

GOD AND HIS BOOK.

THE BIBLE: WHERE DID WE GET IT, AND
WHAT IS IT?

BY

Saladin.

ועתה ישראל שמע אלה חקים ואלה משפטים
אשר אנכי מלמד אתכם לעשות למען תחיו
ובאתם וירשתם את הארץ אשר יהוה אלהי
אבותיכם נתן לכם לאתם עליו על הדבר אשר
אנכי מצוה אתכם ולא תגרעו ממנו לשומר

LONDON :

W. STEWART & Co., 41, FARRINGDON ST., E.C.

Reproduced in Electronic form
2008

Bank of Wisdom®
A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

The purpose of the Bank of Wisdom
is to again make the United States the
Free Marketplace of Ideas that the
American Founding Fathers
originally meant this Nation to be.

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom, LLC

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

All Scripture Inspired—Difficulty of Knowing Divine from Human Writings—Holy Ghost Lacks Literary Talent—Old Testament References to Books Now Lost—Are the Targums Inspired?—The Godhead as an Author.

CHAPTER II.

Qualifications of a True Littérateur—List of Books that at Various Times have been Attributed to the Holy Ghost—Which of them are Really His?—Lack of Care in the Custody of the Scriptures—Curious Plan Deity Adopted to Publish the Scriptures.

CHAPTER III.

The "Book of the Law" not in the Ark—Ark Lost for 2,800 Years—Where is it?—"Book of the Law" Found—How Verified—Huldah the Witch—"Book of the Law" again Lost—Reproduced by Ezra.

CHAPTER IV.

Ezra Proves Useful to his Maker—Indispensables in Bible-writing—Ambiguity and Obscurity—Inadvisability of Translating Bibles—Bibles not Read, even when Translated—Testimony of the Fathers that the Bible was Written by Ezra—Thus not Necessary that the Previous Bible-writers should have been Inspired—Theories of Inspiration.

CHAPTER V.

Predecessor of the Holy Ghost—The Language in which the Old Testament was Written—The Maserites—Adoption of Chaldean Alphabet—Indefinite Character of the Hebrew Text—Different Readings.

CHAPTER VI.

"Inspired" Bumpkins—Why not "Inspire" the Philosophers of Greece and Rome?—The Unlearned Entirely at the Mercy of the Learned—A Specimen from the Writings of the Holy Ghost—No one Language can be Translated with Exact Equivalency into any other—800,000 Various Readings Admitted—The Potency of a Single Gospel-grinder—Testimony of the Rev. Dr. Irons—Mental Thimble-rigging.

CHAPTER VII.

Palimpsests—Asses, etc., with Four Hides—Specimen of a Palimpsest—Christianity Charged with the Loss of Certain Greek and Roman Classics—Diodorus Siculus Lost that we might have an Account of the Virgin Mary's Milk—Divine Fiddle-faddling.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our Earliest Hebrew Text more than 1,000 Years more Recent than the time of Moses—800 Years to Decipher God's Book—"In Toby" or "On Tabby"—"Bet, Cheat"—In what Language did Moses Write?

CHAPTER IX.

The "Search" for "Eternal Life"—The "Search" Easier now than it Once was—The Parts of Scripture Most Intensely Inspired—A Short Cut to "Eternal Life"—The Lant Street Mechanic's Speech to Jehovah.

CHAPTER X.

A Hiatus of over 2,000 Years—No Allowance Made for Change in the Language from the Date of Genesis to that of Malachi—The Septuagint and its Witnesses—Prodigies which would be Incredible but for the Evidence of such Witnesses.

CHAPTER XI.

The Kind of God Rejected and the Kind of God Wanted—Reasons why God did not Produce a Better Book—Domestic Complications and Infelicities in the Divine Family Circle—God's Grandmother, St. Ann—The Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER XII.

The Scriptures Modern—Father Hardouin's Contention—Alleged Forgery of the Greek and Roman Classics—Fallibility of Scholars and Experts—Instances of the Spurious Antique in Literature—150,000 Different Readings of Holy Writ—Christ Quoted from a Spurious Version, the Septuagint.

CHAPTER XIII.

Is God Magnanimous?—Scriptural Obscurity—All Hagiography Obscure—Genesis iv. 23, 24—Sacred Languages—The Name of God—Reputable and Disreputable Necromancy.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Eve and Apple Story—If this Story of the "Fall" be not Literally True, "Redemption" would be Unnecessary—The Adam and Eve Story a Plagiarism—The "Fall" and Death Absolutely Indispensable—Mathematical Calculation showing what would Now be the Population of the Globe if there had been no Death—Damnation Consequently a Blessing.

CHAPTER XV.

Where the Israelites Got the Adam Fable—An Earlier Version of the Adam Fable—Is Normal Man Insane?

CHAPTER XVI.

Origin of Chapters and Verses in the Old Testament—Protestant Misprints in and Additions to the Works of the Holy Ghost—Papist Tamperings with the Writings of the Holy Ghost—The Attitude of Him who is Neither Protestant nor Papist—Triviality of the Conflict between the Sectarians.

CHAPTER XVII.

Burning the Works of the Holy Ghost—Papist Disparagement of the Works of the Holy Ghost—The Virgin Mary's Shift—Advice to Jehovah—Papal Opposition to the Circulation of the Works of the Holy Ghost—Conditions under which Papists may Read the Works of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Canon Westcott on the Works of the Holy Ghost—"La Bandera Catholica" on the Works of the Holy Ghost—List of those Burnt for God's Sake by Torquemada and Others—Bibliolaters and Biblioclasts—Gospel-grinding Apologetics—Reply to the Same—Jules Soury on Jesus—Redemption—The Goblet of Fire.

CHAPTER XIX.

Acquaintance with God's Book—The Assault not upon the Bible's Own Pretensions, but upon the Pretensions Made for it—Two "Creations," the First by the Gods, the Second by the Lord—Reconcilement of the Two Conflicting Accounts—Woman Made in the Dark—The Damnation Trap in Eden—THE Question.

CHAPTER XX.

Biblical Self-contradictions—Suggested Reasons for the Self-contradictions—Biblical Obscenity—Admissions as to Biblical Obscenity—Numerical Efficiency of the Different Religions of the World.

CHAPTER XXI.

Questions addressed to Jehovah—Intestinal Proof—Abraham's Losing Sixty Years of his Life—The King of Sodom's Restoration to Life—Melchisedek—His Series of Lectures—A Dream which is not All a Dream.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Lord "Creating" More than he Knew of—The Living Organisms in the Thames Water Praising the Lord—Jehovah "Created" Worlds without Knowing it—We "Created" God—Jehovah has Served his Purpose and Become Obsolete—a Roll of Dead Gods.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Christ as a Prophet—Christ's Most Important Prophecy not Fulfilled—1800 Years Too Late! Christ's Geographical Knowledge—Proof of Christ's Prophecy of His "Second Coming"—Terrible Uproar Connected Therewith, shaking the "Powers of the Heavens," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Devout Ignorance—Mr. John Smith's Belief—Gospel-forging—Fixing the Canon at the Council of Nice—Jumping and Non-jumping Gospels—The Pious English Girl's Happy Ignorance of her Bible—Christianity Covers much Less of the Area of the Globe than She did 1,000 Years Ago.

CHAPTER XXV.

Success of the Ghost as an Author—The Ghost a Plagiarist—The "Lord's Prayer" Far Older than Christ or Christianity—The "Lord's Prayer" Stolen from the Jewish Kadish—The "Lord's Prayer" Culled out of Ancient Jewish Prayers—Scriptural Plagiarism from the Talmud—The "Lord's Prayer" Examined—The Golden Rule a Plagiarism—Its Formulation by Different Writers Centuries before Christ—The Golden Rule Examined.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Divine Falsehood, Ancient and Modern—Archdeacon Farrar's Allegement that Christianity Originated Hospitals—Evidence of the Falsity of Archdeacon Farrar's Allegement—Cowardice of Ecclesiasticism—Non-and Anti-Christian Philanthropy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Christianity's Claim to have Rendered Hospitals Necessary—Ante-Christian Medicine—"Holy Oil" and Christian "Learning"—The Host and the Use of Poisons—Saints Presiding over Particular Maladies—Curing by the Sign of the Cross—A Christian Brothel—Ante- and Anti-Christian Therapeutics, Civilisation, and Philanthropy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Mohammedan Civilisation, Literature, and Science—Mr. John Smith as a Product of Christian Civilisation—Pious Slaughterings—Ante-Christian Architecture and Masonry—Insanitary Christendom—Persecution of the Jews—Ancient and Modern Hedonism.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Pagan Rome *versus* Christian England—Roman Slavery and English Serfdom—How the Machinery of Statecraft and Priestcraft is Maintained—The Fruits of Christianity at Home and Abroad—The First Christian Murderer—Constantine and Julian—Death of Julian.

CHAPTER XXX.

Infallibility of the Bible—Endowment of Opinion—Canterbury Cathedral and how it is Supported—Church Property Exempt from Taxation—Ecclesiasticism and Morality—Bishops and Brewers—Shameless Promotion—The Secret of Christianity's Survival—Persecution and Cruelty—Pagan Decline and Christian Triumph.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Christian Propaganda—The Jehovah-Jesus Juggle—Christianity Willing but Impotent to Persecute—Is Christianity Compatible with Culture and Education?—Who Believes Christianity?—The God of Battles—A Retrospect and Forecast—Onward to the Orient !

CHAPTER XXXII.

Christianity's Claim to have Originated Lunatic Asylums—Religious Insanity—Religious Insanity Incurable—The Bible and Brandy—Better to Go to Hell with Reason than to Heaven without it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Confused Nature of God's Book—A few Questions Addressed to Jehovah—Was God Ever in Hell?—Pulpit Lies—The Relative Ages of Sacred Books.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Divine Plagiarism—The Canonical and Apocryphal New Testaments—The Talmud—Scriptural Plagiarisms from the Talmud—The "Creature" asks no Reward for Enlightening his "Creator"—The Way the "Creator" has Rewarded Certain of his Favourite "Creatures."

CHAPTER XXXV.

How Christianity Vaulted into Power—Gospel Propagation a Pious Sham—The Masses as Religionists—Shirt-and-Sovereign Christians—Constantine—"Creating" Fools—The God of Battles—Krupp's Cannon Factory.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Books and Bayonets—"Our Father which art in Heaven"—God's Drunken Children—Poverty's Malebolge—The Black Pipe and the Pawn Tickets—Sleeping under the Stars—The Sleep of one of God's Female Children.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Poverty and Prostitution—God as Limned in the Bible—Jehovah's Hand-writing—What the Educated think of the Book—The Dissemination of the Scriptures Prohibited by the Papists—The Jews and the Bible—Eating the Lord—Cannibalism in New Guinea.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Whom the Lord Loveth he Chasteneth"—Did God "Create" Hell?—Uncritical Ignorance the Bed-Rock of Sacred Lies—The Wooden-legged Liar of Antietam—A Living Hell—Testimony that God can Indeed Make Hell.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God an Affair of the Enterics—Prayer Degrading—The Danger of Too Many Praying at Once—Christ's Second Coming Precipitated—Difficulties in the Way of Prayer—Jehovah's Autograph—His Efforts in the Epistolary Line—"Prayer of Jesus, the Son of Mary."

CHAPTER XL.

Which Version of the "Lord's Prayer" does the Lord Prefer?—Divergent Readings of the "Lord's Prayer"—Two Versions of the Decalogue—The Resurrection of the Marquis of Anglesey's Leg—Grander than the Resurrection and Nobler than Prayer—My Salvation—Is Heaven Worth the Going to?—Measurement of the New Jerusalem—Written Warranty to Give Away 99 of my 100 Rooms—If there be Hell, "then Heaven too is Hell."

CHAPTER XLI.

Aversion to be Considered Sacrilegious—How Jehovah Punished Titus for Sacrilege—The Increased Distance between Heaven and Earth—The Gnat that Ate the Brain of Titus—The Louse a Distinctive Mark of "the Finger of God"—The Solid Earth not Stable—Improvements in the Earthquake since the Days of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—Quiet Death—Prepared for the Gnat of Titus or the Earthquake of Korah—Peroration Addressed to Jehovah.

GOD AND HIS BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

All Scripture Inspired—Difficulty of Knowing Divine from Human Writings—Holy Ghost Lacks Literary Talent—Old Testament References to Books now Lost—Are the Targums Inspired?—The Godhead as an Author.

“ALL Scripture is God-inspired,” *πάσα γραφή θεόπνευστος*.^{*} This is awkward for such theologians as would like to claim that only their own favourite texts are inspired and the passages that lend support to their little ism, but that texts that are repugnant to them, and passages which conflict with their ism, are not God-inspired. This contention, of course, implies that the Holy Ghost produced some writings and shook them up in a sack with the writings of mere mortals, and set mankind to a desperate effort of eclecticism, the determining which are the writings of God and which are the writings of patristic forgers. Man cannot have been made so much lower than the angels after all, if he can write so alarmingly like God that even the learned have not been able to agree as to how much of the Holy Scriptures have been written by Jehovah of Heaven, and how much by John Smith of Earth. If this half-and-half inspiration theory be not particularly complimentary to El Shaddai, “the Almighty,” it is certainly a feather in the cap of John Smith, a poor “worm of the dust.”

^{*} 2 Tim. iii. 16.

The supporters of the Holy-Ghost-and-John-Smith inspiration theory read the verse in Timothy, "All Scripture that is God-inspired." But they are more ingenious than ingenuous, and their piety is greater than their Greek. The verb substantive must be understood between *γραφη* and *θεοπνευστος*, and not between *θεοπνευστος* and *ωφέλιμος*, because the conjunction comes between, which renders *ωφέλιμος*, the second qualitative attribute of *γραφη*, as *θεοπνευστος* is the first. I do not know whether the Holy Ghost be still in the shape of a pigeon; but, if he be, theologians twist his writings with a force that would twist his neck.

Peter the fisherman steps in to the assistance of "Timothy" and settles the matter. He assures us that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* This settles the matter. Peter himself was one of the "holy men of God." He sliced the ear off Malchus, denied his Lord, fished sea of Galilee *geds*, and devoted his leisure hours to acting as amanuensis to the Holy Ghost. Fine work, too, the Ghost and he produced. When he said, with an oath, to the damsel Rhoda: "Woman, I know not the man!" he told an unmitigated lie. But when he asserted that "prophecy" was written by the Holy Ghost he, of course, told the truth. George Washington could not tell a lie; but Peter apparently could. Was it for this reason that the Holy Ghost selected him as an amanuensis?

If you sin against the Holy Ghost, you cannot "be forgiven, neither in this world nor the world to come." I fear that most of us will never be forgiven; for who among us has not grossly insulted the Ghost by attributing certain of his writings to a poor scribbling worm of the dust, and *vice versâ*? Not only do we frequently fail to distinguish the Ghost's work from Smith's work in the Authorised Version, but there are a number of books which some allege to be the Ghost's and some allege to be Smith's, which are excluded from the Authorised Version altogether. There are the Books of

* 2 Peter i. 21.

Tobit and Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, the Song of the Three Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Maccabees. The Roman Catholic Church believes all these books to be from the pen of the Ghost; but the Protestant Church alleges that they are the worthless writings of Smith. If the Ghost really wrote them, I should like to hear his opinion of the Protestant Church. If he did not write them, it would be interesting to have his verdict upon the Church of Rome.

The books I have enumerated were canonical down till about 360 years ago. Then a Council of Protestant divines determined that they were not in the handwriting of the Ghost. The heavy majority of Christians, however, still believe that they are the work of that "comforter" and author. Nobody seems to have questioned that the truly insane parts of the Scriptures are by the "comforter;" but learned divines have never been able to quite determine that he wrote Chronicles, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Daniel, Jonah, and Zechariah. I repeat that it is unfortunate that the Ghost writes so perplexingly like Smith. Why did he not adopt a style of his own? He seems to have no idiosyncrasy. Literary talent does not run in the family of El Shaddai. The Father himself, amid a great deal of thunder and lightning at Sinai, wrote a very trite and stupid decalogue, the egotistical burden of which was that they should have no other God except himself. A very poor affair after so much thunder and lightning! Then Jerome informs us that the Son could not write at all, nor read either, I should say, from his star-gazing enthusiasm and uncultured hallucinations. Then, as to the third "person," the Ghost, he has written with so little force and character that there are literally scores of books over which the learned have wrangled for ages, unable to determine whether they were written by the literary member of the Trinity, or by some twopence halfpenny hack of some ancient Grub Street.

We are to "search the Scriptures" in order to obtain "eternal life;" and some of us, who would really like "eternal life," would not mind the trouble of searching the Scriptures if we could only find out what the Scriptures really are. Not one man in fifty thousand has had

the leisure and the learning to con over the ancient MSS. and codices, and to determine for himself which writings are divine and which human. Even if God did give man a written revelation, one thing is certain—we have either never seen that revelation, or, when we do see it, we fail to clearly distinguish it from the mass of ancient writings of a similar character with which it has got inextricably mixed. For our Bible, such as it is, we are indebted to the wranglings of the Fathers and the laborious plodding of subsequent pedants. We are entirely at their mercy, and they are at deadly variance among themselves, not only as to certain books which are altogether rejected, but as to which passages are inspired and which are not in the books that have been accepted.

In finding out what the Ghost actually has written, the difficulty of the task becomes more formidable every attempt we make to undertake it. Certain books of the Bible quote from books and records which no longer exist. Were these books and records also inspired? If not, how can portions of books which are not inspired form any portion of books which are inspired? If the Holy Ghost were to quote from the *Agnostic Journal*, would the *Agnostic Journal* thereby become inspired? The references of the Holy Ghost to works which seem to have existed before he began to write the Bible for our salvation and bewilderment are more frequent than a superficial reader would suppose. I here give a list of the works the Holy Ghost had before him when he was writing, and from which he has quoted:—

Books Lost, cited in the Old Testament.

The Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers xxi. 14).

The Book of the Covenant (Exodus xxiv. 7).

The Book of Jasher, or the Upright (Joshua x. 13, 2 Samuel i. 18).

The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41).

The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings xiv. 19, and eighteen other places in the Books of Kings; also 2 Chron. xx. 34 and xxxiii. 18).

The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings xiv. 29, and twelve other places in the Books of Kings).

The Book of Samuel the Seer (1 Chronicles xxix. 29).

The Book of Nathan the Prophet (1 Chronicles xxix. 29).

The Book of Gad the Seer (1 Chronicles xxix. 29).

The Chronicles of King David (1 Chronicles xxvii. 24).

The Book of Nathan the Prophet (2 Chronicles ix. 29).

The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilomite (2 Chronicles ix. 29).

The Visions of Iddo the Seer against Jeroboam the son of Nabat (2 Chronicles ix. 29).

The Book of Shemaiah the Prophet (2 Chronicles xii. 15).

The Book of Iddo the Seer concerning Genealogies (2 Chronicles xii. 15).

The Story of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chronicles xiii. 22).

The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chronicles xvi. 11, and six other places in the same Book).

The Book of Jehu (2 Chronicles xx. 34).

The Memoirs of Hircanus (mentioned in 1 Maccabees).

The Books of Jason (mentioned in 2 Maccabees ii.).

The Acts of Uriah, mentioned in 2 Chronicles xxvi. 22.

Three thousand Proverbs of Solomon, mentioned in 1 Kings iv. 32.

A thousand and five Songs, mentioned in *ibid*.

Several other volumes by the same author, mentioned in *ibid*.

The Prophecy of Jeremiah, torn in pieces by Jehoiakim, cited in Jeremiah xxxvi.

Another Prophecy of his upon the city of Babylon, mentioned in Jeremiah li.

Memoirs or Descriptions of the same author, mentioned in 1 Maccabees ii.

The Prophecy of Jonah, mentioned in the Book of Jonah.

These works may each and all have been inspired. I cannot allege that I say so through inspiration; nevertheless, I feel inclined to think that the Book of Jasher, the Book of Iddo, and the rest of them, were juvenile and immature performances of the Ghost. I opine that he incorporated the gist of them into his more recent writings, and then committed to the flames the crude compositions of his adolescence. It is, however, a pity he burned them. With what holy and absorbing interest we should have read them as milestones on the road of mental development on which travelled the only ghost that ever took to writing books! Still, some Tischendorf or Shapira may yet unearth the Ghost's boyish volumes, the Book of Gad and the Book of Nathan. We have certain of the boyish writings of Sir Walter Scott, which were tenderly preserved by his mother; but the Ghost, being his own mother, does not stand on quite parallel lines with Sir Walter Scott.

Then as to certain of the Targums, God only knows

whether the Ghost wrote them or not. The Christians say he did not, and the Jews say he did.* The Rabbins contend that, when Jehovah, amid an extraordinary, but quite unnecessary, display of thunder and lightning, gave out the decalogue at Sinai, he issued, at the same time, the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan. If he did so, it explains what has been otherwise always inexplicable to me—viz., why Moses spent forty days on the mountain over such a trifling job as engraving the decalogue. It has frequently struck me that God and he must have had an idle time of it, if it took the two of them forty days to do as much engraving as is now-a-days found on the tombstone of an ordinary tailor, when his virtues are well set out. But, if they actually produced, in addition to the Decalogue, the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, that alters the matter; they cannot have been so very idle after all.

Be this as it may, God must have been very idle in heaven when he came down to earth and spent forty days on the top of a mountain in Arabia over such a poor affair as the Decalogue and the Targums. The "Have no other God save me" business was, perhaps, new; but all the rest was as old as the basis of society. To tell men to honour their father and mother, for instance, was poor work for a god, it being quite unnecessary. All men worthy of the name have honoured their father and mother. Did Jehovah never hear of Troy? Has it not reached his ears how Æneas took his aged father on his shoulders and rushed through the roaring flames, saving the life of his parent at the peril of his own? This was a thousand years before the nomadic carpenter had begun to preach in the villages of Galilee, and I know not how many centuries before Ezra had written a line of the Bible. Æneas had never heard of Jehovah and his Decalogue, and, even if he had, would most likely have laughed at both.

But the most noteworthy thing about Jehovah and his Decalogue is this: He, as the Bible shows, broke every "commandment" in it save one. That one was, *Thou shalt have no other God before me*. Through all his

* *Vide* Stackhouse's "History of the Bible," vol. i. p. 92.

slaughter and lust and lying he always retained a good opinion of himself, and kept at least one item of his Decalogue intact by never bowing his knee to any other God. He could endure Rahab and Ruth; he could favour incestuous Lot and gory David; but he could not stand Ashtaroth or Baal.

By the way, Jehovah does not, as a rule, have, as a literary deity, the credit which is due to him. He, as a hagiographical writer, does not occupy the niche to which his genius entitles him. His writings are lost sight of in the auriole of glory that flings its halo over the writings of the Ghost. A sense of justice impels me to interfere and claim for him that which is his due. It is common to assume that all the Scriptures are the work of the Ghost. This is a fallacy. Jehovah wrote the Decalogue before the Ghost was invented—while the God of Israel was as yet “ONE GOD,” and the Ghost has plagiarised it. It must also be remembered, as a feather in Jehovah’s literary bonnet, that he is, according to his chosen people, the Jews, the author of at least two dreary and musty Targums—the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan.

‘Not his the song whose thunderous chime
Eternal echoes render;
The mournful Tuscan’s haunted rhyme
And Milton’s starry splendour.’

The Son, unlike the Father and the Ghost, wrote no books. Jerome says he could not write. Joseph had sent him to work in the carpenter’s shop before he had learnt his pothooks. True, he once stooped down and, with his finger, wrote upon the ground;* but the writing was most likely of the kind which, on the moist sand, the sea-gull makes with his feet—viz., an illiterate and unintelligible scribble.

* John viii. 6.

CHAPTER II.

Qualifications of a True Littérateur—List of Books that at Various Times have been Attributed to the Holy Ghost—Which of them are really His?—Lack of Care in the Custody of the Scriptures—Curious Plan Deity Adopted to Publish the Scriptures.

NEITHER Christ's nor the sea-gull's writings have found their way into the inspired volume (although, here and there, something alarmingly like them have), so the entire Scriptures are the work of Jehovah and the Ghost, with a little touch up here and there by that "worm of the dust," John Smith.

From the remnants from his pen which he has graciously vouchsafed to us, we cannot claim for Jehovah-jireth commanding talent as a writer. How could he be a writer? The god or man who would write well must know much of the world and much of books. To get a few paces abreast of his fellows, he must have unconquerable self-respect and immaculate purity of moral aim and aspiration. He must have the bone and the sinew to work while others rest, to toil while others sleep, the self-consciousness of talent or even genius based upon an indomitable will, a tireless energy, and a lofty but tender humanity. He may make himself sociable; but he has no time to be frivolous. Now, if these be the characteristics of a writer born to lead the straggling files of human opinion, it must be admitted that Jehovah had few or none of them, unless his biographer, the Ghost, has done him grievous injustice. He is jealous, ignorant and narrow, and quite lacking in that literary turn of the wrist, unteachable, untaught, which distinguishes him who, by an inexorable law of heredity, was *born* a writer from him who was *made* a writer, on the principle that

you can make a silken purse out of a sow's ear. And, then, as to frivolity, Jehovah was an incorrigible trifler. He occupied much of his time with patterns for tents and toggery for priests, with fringes and candlesticks and snuffers and tongs. He also turned his attention in the Eugene Rimmel direction, and manufactured a certain kind of holy hair-oil,* and threatened to put to death any one who would make a perfume to smell like it—*his* way of taking out a patent. This is not the sort of trifling in which he, who would be a writer, can afford to indulge. And candour compels me to admit that the three inscrutables rolled into one inscrutable could not produce "Childe Harold," even with all the assistance they might get from the "worm of the dust" John Smith.

How long, O Lord, how long? There is a grievous injustice done thee somewhere. Arise and avenge thyself. Thy works have got so inextricably mixed up with those of Smith that I, for one, am utterly at a loss what to read devoutly as thine, and what to read with reprehension as a spurious imitation of thy style. For thy greater honour and glory, I herewith furnish thee with thy servant Dupin's † list of the various books that have been attributed to thee by Jews and Christians:—

Books now Considered Canonical by Jews and Christians.

The five Books of Moses.
 The Book of Joshua.
 The Book of Judges.
 The Book of Samuel, or the first and second Books of Kings.
 The third and fourth Books of Kings.
 Isaiah.
 Jeremiah.
 Ezekiel.
 The Twelve Minor Prophets.
 The Book of Job.
 The Hundred and Fifty Psalms.
 The Proverbs of Solomon.
 The Ecclesiastes.
 The Canticles.
 Daniel.
 The Chronicles.
 Esdras, divided into two Books.

* Exodus xxx., *passim*.

† "History of the Canon and Writers of the Old and New Testaments."

Books Received as Canonical by some Jews and Rejected by others.
 Esther, Ruth.

Books Excluded the Jewish Canon, and Reckoned as Apocryphal by some of the Ancient Christians, but Allowed as Canonical of late by the Church of Rome.

Baruch, Tobit, Judith, the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, the two Books of the Maccabees.

The Song of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace.

The History of Susanna.

The History of Bel and the Dragon.

Books that are Excluded the Canon without apparent Reason.

The Prayer of Manasseh, inserted in the Apocrypha.

The third and fourth Books of Esdras (ibid).

The third and fourth Books of Maccabees, in the Septuagint Bible.

The Genealogy of Job, and his Wife's Speech, at the end of the Greek text of the Book of Job.

The 151st Psalm, at the end of the Greek Psalms.

A Discourse of King Solomon, at the end of the Book of Wisdom.

The Preface before the Lamentations of Jeremiah, in the vulgar Latin and Greek text.

Other Apocryphal Books of the same Nature, which are Lost.

The Book of Enoch.

The Book of the Assumption of Moses.

The Assumption, Apocalypse, or Secrets of Elias.

The Secrets of Jeremiah.

Books Full of Fables and Errors, which are Lost.

The Generation, or the Creation of Adam.

The Revelation of Adam.

Of the Genealogy, or of the sons and daughters of Adam.

Cham's Book of Magic.

A Treatise, entitled Seth.

The Assumption of Abraham.

Jetsira, or concerning the Creation, ascribed to Abraham.

The Book of the Twelve Patriarchs.

The Discourses of Jacob and Joseph.

The Prophecy of Habakkuk.

A Collection of the Prophecies of Ezekiel.

The Prophecy of Eldad and Medad.

The Treatise of Jannes and Jambres.

The Book of King Og.

Jacob's Ladder, and several other Tracts.

This is a pretty long catalogue, O Lord of Hosts; but you have, of course, had all eternity to produce it. Now, *inter nos*, which on the list did you write, and which did you not write? I think I have detected thy bold Roman hand in the Book of Tobit. Am I right? I think I could point you out seventeen lines in the Book

of Gad that you could not look me in the face and say you did not write. I think Ruth is all by thee; it is quite in thy style. O Ancient of Days, am I right? I deem thy son's letter to Abgarus quite genuine, more especially since thy son could not write. I recognise in the speech of Job's wife flashes from the pen of the Most High. Numbers is written by you, especially the thirty-first chapter. Several of the Psalms, too, are thine, especially *the Psalm of Curses*.* A good deal of Genesis is thine, especially the two accounts of the Creation, which flatly contradict each other, and which are, nevertheless, both true. This sort of writing undoubtedly takes a God to write it—and a devil to understand it; and for this and all thy other mercies, make us truly thankful. These, O Shaddai, I mention from the mass of books in which thy Jewish and Christian followers have supposed thee to have had a finger. But there are a great many of the books in regard to which, O Lord, I humbly confess before thee, I cannot for my life determine where Smith ends and Jehovah begins. O Lord help thou my literary discrimination, or else strengthen my faith *ad libitum*. I should like wings and glory, and should be sorry to miss them through not knowing whether to attribute the Book of Susanna and the Book of Og to Smith or to thee, O Mighty One of Israel.

It is with due deference that I suggest to the Lord that, when he again writes a book upon which the salvation or perdition of untold millions of mankind is destined to hang, he should take some reasonable care that that book be not lost or destroyed. He has not been at all careful with the Bible; he has more than once permitted it to disappear altogether and to be reproduced by worms of the dust, just in whatever way might please their fancy. First, when God produced his book he gave it in keeping to the Jews. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God."† They were not to read it (he seems never to have intended his book should be read), but to place it in the ark, a shittim-wood box of holy nick-nacks, in which he took great interest, coming down now and again to dance upon the lid, or, rather, to shine as a

* Psalm cix.

† Romans iii. 2.

shekinah—something or other that gave nearly as much light as a halfpenny candle. "Take the book of the law and put it into the side [*i.e.*, inside] of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." *

When any ordinary mortal writes a book he takes some pains to give all the world an opportunity of reading it. When a god writes a book it is far otherwise. The Lord commanded his book to be put inside the ark, and ordered that the ark be kept in the most holy inner recess of the tabernacle or temple—a recess to which the high priest alone had access. Moreover, the place was too sacred for even the high priest to visit it whenever it might enter his head to do so; for Aaron was cautioned not to come "at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy-seat which is upon the ark, that he die not." † From this it is obvious that, if the Lord had peculiar notions as to how to *write* a book, he had even more curious notions as to how to *publish* one. His mode of publishing was to put his MS. into a closed box, place the box in a recess where only one person was permitted to visit it, and that very cautiously and at stated times, under peril of being struck dead on the spot. This is slightly different from the way publishing is carried on in Paternoster Row and its environs; but, of course, there is some dissimilarity between Jehovah-nissi and Anthony Froude, as also between London and Kirjath-jearim. The men of Beth-shemesh were of an inquiring turn of mind, and one or two of them, on one occasion ventured a peep into the box or ark in which the Lord kept his book. But the Lord, whose son said, "Search the Scriptures," did not approve of his book and his box being peeped at, so he "smote the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people 50,000 and three score and ten men." ‡ It is evident Jehovah had attached some importance to his book, since he slew 50,070 men because one or two out of that number had craned their necks to look into his book box. I repeat, Jehovah's ideas of publishing are just a trifle peculiar.

* Deuteronomy xxxi. 26.

† Leviticus xvi. 2.

‡ I Samuel vi. 19.

Seeing that nobody was permitted to read the Book of the Law, or even to approach within several feet of it, it was obliging of Jehovah to come down and sit on the lid of the box that contained his book, and talk over matters with his friend Moses. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."* So a performing Jehovah came down and sat on the top of his shittim-wood box, just as you have seen a performing monkey sit on the top of a travelling hurdy-gurdy. This was very condescending on his part. Business must have been slack in heaven when he could afford the time to come and sit on the top of that box, like a parrot on a perch, between the two gew-gaws of sacred fowls, which he is pleased to call *cherubims*. But he would have saved himself all this humiliation and trouble if he had only permitted his book to be read. He wrote the Law, and then came down to the lid of the box and delivered it orally; in short, he kept a dog and yet did the barking himself.

* Exodus **xxv. 22.**

CHAPTER III.

The "Book of the Law" not in the Ark—Ark Lost for 2,800 Years — Where is it? — "Book of the Law" Found—How Verified—Huldah the Witch—"Book of the Law" again Lost—Reproduced by Ezra.

POOR deluded Jehovah! As something of an author myself, I extend him my fraternal sympathy. After all the preternatural fuss he had made about his "Book of the Law," he was completely on the wrong track. He had made some Jew too clever, and that Jew had managed to swindle and over-reach his maker. The ark was opened in the time of Solomon,* and, O duped and insulted heaven! *the Book of the Law was not in it!* If ever the "Book of the Law" had been there, it had been fraudulently abstracted, God knows when, and this in spite of Omniscience knowing what was in the bottom of the ark, and in spite of Omnipotence kow-towing upon the lid of it!

After this appalling discovery the ark was never again heard of. What became of it and the two stones that were in it, God only knows. Peradventure Jehovah, on discovering how he had been swindled, jumped upon the box with his Omnipotent feet, and smashed it into match-wood, while the 50,070 men of Beth-shemesh looked down from heaven and up from hell, putting their right hands to their noses, and extending their fingers and crying "Ha! ha!" while murdered Uzzah† delivered himself of a ghastly giggle. It is now more than two thousand eight hundred years since the ark was last seen. According to Maccabees, the prophet Jeremiah hid it in a cave on Mount Pisgah, and sealed up the entrance of the said cave. There, of course, it remains till this day,

* See 1 Kings viii. 9.

† See 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.

and, most likely, Jehovah is still sitting on the lid, shining away in the dark. "*God does nothing*," admitted Thomas Carlyle in mournful bitterness. But, if Carlyle himself had been placed on the lid of a gilded box between two cherubs or gilded hens, and confined to a cave in Mount Pisgah, could he himself have done more than Jehovah has done?

The "Book of the Law" was evidently a merry, happy-go-lucky volume, that dearly loved a game of hide-and-seek. After all the truly infernal fuss which had been made about the "ark"—or, more correctly translated, *box*—of the Lord, which was supposed to contain it, as we have seen, the box was opened in the time of Solomon (and this time it would seem nobody was struck dead for meddling with it), and behold the "Book of the Law" was not there! But it was not all over yet with the marvellous volume, as the sequel will show. For three hundred and fifty god-forsaken years the world had to get along as best it could without the works of Moses. Nobody could form any idea as to what God had done with his book. Had he deftly pilfered it out of the ark, and taken it up to heaven with him to read it to Sarah and ask her assistance in revising it for the press? Had he become thoroughly ashamed of it, and made up his mind to withdraw it altogether? No, he had not. He had still faith in the old book, in which he related how he "created" the heavens and the earth out of a few tons of excellent nothing. He had killed tens of thousands with his box, and he was yet destined to kill untold millions with his book. Three hundred and fifty years after Solomon's time, when the ark was opened and no "Book of the Law" found therein, "Hilkiah, the high priest, said unto Shaphan, the scribe, I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord."* There was life in the old dog yet. And in that life lay hidden the bolt of Death. Not all the books the world ever saw was so deadly and baneful as that book. Its fearful mission among mankind could not have been prefigured by making every leaf of it a leaf from the upas tree, and every word of it

* 2 Kings xxii. 8.

written with the poison of asps. Accursed above all names be the names of Hilkiab and Shaphan. Did the shuddering thunder shake the world, and showers of blood splash down from the darkened heaven as Hilkiab lifted from the shelf in the temple that baleful "Book of the Law"? Every leaf has proved the parent of division, schism, and hate. Every line has been a row of dragons' teeth, from which have sprung a crop of armed men. Every word has been an anvil, upon which have been hammered ten thousand swords. Every letter has evolved the fire, the scaffold, the dungeon, and the rack. All the ink that has been shed in producing its millions of millions of copies is a mere drop in the bucket to the merciless deluge of blood with which it has drenched the fire-blackened plains and ruined cities of the world. And the fetters of iron which it has riveted upon the limbs of the most valiant of our race are as nothing to the shackles of intellectual bondage which, worn for long ages, have made Humanity an aggregation of credulous parasites, crushed by a superstition under the weight of which all creation groans. In the interests of the Human Race I say *Anathama maranatha* be the hand that penned that "Book of the Law," and damned be the light of that day which rose upon Jerusalem when Hilkiab told Shaphan what he had found "in the house of the Lord"!

How did Shaphan and his friends know that he had found the "Book of the Law"? Aye, there's the rub. Did they submit the book to the scrutiny of all the scholars and experts of the then civilised world, in order that they might have their verdict as to whether the work was from the stylus of Jehovah or from the pen of some Chatterton of a Jew? No such thing. God and his people do not like learning, and they never did. The wise and prudent, the learned and thoughtful, are not in their line; but the babe and suckling are, and the imbecile and the blockhead. They took the book to no seat of learning; they showed it to no scholar and philologist; but they went off with it under their arm, and showed it to Huldah the *witch*! * "Hilkiab the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and

* "Prophetess" by courtesy.

Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college); *and they communed with her.*" *

The witch Huldah cursed like a trooper. Our army swore terribly in Flanders, but nothing like Huldah when the deputation waited upon her with the "Holy Bible, book divine." She cursed the place and she cursed the inhabitants, even with "all the curses that are written in the book." Quoth she, the wrath of the Lord is "kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched."† And all this fearful and unquenchable rage of Jehovah was to fall upon the generation alive when his book was *found*, not upon the generation who allowed the book to be *lost*. But we must constantly keep in mind that the Lord's ways are not as our ways, and that the Lord's justice is justice upside down.

One person, however, was to be exempt from the terrible curse; and this person was King Josiah. He had flattered the witch by sending the deputation *re* the book to wait upon her. In the name of the Lord she prophesied of him: "Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave *in peace*."‡ Now, in the very next chapter the witch's prediction is falsified. Far from being gathered to his "grave in peace," Josiah was slain in battle at Megiddo, from which stricken field his servants brought his bloody remains and laid them in a sepulchre in Jerusalem.§ So much for Huldah's skill as a prophetess; but, next to babes and sucklings, the Lord seems to have a weakness for imposters. And one imposter more or less with a finger in the pie of the finding of "the Book of the Law" was neither here nor there.

But the "Book of the Law" had not even yet done with its game of hide-and-seek. Its appearance in the temple was mysterious enough. If it had been there only for a short time, how did it come there and whence did it come? If it had been there for a long time, how

* 2 Kings xxii. 14.

† 2 Kings xxii. 20.

‡ 2 Kings xxii. 17.

§ *Vide* 2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30.

did it remain that long time and not be discovered? The discovery was certainly mysterious, and, in recognition thereof, the king "rent his clothes," which would give a slight impetus to trade in the tailoring line, and the people took to eating roast lamb, without green peas and mint sauce, and called the orgie the "Passover." But, mysterious though the appearance of the book was, its disappearance appears to have been more mysterious still. God does not seem to have written his law upon sheep-skin, but to have inscribed it upon the back of a veritable will-o'-the-wisp.

One hundred and fifty years after Hilkiab's time Ezra managed to put salt on the tail of the Lord's will-o'-the-wisp—the "Book of the Law" was again discovered! The discovery this time was of an exceedingly peculiar nature. Hilkiab discovered the book in the temple; but Ezra seems to have discovered it *inside his own head!* After the return from the seventy years' exile by the waters of Babel, Esdras (Ezra) saw it necessary to draw the attention of the Lord to the fact that the "Book of the Law" had been destroyed by fire, and thereby the Holy Ghost's name as an author blotted from the records of literature. "Thy law *is burnt*; therefore no man knoweth the things that are done of thee." Then, after assuring God that his book had been burnt, Ezra obligingly offers to write him another in its place—to "write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in thy law that men may find thy path."

CHAPTER IV.

Ezra Proves Useful to his Maker—Indispensables in Bible-Writing—Ambiguity and Obscurity—Inadvisability of Translating Bibles—Bibles not Read, even when Translated—Testimony of the Fathers that the Bible was Written by Ezra—Thus not Necessary that the Previous Bible-Writers should have been Inspired—Theories of Inspiration.

GOD appears to have approved of the proposition of Ezra to write a book to take the place of the one that had been burnt, and that worthy, in forty days, with the assistance of five scribes, performed the task.* So the Bible had been destroyed by fire, and was reproduced by six men in forty days. This, no doubt, saved the Lord a great deal of trouble, and spared him the pain of referring to a number of old-world matters of an unpleasant nature, such as six days of hard work at "creating," followed by a day on which he "rested" and kicked up his divine heels; and all the half-forgotten bother he had over Eve and the apple, and the pranks of that talking serpent, and the doctoring of the wicked world with the cold-water cure, and all in vain.

Ezra, being "a ready scribe," proved remarkably useful to his maker in the reproduction of the burnt book. Of a verity he was "a scribe of the law of the God of Heaven."† It is easier to reproduce a lost book for "the God of Heaven" than some seem disposed to think. God does not approve of able writing; he prefers the "babe and suckling" style. He is not at all particular as to facts; and he cares not a jot for dates. With him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. All he required of Ezra and his five assistants

* See 2 Esdras xiv. 21-44.

† Ezra vii. 6.

was that they should have a good running hand, only a very few brains, some inventive faculty, and that they should be liars. They did the whole thing in forty days. If they had taken an extra ten days, they might have made a better job of it; but God seems satisfied, and why should not I?

One indispensable in Bible-writing is ambiguity; and in the vague, equivocal and obscure, Ezra was a perfect master. In writing a human book it is necessary to make it convey some specific meaning; but, in writing a divine book, care has to be taken to give it no meaning in particular: make it mean anything or nothing, and always leave a loophole through which the apologist can slip out and explain away whatever may oppose the particular position for which he contends. If you are writing a Bible and find yourself degenerating into anything like explicable common sense, it is incumbent on you to mix your sentence up with candlesticks and wheat, and beasts and chariots, and horns, and souls of men, and trumpets and millstones, and dragons and stars, and phials and earthquakes, till no sane person would write such a passage, and no sane person would read it; then it will have all the better chance to pass unchallenged as "the word of God." A God or an oracle should never utter anything that has not, at least, *two* meanings.

Gods and oracles have usually observed this rule. Bible readers do not require to be directed to any particular instance of Jehovah's divine ambiguity, and classical readers will readily remember the cleverly equivocal utterances of the Delphic Oracle. Pyrrhus desired to know what would be the result of his projected expedition against Rome. The Oracle replied:—

"CREDO TE, ÆACIDA, ROMANOS VINCERE POSSE."*

The same Oracle replied to Crœsus, King of Lydia:—

Χροισος Ἀλυν διαθας, μεγαλην αρχην διαλυσει.†

* This reads either, "I believe that thou wilt conquer the Romans," or "I believe that the Romans will conquer thee." Pyrrhus was defeated and slain; but the Oracle held that its infallibility was unshaken, and that it was no fault of its that Pyrrhus had adopted the former reading and rejected the latter.

† "If Crœsus pass over the Halys, he will destroy a great empire." And so he did; but that great empire was *his own*.

Those who would write Bibles, or even explain them, would do well to found their style on these two utterances of the Delphic Oracle.

Bible-making is easily enough executed if you, or Ezra, or any one else, only keep up a due blending and admixture of ambiguity and incomprehensibility. Speak to the vulgar in language they understand, and they think you are simply one of themselves. But it is very different when you, or Ezra, or any one else, burst out into, "And they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went they went upon their four sides; and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up."* If you want to gull the multitude out of first their reason and then their coppers, keep firmly on the lines of the mysterious. It is an oft-spoken whim of the cynics—and possibly something more—that the doctors give their prescriptions in Latin so as to afford their ignorant patients the benefit of a little imagination. *Bolus Panificum* sounds a good deal more important than "bread-pill." Some years ago, in a Rhode Island Legislature, a member moved to translate all the Latin phrases in the statutes, so that the people could understand them. A Mr. Updike took the ground that it was no advantage to have the people understand the laws. He said they were not afraid of anything they understood; that it was the Latin words they were afraid of; and proceeded to illustrate as follows: "Mr. Speaker, there was a man in South Kingston, about twenty years ago, who was a perfect nuisance, and nobody knew how to get rid of him. One day he was hoeing corn, and he saw the sheriff coming with a paper, and asked him what it was. Now, if he had been told it was a writ, what would he have cared? But the sheriff told him it was a *capias satisfaciendum*, and the man dropped his hoe and ran, and has not been heard of since."

* Ezekiel i. 16-19.

No Bible, if it is to retain its influence, should ever be translated into a language understood, or even half understood, by the people. Well the Church of Rome knew this, and determinedly it resisted translation out of "the original tongues." The Bible of the Christian is not exceptional in this respect. While I write I learn that what is likely to prove one of the most deadly blows to Hinduism has just been inflicted by the latest issue from the vernacular press of India. This consists of the first of eight parts of a complete translation of the Rig Veda. The mass of the Hindus, and even multitudes of educated men among them, have always fallen back upon the Vedas as the foundation of their faith, and as a mine of unknown spiritual wealth. Pressed in religious discussion at the many vulnerable points of Hinduism, they could always believe that in the Vedas as known to their pundits was a spiritual revelation that cast even Christianity into the shade. This belief, of course, derived all its strength from ignorance, and, as long as the Veda remained unknown, might continue unshaken. A scholarly native officer of the Civil Service, Romesh Chunder Dutt, who is collector and magistrate of Bursaul, therefore resolved to translate the first great literary work of his race into Bengali. The shrewder champions of Hinduism at once took alarm when they heard of his purpose to unveil to the common people the secrets of the hitherto mysterious book, being well aware that this would undoubtedly destroy the veneration secured for it from ignorance; and with more courage than wisdom, a leading Hindu, Shoshodhor Tarko Churanoni, has assailed the work of the translator. But Romesh Baboo had prudently secured beforehand the sympathy and aid of the leading Sanskrit scholars of Bengal, and, though his translation may have to pass through a scathing fire of criticism, it is certain to remain substantially unaffected, and the spiritual emptiness of the Vedas will now become apparent to all. As the *Indian Baptist* pithily remarks, the new garb that the Rig Veda is putting on will prove to be its graveclothes. The well-informed upholders of orthodox Hinduism know this, and they are gnashing their teeth.

But there is one effective set-off against the evil of

translating the Bible, few really read it, even after it has been translated. If you find a man here and there who has really read the Bible, he is always more or less of an "Infidel." The true Christian does not read it; he only praises it. He gives it a conspicuous place in his house—in some parts of England I have seen it, large and gilt, do duty as an ornament for the window-sill; it is in his hand every Sunday at least, and I know one or two saints who carry it constantly in their pockets; and yet they know nothing of where it came from, and next to nothing of what is in it.

"One day a flash of lightning struck a mortal;
The ghost he didn't yield—
Above his heart and in his bosom pocket
A Bible was his shield.

"A marvellous deliverance, and worthy
Of any poet's rhyme;
But just suppose that mortal had been *reading*
His Bible at the time!"

However, the lightning did not find him reading it, and it will require to take three or four more shies at him before it does find him reading it.

If anything at all be certain in regard to such a doubtful quantity as the Old Testament, it is certain that it is the production of Ezra. Besides the evidence on this point I have already quoted, that Ezra reproduced the lost Bible was the uniform opinion of the early Christian Church. Clement of Alexandria writes: "In the captivity by Nebuchodonosor, the writings having been destroyed, in the time of Artaxerxes, King of the Persians, Esdras, the Levite, having become inspired, prophesied, restoring again all the old writings."*

Tertullian writes: "Jerusalem having been destroyed by the Babylonian siege, it appears that every instrument of Jewish literature was restored by Esdras."†

Eusebius quotes Irenæus as saying: "And it is not at all wonderful that God wrought this, who also in the captivity of the people in the time of Nebuchodonosor, when the writings had been destroyed, and the Jews

* Strom. i. 22.

† "De cultu. scem.," c. 3.

came back after seventy years to their own land, then in the time of Artaxerxes, the King of the Persians, inspired Esdras, the priest of the tribe of Levi, to set forth all the words of the prophets who had gone before, and to restore to the people the legislation given through Moses." *

Jerome writes: "Certainly the present day is to be deemed of that time in which the history itself was put together: whether you choose to call Moses the author of the Pentateuch, or Ezra the restorer of the same work, I make no objection." † Basilius, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Leo Byzantinus, and others of the Christian Fathers give similar testimony.

It is evident that, for the production of the Bible, only one inspiration was requisite—the Inspiration of Ezra. Clearly it matters not a jot whether Moses was inspired or not. Whatever Moses' writings had been like, they had got destroyed, so it was of no moment whether they had been inspired ten times over. If Ezra produced the lost twenty-two books, he must have suffered from a far more severe attack of inspiration than Moses had had, who produced only five books, against Ezra's twenty-two. In fact, the amount of inspiration which had been sufficient for the whole staff that had produced the lost Bible must have been let loose upon Ezra. Suffering in his person from inspiration sufficient for the entire staff of the Bible, the wonder is that, from the over-dose, Ezra did not burst, his pieces flying from Dan even unto Beersheba.

I am not extravagant in this solicitude lest Ezra should have burst. One theory at least of inspiration held by theologians would not be quite incompatible with the inspired one bursting, and thereby leaving his study in a state more easily conceived than described. For, after the manner of the Pythian prophetess, the spirit that possessed those inspired was believed to "swell and blow up their bodies, especially their breasts and bellies, like a bladder or bottle." ‡ Another theory of the

* "Hist. Ecc.," v. 8.

† "Adv. Helvidium," tom. iv. p. 134.

‡ "The Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures," p. 17, by Dr Samuel Clark.

action of inspiration was that the Holy Ghost came upon the Bible-writer like "a rushing, mighty wind." * To receive the gust necessary to writing a whole lost Bible, Ezra may, of course, have chained himself firmly to the trunk of a tree; but, even then, such a tempest of inspiration was enough to have blown the very teeth out of his head.

No wonder that the inspired ones were blown up and bulged out in abdomen and breast; for the "Holy Ghost," if properly translated, would be nothing more or less than the "Holy Wind." The Greek word *πνευμα* stands in the New Testament for *wind*, *ghost*, and *spirit*. The translators did not find it their business to make a correct translation from the "original;" but they did find it their business to gull the unlearned, and so, when they met with *πνευμα*, they rendered it *wind* in one place, *ghost* in another, and *spirit* in another—not with any regard to critical and philological nicety, but with due regard to making mysterious and imposing sentences, that should cause the wayfaring man to feel that he could not wrestle with Scriptural inscrutabilities, and that, therefore, to make all mysteries plain, it would be well to build a church and pay a parson to explain. The poor dupe, in his millions, has done so: the churches have been built, and the parsons explain; and, of course, they have always found it their interest to make the inexplicable, if possible, more inexplicable still. One of the most flagrant instances of tampering with *πνευμα* is to be found in the verse, "The *wind* bloweth where it listethand so is every one that is born of the *Spirit*." The same Greek word is actually translated *wind* in one part of the same verse and *spirit* in another! And the "spirit" is no common "Spirit" either, but begins with a capital *s*, to make it look more mysterious and terrible to the untutored multitude who can be gulled into the building of churches and the paying for parsons. If what I say be not true, let all the learning of all their universities contradict me. Usually, when a parson finds himself in a fix, he remarks: "In the original, my dear Christian brethren, we find that our blessed Lord made

* Acts xi. 2.

† John iii. 8.

use of the Greek word so-and-so," taking it for granted that his pious dupes will, at "the Greek word so-and-so," open their mouths wide in reverent ignorance, and let the most holy and deeply-erudite man of God have it all his own way. What a poor, detected charlatan the parson would seem if only a scholar or two could be found to be fools enough to listen to his pulpit drivel, and confront him with the damning truth, "Rev. Sir, there is, as you are very well aware, no 'original.' The oldest MS. is not older than the fourth century, and it is notoriously imperfect; and, even if there were an 'original,' by all the canons of scholarship, it would not bear the translation you thrust upon your version. Would it not be more manly, Rev. Sir, more honourable, to take a spade or an axe and work honestly for your daily bread, than thus to get up into your gospel-box and, for a living, impose upon the ignorance of the ignorant?"

Paul—other "holy men of God" may possibly do likewise—occasionally writes on his own account, but with a kind of vague conjecture that the Holy Ghost or Holy Wind would approve what he writes:—

"After my judgment; and I think also I have the Spirit of God."*

This means that, at times, Paul did not feel so afflicted with sacred flatulency that he was quite sure he was "inspired." Did he test the extent of inspiration by striking his hand against his abdomen to ascertain whether it were sufficiently inflated with the Holy Wind? If, under a blow from his fist, his abdomen boomed like a drum, did he take this as an omen that he was thoroughly under the influence of inspiration? The "holy men of God"—the Ezras, the Pauls, and the rest of them—sitting, pen in hand, with terribly-distended abdomens, producing the Bible, "the source of England's greatness," is a burlesque well worthy the burlesque of a book they have produced, and the tragic burlesque of millions of mankind taking it for a sporadic and exceptional expression of supernal wisdom. Leeze me upon the *πνευμα*. The Holy Spirit = Holy Wind theory of in-

* 1 Cor. vii. 40.

spiration. In beatific vision, I behold the holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Wind, each time they dip the pen into the ink with the one hand they give their abdomen a blow with the other to try whether it is tense enough to emit the drum-like sound indicative that the possessor is just in the proper key for Bible-writing and for acting as the amanuensis of Jehovah Tsidkenu. The whole affair began in wind, and it is ending in smoke.

CHAPTER V.

Predecessor of the Holy Ghost—The Language in which the Old Testament was Written—The Maserites—Adoption of Chaldean Alphabet—Indefinite Character of the Hebrew Text—Different Readings.

THE Holy Ghost, according to the *Filioque* Nicene Creed, is descended from the Father *and* the Son; and yet the said Holy Ghost “overshadowed” Mary and begot the very Son from whom he proceeded! Reader, you are required only to *believe* this; you are not expected to understand it. A serious attempt to understand would drive you mad; but, of course, madness—or, at least, mental imbecility and distortion—is the necessary preliminary to becoming a Saint. The first time we hear of the mysterious “person” who inspired the Scriptures in the New Testament is in the assurance that Mary “was found with child of the Holy Ghost.” This, of course, determines the sex of the Ghost; and, up to date, that is all in regard to him that has been determined.

Instead of proceeding from the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost would seem to be descended from כַּח קוֹל, DAUGHTER OF A VOICE. It was this *Bath-Kol*, or oracular voice, that did duty in inspiring the whole of the Old Testament—prompting Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and other holy men of God. It is in the New Testament that this *Bath-Kol* first steps upon the scene as the Holy Ghost, and he has the honour, as we have seen, of being introduced as the father of the child of an unmarried woman

The Holy Ghost has not even all the New Testament to himself; for, in the Syriac version, the “voice from

heaven"* is our old friend *Bath-Kol*. This כה קול strides through the Talmud recking nothing of his new-fangled successor, πνευμα, the Holy Ghost. Both the *Bath-Kol* and the Holy Ghost seem to have been ornithologically inclined and to have had a special *penchant* for the pigeon. In the Talmud Rabbi Jose writes: "I went once into the ruins of Jerusalem to pray, and I heard there a *Bath-Kol*, cooing like a *dove*, and saying: 'Woe to the children on account of whose sin I have destroyed my home, have burnt my temple, and have dispersed them among the Gentiles!'" So much for the *Bath-Kol* that, in the fulness of time, seems to have developed into a full-blown Holy Ghost, to whom we are indebted for begetting our blessed Lord and for inspiring those who wrote an account of his life and teachings.

Before I proceed to other relevant considerations let us briefly advert to the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote the Scriptures, in the searching of which we are promised "eternal life." Dupin, who was doctor of the Sorbonne, professor of philosophy, and one of the most learned of Christian writers, observes†:—"The Hebrew alphabet is composed of twenty-two letters, like those of the Samaritans, Chaldeans, and Syrians. But, of these letters, *none are vowels*, and, in consequence, the pronunciation cannot be determined. The Hebrews have invented *points*, which, being put under the letters, answer the purpose of vowels. These vowel-points serve not only to fix the pronunciation, *but also the signification of a word, because, many times, the word being differently pointed and pronounced alters the meaning entirely*. This is the consideration which has made the question as to the antiquity of the points of so much importance, and has, consequently, had such elaborate treatment. Some have pretended that these points are as ancient as the Hebrew tongue, and that Abraham made use of them. Others make Moses the author of them. But the most common opinion among the Jews is that, *Moses having learnt of God the true pronunciation of Hebrew words*, this science was preserved in the

* Matthew iii. 17 ; xvii. 5. John xii. 28.

† "A Complete History of the Canon and Writers of the Old and New Testament."

synagogue by oral tradition till the time of Ezra, who invented the points and accents to fix the meaning. Elias Levita, a German Jew of the last generation, and deeply learned in Hebrew grammar, has rejected this opinion, and contended that the invention of points took place in much more recent times. He ascribes the invention to the Jews of Tiberias and to the year 500 A.D., and alleges that the invention was not perfected till about the year 1040 A.D., by two famous Maserites, Ben-Ascher and Ben-Naphtali."

Certain scholars have, indeed, contended—evidently in the interests of "Holy Writ," rather than in deference to the weight of evidence—that the points are very ancient; but the great consensus of learned opinion inclines towards the accepting of the contention of Elias Levita. Dr. Prideaux observes* that "the sacred Books made use of among the Jews in their synagogues have ever been and still are *without the vowel points*, which could not have happened had they been placed there by Ezra, and had, consequently, been of the same authority with the letters. For, had they been so, they would certainly have been preserved in the synagogues with the same care as the rest of the text." Dr. Prideaux goes on to say that no mention is made of the points in either Mishna or Gemara, and that "neither do we find the least hint of them in Philo-Judæus or Josephus, who are the oldest writers of the Jews, or in any of the ancient Christian writers for *several hundred years after Christ*. And, although among them Origen and Jerome were well skilled in the Hebrew language, yet in none of their writings do they speak the least of them. Origen flourished in the third, and Jerome in the fifth, century; and the latter, having lived a long while in Judæa, and there more especially applied himself to the study of the Hebrew learning, and much conversed with the Jewish rabbis for his improvement herein, it is not likely that he could have missed making some mention of them through all his voluminous works, if they had been either in being among the Jews in his time, or in any credit or authority with them, and that especially since, in

* "Connection of Sacred and Profane History."

his commentaries, there was so many necessary occasions for taking notice of them." Dr. Prideaux concedes that, after the Babylonish captivity, "the Hebrew language ceased to be the mother tongue of the Jews," observing that this "is agreed on all hands."

Now, what is the true significance of the foregoing specimen statements, not hostile conjectures of semi-literate "Infidels," but deliberate admissions of erudite and eminent Christians? A pretty language Hebrew was, to be sure, to be used by Almighty God in the revealing of his will to men. He used, it seems, a language which had twenty-two consonants and no vowels, thereby leaving his meaning utterly unfixed and uncertain, and yet making the comprehension of his book so obligatory that on it hung the destiny for beatitude or malediction of the human race. Let my reader picture to himself a language so rude and primitive that it bungled away with its twenty-two consonants, and without a single vowel, and he will have some idea of how clearly intelligible God made himself! "It is true," admits Dr. Giles,* "that it might be difficult to know what vowel-sound should, in every case, be inserted among the written consonants; this was left for the reader to supply by his knowledge of the language. Thus the first word in the Hebrew Bible, being composed of the consonants B R S T, might be pronounced *Barasat*, *Bereset*, *Birisit*, *Borosot*, *Burusut*, and in twenty other ways, according to the combinations of the letters a, e, i, and u." In short, God wrote his book in such wise that the very first word in it was one uncertain thing out of twenty-five, and by this word you are to be saved or damned.

Those who know Pitman's system of phonetic stenography are aware that reporters, in taking a verbatim report of the speech of a rapid speaker, simply dash off the consonants, having no time to put in the points which, by a curious coincidence, designate the vowels with Pitman, even as they do with Jehovah. Now, any practised stenographer will tell you that he experiences less difficulty in "taking down" the speech of the orator than in *deciphering the said speech after it is taken down.*

* "Hebrew Records."

Owing to this elision of the vowels, the reporter encounters a difficulty, even although he knows the language well which he has been reporting, and even although, in transcribing his stenography into "long hand" for the press, he has a pretty vivid remembrance of the speaker's drift and context. To understand how impracticable it is to make either head or tail of the Holy Ghost's unvowelled Hebrew, we must suppose the reporter has to put vowels into a speech so as to make sense of it, say a thousand years after the speech was delivered, and say five centuries after the language in which it was delivered had become a *dead language*! He might make the first four letters in Genesis into *burst, bearest, barest, borest, breast, abreast*, etc., at option, according to his conception of what the Holy Ghost might have meant, rather than with a certainty as to what the Holy Ghost actually intended.

But, as though the Holy Ghost had exercised preternatural ingenuity to make it impossible for men to believe that his writings could be accurate, and thereby manage maliciously to damn the world, he threw still further difficulties in the way of any sane person receiving his book as "infallible." Ezra not only wrote the book in Hebrew—a language which, during the Babylonian captivity, had become obsolete—but, apparently because the then Jews did not know even the very letters of Hebrew, he wrote his obsolete Hebrew in *Chaldean characters*! * Fancy what Macaulay's "History of England" would look like, not translated into German, but printed in German characters, and you will have some sort of vague notion of the appearance of the book which was turned out by Ezra and his five scribes to oblige Jehovah by giving him a book in the place of the one that had been burnt; and this, added to the other insuperable difficulties to which I have already alluded. To complete the analogy we must further submit that Macaulay's History had been burnt, and had to be reproduced from memory.

* According to Scaliger, Casuabon, Vossius, Grotius, Bishop Walton, Louis Cappel, Dr. Prideaux, and other Biblical philologists and critics. *Vide* Hartwell Horne's "Introduction," vol. ii. page 7.

That the English reader may form some idea of the aspect of the Hebrew characters, I here give a specimen of what is considered very ancient Hebrew, or as near as can be obtained to the true handwriting of the Holy Ghost. The passage is Deut. iv. 1, 2, and is a *fac-simile* from what is known as the Malabaric MS :—

ועתה ישראל שמע אל החקים ואל המשפטים
 אשר אנכי מצויד אתכם לעשות למען תחיו
 וזאתם ירשתם את הארץ אשר יהיה אלהי
 אבותיכם נתן לכם לאתקפו על הדבר אשר
 אנלי מצויד אתכם ולאתגרעו כמעט לשמר

These pious gambols of black snails have been modernized into square black characters like these :—

* בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ *

What are usually regarded as the Hebrew letters are not the Hebrew letters at all, but a comparatively modern Syriac substitute of an uncertain date.

Let us try a line of English on Jehovah's plan of writing, our, however, venturing to write from left to right—not, as he did, from right to left :—

Nthbgnnnggdcrtdthhvnndthrtndmdn — fhmslfbntcrtnnglgbhchh
 cdcrcrdthvnt.

That would be Jehovah's way of putting :—

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and made an—of himself by not creating a language by which he could record the event.

I ask any sane man whether this sort of thing is a written language at all. It may possibly be an aid to memory and a clue to conjecture ; but, even as such, the aid to memory

* ha-arets ve-eth hasshamayim eth elohim bara Bereshith
 the earth and it the heavens them gods created In the beginning
 (Read from right to left.)

must be of the feeblest order, and the clue to conjecture vague and speculative beyond expression. And this is the manner in which "the very word of very God" was written, and in this state it remained, more or less, for over a thousand years after Hebrew had ceased to be a living language, even if we concede the absurd point urged by some theologians, that Hebrew ceased to be the language of the people, not in the days of Ezra, but in the time of Christ. Dupin, just by way of illustrating how precisely and accurately God's own holy word was understood, mentions that the translators of the Septuagint rendered a certain word *chimney* which Theodotius, in his version, rendered *locusts*! God, of course, meant either *locusts* or *chimney*—or something else. The Bible is inspired, every word and every letter; and, really, the difference between "locusts" and a "chimney" is so trifling "in the eyes of him with whom we have to do" that it is very wrong of us poor ignorant laymen not to believe all that our pastors and masters tell us, and be ready to die for the Bible, "the source of England's greatness," knowing little of what is in it, and still less of how it came there.

The high priests of the Christian Church—men of intellect and learning—know all that I here adduce, and much more of the same character; but the ordinary little sermon-spinner knows as little of it as do the devout ignoramuses who follow him into such places as Parker's gospel huxter-shop, or into Spurgeon's tabernacle of shallow and solemn buffoonery. The ignorance of the small half-educated hedge-priest keeps him honest: he believes the nonsense he preaches; his abler neighbour indulges in his enlightenment at the expense of his honesty. He has learnt to be a priest, and he can be nothing else. He cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed; so he goes on in his vocation of parson-craft, committing himself as little as possible to concrete dogma, and thanking his stars that the damning admissions of the Church's ablest men are contained in erudite and expensive works, altogether out of the reach of the vulgar.



There is no fiction that the Protestant parsons would like to be so unequivocally accepted as fact as that the Bible is the correct and indisputable word of God; and

yet all the fairly-educated among them know full well that, as Dupin alleges, "It is mere superstition to assert, as some authors do, that the Hebrew text which we have at present is not corrupted in any place, and that there is no error, nor anything left out ; and that we must indispensably accept of it as correct on all occasions. This is not only to speak against all evidence and contrary to all probability, but we have excellent proof to the contrary. For, in the first place, there have been differences between the oldest of the Hebrew copies, which the Masorites have observed by that which they called *Keri* and *Ketib* ; and, putting one of the readings of the text in the text and the other in the margin, we have the different readings of the Jews of the East and the Jews of the West—of the Ben-Ascher and Ben-Naphtali ; and the MS. copies of the Bible do not always agree."

But this sort of thing is among the trade secrets of the parsons, and you may no more expect them to admit them from the pulpit to their credulous and uninquiring dupes than you may expect an interested and unscrupulous draper to stand in front of his shop and shout, "My shelves are laden with shoddy and rubbish !" when, by holding his peace, he might sell his shoddy and rubbish as, and at the price of, excellent broadcloth.

CHAPTER VI.

"Inspired" Bumpkins—Why not "Inspire" the Philosophers of Greece and Rome?—The Unlearned Entirely at the Mercy of the Learned—A Specimen from the Writings of the Holy Ghost—No one Language can be Translated with exact Equivalency into any Other—800,000 Various Readings Admitted—The Potency of a Single Gospel-Grinder—Testimony of the Rev. Dr. Irons—Mental Thimble-Rigging.

Now that we have seen a *fac-simile* of the Holy Ghost's handwriting, let us consider for a moment the action of his inspiration upon those he inspired. I question whether the majority of those he employed to write gospels that we might be "saved" knew a  from a bull's foot, or a  from a lamb's tail. There are few among us who could set down a hind like Elijah or an eel-fisher like John, who knew as much about handwriting, presumably, as a pig does about the binomial theorem, and "inspire" them to write books that every man of us who will put ourselves to the trouble of reading said books and believing in them might have a harp, a crown, and a pair of wings. For those who do not read the Ghost's books, or, reading them, venture to criticise them, there was once an uncomfortably hot hell; but, through lack of faith and brimstone, that has now subsided into a quiet, cool *sheol*, for which ever blessed be the name of the Lord.

Just imagine to yourself (if, indeed, it be not sacrilege to permit yourself to imagine an incident so sacred) the Ghost feeling himself in the throes of literary composition. He is possessed with an overwhelming anxiety that every soul of us should get to heaven, and he yearns and burns to write us a guide-book from earth

to that locality. He does not go to glorious Greece, with her learning and renown—to the “land of lost gods and god-like men;” he does not go to Rome, where, over the forum, the eloquent air “breathes, burns, of Cicero,” and whence the Roman tongue and the Roman sword could have carried a knowledge of his writings to every realm over which the Roman Eagles flew. No, the Ghost recognised that he would have no chance in India, with her learning and civilisation stretching far out into the measureless night of antiquity; no chance in studious Egypt, with her hieroglyphics and esoterics and mystery; no chance on the banks of the Ilyssus, where Genius had touched the marble into rapture, and the thought of Plato had climbed on its ladder of stars to the immortal gods; no chance by the Tiber, whose temples were sublime with the scholar’s lore, whose breezes were aflame with the poet’s song, and where the cohorts of the legion crashed and thundered down the stately street. None of these were adapted to the requirements of the Ghost and his bookwriting. He was God; but, by the Ganges, the Nile, the Ægean Gulf, and the Tiber, there were *Men* wiser and nobler than he. So he took to a wretched out-of-the-way ditch called the Jordan, to a riddlings-of-creation little patch of ground, of the very existence of which hardly anybody had heard. And, instead of availing himself of the Titanic mind-force of a Plato or the volcanic passion-burst of a Sappho, he set himself down in an unheard-of Galilee village, and commenced to operate upon bumpkins.

To a layman like myself, who has not been taken into the literary confidence of the Trinity, it is exceedingly difficult to understand what assistance to the Ghost “unlearned and ignorant men” could possibly be. Why did he use them? Were they not an obstruction, rather than a service to him? Could he not have managed to write his two contradictory genealogical tables, for instance, as well without “Matthew” and “Luke” as with them? Could the Holy Ghost not express his priceless treasures of literature except through the medium of an automatically-scrawling yokel? The father, at Sinai, wrote with his finger; could not the paraclete, at Jerusalem, have written with his toe? This would have allowed maunder-

ing Saul of Tarsus, mad John of Patmos, and the rest of them to have devoted their attention to mundane affairs. Was a man much use for making tents or hawking fish after the Holy Ghost had used him as a sort of treadle printing-machine? From my studies in esoteric divinity, I infer that "inspiration" was a sort of cross between a galvanic shock and *delirium tremens*. Why was a yokel used in preference to, say, a he-goat or a pump? A pen could have been fastened to the goat's horns, and, on "inspiration" being turned on, he could have produced "The Gospel of St. Capricornus;" or the pen could have been fixed to the pump-handle, and, under a good strong current of "inspiration" could have been produced "The Gospel According to Pump." It is clear that the Ghost, when writing, cannot write directly, but requires some sort of medium or other; and, after all, it is rather fortunate he used dolts rather than any other kind of rubbish. I, too, if I were in the Ghost's shoes, and found I must use some worthless thing or other to make my writings legible, should use the ordinary brainless *homunculus*, rather than run the risk of maiming a respectable he-goat or injuring the village pump by using them for my inspirational experiments.

To know what the Ghost wrote, the unlearned are entirely at the mercy of the learned, and the learned themselves are notorious for their disagreement as to what the Holy Dove really wished to be at when cooing the Bible to mankind. Hebrew, the language in which the Holy Dove cooed, and which was, at best, a language suited only to a dove or a savage, has been dead for about two thousand four hundred years; for we find that, when the Hebrew Scriptures were read out to the people in the days of Nehemiah, those who read had to "give the sense, and cause them to understand the reading."* During the captivity the Hebrews had forgotten, or had probably been prescribed the use of, their own language, and, as slaves, they had no doubt picked up the *patois* of Chaldea.

Just to give the English reader some faint idea of the infinite and tender mercies of Jehovah in sending his

* Nehemiah viii. 8.

own Ghost, in whom he was well pleased, to write a Bible, I will quote here the first seven verses of Genesis in Hebrew, using, however, the Roman characters:—

BRASHYTHBRAALHYMATHHSHMYMVATHHARTSVHARTSH
YTHHTH HVVBHVCHSHKGNLPNYTHHVMVRVCHALHYMMRC
HPHTHGNLPNYHMYMVYAMRALHYMYHVAVRVYHYAVRVYRA
ALHYMATHHAVRKYTVBVYBRLALHYMBYNHAVRVBYNHCHSH
KYYKRAALHYMLAVRYMVLC HSHKKRALYLVYIYNGBVYH
YBKRYVMACHDVYAMRALHYMYHYRKYGNBTHRKHYMVYHY
MBDYLBYNMYMLMYMVYGNSHALHYMATHHRKYGNVYBDBY
NHMYMASHRMTCHTHLRKYGNVBYNHMYMASHRMGNLLRKYG
NVYHYKN.

It was so considerate of Jehovah to send his Ghost to furnish us with the foregoing beautiful sentences! The only thing to be regretted is that, since he sent the Ghost to write them, he did not come down himself to translate them. But his ways are not as our ways (for which let us be truly thankful), and he has vouchsafed unto us a composition without beginning of words or end of sentences, for which blessed be his holy name. As far back as the days of Nehemiah, as we have seen, the very Jews themselves do not seem to have been able to make head or tail of the language in which the Ghost had written, and only the learned rabbis, who, on the subject, peradventure, knew very little more than the vulgar, pretended to translate and expound.

Strictly speaking, no one language can be translated into any other. A language is not merely a vocabulary of verbal counters with their exact equivalents in other languages; it is a matrix in which may be found the features and lineaments of the national life. I appeal to those who know the Classics best; and I make bold to ask the man who is deeply learned in Latin and who is a master of English if he ever, in all his life, saw a rendering out of the one language into the other which was, in all respects, satisfactory. This can be predicated of Latin, a language known by thousands and well known by tens. Then what of this shepherd's jargon, Hebrew, that, properly speaking, in its written form, seems never to have been a language at all, but only a number of clumsy and un-

gainly black-snails, intended to assist the memory of a rude and all but illiterate people?

And it is, perhaps, doubtful whether Hebrew, as written, tended more to lead than to mislead. It was never pretended that the language (by courtesy), in its literary form, indicated anything special and in particular. No MS. was of any use apart from the *traditional* reading. In other words, the MS. contained only signs intended to assist the memory of the reader. Where the traditional reading was forgotten, and the meaning of any particular word or sentence was sought to be extracted from the writing itself, the most inextricable contradiction and confusion were likely to ensue. As is well known, one set of translators opined that a certain word meant *locusts*, while another set, equally learned, contended that it meant *chimney*! True, the Masoretic points to some extent fix the meanings of particular word-signs; but, then, these points, as I have indicated, are comparatively modern, and were arbitrarily fixed long after Hebrew had ceased to be a living language, and after the traditional reading of its ancient Scriptures had been to a great extent, or altogether, forgotten.

And, mark you, even granted that the original consonant characters of the Hebrew Scriptures were "inspired," the wildest bibliolater has never urged that the Masoretic points were "inspired," and without these points you may just as well try to read logarithms off the sea sands, scrawled over by the toes of sea-gulls, as read any one thing in particular out of the ancient unvowelled Hebrew. Even with the Masorah the text is notoriously unsatisfactory. Sir William Drummond writes: "I have wholly discarded the Masoretic points. I believe there are few Hebraists who will think of undertaking to defend the Masorah." And again: "I have seldom seen two Hebraists who read and who translated two chapters alike throughout the whole Scriptures."* The learned Christian apologist, Professor Moses Stuart, avows: "In the Hebrew MSS. that have been examined, some *eight hundred thousand* various readings actually occur as to the Hebrew consonants. How many as to the vowel-points and accents no man knows."

* "Œdipus Judaicus," xvii., xviii.

It is clear to the meanest capacity that the Ghost wrote in a language which was no language, but in an indefinite jargon of which the unlearned know nothing, and which no two learned human beings translate the same way. And yet this Scripture is "the very word of very God," and we have to believe in it under the penalty of being damned. For this and all his other tender mercies, glory be to God in the highest !

All that is sweet and beautiful and elevating in life is due to Christianity. Every preacher whines that, and every baby knows it. But for the creed of the manger, our deportment would be that of bears and our morals those of goats—vestalities would be nowhere and bestiality everywhere : we should hunt in vain over all the shores of the world for one footprint of Rhea ; but, on the world's every couch, we could find Priapus. Tarquin, from his throne, could scan the globe from horizon to horizon, and see Phryne amid red wine and lawless orgie, and find Lucretia nowhere but in the grave. But blessed be God that he has dowered us with a huge bundle of inspired contradictions which has purified the world.

We are, of course, stiff-necked ; we have gone away backward, and have all deserved "God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." But a really effective gospel-grinder, standing up on his hind-legs in a ranting-box well-varnished, and telling us forever and forever how Jehovah kicked Adam out of Paradise for eating an apple, and how Jehovah's son, who was at the same time Jehovah's self, got nailed to a stick, is sufficient to keep us pure and holy and divorced from the world, the flesh, and the devil. If we only genuflect properly and howl "Amen," one professional gospel-grinder will be sufficient to "save" about 700 of us from being pickled in brimstone, and from being gnawed by a worm of considerable length, and which no vermin-powder will destroy.

If you are determined to *believe* in the Scriptures, leave their history and all inquiries as to how they originated and how they have been preserved, severely alone. *Faith* can flourish and triumph only where *Ignorance* is cultivated as a virtue. Clothe yourself with prejudice as with a garment, and array yourself in bigotry as with

raiment, and obstinately refuse to investigate and to judge, and you may be able to believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God. But, by this course, and by no other course, can you possibly so believe. Intelligent Christians themselves are as fully aware of this as I am; and, occasionally, they express their conviction on this point almost as emphatically as I do. Writing with an emphasis which I could not surpass, even if I tried, and powerfully recapitulating and epitomising much that I have written, the Rev. Dr. Irons, formerly a prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral, furnishes us with the following candid but damnatory passage as regards the reliability of the "Word of God."

"We may concede 'that the very copy of the Pentateuch, written by Moses throughout, with National Hymns, and some of the Psalms, and some pieces of history gradually appended, existed for ages in Israel;' but the Sacred Autograph escapes us at last. Or, if the 'Book of Jasher,' for instance, became the standard copy of 'the Scriptures' thus composed—did it contain a transcript of the Divine Writing once made in Horeb? And was that Divine Writing lost altogether after the Captivity? Having existed for 500 years, from Moses to Solomon—and 350 more from Solomon to Hilkiah—and then 150 years more to Ezra—very little noticed in all those ages, so far as the record states—was it really turned into one uniform shape—Chaldee letters, without the written points—with only unwritten 'Masora' to fix its meaning? To conceive of this as 'Revelation for every man's own verifying faculty to judge of'—seems to require credulity more amazing than we can describe.

"We waive, for the present, the literary examination of the contents, and the internal character of any of the Sacred Books. The mere identification of the 'documents,' as such, presents such crushing difficulties to the independent inquirer, 'freely handling Revelation for himself,' that we do not hesitate to say that any reasonable being who would accept the Scriptures at all *must* take them on some other ground than that which 'identifies the written word with God's Revelation.' Granting the Hebrew Bible a safe transit from the Mediæval schools of Toledo back to the best manuscripts

of Bagdat ; granting that the Jewish Masoretic points (whenever invented) kept all the traditional sense handed down from Moses ; granting that the earliest Jewish records (the best parts of the Mishna or the Targums) give the scholar ground for supporting a true text, till we reach Josephus and Philo, and the Septuagint ; and granting that some parts of the Targums may, though unwritten, have been as old as Ezra ; yet, if the reproduction of the whole ancient Scriptures, in a new character, interpreted then by an unwritten 'Masora,' be what we come to in Ezra's time, and the documents of the thousand years before all vanish before investigation, it is on the gigantic gifts and inspirations of the transcribers in Ezra's day that we are really depending—gifts and inspiration which yet are a mere hypothesis, of which the possessors tell us no single word ! And before Ezra's day, we are thus owning, unmistakably, that the literary history of the Old Testament is lost ! Let all those who would identify this with God's entire revelation, see to what they have brought us."*

He that hath ears to hear let him hear. Yet, such is the mystery of godliness, Dr. Irons did not consider the foregoing expression of opinion in regard to God's Book inconsistent with his being God's servant and prebendary of St. Paul's. So much has this baleful flagitiousness of teaching for many centuries that Faith is superior to and independent of Reason done to dwarf and distort the mental and moral perceptions of the noblest and ablest among us ! Theology has made us such adepts with the loaded dice of quibble and paradox that able and honest men like Colenso, Irons, and Giles experience no difficulty in reconciling their appalling heresies with the retention of their "living." It is natural enough for a student who has been trained in the atmosphere of mental thimble-rigging, which a theological training implies, to work his cerebration so that it arrives inevitably at the result that he is still morally justified in taking the Lord's wages for the planting of weeds in the Lord's vineyard. Now, all except the contemptible residuum of the Lord's own empty pates—little creatures of the Spurgeon, Booth,

* "The Bible and its Interpreters," pp. 38-40.

and Moody order—really stand faithfully by the Lord's mildewed and horrible vines. For them, the book of Historical Criticism has never been opened. I pity their honest but criminal ignorance, and I grieve at the unconscious moral disingenuousness of the men who are immeasurably their superiors in intellect and learning.

CHAPTER VII.

Palimpsests—Asses, etc., with Four Hides—Specimen of a Palimpsest—Christianity Charged with the Loss of Certain Greek and Roman Classics—Diodorus Siculus Lost that we might have an Account of the Virgin Mary's Milk—Divine Fiddle-Faddling.

"THE costliness of writing materials gave rise to a peculiar usage. From the leaves of an ancient work the original writing was erased, more or less effectively. They were then employed as the material for another work, the latter being written over the former. Such MSS. are called *palimpsests*,—'written again' after erasure. The original writing, which is often the sacred text, can, in general, be deciphered, especially by the aid of certain chemical applications. Some of our most precious MSS. are of this character."* After all the bother he put the Holy Ghost to in begetting a son and then writing four different and conflicting accounts of his life, the Lord allowed these accounts to be rubbed off the sheep-skin till portions of them cannot be read except with great difficulty, and certain of them cannot be read at all. To be able to read what the Lord has written the devout have now to resort to chemistry, a science which, for ages, the Church banned and persecuted and abhorred. Of old it was, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; now it is, Work out your salvation with fear and chemistry.

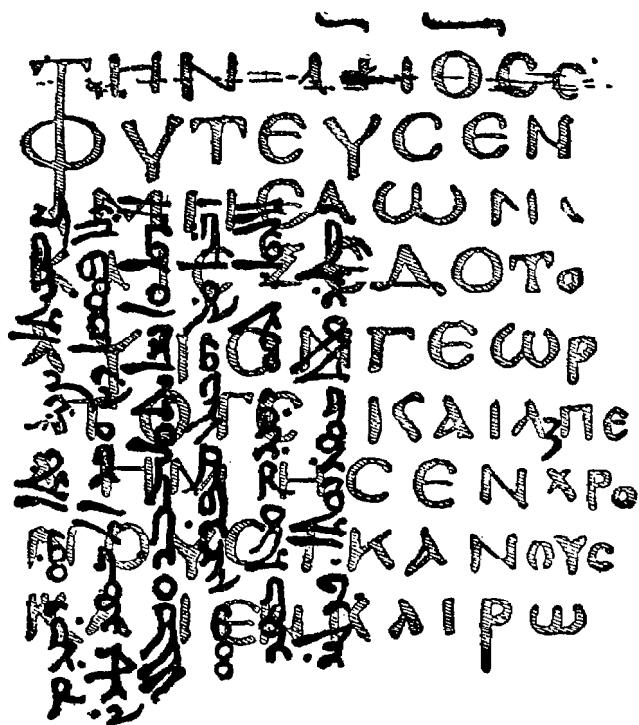
The saints whom God appointed to preserve and perpetuate his volume may have been rich in grace, but they were poor in pence. To have preserved and transmitted his book so that we might have thoroughly

* Barrow's "Introduction to the Study of the Bible," p. 29.

depended upon it, and have found "salvation" in it quite easily and with flying colours, he should have contrived to make *parchment* much cheaper than it was in the days of the copying saints. In his wisdom and omnipotence he might have accomplished this by giving each calf and each sheep, say, *four* skins, instead of only one. Skin No. 1 might have been flayed off, and the gospel of Matthew written upon it. This executed, the sheep could have been brought in from the green pastures and still waters and persuaded with a knife to give skin No. 2, that on it might be transcribed the gospel of Mark; and so on till the fully transcribed gospels of Luke and John had accomplished our skinny salvation. The ass, too, might have been enticed to give up his pachydermatous envelope to the sacred purpose of gospel writing. The ass yielding up his hide for such a purpose would have had something peculiarly graceful and appropriate in it.

Jehovah, very likely, sees all this now as clearly as I do, and I will not be so ungracious as to insist upon giving him advice after the event. All I say is that, if he had been graciously pleased to make parchment cheaper, we should have had more copies than we have of his divine and exceedingly correct Word, and several of the scraps and tatters upon which depends "England's greatness" would have been much more legible and could have been deciphered with a probability more closely approaching certainty. Parchment was so dear and scarce that skins upon which gospels had been written by the saints had matter which was certainly not gospel scrawled over them by persons who were certainly not saints. To give the reader not versed in textual criticism some idea of what I mean, I subjoin a *fac simile* of a fragmentary MS.* of the sixth century, and which is to be seen in the British Museum :—

* Part of Luke xx. 9, 10: "A certain man planted a vineyard and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season." The faint and half-erased gospel is partially covered with Syrian writing of the ninth or tenth century.



I could readily enough forgive those who scrubbed out the "lively oracles" in order to write in their place higher-class compositions than those of Bath-Kol; but I extend little mercy to the memory of those who erased the writings of Greek or Roman John Smith in order to make room for the crudities, silly fables, and mendacious puerilities of the Hebrew Jehovah. "Since the twelfth century the Greeks, sunk in ignorance, took it into their heads to erase the writings of old parchment MSS. and to write ecclesiastical treatises in them; and thus, to the unspeakable detriment of the republic of letters, such authors as Polybius, Dio, Diodorous Siculus, and some

others, who are quite lost, were metamorphosed into prayer-books and homilies." *

However gratifying this may be to an illiterate saint, it is a fact replete with humiliation, regret, and pain to every scholar and votary of polite learning. None except the most brainless of the elect can rejoice that, instead of the lost books of Livy, we have a foolish prayer to some stupid saint and a platitudinarian homily by some canonised blackguard. To none except the most fanatical "followers of the Lamb" can it be anything else than a subject for regret that, instead of the works of Polybius, we have an account of the miracles that were worked by the many heads of John the Baptist that were possessed by different abbeys. To all except the truly devout it must be a shameful admission that, in place of the writings of Dio and Diodorus Siculus, we have accounts of the different bottles of the Virgin Mary's milk, of the casket that contained her chemise, of that inestimable relic a finger of the Holy Ghost, of Christ's tooth which was preserved in the monastery of St. Medard, and the navel-string of his birth, and even the prepuce of his circumcision, which were duly preserved and venerated. It does not tend to reconcile the scholar to the Galilean, this horrid Christian babblement about prayers and homilies and heads and milk and chemises and teeth and navel-strings and prepuces, instead of Livy and Diodorus Siculus, and other irretrievably-lost treasures of the classics of poetic Greece and conquering Rome.

I accuse the "Holy Scriptures," not only of a perversion and waste of good brains, but of wasting the time of those who had no brains, and who might, instead of making the following tables, have been profitably employed in some honest calling like sweeping the street, feeding hogs, or driving a jack-ass. Here is a specimen of the kind of work they executed instead :—

* Jortin's "Ecclesiastical History," vol. iii. pp. 324-5, quoting from Montfaucon, "Mem. de l'Acad.," ix. 325.

א	Aleph occurs in the Hebrew Bible	42,377	times.
ב	Beth	38,218	„
ג	Gimel	29,537	„
ד	Daleth	32,530	„
ה	He	47,554	„
ו	Vau	76,922	„
ז	Zain	22,867	„
ח	Cheth	23,447	„
ט	Teth	11,052	„
י	Yod	66,420	„
כ	Caph	48,253	„
ל	Lamed	41,517	„
מ	Mem	77,778	„
נ	Nun	41,696	„
ס	Samech	13,580	„
ע	Ain	20,175	„
פ	Pe	22,725	„
צ	Tsaddi	21,882	„
ק	Koph	22,972	„
ר	Resh	22,147	„
ש	Shin	32,148	„
ת	Tau	59,343	„

Books in the O. T.	39	In the N. T.	27	Total	66
Chapters	929	„	260	„	1,189
Verses	23,214	„	7,959	„	31,173
Words	592,439	„	181,253	„	773,692
Letters	2,728,800	„	838,380	„	3,567,180

Apocrypha.

Chapters	...	...	...	183
Verses	...	...	...	6,081
Words	...	...	...	252,185

Old Testament.

The middle book is Proverbs.

The middle chapter is Job xxix.

The middle verse is 2 Chronicles, xx. chapter, between verses 17 and 18.

The least verse is 1 Chronicles i. 25.

New Testament.

The middle book is 2 Thessalonians.

The middle chapter is between Romans xiii. and xiv.

The middle verse is Acts xvii. 17.

The least verse is John xi. 35.

Ezra vii. 21 has all the letters in the alphabet, except j.

2 Kings xix. and Isaiah xxxvii. are alike.

The word *and* occurs in the Old Testament 35,543 times.

The same word occurs in the New Testament 10,684 times.

The word *Jehovah* occurs 6,855 times.

Holy creatures, with their upper story untenanted, actually spent so many hours a day for years in divine fiddle-faddling like the above. Great shall be their reward in heaven. They have established a claim to aspire to the dignity of brushing the boots of the Holy Ghost, who, by-the-by, may have feet for boots, seeing that he must have hands, one of his fingers having been for long preserved in a church in Jerusalem. A dove with boots and fingers would have been a find for Barnum. "Great is the mystery of godliness!"

CHAPTER VIII.*

*Our Earliest Hebrew Text more than 1,000 Years
more recent than the Time of Moses—800 Years to
Decipher God's Book—"In Toby" or "Tabby"
—"Bet, Cheat"—In what Language did Moses
Write?*

It will be right to premise that the date usually given of Moses is B.C. 1567-1447; but the very commencement of our knowledge of the history of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament does not run further back than B.C. 300, some 1,150 years after the Pentateuch is said to have been written. This date, from the present time, would carry us back into the Heptarchy, for it was a century after such a period (within a year or two) that Egbert began his reign (A.D. 827).

We are, therefore, to suppose that several books written during the Heptarchy have now for the first time come to light, and that scholars for the next 800 years are to study these books in order to make them out; and that will give the reader an idea of the first period of our knowledge of the Biblical Hebrew (B.C. 300 to A.D. 500). Before that period our knowledge about the Hebrew language is a dead blank. The next period is from A.D. 500 to the eleventh century, when efforts were made by the "Lords of the Masora" to vivify the dry bones of the previous period by the introduction of sonants, or vowel points, written under the consonantal words, whereby

NTBGNGDCRTDTHVNSNDTRT+

became

NTBGNGDCRTDTHVNSNDTRT

i e e i i o e a e e e a e a c e a

* This chapter is furnished by my colleague, Julian.

† Of course, the words selected are: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Now, several of the Hebrew letters are so much alike that it is well nigh impossible to distinguish between them in writing. For example, *g* and *n*; *b* and *c*; *v*, *r*, and *z*; *h* and *ch*, etc. So the first thing the "Lords of the Masora" had to determine on was the dubious letters; and the next thing would be how many letters were to be sorted together to make a word.

As three letters for the most part go together in Hebrew, they would first try NTB. *Question the First*: Is the first letter N or G? and is the third letter B or C? Suppose, first, the letters to be NTB; *query*, do they stand for "In Toby," or "On Toby," or "Tabby"? These being rejected, try NT without B. Do NT stand for *ant*, *not*, *nul*, or *nit*? If not, do they stand for *into unto*, or *on it*? All these suggestions being rejected, a happy inspiration determines that NT stand for *In the* between which and "On Toby" is a great difference without doubt. So, having determined the force of the first two letters, the "Lords of the Masora" clinched them by writing a little *i* underneath the N, and a little *e* underneath the T. In a similar way they go through the other nineteen letters.

Of course, if N is a blunder for G, or B for C, a host of other doubts must arise. Thus GB or NC may be Gob, Gib, Nice, Inch, Unuch, and so on; the adoption of any one of which suggestions would materially alter the sense; and we are not at all surprised that it took 800 years to fix the veritable words of the Old Testament by such an exhaustive process as this, and that, after all, Aaron Ben Asher's Western version does not agree with Jacob Ben Naphthali's Eastern Version. Let us take a very simple English example:—

BTCHTHRKNDNDTR. This may stand for "Bet, cheat; hearken, do no D.T.R. (*i.e.*, dirty work; " or it may stand for "Bet, O e' Achoth, erk-in d'andt rûe;" (O Immortal Bacchus, repent thy malice, hide it in the ark of Nemesis*); or it may stand simply for, "Be to each other kind and true." As a "Lord of the

* Achoth—*i.e.*, Bacchus; Bet—*i.e.*, repent; e' for ece—*i.e.*, immortal; erk-in *i.e.*, in the ark; rûe *i.e.*, Nemesis; d'—*i.e.*, of; andt—*i.e.*, malice, from *andra*, malice (English before the conquest, generally called Anglo-Saxon).

Masora," I am inclined to the second reading as the best one, "Bet, O e' Achoth, erk-in d'and't rûe. O Immortal Achoth [or Bacchus], repent thy malice, [hide it] in-the-ark of Nemesis." There is something highly poetical in this rendering, and, we must remember, it would carry us back a good thousand years or more. I am frank to admit that "Bet, cheat; hearken, do no dirty work," is a fine moral sentiment; but D.T.R. seems somewhat forced, although we have the high authority of Tusser, "Ill husband as soon hath a *toad* with an R."* "Be to each other kind and true" is rather goody, and not very original. It reminds one of "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another" (Eph. iv. 32); or Seneca's "*Clementium mansuetudinem, omnes boni præstabunt*;" or Cicero's "*Adhibeatis in homines misericordiam*," which, in a French equivalent, is "*à tout péché miséricorde*." I call that something musty, and will none of it; but "*Bet O è Achoth, erk-in d'and't rûe*," is far more original. It smacks of palæontological learning, and, therefore, approaches nearer to the unknown region of inspiration.

I have given this simple example to show what renderings may be attached to the same letters, and how different minds may see the same thing in different lights. There cannot be a doubt that many would prefer the reading, "Be to each other kind and true;" but I know a scholar, deeply read in half a dozen dead languages, who gives his voice for Bacchus, and such a master ought to outweigh a whole multitude of others. Tom Wright insists that the true reading is "Bet, cheat," and so on; but, then, Tom Wright is only Tom Wright, and not a "Lord of the Masora." Here, then, we must leave the matter *sub judice*, or refer it to Saladin, as our umpire, for his casting vote.

The third period of the Hebrew language is that between the eleventh and the middle of the eighteenth century, when such scholars as Maimonidès, Jarchi, Ebene Ezra, and Kimchi took refuge in Europe, and brought their critical learning to bear on the subject.

* "Suffer also this zeor, til the while I delue aboute it, and send toordis" [T,D, with an R]. Luke xiii. 8 (Wycliffe).

In A.D. 1477 the first Scriptural book in Hebrew was printed. This date, it will be seen, is about the same A.D. as the supposed "original text" by Moses was B.C. So it took above eighteen hundred years altogether from the "make up" to make out the Pentateuch, and to the present time much remains *in nubibus*.

The next question is naturally this: What language did Moses and his exile followers speak? Certainly not Hebrew. That is, not what we call Hebrew. The Mosaic Hebrew was no more like what we now call Hebrew than Pope's modernised Chaucer is like the original, or James's version of the Bible is like Wycliffe's or Tyndale's. As we have been obliged to re-translate our Bible several times to make it intelligible to subsequent ages, so the original Hebrew of "Moses" was re-translated over and over again to make it intelligible to the ever-varying character of the Israelitish vernacular tongue.

Abraham, as a native of Chaldea, spoke Old Chaldee; but the long settlement of the Israelites in Egypt could not fail to corrupt the language of the people, and in Moses's time the people must have spoken "pigeon Egyptian," as native Indians, connected with our own people, speak "pigeon English."

We are asked to believe that the jargon spoken by the Israelites in the Wilderness was identically the same as the Hebrew of Malachi 1000 years later. This, however, is such an outrage on common sense that it may be relegated to the ridiculous story about the Septuagint. No living language ever was fossilised, and the pigeon Egyptian of the Israelites would be specially subject to change. First, after their passage of the Jordan, it could not fail to be affected by the language of the Philistines, as the Saxon of the followers of Hengist and Horsa was affected by the British with whom they mixed, and the Norman of the Conquerors was affected by the natives, till Norman-French became merged into Saxon-English. Subsequently the Babylonish captivity must have introduced another change, and those who returned with Nehemiah must have spoken a language wholly unlike the Mosaic jargon.

If, therefore, Moses wrote the Pentateuch, he wrote it

in pigeon Egyptian ; and this bastard language, after the settlement in Palestine, must have been reduced to Chaldeo-Egypto-Syriac ; and, after the captivity, into Chaldeo-Egypto-Syriaco-Babyloniac ; and the Hebrew referred to in the New Testament must have been a still greater jargon.

Whatever the language of Moses might be, we are certain it was extinct about B.C. 500, and long before then it was quite obsolete.

CHAPTER IX.

The "Search" for "Eternal Life" — The "Search" Easier now than it Once was—The Parts of Scripture Most Intensely Inspired — A Short Cut to "Eternal Life"—The Lant Street Mechanic's Speech to Jehovah.

DID you ever try to find anything in particular in the Bible? Having searched, did you find it? If so, you need not despair of finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Anything like arrangement or method you must not for a moment expect from the Holy Ghost. You are to "Search the Scriptures" that you may obtain "eternal life" (who wants it?); and, if you search the Scriptures for "eternal life" or anything else, you have your work before you. Long before you have found "eternal life," if you devote yourself to the search with becoming zeal, forsaking the ways in which the world's bread is won, you will die of hunger. He who is anxious to have "eternal life" is advised to search for it among "the sons of Manasseh; of Machir, the family of the Machirites," and among the sons of Gilcad of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites; of Halek, the family of the Halekites; and of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; and of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaïtes; and of Hepher, the family of the Hepherites; and Zelophehad, the son of Hepher." He who can find "eternal life" by wading through endless catalogues of this sort of thing deserves "eternal life," and may he enjoy it. There are passages in the Bible that, keep out of "Bradshaw" (which may possibly also be a production of the Holy Ghost), are the most dry and uninteresting reading in the whole range of literature. But *All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for "instruction in righteousness." * So, for "instruction in righteousness," it is necessary for the Christian to know that "Asa begat Josaphat, and Josaphat begat Joram, and Joram begat Ozais, and Ozais begat Ezekias, and Ezekias begat Manasses, and Manasses begat Amon, and Amon begat Josias, and Josias begat Jechonias." Remember, "*all* Scripture," etc., and that, for "instruction in righteousness," it is essential to know that Jechonias begat Salathiel, and that Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

It is quite evident that to search the Scriptures for "eternal life" is no small matter. Still, it is much easier now than once it was. The process may now be compared to looking for a needle in a haystack; but formerly it was like searching for a needle in fifty haystacks; and I fear me much that the Christians of the first few centuries went straight to Tophet. When now you take it into your head that you should not mind having a try for "eternal life," the search is much easier than it was some six hundred years ago. Before that time the Bible had *neither chapters nor verses*. The Ghost just got hold of his different yokels and eel-fishers, turned on the "inspiration," and wrote his Bible straight ahead from right to left, without putting in a single vowel and without leaving any space between one word and another. It is doubtful if he allowed any space between one book and another. At all events, the books were not originally as they are now; but often two or three of them, in the divine wisdom, were knocked into one. When the Ghost got fairly on the war-trail he seems to have been unable to stop himself, and to have gone right ahead, winding Gospel after Gospel and Epistle after Epistle out of his intestines, just as I have seen woollen yarn wound upon a check reel. Those who found "eternal life" by searching in his book as it originally stood should have a rather longer "eternal life" than their neighbours, and be accounted among heaven's senior wranglers.

For the advantage of those to whom God has graciously given his book, but withheld from them the necessary leisure to read it *as a whole*, I will briefly indicate the

portions which are more intensely "inspired," and in which the reader who wants such a thing is most likely to find "eternal life." The Holy Wind, Ghost, Ghast, or Gust, was not always a tearing tempest. Sometimes it dwindled down till it was almost no wind at all, and passages, and even whole books, were written with just the merest *souffçon* of "inspiration." Such books may be skipped by the busy man who has to sell sanded sugar as well as work out his salvation. Be it my portentous and awful duty to draw his attention to the passages and books produced by the Ghost in full blow.

No; I hesitate. The responsibility would be unspeakable should I advise Mr John Smith which portions of Scripture to read for the everlasting well-being of his little soul and discover that I had advised him wrongly. I should not for the world that Mr John Smith came and laid his little soul at my door, remarking: "You see what a dose of burning I am in for through following your advice, and laying more stress upon the Epistle of Jude than upon the prophecies of Habakkuk." I cannot take the responsibility of declaring the passages upon which the Ghost blew a tearing tempest and the passages in which he subsided down to the kind of tiny puff that is emitted from the domestic bellows. Personally I will stand aside, and merely let the reader have an excerpt from that eminent theologian, Dr Samuel Clark, as to the Scriptural passages which owe most to divine pneumatics. Here goes Dr Samuel Clarke:—

That the Psalms were indicated by the Spirit of God appears by these places:—2 Samuel xxiii. 2; Mark xii. 36; Acts iv. 25, etc., i. 16; Hebrews iii. 7. And, then, many of them are *prophetical* of Christ, his kingdom, sufferings, etc., and of the calling of the Gentiles.

The writings of the prophets are most evidently of *divine inspiration*, for they are generally nothing but a *rehearsal* or *transcript* of what God spake to and by them, as appears by the several particulars.

Esay is nothing but a collection of his prophecies, and so all the very words of God, only with a part of *Hezekiah's History* (xxxvi. 39).

Jeremy and *Ezekiel* are mostly the same, too, interwoven with some historical passages of the affairs of the Church in those times, and some of their own personal concerns: wherein, though some

things were the product of their own spirits (as those passionate expressions Jeremiah xx. 14, etc.), yet the recording of them in Scripture was by the special direction of the Holy Ghost.

Daniel is a good part of it prophetical, and, therefore, must be of divine origin.

Hosea contains nothing but the words of God, except the account of his obedience to God's command (chap. i.).

Joel is all the words of God.

Amos the same, except a narrative of some visions (vii. 8, 9).

Obadiah only the words of God.

Jonah historical.

Micah the words of God mostly.

Nahum the same.

Habakkuk a kind of dialogue between God and the prophet (i. and ii.) and a prayer (iii.).

Zephaniah, all of it the words of God.

Haggai the same.

Zechariah consists mostly of visions concerning the state of the Church in those days.

Malachi, all of it the words of God.*

There, Smith! If, by-and-by, you find out that Joel is *not* "all the words of God," do not blame me; take your little soul and lay it at the door of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Clarke, one of your great divines.

But perhaps those who have to devote nearly every moment of their lives to maintaining their children, toiling for bread to nourish them and garments to cover them, may earnestly wish to consult me personally as to what *part* of the Scripture they can most easily dig "eternal life" out of. Well, my busy friends, you can find out what *part* of the Scripture is most important from the fact of Jehovah giving it *twice over, word for word*. I have already advised you that the xix. chapter or 2 Kings and the xxxvii. chapter of Isaiah are identical. This is evidently Jehovah's crack chapter, the one he prides himself upon, the one he recites to Sarah and the angels and the beatific beasts on his birthday and other occasions of high junketting in the kingdom of heaven.

These two chapters which are one chapter is the Liebig's extract of the writings of the Holy Ghost—is, in fact the Word of God in a nutshell. Any man with ten children, and only a jack-plane between him and starvation, and no time to work out his salvation among the

* "Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture," pp. 11-13.

3,567,180 letters of which the Holy Scriptures are composed, had better, to save time, devote himself to this chapter alone, and leave the reading of the remaining 1,188 chapters to those with fewer children and more leisure and money.

In the event of some very busy and much-childed mechanic not knowing how to put his case on the day when the sheep are to be separated from the goats, I hereby do him the service of presenting him with a copy of a brief address which he can deliver if he be challenged when about to step over the heavenly threshold :—"O Holy One of Israel, thou knowest that my wife, Kate, was a fruitful vine. Thou gavest me, O El Shaddai, a quiver full of arrows. Between us we brought up thirteen children to praise thee. Four of them thou hast taken to thyself; and, although I say it who should not say it, better angels never waved wing nor flew with more divine gyrations among the heavenly rafters. They had mortally fine voices; they were in the choir that sang to thy praise and glory in thy Bethel down in Lant Street, Borough. I think you will admit that few finer voices do the 'Holy, Holy, Holy!' or dash into the chorus of the Song of Moses and the Young Sheep.

"But to be brief. I was too busy making doors and laying floors to keep the children and myself out of the work'us to be able to get through that book of yours. To tell you the truth—I have been told you like the truth—the book is infernally dry, nearly as dry as 'Bradshaw's Railway Guide.' In fact, 'Bradshaw' and yourself write remarkably like each other. Are you related? In reading your rigmarole (pardon me!) I never could tell what you really meant to be at. I could make neither head nor tail of you; but, no doubt, when I get inside, before I have spent the half of eternity with you, I will have got into your ways and will understand every word you say.

"Well, neither having time nor brains to 'search' the *whole* 'Scriptures' for 'eternal life,' I took the advice of thy servant Saladin, and he directed me to concentrate my attention upon that portion of thy Holy Word which was most important—viz., that chapter which you considered of such immense significance that you gave it

twice over. Here I am—I know that chapter well. Examine me upon it. Rab-the-Ranter,* O Lord, is not the only Rab I ever knew. I am also acquainted with thy servant Rab Shakeh. I submit that I am well entitled to ‘eternal life,’ since, amid the harassments of poverty, toil, and a nagging wife, I have taken the pains to know that, according to thee, the Assyrians utterly destroyed Gozan and Haran and Rezep, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar, also the King of Hamath, the King of Arphad, the King of Sepharvaim, and Hena and Ivah. Where these places were and what sort of places they were, thou alone knowest, O Adonai.

“I have made my calling and my election sure by actually committing two verses of your favourite chapter to memory. Here is one: *‘Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.’* That is a very grand verse, O Lord! I do not pretend to great things, for all my righteousness is as filthy rags before thee; but, as to that hook-in-the-nose business, I think I might be of some assistance to thee. I can dress fly-hooks, O Lord, with the face of clay.

“To make perfectly sure of ‘eternal life’ I have, O Holy One of Israel, out of thy favourite chapter committed yet another verse to memory: *‘And it came to pass that night the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses’*” How surprised those Assyrians must have been when they got up in the morning and found ‘they were all dead corpses!’ You astonished them that time, Jehovah. Wouldn’t even *you* be astonished if you got up in the morning and found yourself a corpse? It is not on record what any dead Assyrian said; but a Cockney under the same circumstances would get up, rub his eyes, and ejaculate: ‘A say Bill, I’s *dead*!’ Tell the ole ‘oman I’ve snuffed it. The b—— worms are already a crawlin’ in my thunderin’

* See the Scottish song, “Maggie Lauder.”

liver, and I'se been a corpse for four bloomin' hours. Bury me decent like at Nun'ead, you ——.' I believe this story of yours, O Jehovah-jireth, and anybody who does you the honour to believe it has a right to be 'saved.' ”

This should fetch him.

CHAPTER X.

A Hiatus of over 2000 Years—No Allowance made for Change in the Language from the Date of Genesis to that of Malachi—The Septuagint and its Witnesses—Prodigies which would be Incredible but for the Evidence of such Witnesses.

WHEN modern men write they so fix and dispose their words that the words suggest the meaning. It was different, as I have pointed out, with the ancient Holy Ghost. He expected the reader to fix upon a meaning, and then make the words accommodate themselves to the meaning he desired them to convey. To give one simple example, ש, *sh* ; מ, *m* ; ר, *r* (read from left to right), might be *shemar*, he kept ; *shemor*, keep thou ; or *shomer*, keeping. The writings of the Holy Ghost, as I have insisted, are not particular as to trifles of that kind : "You pay your money and take your choice."

The Holy Ghost permitted his book to remain in this free-and-easy, anything-you-like condition for some twenty centuries, and it was not till between the sixth and twelfth centuries after Christ that he began to be a little more particular, and to raise the standard of examination for admission into the kingdom of heaven. By the tenth century he had completed the Masora, thereby making the meaning of his book more definite than it had ever been previously, although, even to this day, it is immeasurably the most indefinite book we have among us. First we have to purchase it, which incurs only a trifling expense ; but, next, we have to hire a holy man of God to explain it, and build him a huge house with a steeple in which to explain it ; for no ordinary kind of house is good enough to praise the Lord in for all "his tender mercies," including poverty, disease, war, and pestilence,

and, above all, this ever-blessed book which baffles our comprehension and threatens us with perdition.

Another peculiarity of this "source of England's greatness" is that, although it pretends to be so extremely ancient, there is not a single ancient copy of it in existence. "As to the age of Hebrew manuscripts, it is to be noticed that not many of them have come down to us from an earlier century than the twelfth."* Even the New Testament, which is comparatively a thing of yesterday, can lay claim to much older manuscripts than the Old Testament, certain of them belonging to a period as remote as the fifth, if not even the fourth, century. Portions of the Bible, at least, lay claim to having been written away back in the early morning of the world; and yet, by way of evidence of this claim, there is not a single manuscript in existence that is undoubtedly older than the days of William the Conqueror. It is generally conceded that the Masora was completed in the tenth century, and, as far as Biblical scholarship knows at present, there is not a single ante-Masoretic Hebrew manuscript of the Bible in existence. I forbear to comment on this fact; but it certainly suggests misgivings and opens up a wide and vague field of speculation for the Protestant bibliolator to wander in and to examine. According to the received chronology, Moses wrote the Pentateuch some 1451 years *before* Christ, and the oldest Hebrew manuscript dates more than 1000 years *after* Christ. There is a dead blank of *more than two thousand years* in which this book that we are to believe in or be damned has not a single vestige of a manuscript to prove that it was in existence. We have shown that no part of the Scripture, as we have it, can be older than the time of Ezra; but there is the strongest probability that it belongs to a much more recent period.

The entire evidence for the antiquity of the Bible is of the most contradictory and unsatisfactory nature that it is possible to imagine. The first part of it pretends to have been written by Moses some 1450 years before Christ, while Malachi, the last of the prophets, wrote so recently

* Dr Barrows' "Introduction to the Study of the Bible," page 133.

as about 397 years before Christ. Thus the writing of the Old Testament extended over a period of more than a thousand years. And yet, in the face of this, scholars bear testimony that there is hardly any difference between the Hebrew of the Pentateuch and the Hebrew of Malachi. How is this if more than a thousand years elapsed between the writing of Genesis and the writing of Malachi? How is it that there is really no difference between the Hebrew of the one and the Hebrew of the other? Was there ever, since the world began, a language that stood unaltered for a thousand years? What tyro in philology, acquainted with even the barest rudiments of the origin and growth of languages, will affirm that a living language ever stood still for even 300 years?

Let even him who is no philologist at all compare the English of to-day with the English of Shakespeare, and see whether they are by any means identical. Or let him go further back, and contrast the English of the *Times* newspaper with the English of Chaucer. It is not the half of a thousand years from now to Chaucer, and yet he cannot read Chaucer without a glossary. This will place him in the true light in which to see the notorious fact that there is no difference between the Hebrew of Genesis and the Hebrew of Malachi.

When this Book of God was written God only knows; but others besides God know that, as we have it, it is a recent production. The traditions on which it is based are ancient, and in support of these traditions there may have existed somewhere, and at some time, certain Accadian or Hebrew monuments or manuscripts. But where are they? The Protestant sneers at the Papist's infallible Pope; well may the Papist return the sneer with usury at the Protestant's infallible Book!

The Bible, as we have it—and even that is not quite as we have it—is upwards of a hundred and fifty years more recent than the time of Ezra. I refer to the Septuagint, produced about 280 years before Christ. Justin Martyr, who flourished about A.D. 166, is a great authority on the Septuagint Version, which was made some 300 and odd years before he was born! God always selects exceedingly likely persons to bear testimony to the historical facts connected with his Holy Word. His servant, Justin

Martyr, writing more than three centuries after the event, tells us all about it. The production of this Septuagint Version is even more wonderful than that by Ezra and his five scribes some 150 years previously. According to Martyr, seventy different men were shut up in seventy separate cells by King Ptolemy of Egypt, and ordered to translate the Bible without having any access to each other. When these seventy different translations were completed they were diligently compared with one another, and it was found that they agreed *verbatim et literatim*. Every word, every letter in the whole seventy translations was alike. This shows that our old friend, Bath-Kol, *alias* the Holy Ghost, must have kept dodging about among the seventy cells, by the gusts of his "rushing mighty wind" keeping up the exact uniformity. At least, this is the lesson that is evidently meant to be conveyed by this veracious episode.

Justin Martyr clinches the divine truth he communicates by assuring us that he had himself seen the seventy cells in which the seventy scribes had been confined while they were, under God's guidance, pegging away at "the lively oracles." He, moreover, informs us that it was Herod, King of the Jews, who sent these seventy holy scribes to Ptolemy. *Now, Ptolemy died three hundred years before Herod was born*; but trifles of this kind are as nothing to the Lord and his servants, especially when they have such important work on hand as producing or redacting a Bible.

This seventy-cell miracle is also testified to by Irenæus, the great and holy Irenæus, the father of all the Fathers. To show, in brief, to the non-patristic reader how profoundly this Father was versed in matters relating to the writings of the Holy Ghost, I make one short excerpt:—"It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four corners of the world in which we live, and four Catholic spirits, while the Church is scattered throughout the world, and the pillar and grounding of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life, it is fitting she should have four pillars. . . . He who was manifested to men has given us the Gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit. . . . For the cherubim, too,

were four-faced, and their faces were images of the dispensation of the Son of God."* Christian apologists make much of the fact that Irenæus is the earliest writer who mentions the four Gospels. They usually, however, forget to mention that, according to him, there are four Gospels because the earth has four corners, and because the cherubim—or heavenly hens—have four faces.

Just to show the peculiar qualifications and mental type of the saints of the Lord whom he wisely selects to bear testimony in regard to himself and his book, I may mention that, by "divine revelation," this Irenæus had put on record a prediction in regard to the Millennium. Vines, according to this saint, will be the leading vegetable of the Millennial era. He assures us that "the days will come in which there will grow vineyards, each having ten thousand vine-stocks, each stock having ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand shoots, each shoot ten thousand bunches, each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape squeezed shall yield twenty-five measures of wine; and when any of the saints go to pluck a bunch another bunch shall cry out, 'I am better; take me, and bless the Lord through me.'"

It was this same Irenæus, the Lord's saint, who assures us that, at the martyrdom of Polycarp, the flames refused to burn him, but harmlessly formed themselves into an arch over his head. Seeing this, the executioner thrust a sword into Polycarp's side, and, in drawing out the sword, a dove flew out of the wound, from which we may conclude that Polycarp had been so full of the Holy Ghost that he had become a sort of walking dovecote, with doves cooing on his diaphragm and nidifying on his duodenum. Following the dove out of the wound came a torrent of blood, which extinguished the fire. There was nothing but interment for Polycarp; cremation had no effect upon him. So much for the truthful but slightly hyperbolical Irenæus, whom the Lord has entrusted to tell us about that version of His Holy Word known as the Septuagint.

But that the Lord might not, by any means, leave him-

* "Irenæus," book iii. ch. xi. sec. 8.

self without a witness, he brings in his black* servant, Tertullian, to back up Justin Martyr and Irenæus. A very few words quoted from his divine pen will show how overwhelmingly weighty he is as a witness. "I maintain," writes he, "that the Son of God died. Well, that is wholly credible, because it is monstrously absurd. I maintain that, after being buried, he rose again; and that I take to be *absolutely true, because it is manifestly impossible!*" So much for our witnesses as to the why and wherefore of that version of God's own Holy Word known as the Septuagint. The evidence is, of course, of the most satisfactory nature. If Jehovah would not set it down against us as presumption, we should venture to congratulate him upon his selection of witnesses. They are adorned by all the indispensable graces of ignorance and credulity necessary to Bible-making and to taking a position as absolutely reliable witnesses for examination and cross-examination in this the nineteenth century. *Laus Deo.*

Well may the Rev. Prebendary Irons exclaim, "What is this Greek version, or Septuagint, as it is called? Who made it? From what originals was it made? And when? And why? And what is its present state?"†

It was well for the Lord that, in his own good time and way, he appointed these calm, discriminating saints, distinguished for sound judgment and the careful weighing of evidence, to bear testimony to sacred facts which bristle through his Holy Word, and which, being divine, could never have been credited by the carnal mind had they not been so inexpugnably attested by the veracious saints of the Lord. God the Father and God the Son are of the same age. Christ had no father at all proper, only a Ghost; while, to make up for this, Joseph the Carpenter had two fathers; Matthew mentions his father Jacob, while Luke refers to his other father, Heli. Ahaziah, however, beat even the Son of God at procreative legerdemain, and managed to be *two years older than his father?* All this we might have had some difficulty in understanding and believing if the volume

* Tertullian was a native of Africa.

† "The Bible and its Interpreters," p. 26.

‡ See 2 Chron. xxi. 20 and xxii. 2, from which it will be seen

in which we find it had not had credentials from the most holy and veracious Justin Martyr, who, with his own eyes, saw the seventy cells.

Although fathers were so plentiful that a journeyman carpenter like Joseph had two of them, the Lord, in his own blessed but mysterious way, made mothers alarmingly scarce. We find from a census taken at a particular period * that, making the usual allowance of five persons to each male over twenty, we have, roughly, 3,000,000 people in all. There were, we are assured, 22,273 first-born males: allow for the same number of first-born females, and we get a total of 44,546. If you divide the 3,000,000 by the number of mothers, you get a total of about *sixty-eight children for each mother*. To please the Lord and give him something to write about, the women of the house of Israel must, then, like rabbits, have brought forth litters of eight or ten at a time. Ahaziah was older than his father; Joseph had two fathers, and Jesus had none. There is evidently here some confusion in the matter of heredity. But that some confusion arose can hardly be wondered at. When every woman had to produce sixty-eight children to please the Lord her hands were quite full, and she had no time to be particular about such a trifling matter as fathers. In our carnal minds we might have felt disposed to be sceptical in regard to these pious feats in fecundity if the Septuagint had not been vouched for by the divine Irenæus, who attests to the flames going out on strike when asked to burn Polycarp, and to the pigeon flying out of that worthy's wounded side.

According to Christian statisticians, working upon the data given in Exodus, the lowest estimate of the numbers of the Israelites who left Egypt is 3,000,000. The Bible states that there were 600,000 fighting men, besides women and children, and men who were too old to fight. Besides, there were the flocks and herds which they took with them, which probably numbered 3,000,000 more, as they were a pastoral people. The Bible says they went

that Ahaziah's father was *forty* years old at his death, and Ahaziah succeeded him immediately upon the throne at the age of *forty-two*.

* See Exodus xxxviii. 26.

up "harnessed," which the marginal reading explains as meaning "five in a rank." Allowing only one square yard for each man and beast and picaninny, there would have been a procession over 681 miles long, all of which, we are solemnly assured, went out from Egypt in a single night without the departure being known to the Egyptians till the next morning. If the night in Egypt lasted ten hours, the Israelites must have travelled at the rate of over sixty-eight miles an hour, which is a good rate of speed even for a man with pretty long legs and arrayed in nothing save boots and a night shirt, and which is just a trifle too fast for a woman with sixty-eight children—one on her back, one in each hand, and one behind holding on by her skirts, the next holding on by that one's skirts, and so on, in a long, long line of some sixty or seventy, almost as far as the maternal eye could reach, and all tearing along out of Egypt at the rate of seventy miles an hour. But that the holy and voracious Tertulian had been associated with the book that records this break-neck race out of the land of the Pharaohs, we might possibly have been wicked enough to have called the whole affair in question. As it is, the truth of the statement is, of course, beyond cavil.

CHAPTER XI.

*The Kind of God Rejected and the Kind of God Wanted
—Reasons why God did not Produce a Better Book—
Domestic Complications and Infelicities in the Divine
Family Circle— God's Grandmother, St Ann— The
Virgin Mary.*

THIS kind of book-writing may be considered sufficiently sane to be creditable to the pen of the Jewish Jehovah; but it is not sane enough for any god that can have any homage of mine. THERE IS SOMETHING SOMEWHERE; but, in our vain attempt to grasp it, we dash our heads against the door-posts of Nescience till our brains reel, stunned and overwhelmed. Untrained thinking has no difficulty in formulating a god, or in excogitating fifty gods; but, to trained thinking, God persists in consciousness, but defies formulation. If it be beatitude to find, in some last analysis, rest for the sole of the mental foot, would to God that there were a God. If to have some point of absolute fixity be a blessing, it is better to have a vague, untrained mind that adores a deity evolved from its own crude chaos than to be possessed of an intellect virile and disciplined, and which, by its weight, crushes the pantheon to atoms.

I pass by the poor buffoon of a deity that, by his literary performances, makes certain Jewish women have litters of ten or twelve children at a time. This deity that makes a woman pregnant with ten or twelve children, and, having one on her back, one in her arms, and thirty or forty in a row behind, run out of Egypt, at the rate of about seventy miles an hour, may be a suitable enough sort of fetish for those who find life a pantomime or a burlesque; but he is not suitable for me, who find life a tragedy, solemn and earnest.

I am concerned about the God who could show me

the *nexus* between the subjective and the objective universe, and who, before he sets me the problem of proving that HE IS, would furnish me with the data to prove the fact of my own existence. Arrogant Ignorance knows much; but the principal knowledge of Knowledge is *to know that nothing can be known*. I am not concerned about the Lord who has in heaven beside him beasts with "eyes within;"* but I am concerned about the Lord who has placed me upon the earth here, not far from a marine fellow creature with 8,500 eyes on the outside of its shell.

"The Coat-of-Mail shellfish has its eyes not on its body, where we should naturally look for them, but *on its shell*. The surface of the shell is, in fact, full of eyes. They glisten at us like crystals, as, through the microscope, we view them in their calcareous setting. One might as soon expect to see eyes embedded in the back of the tortoise or turtle, or on the surface of one's finger-nail. The sight is so strange, and the discovery so new to science, as to lead us to a closer inspection. These eyes of the Coat-of-Mail shellfish are minute, highly-refracting, rounded bodies, for the most part *arranged in rows*. In one case there are twenty-four of such rows, with an average of fifteen eyes in each, so that there are in all 360 eyes. In another shell, of which the eyes are very small, the almost incredible number of 8,500 eyes can be counted. We are not wrong, therefore, in speaking of the 'myriad-eyed' Coat-of-Mail shell."† When I have solved earth, and this creature with "eyes without," I may have some time to spare for heaven and the beasts there with "eyes within."

Crediting him with only ordinary talents and a School Board education, the deity of the Jews should have produced a better book. There must be some reason, very real, but not very apparent, for his maundering imbecilities and slipshod blunders. After earnest but not prayerful study, I think I have discovered the reason of El Shaddai's literary aberrations. No man, and presumably no god, can produce a book that deserves to be read and to live unless he be free from carking cares, the fight for

* Rev. iv. 8.

† "Wonders of the Microscope."

bread and the mean little battle for boots. True, semi-immortal works have been produced by those with thread-bare garments and empty larders; but only when they have been dowered with the rare gift of complete self-absorption, and have been able to revel with kingly wealth in the dignity of their subject, utterly oblivious of common cares and domestic infelicities.

Now, El Shaddai may possibly not be gifted with the sublime self-absorption necessary to Bible-writing on severe and elevated lines. His domestic complications are, to put it mildly, *strange*. He had a son without having a wife, and this sort of thing alone entails, as a rule, an amount of worry and moral unrest. This worry and unrest is not likely to be minimised by the fact that the son of the author of the Bible is of the same age as himself, nor by the fact that this son had only a Ghost (a "Holy" one, however) for a mother, she being of the same age as the father and the son. And we can readily surmise that domestic acrimony in heaven became more acrimonious still when the son, apparently dissatisfied with having a mere ghost for a mother, selected a human mother for himself and actually condescended to get born in a stable. Talk of an earl's daughter running away with her father's groom!—what is that to Jehovah's son being born in a stable among asses and with a she-barber for a mother? * Under domestic humiliation like this, I question whether Milton himself could have written much better than El Shaddai has done.

This "born-again" craze of the son, and which he tried to ram down the throat of Nicodemus, introduced El Shaddai to a number of poor and rather vulgar relations. One mother-in-law is, as a rule, nearly enough to drive any writer crazy. But there were *two* ladies to whom were applied respectively the divinely sonorous titles, "grand-mother of God" and "mother-in-law of God." The former of these was St Ann, a widow of the name of Ann, the mother of the Mary who obliged the son by bearing him in the stable. The latter, the "mother-in-law of God," was also a widow. Her name was Paula. Besides being

* The Virgin Mary was a dresser of ladies' hair. See the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu.

a widow she was also a harlot, and, as his mistress, she travelled over the East with St Jerome, assisting him to spread the blessed Gospel in all purity. It was Jerome himself who gave her the name of "mother-in-law of God." This saintly man was marked out by divine providence to give God a mother-in-law (whom he made his own concubine), and the Church a new version of the Scriptures, which version the Council of Trent declared to be "the only authentic version, and the Church its only legitimate interpreter."

El Shaddai has, however, now lost his grandmother. She was abolished by Pope Clement XI.; and Nestorius very nearly succeeded in abolishing God's mother.* A Church Council could, if it liked, apparently kill off all the Almighty's poor relations in a single day and make him attend their funeral on the next. Be that as it may, from the days of Clement XI., for more than a century and a half now, the Lord has had no grandmother. This Lord is (or was) my "father which art in heaven." If he be my father, his grandmother, Ann, was, of course, my great-grandmother. Pope Clement XI. did away with my great-grandmother, and thereby left me a sort of orphan.

The two ladies, the grandmother and the mother-in-law, were bad enough, although not sufficient to account for all the Lord's twaddling and blundering in his *magnum opus*, known as "the Holy Scriptures;" but the "Virgin Mary" towered over all the other domestic plagues as the most impudent and offensive of his poor relations. She was not his aunt, she was not his grandmother, she was not his niece. Heaven only knows what relation she was to him. Consider, O reader, that you are father of a son; this son is not satisfied with the mother you selected for him, and resolves to be *born again*. This time he selects a mother for himself, a she-hairdresser, and is *born again*. What relation would this female barber be to you? She would be the same relation to you that the "Virgin Mary" is to Jehovah. How would you stand cheek from this person? How could you

* See Bower's "History of the Popes," vol. i. pp. 402-3. The reason assigned for the abolition of the grandmother was because she was *piarum aurium offensiva*.

write Bibles and make worlds if she were always setting herself up as if she were as big as you, or bigger, and getting churches built to her honour and prayers howled to her from the throats of millions? You are hard upon Jehovah for perpetrating this abortion of a world and this *olla podrida* of a Bible; but put yourself in his shoes. This "mother of God," as she is called, has long been a sort of pestiferous rival to the Almighty. The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) settled the point that she was "the mother of God." About the end of the sixth century and during the pontificate of Gregory the Great a portrait of her was carried through Rome by the monks, in the hope that a public procession of priests with the said portrait displayed at its head might stamp out a terrible dirt-pestilence with which the city was, at that time, being devastated. The painting was from the brush of St. Luke, who seems to have been an artist as well as a physician, a compounder of pills and a mixer of pigments, a phlebotomizer and a writer of gospels—a sort of ancient Galen and Sir Joshua Reynolds rolled into one. The displaying of Mary's portrait by such an eminent artist stopped the plague at once. An angel was seen standing on the Tower of Adrian sheathing a blood-dripping sword as an augury that the wrath of heaven had been appeased. And, far above the Tower of Adrian, with its angel and the bloody sword, from the blue vault of the empyrean a choir of angels pealed forth the anthem, "REGINA CÆLI." It was evident that all heaven was on tiptoe over Mary, and that Jehovah was being neglected. Pity the sorrows of a poor old deity!

St. Liguori-the-Nasty* is a very pious and an exceedingly eminent Christian, so eminent that it was announced by the Church as late as 1871 that "the fact of an opinion being found in his works is ample warrant for its adoption, without any need to weigh its reasons." This St. Liguori-the-Nasty is loud in the praise and exaltation of "the Virgin," and must have caused Jehovah much chagrin by his setting this Virgin on his back and over his head. Quoth Liguori: "Our Salvation is in the hands of Mary." "Whereas it is said of other saints

* See "The Confessional: An *Exposure*," by Saladin.

that they are with God, of Mary alone can it be affirmed that, not only is she not subject to the will of God, but that God is subject to her will." "All things, even God himself, are subservient to the empire of the Virgin." "By thy governance, most holy Virgin, endureth the world which *thou, with God, didst found from the beginning.*" So it is no use alleging that Jehovah had finished the Old Testament at least, and corrected the last proof-sheet, long before he had begun to be nagged and worried by his poor relations. It seems that the first time he heard of this Mary, the hair-dresser, was not on the occasion of her *accouchement* in the stable, but that she was an old colleague of his, and that she had actually lent him a hand in the creation of the world! I should like to see the author who could write a respectable Bible with a person of this kind constantly about him. No wonder that Jehovah made women pregnant with ten children at a time, and made them run at the terrible rate of seventy miles an hour. One woman, this irrepressible nuisance of a Mary, ever lording it over him, and getting the angels to sing the *Magnificat* and *Regina Cæli*, is enough to have made him such a misogynist as to have condemned women to be pregnant with a hundred children at a time and to run at the rate of a thousand miles an hour. There is no way for him to get rid of this terrible Mary. She has claims upon him; she helped him to create the world, and she obliged his son by becoming his mother.

Jehovah has had to bear a good many indignities in his day and say nothing. "It is related somewhere of Diogenes, the cynic, that, to show his contempt of sacrifice, he took a louse and cracked it upon the altar of Diana."* Jehovah has, in various ways, had to endure like demonstrations of contumelious contempt. In fact, by *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments men have been trying for centuries to prove his existence, as if a truth so obvious needed proof. But it was perilous in the extreme to affront his rival, Mary the hair-dresser. For instance: "René I., Duke of Lorraine and King of Naples, ordered a Jew to be punished in the most ter-

* Jortin, "Eccles. Hist.," vol. i. p. 195.

rible manner, for having uttered a blasphemy against the Holy Virgin. He condemned him to be skinned alive, and refused 20,000 florins, which were offered him by the brethren of the accused, for his pardon, notwithstanding the great need he had of money, and that his favourites and councillors, already won over by the Jews, advised him to accept the propositions and the price which accompanied them. 'How!' replied René to his courtiers; 'would you have me forget the injuries done to the mother of God, and allow the punishment to be redeemed for a handful of gold! God forbid that I should ever do such an offence to the honour of our house, and that it should be said that, during my reign, crime was ever left unpunished!' But the most infamous part of this affair is that the ministers or René found means for making their cupidity accord with the cruel firmness of their lord. They threatened the Jews with making them execute, themselves, the sentence pronounced against their brother, as a punishment for their insolent boldness that had induced them to offer money to the prince, and thus to divert him from the path of justice. To save themselves from the horrible task of skinning their brother alive, they were compelled to give to the courtiers the 20,000 florins offered for his life. According to the historian of Lorraine, Don Calmet, some noblemen in disguise, inspired no doubt by their devotion to the Holy Virgin, offered to perform, themselves, the task of skinning the Jew."* So much for saying that black were the white stockings of Mary the hair-dresser.

As far as Jehovah is concerned, Mary, it would seem, can be of advantage to him in one way only. There are, or were, so many bottles of her milk among the convents of Christendom that, undoubtedly, she must be mighty in the lactation line. She very likely supplies El Shaddai with milk, and saves him the expense of keeping an Alderney cow. But we may place as a set-off against this the report of a recent tourist in Italy, † who asserts

* "History of Religious and Political Persecutions," vol. i. p. 18.

† Writing in the *Boston Investigator*.

that 150 convents have each the head-dress of the Virgin. What a heavy sum she must have run up for bonnets! To suppose that a man in the position of Joseph the Carpenter paid for these bonnets is sheer nonsense. No doubt, when he discovered the extravagant character of "the Virgin," he inserted an advertisement in the *Jerusalem Gazette and Bethlehem Courier* :—

I, JOSEPH, CARPENTER AND WHEELWRIGHT, of Jezebel, St. Nazareth, do hereby GIVE NOTICE that, after the 13th of this month Nisan, I will not hold myself responsible for debts contracted by my wife MARY, usually nick-named "THE VIRGIN."

No doubt Jehovah had to put his hand deep into his breeches' pocket and pay for these bonnets. Pestered with his poor relations, and especially by his horrible Mary, all things considered, Jehovah has written remarkably well. I am free to admit it to be a wonderful thing, under the circumstances, that the Bible is such a sensible book as it is.

CHAPTER XII.

The Scriptures Modern—Father Hardouin's Contention—Alleged Forgery of the Greek and Roman Classics—Fallibility of Scholars and Experts—Instances of the Spurious Antique in Literature—150,000 Different Readings of Holy Writ—Christ quoted from a Spurious Version, the Septuagint.

PERADVENTURE, I am one of those Jehovah included when he declared, in the interests of eternal Truth, "I shall send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie." But, if he has, in his divine benevolence, sent me "strong delusions" so that I may "believe a lie," he will, of course, be satisfied with his own handiwork. I very strongly suspect that the tracts that his paid hirelings assure us are so holy and so ancient are neither holy nor ancient. The traditions upon which "Holy Writ" is based are ancient, and, at various times and in divers manners, scraps of traditional records may have been written on stone, papyrus wood, or parchment; but the Scriptures, as we have them, can establish no claim to antiquity. For mendacious century upon century, fraud upon fraud, and forgery upon forgery, were the order of the day. Every student of ecclesiastical history knows this, and the more searching his investigations, the stronger becomes his conviction that his barque of exploration is afloat on a very sea of Literary Fraud, in which even the works of the so-called giants and immortals of olden time are not islands and continents, but simply phantoms and mirages and forms of deceptive and impalpable mist.

Monkish forgery was so general and inveterate that Jean Hardouin, a learned French Jesuit, who died in

1729, aged 83, contended * that not only *the whole* of the writings of the Christian Fathers, but *nearly all* the Latin and Greek classics, were monkish forgeries of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries! To such an appalling degree had the Christian priesthood forged that, upon close investigation, Hardouin admitted only two Greek and four Latin authors to be genuine. The two Greek authors were Homer and Herodotus; the four Latin authors, Plautus, Pliny the Elder, Horace (only the Satires and Epistles), and Virgil (only the Bucolics and Georgics). The learned Jesuit did not include the Old and New Testaments in the list of works forged by Benedictine monks after the middle of the thirteenth century; but his excepting them from the mass of admittedly spurious Books, Epistles, and Gospels with which they were inextricably mixed up is clearly invidious and irrational. When it is remembered that, to the present hour, there is diversity of opinion as to which books should be included in the Canon and which should not, the writer who alleges that *all* the patristic works are spurious comes too dangerously near to stating that the books included in the Canon are spurious also. The learned Father went as far as he dared, under the consciousness that the vigilant and suspicious eye of the Church was upon him. Even without expressly including the canonical Scriptures, the eager student had dared to go further than was prudent and safe; and in 1708, like Galileo, he was brought to his knees and compelled to recant the opinions he had enunciated, and his book, "*Chronologiæ ex Nummis Antiquis*," was suppressed.

Hardouin was a priest of ripe learning, and distinguished by ceaseless industry, painstaking judgment, and incisive critical faculty. It was much easier to suppress his writings than to confute them. The first scholars in Europe, in the interests of conventionality, found they had severe work before them in dealing with a critic and historian like this laborious Jesuit. The University of Oxford was stirred to its depths. Holland, France, and Germany rallied their scholars to the rescue, led on by no

* In a work in Latin, entitled "*Ad Censuram Scriptorum Veterum Prolegomena*."

less distinguished savants than Basnage, Leclerc, Lacroze, Ittig, and Bierling.

If such a startling position as that assumed by Hardouin can be stoutly defended with weapons furnished by History and Criticism, the depressing consciousness forces itself upon us that, previous to the middle of the thirteenth century at the very earliest, we, so far as the literature of Europe is concerned, stand nowhere upon solid ground, that our annals are a delusion and a snare; and we cannot rise above the painful suspicion that the Greek and Roman classics, and even the very Oracles of God, are modern forgeries.

But, say you, "scholars and experts would, before this, have detected the Bible to be a modern forgery, had it really been so." O ye of much faith, it is not certain that scholars and experts would have done any such thing, especially scholars and experts who undertook their examination with a strong predisposition to find the writings ancient. Scholars and experts are fallible creatures, indeed, when they set themselves to determine whether a document is ancient or modern, genuine or spurious. I could give numerous instances of the most egregious errors being laboriously arrived at and tenaciously maintained by those whom all the world looked up to for guidance on the very subject on which they had erred. Only one or two specimen instances of this kind must suffice. If ever there was a man thoroughly *au fait* in everything pertaining to Border Ballads, that man was Sir Walter Scott. It will be remembered that in Canto I. of "Marmion," he quotes a stanza from a ballad, entitled "The Raid of Featherstonehaugh;" and in his notes to that romance he prints the ballad in full, and points out, from internal evidence, its indubitable claims to *antiquity*. In spite of this, the ballad turned out to be from the pen of one of Scott's contemporaries, an obscure poet of the name of Surtees.

More recently Dr Reinhold, of Germany, came before the public with his "Amber Witch, a Story of the Olden Time." The scholars of scholarly Germany applied their severe tests of historical and philological criticism to it, and found it to be a genuine literary relic of antiquity. Even those incisive and acute neologists, the Tübingen

Reviewers, found the "Amber Witch" hoary with the rime of centuries. When Dr Reinhold had fairly got the *quid nuncs*, the scholars and experts, to commit themselves so thoroughly that they had no chance of escape from the position they had assumed, he declared himself the author of the "Amber Witch"! The dogmatism of pedantry was not, however, prepared to relinquish its breastwork of erudite ignorance without a struggle. Critical infallibility pronounced Dr Reinhold an impostor and a liar, and declared itself prepared to trust to its own unerring canons rather than to him upon his oath; and it was not till Reinhold produced inexpugnable testimony, including the evidence of several of his neighbours who had seen him engaged upon the work, that learning had to abate its arrogance and acknowledge with a reluctant growl, that the "Amber Witch" was only a few months old.

In 1824 the learned Raoul Rochette, Professor of Archæology and Keeper of the Paris Cabinet of Antiquities, received from Malta, for the Academy of France, a stone with a bilingual inscription in Greek and what purported to be Phœnician. The stone was dated in the eighty-fifth Olympiad, or about 436 years B.C. Rochette gave the inscription credit for the antiquity to which it laid claim, and sent a copy of it to every savant in Europe for decipherment and translation. The giant scholar, Gesenius of Halle, and the hardly less colossal Hamaker of Leyden, agreed with Rochette in referring the inscription to the eighty-fifth Olympiad, and they published comments upon it, laborious and recondite, and formidable with prodigies of oriental and antiquarian lore.

And yet it turned out that Rochette, Gesenius, and Hamaker, together with shoals of the lesser scholars of Europe who hung on by their skirts, had given all the weight and *prestige* of their name and learning to establish the genuineness and antiquity of an impudent modern forgery! Since all this is so, and far more than all this, he is a bold man, and, moreover, an ignorant one, who will lightly pooh-pooh Father Hardouin's contention. And if Benedictine monks some two or three centuries ago wrote the "Metamorphoses" and attributed it to Ovid, what guarantee have we that certain other monks

did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews and attribute it to the Holy Ghost, with Paul as an amanuensis?

Even if Hardouin's theory is not to be accepted, who selected the New Testament out of the huge, mixed mass of Gospels and Epistles? When did he make the selection? Where did he make the selection? Is divine inspiration claimed for the person or persons who made the selection? No such inspiration has been claimed. But, if the person or persons who made the selection were not inspired, what guarantee have we that the selection does not include books or passages which are not the Word of God, and exclude books or passages which are the Word of God? The passages which allege that Jesus rose from the dead, for instance, may, for any guarantee we have to the contrary, be spurious, and may be no part of the Word of God, even if we take it for granted that God did make a special revelation to man.

Again, even although the passages which deal with Jesus' resurrection from the dead be an integral portion of the Word of God, how do we know that we have the correct reading of the passages? It seems to matter little whether a particular passage has been originally written by the Lord or not if it has subsequently been tampered with or altered either through oversight or design on the part of transcribers. Supposing the person or persons who made up the canonical New Testament from the mass of material with which it had got mixed, had rightly discriminated between the writings of God and those of Man, still, from the blunders which have admittedly crept into it, the New Testament would afford doubtful evidence for statements within the pale of credence, and no evidence at all for statements, like that of Jesus' resurrection, lying utterly outside the range of credibility. It must be kept in mind that the Greek New Testaments of the Reformation period were printed from manuscripts none of which were older than the *eleventh century*. Further, as Christian scholars themselves admit, the various readings of the New Testament MSS. to which we are indebted for our text are so numerous as to be almost beyond computation. First, we heard of 20,000 different readings, then of 30,000, then of 50,000, till, in

the collation of the MSS. for Griesbach's edition, as many as 150,000 were discovered. A most reliable book this to trust when it ventures on such an incredible statement as that a certain half-mythical character rose from the dead!

We are expected to give credence to a statement that is monstrously incredible because we find it stated in a book which, from its origin and history, is, perhaps, the most unreliable volume in the whole range of literature. The Rev. Prebendary Irons is, in honesty, constrained to admit: "The very language in which our blessed Lord uttered his divine discourses no criticism has found out. If he spoke them in Greek, are we to suppose that the Galilean multitude who heard him understood Greek? If he spoke them in Hebrew, are 'the original words' entirely lost? Or, was that which he spake to them in Hebrew 'brought to remembrance' thirty years afterwards in Greek, and written down in Greek by the Evangelists? The examination grows harder. There are many 'Apostolic' Epistles, Acts, and Visions: who shall select and authenticate them? It has been said, indeed, that it is 'no harder, after all, than the task of tracing to earliest antiquity any other works of former days:' which may be very true; but, then, the case is different. Other books (such as Aristotle and Homer) ask no examination from us as conveying a divine message to us." * And the Rev. Prebendary might have added: neither Aristotle nor Homer, nor any other book, threatens us with everlasting perdition for failure to believe, on its sole and unsupported authority, that about 2000 years ago a Jewish mechanic, who had been executed for sedition and blasphemy, got out of his grave and flew to heaven.

What certainly does not tend to the verification of Scripture is the fact that this very mechanic himself, when he quoted the Scriptures—that is, quoted the Old Testament into the New—quoted from what is now accounted an erroneous version. "Even taking the existing Gospels, does it appear that our Lord quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures? Did he not use the Sep-

* "The Bible and its Interpreters," pp. 18, 19.

tuagint very frequently? and at times employ a version different from both 'the Hebrew verity' and the Septuagint?"* Our version of the Bible takes cognisance of the Septuagint principally to avoid it as more or less spurious and unsatisfactory; but the Son of God quoted from it in preference to the version which we, his creatures, in our superior wisdom know to be nearer what deity actually meant to say to us, although deity is too ignorant to know the genuine version of his own book from the spurious.

Since Christ differs from Christians in the version of Scripture he prefers, may we ask whether he agrees with Christians in accepting a version which represents him as rising from the dead? We are far from possessing anything like authentic or original documents stating that he ever did so rise. "No actual manuscripts, no original versions, no autographs, of course, of the saints or fathers of the *earliest* generations of Christians now exist. We may get *printed* copies of such ancient works as have survived the ravages of time, in various transcripts, which rarely reach within hundreds of years of the originals. In monasteries and libraries some treasures of the seventh or even the sixth century of our era may be met with by those who are happy enough to explore them; but little critical use has hitherto been made of them."† Even if we were to reject the theory of Hardouin (and it would be easier to reject it by blind prejudice than by intelligent research), what then? Do we even then obtain documents which we can credit with the antiquity they lay claim to and the statements they submit? Verily no. We have an anonymous dateless, placeless, mythological salmagundi. In a chaos of historical mist, full of humid refractions and optical illusions, we obtain dream-like glimpses of prophets and apostles, and christs, pigmy spectres of the Brocken, on asses, crosses, and elsewhere, cutting vague and imbecile capers, which have no more to do with our salvation or perdition, or bliss or woe, than have the ogres of a nightmare dream or the primrose casting its petals upon the summer wind.

* "The Bible and its Interpreters," p. 20. † *Ibid.* p. 14.

CHAPTER XIII.

Is God Magnanimous?—Scriptural Obscurity—All Hagiography Obscure—Genesis iv. 23-24—Sacred Languages—The Name of God—Reputable and Disreputable Necromancy.

HARDOUIN or no Hardouin, a number among us want to be "saved." It is always those who incur the gravest suspicion of having no soul at all that kick up the biggest fuss about their soul and make the biggest rustling among the Bible leaves in order that it may be "saved." If they would take our word for it, "saved" and "damned" are much the same thing, and the latter does not involve so much fawning and cringing as the former. Like a very Timothy, I have searched the Scriptures from a child, and it is likely I have found "eternal life"; but I am quite easy on the matter. According to the light that is in me, I have done my duty. I do not trouble the gods; but no father had ever premature grey hairs for me; to no mother have I brought shame; no man in the world can say I ever turned my back upon him as a friend, or as a foe either, if he preferred me in that capacity; I never swindled mortal man, though many a mortal man has swindled me; no woman in all the world can point to me as the author of her ruin; and no child and no kitten but loves me. But I blaspheme the gods and ridicule their priests, and, therefore, I have to go to *Sheol*, a place that once had another name and a much higher temperature than it has now.

There is *Sheol*, and there is the other locality. I have friends and relations in both of them—persons who, with all my faults, will be pleased to see me. I have thrown tear-bedewed flowers into the grave of the redeemed; I have held on by the black cord that lowered into the deep trench the coffin of the damned (as the world

judges). The redeemed and the damned were alike dear to me, and I cannot think that there is any God so mean that they were not alike dear to him. One man gapes on the gallows, with a rope round his neck; another man gapes in the pulpit, with a white neck-tie round his. Think ye not that they each throw the shuttle to produce the warp and woof of the web of Destiny? The one finds the red thread; the other the black. Eternity is far too long a stretch for a magnanimous God to remember whether you came to him from the gallows or the pulpit. Believe in his son! Believe me, he will never burn you for making a mistake as to whether he had a son, a son and a daughter, or six sons and five daughters. If you must have a god, believe that this god is not a trifler. Mind your business, and let him mind his; and depend upon it, all will turn out well.

“Preserve the dignity of man
With soul erect,
And trust the universal plan
Will all protect.”

But, while God is minding his business, let me mind mine, which is still further to point out the kind of work involved in finding “eternal life” by searching the Scriptures.

“It cannot be denied that the Scriptures are often obscure and difficult, as, for example, where the subject is prophecy or controversy, where words and phrases are used which are not to be found in other authors, and are now become of uncertain signification; and where doctrines are revealed, not fully, but in part. Besides the obscurity arising from the subject and style, the Scriptures have other difficulties common to all books which are very ancient and written in dead languages.”*

So wrapt up with theology is the mystical and unintelligible that the cries of madmen and the babblings of idiots come to be invested with a peculiar significance and sanctity, the prayers of idiots being accounted of special efficacy. Even philosophical Greece was not free from the charge of linking together insanity and sanctity.

* Dr. Jotin's "The Christian Religion," vol. i. p. 138.

Throughout the East idiocy is still held sacred, and in Africa, at Loango Les Albinos, "font la prière devant le roi ; cette mode si choquante de faire reciter les prières par de imbécilles vient de l'opinion qu'on a de leur sainté."* From what I have already pointed out as to the vague and indefinite character of the Hebrew language (?), it will be evident how peculiarly well it would be adapted to divine purposes. A definite and specific language may be very well for men when they wish to express their thoughts ; but an indefinite and mystical language is best suited to the purposes of gods, who use words, not to express, but to conceal their thoughts. "There are certain names," says Psellus, "among all nations, delivered to them by God, which have an unspeakable power in divine rites. Change not these into the Greek dialect, for they are then ineffectual."† Sacred spell-words did not admit of translation, nor of the attachment to them of any specific meaning. Their virtue rested in their mere sound and in their written form. Our Bible would have been far more of a Bible if it had never been translated at all. It would have been a much closer transcript of the Word of God if it had but been permitted to remain in the Hebrew language, which, in the true sense of the word, never was a language. If, however, we go on translating and revising, we may possibly get back to where we started from—the Hebrew. There are many evidences that our tendencies are that way. The instances of evidence lie in such facts as that *nephilim* used to be giants ; now it is found not to be giants, so it is just left alone as it was, *nephilim*, and God only knows what that means. Then, *Sheol* used to be *Hell* ; but we have no *Hell* now ; we have got back to *Sheol*, and heaven only knows definitely where that is and what it is. On the other hand, however, we used to have *behemoth*. This *behemoth* was a favourite of mine. In divine visions of the night I have beheld him tearing along, striding over huge cities as you would do over ant-hills, his feet shaking the earth, his voice rending the heavens, and a

* "Américanes," vol. ii. p. 20.

† Stanley's "History of Philosophy," part xix. p. 47.

sweep of his tail dashing the cross from the domed summit of St Paul's. But now the translators have whittled him down into a miserable *crocodile*. For Bible purposes, he was infinitely better as *behemoth*.

The old cherubim were magnificent brutes. Michaelis referred to them as Donner-pferde, or *thunder-horses*; but they are being toned down into something like a common chicken; so irreligious and unromantic a thing is it to translate a Bible. And "there were Giants in the earth in those days." But there are no giants now; they have resolved themselves back into *nephilim*, and we are told that *nephilim* may possibly be merely *επιπληροτες, Βιαιοι*; so they may, and they may also have been grindstones, or thunderstorms, or dormice, or mastadons, or anything you like to guess. A god never likes to be definite. He likes to give you plenty of room and opportunity to guess, and abundant pretext to cut your neighbour's throat because he does not guess quite the same as you do.

For a man to try to translate the writing of a god is sacrilegious presumption. Sometimes the translator *thinks* he has caught the divine meaning; but God, in his bountiful goodness, has so written that nearly every individual translator can catch a divine meaning different from that caught by his neighbour. *E.g.*, take Genesis iv. 23-24. Dr. Clarke makes out the divine meaning to be :—

"And Lamech said unto his wives
Adah and Tsillah, Hear my voice;
Wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech;
*Have I slain a man that I should be wounded?
Or a young man that I should be bruised?*
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold;
Also Lamech, seventy and seven."

Another scholar finds the divine meaning to be :—

"For I have slain a man for wounding me,
And a young man for having bruised me."

De Wette thinks the Holy Ghost meant :—

"If I slew a youth with wounds,
And a young man with blows."

Michaelis and Luther are pretty sure that the Holy Ghost meant them to understand :—

“I have slain a man to my wounding,
And a son to my hurt.”

According to Voltaire, God meant us to read :—

“I have slain a man by my wounds,
And a young man by my bruises.”

Geddes has a shrewd suspicion that Jehovah meant to say, in plain English :—

“A man I have killed ! but to my own wounding :
A young man, but to my own bruising.”

And the marginal reading runs :—

“I have slain a man in my wounds,
And a young man in my hurt.”

And, last of all, to me also it seems that the Holy Ghost means me to understand that :—

“Once there was a deuce of a row somewhere,
And somebody got hurt.”

The Hebrew Jehovah was no exception in making his Bible and his rites ineffable and mysterious. Religious rites are, and have been, among all peoples, inscrutable spells. Among some worshippers prayers must be *recited* to be efficacious ; but they need not be understood—as, for instance, in the Romish Liturgy, in which they are couched in Latin. Other worshippers—the Kalmucks, for instance—deem prayers most efficacious when written out, rolled up into small bulk, coated over, and swallowed as pills. Others, again, as the Thibetans, consider them most effective when they are written on long rolls fastened to a cylinder, the turning of the handle of which cylinder is the approved mode of praying. “The prayers of the Vedas,” says Schlosser, “may be read indifferently backwards or forwards : in the *words* is the magic.” “This holy Scripture, the Veda,” says Menzies, “is a sure refuge, even for those who understand not its meaning.” Certain of the more primitive of the Mohammedans carefully wash the parchment, or other substance on which has been inscribed the name of

Allah or a sentence from the Koran, and then drink the water as a religious exercise.

Then, to write a Bible properly, you must write in a sacred language—that is, in a language known only to an exclusive priesthood, and elastic enough to afford even the priests themselves room to quarrel and wrangle as to what this, that, and the other expression really means. No god could exist if he were foolish enough to use the language of ordinary mortals; he would be found out in no time, and have his name laughed at, his altars desecrated, his temples ruined, and his priests cast adrift to find an honest calling or starve. But no god worth speaking about has been foolish enough to use a language known to his worshippers and meant to convey definite ideas. Egypt had her hieroglyphics known only to the priests. Among the Incas of Peru there was a sacred language known to the sacerdotal order, and to them only. The Brahmins have their exclusive and sacred Sanscrit. Among the Parsees there is the Zend, known only to the Mobeds. In Bali “the Kawi is the language of religion and law.”* In Abyssinia, Geez is the sacred language; and Jehovah, with his mysterious and anything-or-nothing Hebrew, has certainly not been out-done by any god that ever figured in a pantheon.

In one word: if you would write a Bible, keep well on the lines of esoteric drivel and mysterious nonsense. Even the very name of God was, among the Jews, a word which could be written, but could not be spoken. Moreover, it could be written only after giving the pen a thorough washing, and after working yourself up into a paroxysm of religious awe and devout imbecility. The name of deity was not, like any other word, the symbol for some specific thing. The word in itself partook of the indefinable and yet terrible nature of the Divine Being. It could be pronounced only by the high priest, only on the day of purification, and only on the awful occasion when he entered into the holy of holies. Similarly among the Brahmins is held the sacred syllable OM, the symbol of God.

Hence originated the idea which found its expression in the cabalistic utterances of conjurers and the spell

* Raffles’ “Java,” i. 411.

words of magicians, exorcists and fortune-tellers. But, in the long race of evolution and elimination, certain branches and phases of necromancy have flourished, and others have decayed ; some have risen to be super-sacred and respectable, others have become extra profane and thoroughly disreputable. For the exercise of his particular branch of esoteric necromancy the Archbishop of Canterbury has £15,000 a year and a seat in the House of Lords ; for the exercise of her branch of esoteric necromancy the spae-wife or palmist fortune-teller has a sparse pittance and a seat in the "stone jug."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Eve and Apple Story—If this Story of the “Fall” be not Literally True, “Redemption” would be Unnecessary—The Adam and Eve Story a Plagiarism—The “Fall” and Death Absolutely Indispensable—Mathematical Calculation showing what would Now be the Population of the Globe if there had been no Death—Damnation consequently a Blessing.

CHILDISH beneath contempt though the Eve and the apple story be, it is a fable which Christianity must regard as a divine truth or perish. The moment it discards the talking serpent it breaks its own neck. If there was not a literal “Fall,” then there was no use for a literal “Redemption.” If there was really no such person as the falling Adam, there was no use for such a person as the redeeming Jesus. That the whole Adam story is one of the most silly and absurd of fables goes without saying. He the “first man!” Why, Kent’s cavern in our own England gives evidence of the existence of man in Devonshire some 70,000 years before, according to the Bible, the world had been “created.” Honest men read God’s book in stone and fossil; dishonest men read it in ink and paper. Science reads the writing on stone; Theology prefers the writing on paper—it pays best, and is better suited to gulling the unthinking multitude.

The Adam story, which alone makes the Christian story necessary, is not even original, as far as the writer of Genesis is concerned. That writer, whoever he was, stole it from the Chaldeans, who possessed a far older and far grander civilisation than ever distinguished the Jews. The Jews stole the fable, and set it down as a direct inspiration from their God; and the Christians derived it from the Jews and linked a Christ on to it in

whom the Jews do not believe! How truly curious are the "lively oracles"! On a few barefaced tricks in fable-mongering depends our "plan of salvation"! "The name Adam, given to the first man in Genesis, is found in the Chaldean account of the creation as meaning all mankind—Adami or Admi. On a very early Babylonian seal in the British Museum one of the most ancient legends seems to be illustrated by the drawing of two figures seated, one on each side of a sacred tree, and reaching forth a hand to its fruit, while, behind one of the persons, is stretched a serpent." Abraham left "Ur of the Chaldees," and took the Chaldean traditions with him. He founded the Jewish nation which worked the Chaldean fables into its cosmogony and theology. The Christians adopted and perniciously *expanded* this cosmogony and theology, and thereby turned back the shadow on the dial that marked the progress of the human race.

It is almost as silly to take time to refute the Adam story as it is childish to believe it. But it would be easy to show that, in "the decrees of God," Adam must have been created for the express purpose of eating the apple and of thereby damning the world. An examination of the following calculation* shows that the world could not possibly have continued to exist without being damned.

It is the opinion of nearly all who believe the Bible that mankind would have remained immortal if Father Adam had not been so weak as to yield to the entreaties of Mother Eve and bite the apple; hence death is in consequence of a bite, and, if Father Adam had taken a more wholesome nourishment, he would be still living, and might enjoy the society of his numerous family, as well as note their wonderful progress. Now, the question is, could he find sufficient room for himself and family to live comfortably? or how would the earth look if all Father Adam's and Mother Eve's offspring were still alive?

Now take a piece of paper and pencil and follow me attentively, because it is very easy to make mistakes in such figures as ours will be.

* The calculation is credited to a Hungarian newspaper.

Suppose that each married couple from the time of Adam had had three children only, which all will allow is not an exaggeration. Suppose, also, that, since the birth of Adam until now, 6,000 years only have elapsed, and that no man enriched the world with a little citizen until thirty years of age, which suppositions, you will readily observe, are under and not over the normal population rules.

If, therefore, the increase of generations since Adam be taken two hundred times, only proportioning 2 (a married couple) to 3 (three children), we obtain a geometrical progression, the first of which is 2, the ratio $\frac{3}{2}$ and the number of terms is 200.

To enable us to make the addition of this progression, we will use the following formula:—

$$S = A \cdot \frac{q^n - 1}{q - 1}$$

Which is, according to the suppositions previously made in this case—

$$S (\text{Total}) = 4 \left\{ \left[\frac{3}{2} \right]^{200} - 1 \right\}$$

Now, we must take the logarithmic tables, and we shall discover that if, since Adam's time, all persons born were living, the population would be—a trifling matter—66,380 quintillions, according to English notation.

The fact is arrived at thus:—

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Log. } \left[\frac{3}{2} \right]^{200} &= 200 (\log. 3 - \log. 2) \\ &= 200 (.4771213 - .3010300) \\ &= 200 \times .1760913 \\ &= 35.2182600 \end{aligned}$$

A number of 36 figures to the left being the value of log. .2182600.

$$\text{Log. } 2182600 = 1652951.$$

Multiply this by the prefix 4, we get for the number represented by the formula

$$6611804, \text{ with } 29 \text{ ciphers.}$$

Now, it takes 31 figures to make 1 quintillion. Therefore, the number of quintillions is 661,180.

I can see an ironical smile on your face, and hear you say: "And what of it? What is the use of annoying us with those dry figures, telling us there would be in the world only 661,180 quintillions of people?"

You will excuse me if I state openly, looking into your eyes, that you pronounce those figures mechanically, without having the least idea of what they mean.

661,180,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 !

A few examples will show whether you have the idea. Let us see: The surface of the whole earth contains 197 millions of square miles, of which 52 millions is land; or, in smaller measure, 1,206 billions of geographical square feet. The exact number, however, is 1,206,676,800,000,000. Dividing the above number—viz., 6611804, with 29 ciphers attached, that is

50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

This is the number of persons whose weight the unfortunate individuals at the bottom would each have to sustain.

Supposing 1,000 of them to reach a mile high, the height above the earth's surface would be

50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

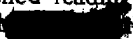

Supposing that since Adam not one person had died, and we wanted to place them—how large a space can we give to each person? One square foot, perhaps. True, one foot is not much; and, if it should be necessary to place mankind so that one person would stand on the shoulders of another occupying that square foot, the position would hardly be the most agreeable. And perhaps you think there would be room enough if we include the surface of the oceans? I am sorry that I must state that you are very much mistaken; even if people could live in this manner (like herrings), there would not be room enough for more than 5,347 billions. What should we do with the rest of them?

It does not mean to say that one square foot is too small a space for one person to occupy, or that we must be more economical? I answer, even this would not do. Admitting that 3, 5 or 10 persons could be placed on one square foot, although it exceeds all possibility, we

would still be in a dilemma; for, if the space be not sufficient for that number, where shall we put 123 trillions? You will admit that such a thing would be impossible.

If this be impossible, let us place them one above the other. We do not care now for the rest of the crowd, but will occupy ourselves with that one person who is in possession of that one best square foot—for example, the one who is sitting comfortably on your chair while you are reading these exciting lines. The place occupied by that person is claimed by 123 trillions more, and, to enable us to satisfy partially those 123 trillions, we will commence to place them on the shoulders of each other—that is, the second on the shoulders of the first, the third on the shoulders of the second, and so on to the end of 123 trillions. In this manner each person, placed as closely as we could pack flour-bags, would form a living column that would repeat itself 5,347 billions of times. But we do not care about the other columns; we will talk of the one that ascends from your chair, the lowest member of which you are. What do you think the height of such a column would be? Suppose each person's height to be four feet only—the reader is probably taller—the reckoning is very simple. Each living column would be 492 trillions of feet high, or 20,000 billions of geographical miles. The topmost member of this column—your youngest grandchild—would be 1,000 times further from you than the sun is from the earth. Imagine now such a column to be each square foot of the earth, and also on the ocean's surface—the columns would not only displace the sun and the moon, but also all the stars of which we know.

It seems to me that your head begins to turn dizzy now; therefore I shall bring only one more example to show you how much 661,180 quintillions are, the figures that made you shrug your shoulders at the beginning.

Now let us return to the column ascending from your chair. We will suppose you have just finished reading the newspaper, and feel that the column is  before. This feeling induces you to ask your  grandchild, who is topmost on the column, why the pressure is so great. I suppose you to be a person progressing with the genius of the age, and that you have

not neglected to establish a telegraph between yourself and your youngest grandchild, and that, of course, you can send and receive messages at any time. It is now, we will say, nine o'clock in the morning, and you have sent for an answer. About what time do you expect an answer? The reply is very simple. Knowing that the electric spark is a very fast messenger, and runs 60,000 miles in a second, how much time is required to make the journey of 20,000 billions of miles that exist between you and your youngest grandchild? Quick! It is hardly worth reflecting upon. Your grandchild will receive the message in 333,000 millions of seconds, which make 10,000 years. If your grandchild answers immediately, you can easily ascertain in 20,000 years what your little grandchild was doing this morning. It is to be regretted that, at that time, he will not be the youngest grandchild, but an old man, 20,000 years of age; and very likely he will be about one trillion times grandfather himself.

This is enough. It is sufficiently shown that you hardly understood the meaning of the figures, 66,380 quintillions. It is also sufficiently shown how necessary it was for Father Adam and Mother Eve to bite the apple; otherwise they would have caused us an innumerable number of inconveniences.

Of course, the "creator" could have blown up the globe, as a boy blows a soap-bubble, till it became of such enormous size as to afford a foot of standing-space for each son of Adam, with nobody standing on his head. But, if the earth were inflated thus, the crust would be so exceedingly thin that no person would dare to blow his nose, far less stamp his foot, for fear that he should thereby cause the whole terrestrial sphere to burst up and collapse. So it is, upon the whole, fortunate that Adam "sinned." I, for one, should not have cared to have been born to stand on somebody's head millions of miles above the clouds. Neither should I have cared to have been born upon a globe where I had to slip about softly on my tiptoes, desisting from blowing my nose for fear I might thereby blow up the universe. Upon the whole, it is well that Adam "sinned," and thereby sent to the limitless realms of Sheol the countless myriads for whom there was no room on Earth.

CHAPTER XV.

Where the Israelites got the Adam Fable—An Earlier Version of the Adam Fable—Is Normal Man Insane?

So much for the feeble fable of Adam and Eve and the snake. That fable was grey with the rime of centuries before it was stolen by the Israelites and incorporated in their mythology. Stolen goods are seldom improved by the stealing. The golden vase, with its graceful proportions, artistic traceries, and free, sweeping outline, is broken in pieces and battered into an amorphous mass in order that it may be crushed into the sack of the thief. The golden vase of Indian thought and speculation and learning had to be broken and mutilated before it would go into the sack of the truculent, and all but unlettered, Jew who stole it.

From what mine was the gold dug; what hands fashioned the original vase? Ask India's awful Temples, hewn into the rock, as if by Titans, and which are shrouded in the dim mists of the world's morning, where history gives no echo, and where even legend is dumb. Ask the names and the ashes of the people of Bharata-Varsha,* whose star-eyed Philosophy tried to peer through the bars of the portcullis of Being, and whose Poetry wafted the soul of the Aryan to the sublimity which is God, some 2,000 years before Jesus Christ was invented. Where the sunlight fell slantingly on Moeris lake; where the pyramids of Cheops and Dijon flung a shadow of weird mystery on the banks of the Nile, the Israelites found the Adam fable, and stole it. But, even then, it was second hand—nay, possibly tenth-hand, having found its way to Egypt through many ages of time and through many realms of space. It had been borne to Egypt from

* The ancient name of India.

Babylon, with her walls eighty feet high and sixty miles in circumference. Grey with eld was the civilisation by the Nile; but the light that shone upon the Nile was only a reflection of that which had lit up the Euphrates long before; and the light which played upon the Euphrates had flashed upon the Ganges centuries ere "the God of Jacob" had been heard of, or the miserable tribe of nomads, in whose brain he had his origin—centuries before the sublime Adima and Heva of the Vedas had been travestied into the Adam and Eve of the Bible.

The earth, we are told in the elder legend,* was covered with flowers, the trees bent under their fruit, thousands of animals sported over the plains and in the air, white elephants roved unmolested under the shade of gigantic forests, and Brahma perceived that the time had come for the creation of man, to inhabit this dwelling-place. He drew from the Great Soul, from the pure essence, a germ of life, with which he animated the two persons whom he made, male and female—that is, proper for reproduction, like plants and animals; and he gave them the the *ahancara*—that is, conscience—and speech, which rendered them superior to all he had yet created, but inferior to the angels and to God. He distinguished the man by strength, shape, and majesty, and named him Adima (in Sanscrit "the first man"). The woman received grace, gentleness, and beauty, and he named her Heva (in Sanscrit "what completes life"). Therefore, in giving Adima a companion the Lord perfected the life bestowed on him; and in thus establishing the conditions under which humanity was about to be born he proclaimed in earth and in heaven the equality of the man and woman.

The Lord then gave to Adima and to his wife, Heva, the Island of Ceylon for a residence, well fitted, from its climate, its products, and its splendid vegetation, to be the terrestrial Paradise, cradle of the human race. "Go," said he, "unite and produce beings who shall be your living image upon earth for ages and ages after you have returned to me. Your mission is confined to peopling this island, where I have gathered together everything

* *Vide* Ramatsariar's "Texts and Commentaries on the Vedas."

for your pleasure and convenience ; and to implant my worship in the hearts of those to be born. The rest of the world is as yet uninhabitable. If, hereafter, the number of your children so increase as to render this habitation insufficient to contain them, let them inquire of me in the midst of sacrifice, and I will make them know my will." This said, he disappeared.

Adima then turned towards his young wife, who stood before him, erect and smiling, in her youthful candour. Claspings her in his arms, he gave her the first kiss of love, softly murmuring the name of Heva. Thus had Brahma willed it, to teach his creatures that the union of the man and the woman without love would be but an immorality contrary to nature and to his law. Adima and Heva lived for some time in perfect happiness—no suffering came to disturb their quietness ; they had but to stretch forth the hand and pluck from surrounding trees the most delicious fruits—but to stoop and gather rice of the finest quality. But one day a vague disquietude began to creep upon them ; jealous of their felicity and of the work of Brahma, the Prince of the *Rakchasas*, the Spirit of Evil, inspired them with disturbing desires. "Let us wander through the island," said Adima to his companion, "and see if we may not find some place even more beautiful than this." Heva followed her husband ; they wandered for days and for months, resting beside clear fountains, under gigantic banyans that protected them from the sun's rays. But, as they advanced, the woman was seized with strange fears, inexplicable terrors. "Adima," said she, "let us go no farther ; it seems to me that we are disobeying the Lord. Have we not already quitted the place which he assigned us as a dwelling?" "Fear not," said Adima ; "this is not that fearful, uninhabitable country of which he spoke to us." And they journeyed on. Arriving at last at the extremity of the island, they beheld a smooth and narrow arm of the sea, and beyond it a vast and apparently boundless country, connected with their island by a narrow and rocky pathway arising from the bosom of the waters. The two wanderers stood amazed : the country before them was covered with stately trees, birds of a thousand colours flitting amidst their foliage.

"Behold what beautiful things!" cried Adima, "and what good fruit such trees must produce; let us go and taste them; and, if that country is better than this, we will dwell there." Heva, trembling, besought Adima to do nothing that might irritate the Lord against them. "Are we not well here? Have we not pure water and delicious fruits? Wherefore seek other things?" "True," replied Adima; "but we will come back. What harm can it be to have visited this unknown country that presents itself to our view?" And, approaching the rocks, Heva, trembling, followed. Then, placing his wife upon his shoulders, he proceeded to cross the space that separated him from the object of his desires. But no sooner did they touch the shore than trees, flowers, fruit, birds—all that they had seen from the opposite side—vanished in an instant, amid terrific clamour; the rocks by which they had crossed sank beneath the waters, a few sharp peaks alone remaining above the surface to indicate the place of the bridge, which had been destroyed by divine displeasure. The vegetation which they had seen from afar was but a delusive mirage, raised by the Prince of the *Rakchasas* to tempt them to disobedience.

Adima threw himself, weeping, upon the barren sands; but Heva came to him, and flung herself into his arms, saying: "Do not despair; let us rather pray to the Author of all things to pardon us." And as she thus spoke their came a voice from the clouds, saying: "Woman, *thou* hast only sinned from love to thy husband, whom I commanded thee to love, and thou hast hoped in me. I pardon thee, and him also for *thy* sake! But you may no more return to the abode of delight which I had created for your happiness. Through your disobedience to my commands, the spirit of evil has obtained possession of the earth. Your children, reduced to labour and to suffer by your fault, will become corrupt and forget me. But I will send Vishnu, who shall incarnate himself in the womb of a woman, and shall bring to all the hope and the means of recompense in another life, in praying to me to soften their ills."

From this legend of "heathen" India arose mediately the Hebrew fable of the Fall of Man. On this stolen myth, spoilt in the stealing, have been based for long,

dismal ages the thought and action of the foremost nations on the globe ! Over the subsequent elaborations of this stolen fable, spoilt in the stealing, through stormy centuries burning cities have glaried like hell while the earth reeked red, an Accldama, a veritable Field of Blood ! Out of this stolen fable, spoilt in the stealing, have arisen hosts of Christs and Mohammeds and Luthers and Loyolas to set mankind by the ears, and to place between the cradle and the coffin the milestones of murder and misery.

In what ante-kosmic and Pandemonian Parliament of Devils was it decreed and ratified that Man should be forever and forever a *fool* ? By what wheel within a wheel in the arcana of ontology was it settled that Man should be the most suffering and wretched of all animals from the fact that he alone of all the animals should be, normally, born *insane* ? Great God, if I could find out where you are, I should not insult you by praying to you for garments and for bread ; I should fall down on my knees before you, and, in the eager agony of my soul, ask you, WHENCE AM I ? WHERE AM I ? WHAT AM I ? WHERE AM I GOING ?

CHAPTER XVI.

*Origin of Chapters and Verses in the Old Testament—
In the New Testament—Protestant Misprints in and
Additions to the Works of the Holy Ghost—Papist
Tamperings with the Writings of the Holy Ghost—
The Attitude of Him who is neither Protestant nor
Papist—Triviality of the Conflict between the Sec-
tarians.*

My writings are not all they should be ; but, such as they are, I do not like them tampered with ; and I never knew an author, save the Holy Ghost, who differed from me in this respect. He, I admit, assures us* that we shall incur the penalty of having our name taken out of the "Lamb's Book of Life" if we add one jot or tittle to his literary performance. But mankind, apparently, do not care a boddle about the "Lamb's Book of Life," or whether their name be in it or not ; for to the works of the Holy Ghost they have added many a jot and many a tittle ; and many a jot and many a tittle they have taken away.

Not to go into more serious matters, the "source of England's greatness," as it came from the pen of its divine author, had neither chapters nor verses. These jots and tittles have been *added* by poor "worms of the dust," who, for their pains, have had their names scraped out of the "Lamb's Book of Life," thereby ensuring perdition to themselves and very much marring and mutilating of the appearance of the Lamb's book. For more than 600 years now the Bible has had *chapters* ; but woe be unto him who gave it those chapters. Out went his name under the friction of heaven's patent ink-eraser, and an

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

angel was despatched to book a seat for him—a gridiron rather—in the realms below, where the most noteworthy inhabitant is that strange entomological specimen, the never-dying worm. It was not till about the middle of the thirteenth century that men got so contumeliously familiar with the Holy Ghost that they ventured to take his Bible and cut it up into fragments. “About this time (1240) the Bible was distinguished into chapters, as we use it now. It seems to be the invention of the schoolmen—perhaps of those who, together with Hugo Cardinalis, were the authors of the Concordance; for before that time divines did not use it, but very frequently afterwards. As to the division of the Bible, we must know that the arithmetical division into chapters which we now use is a late invention; for till within these five hundred years there was no place from Scripture quoted by number, but only the Psalms, which from the very infancy of the Church were quoted by number, as appears by the Acts of the Apostles; and those divisions and numbers of chapters which now appear, as well in the Greek as in the Hebrew and Latin copies, are taken out of our Latin books. For those most ancient expositors divided the Holy Scriptures and quoted them, not by the number of the chapters, but by mention of the particular histories. As Austin saith, he wrote from the beginning of Genesis to the expulsion of our first parents out of Paradise; and Gregory, that he expounded from the beginning of the Book of Kings to the anointing of David to be king; instead of that which we would express thus—On the three first chapters of Genesis, and on the fifteen first chapters of the first book of Kings.” *

So much for the bible; but it took mankind over three hundred years to muster sufficient impudence to tempt the Holy Ghost by cutting up the new Testament † as they had done the Old. I have some reason, however, to believe that the Ghost is not quite displeased with our present division of the New Testament into verses. My basis for this assumption is the fact that the Ghost dearly loves ignorance and incompetence; and

* “Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures,” pp. 7, 8.

† Into the verses as they stand at present.

they are both brilliantly conspicuous in the manner in which the New Testament has been divided into verses. In the opinion of the Ghost, a fisherman was competent enough to write the book, so it can hardly be wondered at that a printer's devil was considered scholarly enough to divide it into verses.

Yea, O bibliolator, the New Testament division into verses was made in the year 1551 by one Robert Stephens, a printer. A good deal of the work was done by this Stephens to amuse himself on a tedious journey—journeys were journeys then—between Paris and Lyons. Was this hasty and slap-dash mode of hacking his book into pieces fair to the Holy Ghost? It is universally admitted, in the words of an old theologian, that Stephens' work was "drawn up in haste," and that he "sometimes severed matters that should have been left united, and united others which he more conveniently might have severed." * In a fortnight any ordinary country rector could make a far better versal division than Stephens made. But then the New Testament, according to the division made in 1551, has been quoted into every theological work written since that year; and, of course, to adjust the verses now would cause confusion almost inextricable in the thousands upon thousands of books into which the New Testament has been quoted. It is acknowledged on all hands that the division is bad, and yet it has been so extensively adopted that it would be impracticable to improve it. In short, the Book of God is blundered, and we know it; but we have got into a fix, and cannot help ourselves. We have, admittedly, got upon the wrong road; but we have travelled upon the wrong road so long that we must not now take the right one. We are in error, but in error we must remain, and get to heaven as best we can by a dexterous use of the New Testament as we have it from the pens of the Holy Ghost—and Bob Stephens.

As something of a writer myself, I trust the Holy Ghost will accept of my sympathy with him in the garbled Vandalisms that have been thrust upon him by Stephens and others. In my beardless days I have lain

* Boil's "Consid. of Style of Scripture," p. 60.

all night awake in vexation at typographical errors I had discovered in the effusions by which, at that period, I had tried to win the ecstatic admiration of the world. I wrote a poem on Poland, full of blood and blazes and thunder, and the printer turned my sublime "bursting bolts" into contemptible "bursting belts," which nearly drove me to distraction. Consequently, the Ghost has a keen sympathiser in him who suffered degradation under the "bursting belts," and I extend my sympathy to him under the infliction of all those who have "improved" upon him, from the erudite Rabbis who wrote the Targums to the inky-knuckled type-sticker who split up the New Testament into verses. Would he do me the honour to accept of my cordial commiseration with him in silly King Jamie being addressed within the boards of the Bible as "the Most High and Mighty Prince James," recognising, as I do, that none save Jehovah-jah has a right to the epithet "Most High"? I should not have liked to have been near Jehovah on that day in 1611 when they lugged into the Bible as the "Most High and Mighty Prince James" a padded and half-begotten buffoon, said to be a procreative effort of Rizzio, the Italian fiddler. The insult was enough to have called forth an immortal satire, "Jehovah upon Smith." *

When I am on this, to him, no doubt, delicate and painful subject, allow me to mingle my indignation with that of the Ghost at the added jots and tittles, in the shape of profane initials, stuck here and there all through Archbishop Parker's Bible, published in 1568. At the end of the Pentateuch stood the letters "W.E.;" "R. M." stood at the close of the Second Book of Samuel; "E.W." at the end of the Second Book of Chronicles; "A. P. C." at the end of Job; "T. B." at the end of Psalms; "A. P. C." at the end of Proverbs; "A. P. E." at the end of Canticles; "R. W." at the end of Lamentations; "T. C. L." at the end of Daniel; "R. E." at the end of Acts; and so forth. These were not even the initials of ordinary jack-angels who had given feathers

* The Preface to the authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures was written by Dr. Miles Smith.

out of their wings and tails to make pens with which to write the "lively oracles." No, these are the impudent initials of "worms of the dust," in the shape of Andrew Perne, Robert Horne, Thomas Bentham, and the like, who had translated out of "the original languages" the portions of Holy Writ which they respectively initialed.

It must have been intensely annoying to the Ghost to find that God only knows the number of gross errors which were in the Cambridge Version of the Holy Scriptures; but it must have been a comfort for him to know that the Oxford Edition had only 1,200 errors and misprints. There must have been a bad quarter of an hour in heaven when he discovered that, in the Pearl Bible printed by John Field, at the Cambridge Press in 1653, occurred the devilish passage, "*Know ye that the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" And he must have broken footstools and thrones over the heads of the beatific beasts when, in the edition by Parker and Lucas, published in 1632, he discovered a version of the seventh commandment which ran: "*Thou shalt commit adultery.*"

All this sort of thing in the way of mangling and bungling the Ghost's hagiographical effusions must make it exceedingly awkward for somebody, and cost hell a round sum for extra brimstone and new branders. For remember, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book."* I have referred to Protestant tamperings with the works of the Ghost; but, according to the Protestants, the church which she lovingly and politely dubs "the Whore of Babylon" has played ruin and havoc with the "lively oracles." In short, the Protestant reads his Protestantism out of the Scriptures; and the Papist, on the other hand, reads nothing in the Scriptures that conflicts with the theory and practice of the Scarlet Lady. The Church of Rome accuses the Church of the Reformation of wilful corruption of the Word of God, and

* Revelation xxii. 18, 19.

this is precisely the same charge that the Reformed Church prefers against the Church of Rome. I believe them both, although each assures me that the other is a liar. I believe that each has striven rather to make the Scriptures support preconceived dogmas than to find out *ab initio* what dogmas it would really support. Be this as it may, all that distinguishes Catholicism from Protestantism the Protestants allege, as far as the Scriptures are concerned, to be not from the pen of the Ghost, but from the pens of wilful forgers and mistranslators, who have garbled up the book to suit the tastes of the lady with the scarlet skirts, and who sits upon the Seven Hills. Here are some specimens of how the gay gallants of this lady are alleged—by her enemies—to have cooked the Bible to her delectation, assisting her to make the earth “drunk with her harlotries.”

In the summary of the “contents” of Matthew xxvi., Mark xiv., and Luke xxii., it is said that those chapters contain the account of the “institution of the mass!” Acts xiii. 2 (“as they ministered to the Lord and fasted”) is thus rendered: “*as they offered to the Lord the sacrifice of the mass* and fasted,” etc. In Acts xi. 30 and other places, where our English version has the word “elders,” this edition has *priests*.

A practice that has proved very productive of gain to the priesthood is made Scriptural in the following manner:—“And his father and mother went every year *in pilgrimage* to Jerusalem” (Luke ii. 41). “And not only so, but also he was appointed by the Churches the companion of our *pilgrimage*” (2 Cor. viii. 19). “Beloved, thou actest as a true believer in all that thou doest toward the brethren and towards the *pilgrims*” (3 John 5).

Tradition is thus introduced: “Ye keep my commandments, as I left them with you *by tradition*” (1 Cor. xi. 2). The faith which has been once given to the saints *by tradition*” (Jude 3).

That the Roman Catholic might be able to prove that marriage is a sacrament, he was furnished with these renderings:—“To those who are joined together *in the sacrament of marriage* I command,” etc. (1 Cor. vii. 10). “Do not join yourselves *in the sacrament of marriage* with unbelievers” (2 Cor. vi. 14).

1 Cor. ix. 5 is so directly opposed to the constrained *celibacy of the clergy* that we can scarcely wonder at finding an addition to the text. It stands thus: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, *a woman to serve as in the gospel, and to remember us with her goods*, as the other apostles," etc.

In support of *human merit* the translation of Heb. xiii. 16 may be quoted: "We obtain merit towards God by such sacrifices."

Purgatory could not be introduced but by a direct interpolation: "He himself shall be saved, yet in all cases as by *the fire of purgatory*" (1 Cor. iii. 15).

Many other passages might be noticed: "Him only shalt thou serve *with latria*"—i.e., with the worship specially and solely due to God. This addition was evidently made to prevent the text being urged against the invocation of the saints (Luke ix. 8). "Many of those who believed came to confess and declare their sins" (Acts xix. 18). "After a procession of seven days round it" (Heb. xi. 30). "Beware, lest being led away with others, *by the error of the wicked heretics*," etc. (2 Peter iii. 17). "There is some sin which is not mortal, but *venial*" (1 John v. 17). "And round about the throne there were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones twenty-four *priests*, seated, all clothed with *albs*" (Rev. iv. 4). The *alb*, it will be recollected, is part of the official attire of a Roman Catholic priest.

But the most flagrant interpolation occurs in 1 Tim. iv. 1-3:—"Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some will separate themselves from the *Roman faith*, giving themselves up to spirits of error and to doctrines *taught by devils*; speaking false things through hypocrisy, having also the conscience cauterised; *condemning the sacrament of marriage, the abstinence from meats*, which God hath created for the faithful, and for those who have known the truth, to receive them with thanksgiving." *

Now, when the priests and saints of the Lord disagree so widely and so bitterly as to how they are to provide

* Vide Cramp's "Text-Book of Popery," pp. 58, 59, on the Bordeaux New Testament, printed in 1686.

me with the means of saving my "immortal soul," which of them am I to believe? I will say to them:—Gentlemen, I will give a wide berth to you both, and let my "immortal soul" take its chance, This said "immortal soul" is undemonstrable; Science knows nothing of it, and Philosophy only guesses at it when she attempts to set a faltering foot on the dim terra incognita of Ontology. I believe no more that Death will end me than that Birth began me. And when you can inform me how I was and what I was a thousand years before I was born you may possibly thereby afford me some clue to determine how I will be and where I will be a thousand years after I am dead. I do not reject your ministrations, gentlemen, because they are teleological, and that I believe that all our existence is the Here and Now. But I do reject them because the Hence and Beyond are the Hence and Beyond, and because no spark therefrom has yet lit the iris of mortal eye or touched with even a solitary thrill the vesiculo-neurine of mortal brain. Translate your Vedas, your Shastras, your Korans, and your Bibles as you please. As far as our pre-natal and post-mortal fate is concerned, they are all alike valid. Instead of being a spur and an incentive to the times, they are centuries behind the age, and your translations and interpretations are as useless and idle, but far more mischievous, than if, instead of making such translations and interpretations, you had busied yourselves with the more harmless idiocy of blowing soap-bubbles or counting straws.

It is not because I take a lower view than you do of the Past, the Present, and the Future that I reject the poor imbecile juggling of your priestcraft. I take a much higher view than you do, and therefore I spurn your puerile flamenicals, which have done much to make ignorance chronic and imposture a profession. From behind the stillness of death and the cold of the grave I hear the dash and plunge of the ocean of the Eternal. Its depths are far down in the caverns of Dis, the crests of its billows are blinding the stars, and its roll and its swing are shaking the worlds. My soul shivers upon the shore waiting for the galley that plies to the archipelago of the Unknown, and for my voyage ye offer me

a toy ship made out of a bible leaf! In the presence of such solemnities, away with your mockery. Whether Death raises the curtain on everlasting Day or lets it fall on endless Night I know not; neither do you. Leave me alone. Your soul-saving is a business and a quack one. There is the ONE SOUL and no other. Degrade it not by pretending to "save" it with your credal dogmas and pulpit platitudes. Realise its might, divinity, and majesty in the exercise of lofty thought, in the performance of heroic deed. Adumbrate its oneness with the universe by holding commune with the roaring sea, with the gloomy mountain, the groaning wood, the moonbeams silvering fields of autumnal gold, and the white clouds flying over the black heaven thick-studded with the burning stars.

CHAPTER XVII.

Burning the Works of the Holy Ghost—Papist Disparagement of the Works of the Holy Ghost—The Virgin Mary's Shift—Advice to Jehovah—Papal Opposition to the Circulation of the Works of the Holy Ghost—Conditions under which Papists may Read the Works of the Holy Ghost.

One word of advice to Jehovah. He likes mortals to advise him as to when it is proper for him to send rain or wind or sun, and the like; and surely he will not be offended when I tender him a word of well-meant counsel in regard to his writings. What I wish to do is to strongly advise him to take more care of his book in the future than he has done in the past. He allowed it to get stolen out of the Ark of the Lord, and to be burnt in the Temple, or somehow lost by the Waters of Babel. It stood an almost exterminating incineration during the persecutions under Diocletian; but what I desire most prominently to draw his attention to is the fact that it ran a narrow escape of extermination by the decrees of the Council of Toulouse in 1229. By one of the decrees of that Council "laymen were forbidden to possess any books of the Bible, except a psalter or breviary, with a rosary,"* under pain of being dealt with by the Holy Inquisition. "An index of prohibited books was drawn up [Jehovah's book was one of them]; they were picked out and removed from the libraries, and then committed to the flames in heaps."† The book-burning was carried on with terrible zeal. "Nor were such laws imposed on booksellers and printers alone; it came to be a matter of conscience even for private persons to

* Riddle's "History of the Papacy," vol. ii.

† Ranke's "Popes of Rome," vol. i. p. 405.

give notice of forbidden books, and to co-operate towards their destruction. This measure was carried into effect with a severity that almost exceeds belief. Although the book on "The Benefits of Christ" had probably been disseminated to the extent of thousands of copies, *it has now utterly vanished; not a copy is anywhere to be found.*

Whole heaps of them that had been carried off were burned at Rome.*

With the Holy Catholic Church the Holy Ghost did not stand high as an author: "The excellence of the non-written word far surpasses that of the Scriptures," says Costor. "Scripture is a nose of wax, a dead letter, and that kills—a very husk without a kernel, a leaden rule, a *school for heretics*, a forest that serves as a refuge for robbers," remarks Lindanus.

Such a disparaging estimate being put upon the Holy Ghost's literary performances by the only kind of Christianity that existed for many centuries, it would not have been at all marvellous if the Scriptures had been completely wiped out of the literature of the world. Only a little more burning at the right time, and the Old and New Testaments would have shared the fate of the book, "The Benefits of Christ," which, in the words of Ranke, "has now utterly vanished."

It is never wise of God, or of any of his servants, to shut up a sacred book, a holy chemise, or anything else precious to the saints in any ark or casket and suppose it to be there. The Shift of the Virgin Mary had an experience closely similar to that of the Book of God. "This relic used to hold the first rank among the treasures of the Cathedral of Chartres. It was presented by the munificence of Charles the Bald. Many works have been written to prove its authenticity (*vide* Rouillard's "Parthenie"), and poems were written in its honour. It was declared to be the shift which Mary wore on the day of the Annunciation. This shift was enclosed in a chest, which was not opened, the faithful being confident that the holy shift was inside. However, in 1793, the delegates of the Revolutionary Government caused the chest to be opened, when they were surprised to find inside

* Ranke's "Popes of Rome," vol. i. pp. 160-1.

nothing but a piece of white silk of a square shape. This was all the more extraordinary as, during the centuries which preceded this irreverent inspection, it had been continually declared that the shift was of the same form as that worn by women of modern times. In fact, Roullard, who wrote under the inspection of the cathedral chapter, and from notes supplied by them, declares the form of the holy chemise to be the same as that worn by ordinary women. The seal of the Church was of the form of a chemise, and the holy shift was further declared to be the *Guardian of the City*.* I take the liberty of mentioning this just to point out to Jehovah (he likes to be prayed at and advised by mortals) not to again allow his book or Mary's nether garment, or any other nick-nack which he deems important, to be consigned to arks and boxes, where moths may possibly corrupt, and into which, apparently, thieves break through and steal.

And may I impress it upon Jehovah that, if he lose his book now, he will never find it again? No Shaphan will be able to discover it. If he did, some still smarter man than Shaphan would discover the questionable circumstances in Shaphan's discovery. No Ezra would be clever enough to re-write it now; for some Tübingen scholar, still more clever than Ezra, would publish ten thousand philological and historical proofs that the thing was a forgery, and the Book of God would be relegated to the black catalogue which contains the names of Collier, Ireland, Cunningham and Chatterton. Again I would impress upon the Lord to take care. When he lost his book formerly, he always found it again; but, should he lose it *now*, he will find it nevermore. Men have got a great deal sharper than they used to be; and it is all the better for men, but it is a great deal worse for books written by ghosts, whether "Holy" or otherwise.

And yet, O reader, remember that "the Bible is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne! Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it (where shall we

* Morin's "La Superstition," p. 84.

stop?), every *letter* of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God—not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the Throne, absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme.”*

When learned doctors differ so widely as to the value and character of the Ghost’s writings, what kind of decision can be arrived at by uninitiated laymen? Burgon faithfully represents the doctrine of the Reformation. The two rival sections of Western Christianity utterly disagree as to the merits of their Maker as a writer. The Protestant exalts him above Shakespeare; the Catholic sinks him below the poet Close.

A certain savage potentate, it is reported,† asked Queen Victoria how and why England was so great and powerful, and all the rest of it. Queen Victoria handed the dusky inquirer a Bible, with the sublime and right royal remark, “This is the source of England’s greatness.” This tremendous event, embodying and surcharged with the profoundest wisdom, is the subject of one of our great historical paintings, executed, of course, by a painter who is a choice mixture of an artist-pietist and flunkey.

To hear the orthodox Protestant rant and rave, this “open Bible” is the be-all and end-all of existence; and it has often struck me that all that was required to preach from it is an open mouth.

And yet, in spite of the oracular wisdom of our Sovereign lady the Queen, the large majority of Christians are dead against the “open Bible”—“the source of England’s greatness.” The Queen has the clergy of Luther and Kate von Bora on her side; but all the priests of the Scarlet Woman are against her, and hold Bible-reading to be an abomination. The Fourth Lateran Council and the Council of Trent prohibited the reading of the Scriptures; and the prohibition was further enforced by several papal bulls. Pope Innocent XI. commanded, in the year 1687, that every one should deliver up his Bible to the clergy of the place to be burnt. Pope Clement XIII. threatened every lay reader of an

* Burgon’s “Inspiration and Interpretation,” p. 89.

† The report is now said to be apocryphal.

Italian translation of the Bible with the galleys. Pope Pius VII., in a papal bull of 1816, said "he trembled at the spread of the Holy Scriptures." "This distribution," said he, "is a most artful crime, through which the true foundations of religion will be undermined. It is a pestilence which must be healed and extirpated; a most corrupting pollution to the faith of any soul. It has been proved by experience that the distribution of the Holy Scriptures in the mother tongue has done more mischief than good." The same Pope, in 1819, issued a papal bull concerning the distribution of the Scriptures in the Irish schools, which states, "that this is sowing weeds, giving corrupt teaching, whereby children, in early years, are inoculated with most injurious poison." In the year 1824, in an Encyclical, Leo XII. speaks of "a certain society, generally known as the Bible Society, which is spreading over the world the Bible, which is the gospel of the Devil." Gregory XVI. issued a bull in 1844 against the Bible Society, in which he says: "We have decided to condemn, with *apostolical* authority, every Bible Society." At the same time, he commands the clergy to tear the Bible in the mother tongue from the hands of the faithful. Pope Pius IX., in January 1850, says: "The Bible Society ventures to spread abroad the Scriptures in the mother tongue without any ecclesiastical notes or warning. Under false deception, it invites the faithful to read the same. You, reverend brethren, will see with what watchful wisdom you must bestir yourselves to awaken in the faithful a holy horror of such poisonous reading."

The Fourth Rule of the "Congregation of the Index" says: "If the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it." Dr. Hale, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Tuam, assured Lord John Russell that he would do his best to preserve the schools over which he had control "from the poison of the Scripture lessons." Father Quesnel, in his "Moral Reflections," laid down the following propositions:—"It is useful and necessary, at all times and in all places, and for all sorts of persons, to study and know the spirit, piety, and mysteries of the

Holy Scripture ;" that "the reading of the Holy Scripture is for everybody ;" that "the Lord's day ought to be sanctified by Christians in reading pious books, and, above all, the Holy Scripture."* Clement XI., in his work against the Jansenists, condemns these propositions of Quesnel as "false, captious, shocking, offensive to pious ears, pernicious, rash, seditious, impious, blasphemous."

Then, can no Roman Catholic, under any circumstances, read the Bible in the vulgar tongue? As an answer to this question, I make a further reference to Rule Four of the "Congregation of the Index." The would-be reader is "referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who *may*, by the advice of the priest or confessor, *permit* the reading of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured, by it ; and this permission they must have in writing. But, if any one should have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have delivered up such Bible to the ordinary." When the would-be reader has got written permission to read the "source of England's greatness," he is bound by the creed of his Church to read it in this wise: "I also admit the sacred Scriptures according to the sense which the Holy Mother Church has held, and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures ; nor will I ever take or interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the fathers."†

You are given the book to read on the understanding that you understand it exactly as some other person has understood it, however much that other person may have differed from you in mental power and educational discipline. This is quite analogous to allowing you to use a certain pair of spectacles if you will take an oath to see exactly the same with them as some previous wearer of them saw, however much the state of his eyesight may

* Vide "Bullarium Romanum," tom. viii. p. 118 ; Luxemburg, 1727.

† Pope Plus' Creed.

have differed from yours. But, of course, *some* very strong restraint must be put upon you when you are permitted to read "the Bible, which is the gospel of the Devil."

I was always told that the Bible was "the word of God." It seems, however, that a larger sect of Christians than that to which I belonged regarded and regard it, in the words of Leo XII., as "the gospel of the Devil." Now that I have come to years of discretion, I admit that, from internal evidence, I should attribute the authorship to the latter rather than to the former claimant. The wickedness of the volume is suggestive of the Infernal Penman. But God and the Devil were so very friendly in ancient times (*teste* their amicable interviews in the Book of Job) that the work is, perhaps, their joint effort, which they brought out on the understanding that they should share equal profits from probable sales. If my surmise be correct, their Divine and Satanic majesties must have had a row over the division of the profits—most probably the former tried to chisel the latter—for they have produced no such volume since, for which the world may be inexpressibly thankful. If we are to have works of joint authorship, give us no more from the pens of Jehovah and Satan. Let us have instead, Beaumont and Fletcher, or Tate and Brady.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Canon Westcott on the Works of the Holy Ghost—"La Bandera Catholica" on the Works of the Holy Ghost—List of those Burnt for Godsake by Torquemada and others—Bibliolaters and Biblioclasts—Gospel-Grinding Apologetics—Reply to the Same—Jules Soury on Jesus—Redemption—The Goblet of Fire.

WESTERN Christianity is split up into two great sections, the Papist and Protestant, known of all men to be Christ's disciples by the way they love one another. A great deal of the love they bear to each other continues, to the very hour in which I write, to hinge on the Ghost's literary performance. In Westminster Abbey the echo of the words of Canon Westcott have hardly yet died away :—

Again, then, we ask you, brethren, to claim your part in the work of bringing the Bible, the charter of hope, written in the facts of life, to every people of the world. We ask you to realise under the condition of the times the first sign of the Divine power of the Church, when the rushing wind and tongues of fire had marked the herald of the Gospel for their office ; this was the effect of their words upon the listening multitude out of every nation under heaven, that all "heard them speak in their own tongue the wonderful works of God." We ask you, then, I repeat, to hasten the fulfilment of this sign of the Church's spiritual life, to use and to extend the provision which has been made for offering freely, to every Church which is enriched or burdened by an ancient inheritance, to every solitary evangelist who is trying to win for Christ some tribe with stammering lips, the Word of Life as it has been written for us, the record of the wonderful things of God, the charter of our hope. He who spake of the old time through his prophets speaks through them still ; he who gives the faith in his own world-wide message will justify, will enforce, will bless it.

So much for Protestant Christianity in England. It hysterically shouts itself hoarse that the story of Jonah living three days inside the whale and of Christ's cursing

of the fig-tree should be taught to all kindreds and tongues and peoples. Turn we now to Papist Spain. In Barcelona there was quite recently a conflagration of the works of the Ghost, which "evil-disposed persons had introduced into the country, in spite of the vigilance of sincere Catholics." Those who introduced the Bibles and those who read them were not also burnt; but, as will be seen from the following peal of *Io triumphe*, "sincere Catholics" hope that that good time is coming when they cannot burn only Bibles, but burn the readers of them for Godsake.

A Spanish newspaper rejoices thus :—

"But Catholic Barcelona, the country of St. Eulalia, and of Blessed Oriol, has had the very great pleasure of witnessing an *Auto da Fé* in this last part of this nineteenth century. On the 29th ult., the festival of the Apostle St. James, in the Custom House Yard of this city, one of the most glorious traditions of the Catholic religion was carried out by the burning of Protestant books, destined to pervert the tender heart of our children.

"It is in vain that the sons of Satan lift up their voice and cry out against this most righteous act, which is but the beginning of a glorious era, of a new epoch, in which the brightness of the sun of righteousness, with its purest light, will dispel the darkness of ignorance and error. There is but a step between this event which we now record and the setting up of the Holy Inquisition. What we now want is the goodwill and united efforts of pure and true Catholics. It seems that the Government is disposed to carry out our desires, and it is only right that we should take advantage of this new turn of affairs, in order to reach as soon as possible the goal of our aspirations.

"Onwards, then, good and sincere Catholics! The happy day of our social and religious regeneration is not far off. The *Auto da Fé*, with which we are now occupied, is a clear and evident proof of the certainty of our indications. The re-establishment of the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition must soon take place. Its reign will be more glorious and fruitful in results than in the past,

and the number of those who will be called to suffer under it will exceed the number of the past. Our Catholic heart overflows with faith and enthusiasm, and the immense joy which we experience as we begin to reap the fruit of our present campaign exceeds all imagination. What a day of pleasure that will be for us when we see Freemasons, Spiritualists, Freethinkers and anti-Clericals writhing in the flames of the Inquisition!

"We judge our esteemed subscribers will read with pleasure the statistics respecting those who suffered under the Holy Tribunal from the year 1481 to 1808, when this so venerable an institution was abolished. As our readers will see, it refers to Spain only. We are unable to give the numbers of those who suffered in other countries. We have believed it right also to publish the names of those holy men under whose hands so many sinners suffered, that good Catholics may venerate their memory:—

By Torquemada—

Men and women burnt alive	...	...	...	10,220
Burnt in effigy	...	...	...	6,840
Condemned to other punishments	...	...	...	97,371

By Diego Deza—

Men and women burnt alive	...	...	...	2,592
Burnt in effigy	...	...	...	829
Condemned to other punishments	...	...	...	32,952

By Cardinal Jimenez de Cisneros—

Men and women burnt alive	...	...	...	3,564
Burnt in effigy	...	...	...	2,232
Condemned to other punishments	...	...	...	48,059

By Adrian de Florencia—

Men and women burnt alive	...	...	...	1,620
Burnt in effigy	...	...	...	560
Condemned to other punishments	..	...	...	21,835

"This Inquisitor established the holy office in America, and in 1522, as a reward for the same, he was elected vicar of Jesus Christ on earth; but so did he love his former ministry that he did not transfer it to another until the second year of his pontificate. He burnt during this time 324 persons, and condemned to various punishments, short of death, 4081.

.

Total number of men and women burnt alive under the ministry of forty-five holy inquisitors-general...	35,534
Total number burnt in effigy	18,637
Total number condemned to other punishments ...	393,533
General total	347,704*

This is rather a different tune to that played by Canon Westcott. The Ghost must have some amusement in watching the fate of his Book. In Westminster it is exalted to heaven; in Barcelona it is thrust down to hell. The devout Papists of Spain, apparently, look forward with great gusto to the prospect of dancing a demon-jig round a roaring fire of Bibles and Bible-Bangers. I cannot say whether a man whom the Father "created" roasting on a fiery pile of books that the Ghost wrote is very amusing to Sarah and Abimelech and to Paul and Thecla; but it would apparently be an exceedingly joyful sight to many sincere Christians who are still on this earth waiting for their summons to accept of harps and wings. It says something for the persistency in Christendom of God and his Book that even at this hour, in order to suppress it, there are those who gloat over the tortures and agonies of the Inquisition, and glory in the prospect of their being re-established. On the other hand, there are those who, for the sake of the Book, would be prepared to endure those tortures and agonies. It is only because these bibliolaters and biblioclasts, the bookites and the anti-bookites, hold each other in check, each being afraid of the other, that life is worth living. There is much amusement, of a kind, to be derived from throwing a bone into a kennel of hungry dogs. But that is a mere drop in the bucket to the amusement, of a kind, the hosts of heaven must experience from seeing the Ghost's Book thrown among some three hundred millions of fools. Witnessing the wrangling and the hating, the burning and the throat-cutting, must do something to relieve the monotony of eternity.

"All this is so very unlike the teachings of the blessed Saviour!" whines the gospel-grinder, and the world's ordinary holy wastrel believes him. "My dear brothers

* From the Spanish periodical, *La Bandera Catholica* (Catholic Banner), of July 29th, 1883.

and sisters in the Lord, the blessed Jesus never commanded any one to burn books, much less to burn human beings. It is the evil devices of man to which we are indebted for the burnt Bibles and the tortured martyrs. It is a corrupt Church—it is the Harlot of Babylon—that has made the earth red with blood and fire."

"The evil devices of man!" And where was Omnipotence and Benevolence when man was allowed to follow "evil devices"? Omnipotence *could* have kept him, and Benevolence *would* have kept him, from following such devices. Does he follow them of his *free will*? Well, even if his will were free, why is it free, when its freedom is apparently a curse? Did Omnipotence and Benevolence give him a free will, while Omniscience knew what the consequence would be? Such Omnipotence is a sham, such Benevolence a delusion, such Omniscience a lie.

Is man simply a matter of kinetics? Is his will and all else of him subject to dynamic law—the law making his will, and not his will the law? Then the law that determines his will maketh not uniformly for righteousness, and who or what is responsible for that fact? What is it that has influenced the human will to burn books and men? Which is the principle of Good, which is the principle of Evil, which eidolon is Ormuz, and which is Ahriman? If the "creator" that "created" the will free left it free to burn books and men, would it not have been better that he had not left it free? Is freedom to burn yourself or freedom to burn your neighbour a blessing or a curse? If man has no freedom, he has no responsibility; if he has freedom, there is a heavy responsibility upon the "creator" who gave it to him.

Be all this as it may, man burnt his neighbour, and his neighbour sang hymns and heavenly cock-o-lorums, and rejoiced in being burnt. He also burnt the works of the Ghost, and would very likely have burnt the Ghost himself if he had been visible and tangible. Man nailed the Son to two sticks, as you have seen a weasel nailed to a barn door; and the hand and hammer that drove nails into the Son would hardly have scrupled to drive them into the Father and the Ghost, only they have

always kept well out of the way. The next to burning a writer's self is to burn his book, and the Ghost's book has been burnt in tons. Buggins of Bethel says that the Blessed Jesus would not approve of the burning of men and books. Possibly the "blessed Jesus" of Buggins of Bethel would not; but then, there are as many Jesuses as there are Bugginses. The Jesus of the Gospels is so hazily and imperfectly drawn that any one can take his pencil and finish off the picture to suit his own predilection and idiosyncrasy. The strongest lines in the Gospel drawing are those that embody a dash of fanaticism and mental aberration. If you maintain from your delineation of the character of the Son that he would not have burnt the writings of the Ghost in the same fire with those who read them, I, from a delineation quite as legitimate, will contend that he who scourged the money-changers, cursed the fig-tree, and thrust Chorazin "down to hell" gives a warranty to the career of Torquemada and Deza.

In short, the best and the worst of Jesus is that he is "all things to all men." There is no diabolical crime that his name has not been quoted to warrant; there is no exalted virtue his name has not been invoked to approve. "Each Church, each Christian age and generation," remarks Soury,* "has had its own Jesus. The 'meek' Jesus of Renan is, for certain, neither the Jesus of James nor of John, the bosom companions of the man Jesus, as he really was. The grace and charm of the Galilean idyll are, unfortunately, terribly marred by the gloomy figures to which they introduce us. It is to be feared that the beautiful, the 'divine' dream, as he would say, which the eminent scholar experienced in the very country of the Gospel, will have the fate of the 'Jaconda' of Da Vinci, and many of the religious pictures of Raphael and Michael Angelo. Such dreams are admirable, but they are bound to fade. But, conceding the rank of historical documents to the Gospels—that is, the first three Gospels, and particularly the more primary and important of them (namely, the Gospel according to Mark), the Jesus who rises up and comes

* "Jesus and the Gospels, pp. 29, 30.

out from those old Judaising writings is truly no idyllic personage, no meek dreamer, no mild and amiable moralist; on the contrary, he is very much more of a Jew fanatic, attacking without measure the society of his time, a narrow and obstinate visionary, a half-lucid thaumaturge, subject to fits of passion, which caused him to be looked upon as crazy by his own people. In the eyes of his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen he was all that, and he is the same in ours. Only, far from imputing it to him as a matter for incrimination, we perceive, in the mental derangement under which he laboured, the determining condition of his pre-eminence, the intimate cause of his influence on the world."

Jules Soury clearly considers Christ to have been insane. But, most likely, a mad sinner required a mad saviour. Man is so irreclaimably mad that no sane deity would have taken the trouble to have redeemed him. The redemption is as insane as the redeemer. Nobody knows for certain whether it was for all the world or only for the elect. Nobody knows exactly what they are to be redeemed from, for hell is altering its name and changing its temperature and getting pretty well exploded. Although the world is every day becoming more sure that there is no hell and ought to be none, to keep men out of this sheol they pay many millions a year to hundreds of thousands of professional impostors and chartered necromancers. A sane man is not at home in this world. He is lost among the fools, like a grain of corn in a bushel of chaff. For ages the world burned or hanged all its wise men; now it neglects and starves them. Hell, poor noodle! Who or what would be at the trouble of keeping up a good hot hell for *you*? Hell indeed! All that *you* require is the conversion of the universe into an asylum for mediocre and credulous imbeciles.

These are bitter words; but they are not the words of a Timon or a Coriolanus, of a pessimist or a misanthrope. They are written in sorrow, not in anger. They are written, not because they are amiably pleasant, but because they are terribly true. The blight destroys the apple-blossom, and the mildew the corn; but ecclesiasticism has nearly ruined mankind. The priest, by his

incomprehensible dogmas, and his comprehensible hell to enforce him, has made the layman the unthinking and conventional imbecile that he is. The priest has caught hold of man's tenderest and holiest emotions in order to drag him thereby unto ruin and death.

By dint of the figment of God and his Book he has persuaded man that he is an heir of eternal misery. Then he has produced a redeemer to stand between him and his misery, and he appeals on behalf of this redeemer to man's noblest gratitude. The method of this appeal is sensational. It points to this redeemer leaving, for man's sake, glory and splendour for ignominy and squalor. It points, with melodramatic force, over the chasm of the centuries to a tree on Calvary's hill, and the Creator and Lord of the universe voluntarily nailed to it to save man from everlasting suffering in the realms of the Infernal. A crown of thorns envelops the bleeding brow of God. A sponge dipped in vinegar is raised on a reed to the dry and pain-writhing lip of Omnipotence. Blood trickles down in crimson drops from where the spikes had been hammered through the feet and hands of the Man of Sorrows. Down on the uncovered head, down on the naked and quivering limb, the Syrian sun bursts fiercely over the hill-top, over the cross—every ray cutting like a flaming sword and drying up in torment the protruding, parched, and swollen tongue and the limbs from which the gore has dripped to allow them the more readily to shrivel up in agony. Then Death comes—his avatar a terrible cry, at which the world shudders. The side is gashed to the bowels with a Roman spear. The earthquake rends the globe, the mouldered dead leap from their graves, and the gloom of preternatural darkness falls upon the naked and white corpse and upon the lonely hill. The priest has forced down Humanity's throat this goblet of fire, and, in the interests of the priest, Humanity has gone delirious.

CHAPTER XIX.

Acquaintance with God's Book—The Assault not upon the Bible's Own Pretensions, but upon the Pretensions made for it—Two "Creations," the First by the Gods, the Second by the Lord—Reconcilement of the Two Conflicting Accounts—Woman made in the Dark—The Damnation-Trap in Eden—THE Question.

I AM no bigot for or against his Book, being neither Protestant nor Papist; and I simply wish to give the Ghost fair play as an author. I have said little about the merits of his work; but that is not because they, such as they are, have escaped my recognition. From my earliest boyhood I have been steeped in the writings of this writer. As a child, I had heard of the Waters of Babel in Babylonia before I had heard of the Water of Dee in my own Galloway. For long, Jordan was a more familiar word than Clyde; and I knew of Carmel and Olivet years before I had heard of Cairngorm and Ben Nevis. I could tell all about Adoption, Sanctification, and Redemption before I knew the genitive from the dative, before I had heard of the Equator or could tell how many roods there were in an acre. I was suckled upon "the milk of the word;" I was dandled on the knee of the Virgin Mary; and the linen that enshrouded the corpse of Jesus was my swaddling clothes. Before I had as yet learned to read I could recite from memory some dozens of the "psalms of David." In my native moorlands the echo of the voices of the Covenanters had hardly as yet died away. Tradition fondly nursed the martyrs' memory; I beheld their graves in the grey cairns, and the burn wimpling over the pebbles murmured their dirge. The plaided shepherd on the hill-side spake of them, and so did the miry-footed ploughman on the furrowed field.

Every one knew the Bible. The buirdly farmer read it night and morning regularly, summer and winter, to his family and servants; and the lone old woman stopped her wheel to read it in her thatched cot miles away on the moor among the peats, the heather, and the peewheets. They were familiar with Moses who had never heard of Robert Peel, and they were intimate with the Siege of Jericho who knew nothing of the Siege of Badajos. David was not only King of Israel; he was, practically, King of rural Scotland. Never by the Waters of Babel were the Songs of Zion sung more devoutly than by the Nith and the Cairn.

A remnant of Covenanting times, the phraseology of the Bible entered into the parlance of ordinary life, always solemnly, never irreverently. This custom sank deep into my childhood's speech, and subsequently into my literary style. I have read many, many books now besides the Bible; but its English and its forms of expression are even yet the bed-rock upon which the edifice of my diction stands. Those who know me know that I am neither irreverent nor ungrateful. The book that inspired my earliest awe does not lightly provoke my most recent scoff. A book to which I owe so much—from which, at my mother's knee, I learned how to read, does not find me an ungrateful recipient of its blessings and benefits. I know its antique nooks of familiar quaintness; I know its glimpses into the simple heart of the olden world; I know its curious tales and fascinating incidents; I know how the comet of its history trails its tail through a chaos of legendary mist; I know the magnificent fervour of its devotional passages; I know the artless simplicity of its prose; I know the lurid thunder-light of its poetry; I know its piping times of peace by the Jordan or the Kedron; I know its fury of fire and sword, the army of the Lord of Hosts, the rush of the chariot, the thrust of the spear; the buckler, the javelin, and garments rolled in blood.

It is not the Bible and the pretensions it makes for itself that I assail; it is the Bible and the pretensions in regard to it put forth by Protestant Christianity. Taken for what it really is—a collection of more or less connected tracts belonging to times more or less remote,

and reflecting as it does the deed and motive of ages and races that are no more—it is a deeply-interesting antiquarian study. But here its use and its merit end. That there is anything divine and supernatural about it more than there are about the Vedas and the Koran and the *Times* newspaper is an utterly untenable hypothesis. When, a century or two hence, the student looks back upon it, all the warping prejudices in its favour forgotten, it will be to him all but incredible that such a bundle of heterogeneous tracts was ever regarded as one homogeneous volume, upon which a definite religious system could be founded. It will appear to him that the impudence and ingenuity which could find a religious system in such a mass of self-contradicting platitudes and exploded absurdity could have found a religious system in a wheel-barrow or in a bag of nails.

I have no irreverence for the Bible and its God as *the Bible and its God*. It and he were the natural evolutionary product and index of a remote and half-barbarous time. The Bible as the Bible and Jehovah as Jehovah I cannot treat with disrespect. It would be quite as legitimate to heap ridicule upon the fact that I had to creep before I had learnt to walk. The Bible and Jehovah are interesting relics of the cradle upon which the baby-world leant before it had strength to stand. I have no quarrel with those quaint old relics, *per se*; but when I find that the world would still lean upon them after all these long and weary centuries, in the interests of the human race I do my best to dash the relics to splinters. It is not the Book and the God, in themselves, that provoke my enmity; it is the pretensions put forward on their behalf by an interested priesthood. These pretensions must excite in every man who is a patriot and a friend of his race feelings of repugnance and aversion. I meet these Protestant pretensions with the laugh of derision, with the stab of hatred.

As I may possibly have to spend eternity with him, may I respectfully ask Jehovah a question or two which are personal, but, I trust, not impertinent? How many gods was he originally, and in what mysterious hiatus between the first and second chapter of Genesis did he

get altered from being a plurality of gods into one god? In the first verse of the Ghost's book we find it was *Elohim* (the *gods*) who "created the heavens and the earth." But, in the fourth verse of the second chapter, we find that it was not the gods, but the Lord God, or Jehovah, who started the universe. It requires no ripe scholarship to recognise this. All preachers except those of the unlearned Booth and Spurgeon order are aware of the discrepancy to which I refer; but the admission of it would not comport with the interests of their business of gospel-grinding, so they are dishonestly silent. One passage of Scripture they never for a moment forget—the passage which states that the Tree of Knowledge bears "Forbidden Fruit." Dispel ignorance and set the dupes of Christianity on the path of earnest and honest inquiry, and the occupation of the priest is gone. It would never do to impress it upon pious Mr. John Smith, nonconformist and cheesemonger, that the *gods* created the heaven and the earth, and that subsequently the Lord God created them over again.

If it were to be impressed upon Mr. Smith that the heaven and the earth were "created" twice over, first by a plurality of gods and next by a single god, he might stop his pew-rents, and cease to drag to the local Bethel his frump of a wife, Mary Anne, and his giglet of a daughter, Araminta. A god more or less or a world more or less would be small thing to the parson compared with Mr. J. Smith ceasing to pay his pew-rents and to air off sacredly the Lord's-Day haberdashery upon his Mary Anne and his Araminta. Every kind of parson except the more rabid street-corner kind knows that the heaven and the earth were "created" by the *gods*, but, for their salary's sake, they are prepared to suppress this knowledge. Some of those Most Low valets of the Most High have only about £100 per annum. So, for this £100 per annum, they, all their lives, read the very first line of the Bible erroneously, making one god where there are several gods. The Ghost goes in for polytheism; but Christian theology goes in for monotheism, and the Ghost is made a monotheist whether he will or not. The Ghost tells us that the *gods* "created" this planet; but the parsons know better than the poor

ignorant Ghost, and put him right on the subject. They were, of course, present at the "Creation," and saw how the thing was done and how many gods were engaged in it, and this gives them full warranty to correct the Ghost in the very first line he has written.

When the parsons are found out, when even their dupe, Mr. J. Smith, stops cutting cheese with a wire to ask how the blazes it came about that the world was "created" by a batch of gods, and then, in next chapter, "created" over again by a solitary but exceedingly clever god, the poor spider that spins prayers will concoct some stupidly ingenious answer. He will very likely contend that, like a reaping machine, God, with a big G, consists of a great number of parts, and that, finding that he had before him the tough job of "creating" the universe, he screwed himself to pieces that he might the more readily accomplish the task. When he "created" the world for the second time, knowing that the job would be easier this time, he gathered up his *disjecta membra*, and screwed himself together, so as to make one compact and good-sized God. "My Christian brethren, this is the explanation. Wicked Infidels, in their lack of the spirit of God dwelling within them, cannot see this beautiful manifestation of divine power, for it is spiritually discerned. Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, it is simply a matter of divine screwing and unscrewing. In the first chapter of his own Holy Word God is *not* screwed, in the second chapter he *is* screwed. And whatsoever he screweth in heaven, it shall be screwed unto him; and whatsoever he screweth on earth it shall be screwed unto him again. Forever blessed be his holy name. Let us pray." And Mr J. Smith will be satisfied with the explanation, and his Mary Anne and his Araminta will be more than satisfied. Every day in the year the Christian clergy give their congregations explanations more preposterous than this; and the congregations accept such explanations and pay for them; for God made man only a little lower than the angel—the *angel* being most probably, a misprint for *the ass*.

The *gods* in the first chapter of Genesis seem to have "created" a rather better universe than the *god* "created" in the second chapter of Genesis. The *god*

forgot in this second "creation" to make the sun, moon, and stars. But the *gods* in the first creation had "made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night," and "the stars also." It was the second "creation" that went in for the rib business, and the performing of the surgical operation upon Adam while he slept. *God* seems to have been so absorbed in this feat that he forgot to "create" the sun, moon, and stars. So, out of the rib, woman must have been made *in the dark*. It has often occurred to me that she is not all she should be; but, considering that she was made out of a rib, and in the dark, I must admit that she is a really wonderful performance. If in the second "creation" Jehovah had not been in such a hurry to make her that he forgot to "create" the sun, Lord only knows what she would have been like! Even as it is, she is the best thing he has ever made. And all out of a rib and in the dark! I am constrained to admit that the Lord is not without a certain amount of cleverness.

Still harping on woman, the Lord forgot, in the second "creation," to make fish as well as the sun, moon, and stars. I sympathise with him: if you get your head thoroughly taken up about a woman, you are apt to forget a great many things you would do better to remember. The Lord, however, remembered to make a multitude of birds and animals generally. He took it into his head that he would like to hear what Adam would call them; so he sent them up in droves before Adam to have them named. How the Lord found them in the dark is not stated; and how Adam saw them in the dark the divine penman sayeth not. Possibly Adam *felt* them in order that he might give them appropriate names. Feeling the lion, especially about the jaws, must have been highly interesting; feeling the business end of the wasp would be a trifle exciting; and, as he felt the cobra, that hospitable worthy would anoint him with mucus and invite him to go inside. The laughter of Jehovah must have shaken the darkness as he heard Adam naming the tiger—and the tiger naming Adam. But all things, including all future inventions, were known to the Omniscient, so he possibly struck a lucifer

on his boot that Adam might see not to meddle too freely with the tails of such creatures as the scorpion. There are a few trifles connected with this first and second "creation" that are not quite clear to me, and, if Jehovah would enlighten me on the subject a little just now, it might prevent my troubling him by putting questions to him when I get into Abraham's bosom. He, it would seem, from the second chapter of Genesis, made woman in the dark, and, up to this time, he has kept me completely in the dark as to how he did it.

I should regret to be considered troublesome; but I should like to ask Jehovah one or two more trifling questions, the answers to which might put himself and myself on less strained relationships than at present exist between us. If he do not care to roar at me all the way down from the kingdom of heaven, stunning Rahab and alarming "the Lamb's wife," a still small voice, if it speak sense, will quite satisfy me. He may address me some night after I am in bed. I am sure to know his voice instantly from that of bellicose and amatory cats in the back yard, and I will at once get up on my elbow and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth thee."

1. We learn from the Ghost's Book that Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Does the voice of the Lord God often walk in gardens and elsewhere, and does it wear Wellington boots?

2. Was it from the pigeons at Hurlingham, that are hatched to be shot, that Jehovah caught the idea of "creating" man to be cursed? Did Jehovah derive great pleasure from the cursing of the two poor featherless bipeds, Adam and Eve? Is it the favourite recreation of deity to place two weak, silly creatures in a garden, when, in that garden, he has placed a damnation-trap and baited it with an apple, knowing well that his two poor children would munch at the apple, and thereby spring the damnation-trap, letting its terrible teeth cut through their flesh and rasp upon their bones, and upon the bones of generations yet unborn? When I get to heaven am I to be imbued with tastes which will enable me to delight in this sort of thing? If yes, would I

not be a trifle better in hell, and, if possible, even further my God from thee?

3. The trap sprang upon the two rabbits in Eden, and it was some 4000 years before anything was done to take its iron out of their flesh, to take its teeth out of their bones. Is this a specimen of "loving kindness and tender mercy" as the expression is understood in heaven? Did the monotheos take 4000 years to unscrew himself into segments, and send down the third part of himself to see what could be done by way of atoning for the snapping of that trap in Eden? What a clumsily-constructed monotheos! I could unscrew a tricycle to pieces in four minutes. It apparently takes 4000 years to screw a deity into three. It shall take less than 4000 years now, however, to screw this deity out of existence. Have not men eaten of the "forbidden fruit" of the tree of Knowledge, and is not this fact screwing Jehovah's neck?

4. After the third part did come down here to see what could be done for the limbs which had been broken in Eden's patent damnation-trap, could he, she, or it not have set about the task in a more sensible fashion? Tramping about in an obscure and outlandish corner of the world, accompanied by twelve yokels and a few huzzies, and talking communism and nonsense, was, to put it mildly, a roundabout way of breaking the rusty iron and the gory teeth of that trap in which all creation groaned. This third part of deity lived as long as it could, and died when it could not help it; and I am rather anxious to know what this had to do with the redemption of mankind. Had not the last blossom that fell from the apple tree, has not every snow-drop that holds out its white cup to catch the dew, has not every flake of thistle-down which the wind blows over the field, as much to do with the redemption of man as had the life and death of that poor peasant of Palestine? Answer me, O God; and you can answer me only one way, unless you be as priest-cursed and credulous as the bipeds down here who are half blind to the glory of *thy* creation, living as they do in a fantastic and horror-haunted creation of their own brain. Send us common sense, and

keep thy "only begotten son" to thyself, and make a kirk and mill of him. Will you only do this Lord, and you and I will be friends forever.

5. That last question is my main one. Will you not expose this redemption sham and enjoin upon man to gird up his loins and redeem himself? Turn his eyes away from that well-meaning rustic who may or may not have been crucified some 2000 years ago. Direct man to rely upon righteousness and love and high endeavour to redeem himself from crime and sorrow and man's inhumanity to man. Will you do this? This *is* my question, and the other trifles I hardly care whether you answer or no. Do not answer them Lord if it give you the least trouble. But, if drawing your attention to the matter does not inconvenience you, you might be good enough to say whether the exhumation of certain tablets in Assyria does not prove that the Sabbath you instituted when you had done "creating" the world was not known in the world centuries before either you or your scribe Moses were in existence? According to your Book, it is only 6000 years since you "created" the world, and it can be proved that the Sabbath was celebrated in that part of the world known as Assyria long before the world was "created" and before Jehovah had been invented. How do you account for this? If you cannot make it out, ask David. If he cannot answer you, ask Sarah. Anachronism! Poor Semitic deity!—Man was in the world long before you were, and he will be in it long after you are dead.

CHAPTER XX.

Biblical Self-Contradictions—Suggested Reasons for the Self-Contradictions—Biblical Obscenity—Admissions as to Biblical Obscenity—Numerical Efficiency of the Different Religions of the World.

LORD, there is another trifle or two I should like to bring under thy notice. I do not mind thy Book being contradicted by Science; for what is Science to thee? Science often alters its tune, and I am prepared to back thee against Science any day. Let Science contradict thee as it may; that, to minds that have widely envisaged the problem of Being, is a small matter. But the worst of it is, O Lord, thou contradictest thyself, and this many times and oft. Thou beginnest thy book with self-contradictions, and, that thou mayest be consistent, thou carriest these self-contradictions right through, from Genesis to Revelation. Just by way of specimen, let us begin at the beginning. If thou hast a copy of thine own Book at hand, may I ask thee to compare the second with the first chapter of Genesis:—

Genesis—Chap. I.

Water abundant (verses 2, 6, 9, and 10).

Vegetation, herbs, grass, trees, produced by an almighty feat (11 and 12).

Animals created before man (20, 21, 24, and 25).

Man and woman created same day in the image of God (26 and 27).

Man to have dominion over all the earth (28).

Genesis—Chap. II.

Water deficient (verses 5 and 6).

Vegetation does not grow, because, as yet, it had not rained upon the earth; neither was there any man to till the ground (5).

Animals created after man (19).

Man created first (7). Woman created some time afterwards, from a rib taken out of the man (22).

Man made to keep and dress the garden (15).

Thou wilt excuse my drawing thy attention to this. It is now a good while since the "creation;" and it may be thou canst not, at this distance of time, quite remember how the thing was done, and how these Genesaic notes came to be jotted down. When thou hast a spare afternoon thou mayst possibly go over these notes and reconcile them. This would make belief in thy book and in thee a trifle easier than it is at present. Of course, in the bustle of "creation" the notes recording the progress of the event may have been very roughly jotted down, and ever since thou mayst have been so busy numbering the hairs of our heads and watching sparrows fall that thou hast never had leisure to revise thy notes. For a small consideration, I will revise them for thee—for a better harp than usual, a pair of extra long wings, and a seat close to Sarah.

You are, no doubt, in some respects, a very good deity. I have a lingering apprehension that your Book makes you much worse than you are, and that, if the said Book were competently corrected, you would appear in your true light, and command the respect of all of us. Your careless and unrevised writing has done you incalculable injury. I have heard—likely so have you—of a Georgia merchant, who, a short time ago, received the following order from a customer:—

"Please send me one dollar's worth of coffy, and one dollar's worth of shoogar, some small nales. My wife had a baby last nite, also two padlocks and a monkey rench."

Through her husband's careless composition this American woman was represented as having brought forth not only a baby, but two padlocks and a monkey-wrench! I apprehend it was some similarly inadvertent writing on your part, Lord, that has given the impression that a virgin bore you a son by the Holy Ghost. I am sure you never would have given such an impression in your sane senses and with time to revise. I suspect I, even I, have had experiences somewhat similar to yours. A good many years ago I wrote, "This is Palm Sunday." The compositor set it up, "This is Sam Lundy." I felt irritated, and wrote on the margin of the proof, "Who the deuce is Sam Lundy?" To my horror when, next

morning, I saw the impression which had been thrown off, a certain sentence ran, "This is Sam Lundy.—Who the deuce is Sam Lundy?" You, Lord, in that extraordinary Book of yours, must surely have suffered from this sort of thing.

Lord, where were you brought up? Your son was born in a stable; and, if you were brought up in one, I must excuse you for the lack of refinement and even decency which characterises much of your Book. To tell you the candid truth, your Book is *obscene*. I could point you out passage after passage, *ad nauseam*, which would incontrovertibly establish my assertion. But, if I were to do so, my Book would be nearly as nasty as yours; and, although it may not shock the feelings and injure the reputation of a deity to write an obscene book, it would shock the feelings and injure the reputation of any ordinary human author, including the one who at present, with so much candour, addresses you.

Dens and Liguori* are filthier even than you; but you beat Ovid in nastiness and Boccaccio in lasciviousness; only Boccaccio is a smarter and more accomplished writer than you. Many writers have eclipsed the Ghost at pretty and witty voluptuousness; but, for good, clean, unornamental dirt, I would back him against any author, living or dead. Do you ask me to quote from your Book to establish my position? I should rather not, unless you really insist upon my doing so.

You will have heard, Lord, of one of your creatures of the name of R. L. Shiel? Of course you will have heard of him, for he was a person of some distinction, being the Right Honourable Richard Lalor Shiel, M.P. Well, this creature whom you "created," and whom you saw fit to exalt to the position of Member of Parliament, says:—

Many passages in Scripture are written with such force, and, I may say, with such nakedness of diction, as to render them unfit for indiscriminate perusal. There are parts of the Old Testament in which images of voluptuousness are presented to the mind on which the imagination of a youthful female ought not to be permitted to repose. I will venture to assert that the Odes of Anacreon do not display more luxury of imagination or combine more sensual associa-

* See "The Confessional: an *Exposure*," by Saladin.

tions than parts of the Old Testament. . . The Bible contains tales of atrocity at which human nature shudders. Parts of the Holy writings consist of history and of the narration of facts of a kind that cannot be mentioned in the presence of a virtuous woman without exciting horror. Should a woman be permitted to read in her chamber what she would tremble to hear at her domestic board? Should she con over and revolve what she would rather die than utter.

And, Lord, perhaps you would not think it, but another creature of thine, in his estimate of thy blessed Book, has also dared to be honest even to thee. You have heard, perhaps, of Judge Huntly Williams, of the Supreme Court of Victoria.* I am almost certain you have heard of him, for he was a judge of considerable power, and "the powers that be are ordained of God." Well, thy creature, Huntly Williams, writes thus :—

I assert, without fear of contradiction, that no English author has ever ventured to put into a book a tenth part of the filth that is to be found passing throughout the Old Testament. In schools where the Bible is read and learnt it is a well-known fact that idle and prurient-minded boys spend a considerable portion of their time in looking up and gloating over all those filthy stories with which the Old Testament teems. There are pages upon pages and chapters upon chapters that no father or mother worthy of the name would ever dream of reading to or wittingly allow a son or daughter to read. Yet, because ever since Christianity has had a Bible, the Old Testament has formed a major portion of it, and children are trained up to consider that as the revelation of the Almighty, which they are not allowed to, and do not, read, except by stealth, and which any adult even would be ashamed to be caught reading by others. Then, again, a further considerable portion of the Old Testament is of the most bloodthirsty, cruel, and brutal description; and so diffused are the characteristics, immorality and indecency, of vengeance, blood-thirstiness, and cruelty, throughout the Old Testament that, if you keep on rejecting the chapter or book in which they appear, the result will be that you will have very little left.

And, Lord, you will perhaps, by this time, have heard of America. When you "created" the heavens and the earth you seem to have had no idea that you had "created" America, and neither the devil nor your son appears to have had any notion of the existence of such a continent when they went up together into a high mountain to survey "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." When you "created" you seem to

* In "Religion without Superstition."

have "created" a good deal more than you had intended to "create." I too am somewhat like thee in this respect at least ; I too have sometimes done more than I had intended. For instance, once, at Carlyle's Craigenputtock, I had intended to have merely leapt into the saddle ; but, instead, I leapt clean over the horse's back and fell on the other side, and nearly broke my neck.

Well, in this America, which you will find in any good atlas, there lived a worm of the dust of the name of Henry Ward Beecher. He died pretty old and tough, and it is a good while since you "created" him ; so I take this opportunity of drawing your attention to him. He was the *Rev.* Henry Ward Beecher, and wore your livery. Well, he too actually had the impudence to pronounce your Book not quite the sort of work to put into the hands of a young lady. Speaking of the *Rev.* Henry Ward Beecher, Mr Parke Godwin says : "His rejection of the Bible as an authority in doctrine and morals is as complete as that of Herbert Spencer, or Frederick Harrison, or Tyndall, or Huxley, or Haeckel, or Monsigneur Capel." (These are all horrible persons, O Lord.) "Plymouth Pulpit is a Rationalist platform from which Mr Moncure Conway" (another horrible person) "might, with perfect propriety, be asked to speak." Find out America, and keep an eye on the Plymouth Pulpit.

I need not ask thee, Lord, if thou hast heard of the *Rev.* Canon Richards, of Swansea. He was one of thine own servants, specially ordained by thee to help to cultivate the Welsh corner of thy vineyard. Well, thy servant, Canon Richards, exhorted the Swansea School Board thus : "Put only the New Testament in the hands of the children ; do not give them the Old, if you have any regard for their morality." Great God, that was Canon Richards' opinion of your Book—what must have been his opinion of *you*, the writer of it? You can settle that matter with him when he and you meet. You will make him change his opinion, or at all events his expression of it, when you get your claws into him. He did not, you will observe, seem to think the New Testament as immoral as the Old. This shows there is some hope for you yet ; that, in spite of your being the "unchangeable," you improve as you go along

Peradventure, if you are spared to write yet another New Testament, you may have become as proper as the old maid I knew who blushed to look at even the *naked* legs of a table, and insisted that they should be draped. Keep an eye, Lord, on that Canon Richards, of Swansea. Depend upon it, he cannot think over highly of you when he thinks so meanly of your Book. Whatever can it be he objected to? You may, in your divine wisdom, have, now and again, lapsed into the suggestively obscene; but then, in your Word, you make ample atonement for that by the pure and holy incidents connected with Onan, with Judah and the girl by the wayside, with Lot and his daughters, with the Levite and his concubine, and with the lass whose name was Tamar. The facts connected with these and many other sweet and elevated incidents should be carefully taught, illustrated by diagrams, etc., so that little children may be fitted to come unto thee, and so that thy name may be glorified. How didst thou, Lord, come to make a canon of this man Richards? How didst thou manage to give him the impudence to consider thy Book *obscene* and calculated to corrupt the morals of the children of Swansea? Thou wilt, as I have already hinted, have something to say to him when thou meetest him. He evidently requires a long dose of brimstone, and to be brought into the refined society of the never-dying worm—a useful worm that in its way. Draw its special attention to the Rev. Canon Richards, of Swansea. But obscenity is not a subject upon which I delight to write; so, with these few words, I leave it and pass on.

Now for a more savoury subject. Thy son said, eighteen centuries ago: "Go ye unto all the earth and preach the gospel to every creature." I should like to draw your attention to the fact that this order has not been obeyed to any very appreciable extent. Some few missionaries have obeyed the command and made a competence by selling to the "heathen" the pills of thy servant Cocker. Some other missionaries, however, have been less fortunate, and, by the "heathen," have been eaten raw and without salt. And, upon the whole, the thing has failed. I sometimes think thou hast given man up altogether as not worth

any more "redeeming," as not even worth the trouble of erasing from the universe. If this be so, any figures in regard to Man would bore and irritate you. You used to do a good deal of figuring over him at one time; even the hairs of his head were all numbered. Even if you have given up counting his hairs, the following few figures in regard to him may possibly be of interest to you. The figures are by one of your own hired servants, by Bishop Fisher, and may save you some trouble in making the calculation for yourself, for mankind are not easily counted—there are always so many of them from home, and so many of them in bed, and so many of them you are apt to mistake for apes and so many for pigs.

Bishop Fisher, in a recent paper, computes the human family of the world to be 1,450,000,000 of individuals, and divides them as follows:—860,000,000 are Pagan, comprising 600,000,000 of Brahma-Buddhists, or Brahmans and Buddhists, 160,000,000 of unclassified Pagans. 100,000,000 Parsees, Confucianists, Shintoists, Jains, and other smaller Pagan sects; 410,000,000 are Christians, composed of 225,000,000 Roman Catholics, 75,000,000 of the Greek Church, and 110,000,000 Protestants; 180,000,000 Mohammedans; 8,000,000 Jews. The 860,000,000 of Pagans are found chiefly in Asia and Africa, and comprise 99-100ths of the population, with scattered millions in the Americas and islands of the sea. The 410,000,000 Christians constitute the body of Europe and nine-tenths of the Americas, with a few millions in Asia, Africa, and the islands. The Mohammedans are found chiefly in Asia and Africa. The Jews are scattered in all lands, without a home or country. The Greek Christians are mainly in European Russia, with a few millions in Asia and in the smaller principalities of South-Eastern Europe, extending into Africa. Western and Southern Europe is divided between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in proportion to three parts Romanists to two parts Protestants. The Romanists hold substantially Austria, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, with a large fraction of France, a considerable part of Germany, the larger part of Ireland, and a strong following in England. The Catholics have

almost entire South and Central America, with the whole of Mexico, and a powerful constituency in the United States and Canada in North America. In America as a whole—North, Central, and South—there are over 60,000,000 Roman Catholics to about 48,000,000 Protestants. Protestantism has its principal home in Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and in the United States of America and the British provinces, and some of the smaller and larger islands. This is approximately a correct cast of the religious status of the world to-day. *En bloc* it shows two-thirds of the whole to be Pagan, or, including the Mohammedans and Jews as anti-Christian components of the Pagan fraction, three-quarters of the whole—not less than 1,050,000,000. The remaining fraction of 410,000,000—a little more than a quarter—Christians, of which fraction more than one-half is Roman Catholic, one quarter (nearly) Greek, and a trifle over a quarter Protestant. Of the race he estimates that 500,000,000 live in houses partly furnished with the appointments of civilisation; 700,000,000 in huts or caves with no furnishings; 250,000,000 have nothing that can be called a home, are barbarous and savage. The range is from the topmost round—the Anglo-Saxon civilisation, which is the highest known—down to naked savagery. The portion of the race lying below the proper line of human conditions is at the very least three-fifths of the whole, or 900,000,000.

Observe that I, Lord, am counted in among the Christians; and thou knowest the kind of Christian I am. In this England alone there are hundreds of thousands who think with me when they think at all; but I make thee welcome to set them down as Christians if the lie thereby involved may tend to thy glory. At the rate at which thy "blessed gospel" is being spread, when thinkest thou it will "cover the whole earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea"? How long, O Lord, how long? Verily, how long? For it takes an expenditure of several thousands of pounds to convert a single Jew, and then he is a poor one, not fit to be a door-mat in Salem. Verily, how long? For it is next to impossible to teach the rib story or the whale

story to an educated Buddhist, Brahman, Confucian, Parsee, or Mohammedan. Christianity is a religion for barbarians, and it takes perceptible root only among savages where the missionary runs the risk of being eaten by his congregation.

CHAPTER XXI.

Questions addressed to Jehovah—Intestinal Proof—Abraham's losing Sixty Years of His Life—The King of Sodom's Restoration to Life—Melchisedek—His Series of Lectures—A Dream which is not all a Dream.

LORD, there are one or two other trifles I should like to draw your attention to if you have a moment to spare for such worms of the dust as I am. Up to this time I have had no intimation that I bore you, and so I am encouraged to proceed. If my questions teased you, you could soon give me a hint to stop. You have always a spare thunderbolt or two lying on your drawing-room table: by way of hint that you wished to hear no more of my questions, you could let fly at me with one of those said thunderbolts, and reduce me to something alarmingly like a spilt bucketful of bill-sticker's paste. In that cataclasmic form I should not be likely to trouble my "maker" with questions in regard to his Book. Or, if you liked to take a gentler way of letting me know I was a nuisance, you could deftly drop one of Sarah's slippers down upon my head, with a pretty little scented note inside it:—

"TO SALADIN, with Jehovah's compliments.—J. will answer S. all his questions when S. comes to heaven."

That would be quite enough. I should build up my Ebenezer and set the slipper on the top of it, and say: "Thus far hath the Lord holpen me." You may possibly deem it a trifle presumptuous on my part to ask questions at such an august three-in-one puzzle as you are. I should not have the boldness to trouble you, if you would give any of your paid servants the brains to answer me. I should never trouble the peer to give me, personally, information I could have from his flunkey. But

your flunkies, Lord, are stone-blind leaders of the blind. I can get no answers from them, and so I come direct to you. Their business is to make their living by canting about your Book to the unquestioning herd, and they would rather take a toad by the nose than attempt to answer such questions as I put. I asked one of your servants the other day—a very choice one with a red face and a white tie—if he would be good enough to furnish me with anything approaching valid historical proof that that son of yours ever tramped the country preaching till he ultimately got nailed to two sticks. I expected to hear of evidence from Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus, *et hoc genus*. But that servant of yours, with the red face and the white tie, simply laid his hand on his heart or his stomach (I am not physiologist enough to say exactly which), and, turning up his eyes, the way a duck does in a thunderstorm, observed, "*My evidence is HERE.*" It was clear to me that the evidence lay somewhere in his intestines. That may be all very well for him. You may have constructed him so that he has evidence of the Crucifixion in his hepatic artery, corroboration of the Atonement in the splenic veins, and proof of the Resurrection in his gastric juice. But you have not constructed me on that accommodating plan, O Lord. My internal arrangements have evidently been contrived to digest and assimilate my food. When I ask them about you, they are dumb; when I ask them about your son Jesus, they know nothing about him. When historical proofs have to be examined, I have to use my head, such as it is. I never found my liver of any use in such investigations, and the soles of my feet I have not yet tried. They are not easily got at; but I will have them thoroughly examined if you give me a hint that, on them, I am likely to "find Jesus."

But, to be serious, how is it that you have constructed certain of your creatures on such a plan that they have proof of the Incarnation, the Redemption, etc., somewhere in their inside? How is it that my inside, and that the insides of my readers, are fit only for digestive and circulatory functions, that they know as much about the weighing of evidence as the calves of my legs do about shooting snipes? I mention this lest

you may have been interrupted in the "creating" of me, and have turned me off as finished before you had put the finishing touches upon me. If this be so, Lord, and you think it worth your while to put on the finishing touches, you know where to find me. How long would you take to put a new inside in me, one furnishing proofs of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension? I could spare you a week to complete the job, asking a colleague to undertake my work while I was being overhauled. One condition only. If you take away my inside for repairs and additions, be sure to bring it back. I should not like to be left altogether hollow, and to be as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal.

Well, Lord, from the foregoing you will be able to understand my position, and why I ask my questions at you direct, and not at the nearest mountebank you have stuck up in the imposter's box yclept a pulpit. Now for a question or two connected with your Book that baffle even the unscrupulous ingenuity of your pulpit hirelings. You will remember of old Abraham, or אַבְרָהָם, as you more likely called him? Of course you remember of him: you keep him sitting up there somewhere, with his shirt-front constantly open, that saints may be taken into his bosom. This Abraham was, according to the Hebrew chronology, born 2083 years after the "creation;" but, according to the Septuagint, 3549 years after that event. So the two editions of thy Most Holy Word make a difference of 1466 years in settling the date of the birth of thy servant Abraham, in whose bosom I may by and bye find a place and ask him to tell me the exact year in which he was born. Whether is the Hebrew version or the Septuagint version right, or are they both wrong? or was there any Abraham at all? Down in this part of the world the saints pin their faith to your Hebrew version; but when your son was tramping up and down Palestine some eighteen hundred years ago he generally quoted from the Septuagint. Which of the two versions do you wish me to prefer, or do you allow me to take my choice? If you do, my choice falls upon neither.

Yet some more figures, Lord, in regard to your servant Abraham with the bosom. This person with

the bosom was born when his father was 70 ; but, when his father had reached the age of 205, Abraham was only 75 years old ! During his father's lifetime he had apparently lost 60 years ! How did he do it ? I have heard of a watch stopping, and of a shake setting it going again ; but a man stopping, O Lord, and for 60 years too, it must have taking a tremendous shaking to set him going again. You must have set your feet wide to steady yourself, and then, taking him in your hands, as a maidservant does a hearth-rug, have given him a shaking that set the world's windows chattering and shook the foundations of the earth. Certainly a strange person must have been this Abraham with the bosom ! A man who had managed to be only 75 years of age, when everybody else born in the same year was 135 years of age, is a man worth going all the way to heaven to see. It is no use asking your paid lackeys here about this matter. Your great hierophants, St. Augustine and St. Jerome, gave it up as inexplicable, and your erudite servant, Calmet, ventures on an explanation which leaves confusion worse confounded ; and, therefore, I appeal direct to you.

And, Lord, another person connected with Abraham also lost some time ; I do not know how much. Abraham, like all your saints, was pretty good in the fire and slaughter line. One of his fights was on account of Lot : you will remember Lot, the man with the daughters, and who had a wife who was turned into salt while you peppered away at Sodom. Well, in fighting for this Lot, Abraham and his 318 servants slew the King of Sodom ; but, after having been slain, "the King of Sodom went out to meet him (Abraham) after the slaughter of Chedorlaomer."* A smart man this King of Sodom. How much time did *he* lose ? Was he used to killing, as the proverbial eels were to skinning ? What mysterious personages flit about among the pages of that Book of yours.

O Lord, what have you done with Melchisedek ? He had no "beginning of days or end of life ;" so, of course, he is still living somewhere ; but he is remarkably quiet. We never hear a word of him. He must

* See Genesis xiv. 10 and 17.

be pretty bald by this time, unless he has taken to using Mrs Allen's Hair Restorer. Having known Abraham, he could possibly tell me the year in which that patriarch was born, and how he contrived to lose the 60 years out of his life and managed to be only 75 when he should have been 135 years old. This Melchisedek had no genealogical tree. Be where he may, no portraits of his ancestors adorn the walls of his dining-room. He had neither father nor mother. Some people manage to do with little or no father; your own son, for instance, had only a ghost for a father, and the fathers of some others I wot of are exceedingly hazy and dubious. But this Melchisedek, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, had no mother! This beats Baxter. This Melchisedek of yours, seems to have been a sort of circle without either a centre or a circumference. Where is he now? I should go a long way barefooted to see him. How interesting to have a chat with one who has had a chat with Abraham! Some of your gospel-shops are in low funds. You should raise the wind by hiring out this Melchisedek of yours to deliver a series of lectures, on the steppes of Tartary, or some such place that would hold his audience. Lecture No. I. might be—"How I contrived to get born without having a father."

No. II.—"How I contrived to get born without having a mother."

No. III.—"How I managed to have no beginning of days."

No. IV.—"How I manage to have no end of life."

No. V.—"How I manage to draw my salary as Priest of the Most High God."

No. VI.—"How I managed to be King of Salem long before there was a Salem on the face of the Earth."*

No. VII.—"Chats with Abraham and Sarah, and general reminiscences of the World before the Flood."

I am interested, Lord, in this Melchisedek of yours, and it passeth my understanding to conjecture why you make so little of him. If you cannot send him out to lecture on Salisbury Plain, you might consider the propriety of sticking him up among the mummies or the

* Cf. Genesis xiv. 18 with Judges xix. 10.

Assyrian tablets in the British Museum. If you could only tell me where he is, I could go and "heckle" him, and he might explain to me not a few of the questions which I am now, reluctantly, pestering you with. He had no beginning and you had no beginning. So, before you took it into your head to "create" the heavens and the earth, there was a Melchisedek. He was King of Salem centuries before Salem existed; so he possibly walked to and fro on the earth millions of years before the earth was "created." When Melchisedek and you had high jinks together before the world was, where was I? Was I simply a bee in Melchisedek's bonnet? or where did you keep the large quantity of *nothing* out of which you subsequently "created" the world and me? Would it not have been as well to have done me the honour to ask me whether I had any desire to be "created"? If you had explained to me that the "creating" of me and things like me would have caused you and your family so much trouble and annoyance, including your bother in getting up the Flood and the fatigue your son was put to in flying down here and flying back to heaven again, I should have politely declined to be "created" at all. I do not care to put gods and the like to trouble on my account. If you had explained to me that you intended to "create" me a sort of tub that could stand upon its own bottom, I might have consented to be "created." But you have fashioned me into an automatic squirrel, revolving in my wheel forever, cracking my nuts, and indulging in my silly chattering and squeals while I am shut in from the pleroma of the Universe by the cage of the Esoteric with its bars of mystery. You have made nearly all men dull owls, that eat much and think nothing and believe the incredible. And, for your glory and amusement, you have made a restless and sporadic few who eat little and think much, and whose brain-hammers ever clang upon the anvil of Fate, amid sweat and fire, forging empirical keys to turn the bolt of the lock of the Unknowable. O had I been blest with the stupidity not to inquire, or not curst with the Tantalus cup of ever inquiring in vain! Embrace your demonstrations, and they are shadows, and all your proofs are visions.

In spite of the shadows and the visions, I rest my fate upon a dream which is not all a dream. I am a soldier far from home. The helm is on my head and the spear in my hand. I feel that I have left somewhere where time is eternal or where time is unknown. Drilled by an unseen baton, I fight under an invisible banner—now with gladiators in the arena, now with snakes in the fen; and the voice of the leader that commands me is a voice inaudible to mortal ear. Somewhere in the realm I have left there is a home with a snow-white door-step, and over the door the red and white roses link and twine and breathe the fragrance of love. On that door-step and under these roses stands my young wife, with my babe in her arms. Down the valley rolls the thunder of the drum, up the hill rises the bugle's silver clang: "Gird on your sword and away!" I obey the summons and depart. I kiss my wife, my plume mingling with the roses; the babe cries, frightened by the jangling of my spurs. Down the lane I ride, hedged round by the spears, overshadowed by the banners. There is a turn in the lane: I wheel round and kiss my hand in a long adieu. My wife's eyes are following me, tearful and loving. I wave my plumed helmet to her in farewell; and, in response, she holds aloft in her hands her babe and mine. The turn in the lane is made—and all is lost.

But I will return. Brief on this earth are the bivouac, the march, and the battle. Something stronger than Death and strong as God has told me I will return. When the solemn fir strikes his roots into my grave and the rank hemlock through the decayed coffin-boards has absorbed my blood, I shall have returned to that home where my babe was held aloft among the roses, and where my wife sobbed "Farewell!" I fear not misery nor dread extinction. One inquiry at least has been answered. The tears of the mourner gleam in the rainbow of Hope. The perfume of unseen lilies streams forever through the gate of the grave.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Lord "creating" More than He knew of—The Living Organisms in Thames Water praising the Lord—Jehovah "created" Worlds without knowing it—We "Created" God—Jehovah has served His Purpose and become Obsolete—A Roll of Dead Gods

I HAVE, O Lord, drawn your attention to the fact that when you did, in the fulness of time, take to "creating," you "created" a good deal more than you were aware of. I have ventured to bring it under your notice that you "created" America, and that, when your son and the devil went to the top of the high mountain to survey all the kingdoms of the earth, neither of them seems to have had any notion that the earth was round, and that it was of such prodigious dimensions. Neither your son nor the devil knew of America. I am not quite sure that your son knows of it yet; but I could produce some proofs that the devil knows of it full well.

Without going as far as America, may I suggest to you that, at my very door, there are countless trillions of creatures that you, judging from your Book, do not seem to know you "created"? Lord, you know the Thames? From the banks of that river you have had several shaky saints, including Charles Peace, Esq. If you wish to know some particulars about the Thames, ask them.

Well, in the Thames there is *water*. May I remind you what water is? You will remember what it is when I recall it to your recollection that you once drowned the world with it. What I wish to bring under your notice is the fact that a cubic centimetre of Thames water has been found to contain upwards of 4,000,000 of living organisms! In your Book you speak of cubits,

but never mention centimetres, so I may explain to you that a centimetre is less than four-tenths of an inch; so that a cubic inch would contain more than sixteen times as many, or upwards of 64,000,000 of living organisms. These beasts, some of them as outlandish and terrible as the apocalyptic beasts round your white throne, do not live in peace, but fight as if they were Christians. They actually swallow each other; and, Lord, you have so constructed me that I swallow the lot every time I taste water. Come, now; you do not mean to tell me that, when you wrote your Book, you knew you had "created" the utterly incalculable myriads of living organisms that inhabit even a cubic foot of the world's many cubic miles of water? When your son cursed the fig-tree was he aware that every leaf which he shrivelled up and withered was a densely-peopled world, and that, by drying up the sap of that tree, he destroyed more of your creatures than there were of men, women, and children on the face of the earth?

When you had done with the "creation" you pronounced it "all very good." What would you have said if you had had even a faint idea of what you had really done? No wonder that you rested from your work. No wonder you have done nothing since. "God does nothing," complained the late Mr Thomas Carlyle. I do not complain that he does nothing; as far as I can judge, he has already done too much. "All thy creatures praise thee," O Lord. I hereby present to you the portraits of a few of your creatures that "praise thee," and of whose existence I make bold to say you were not aware when, in your Book, you wrote down the two accounts of "creation," and which two accounts, in proof of their divine truth, conflict with and contradict each other :—



The circle thou beholdest representeth, Lord, a magnified drop of Thames water. What think you of the praises of that square-built creature with the long neck and the two forks? How like you the prayer of that ugly worm near the centre? How like you a hymn from that dot to the left, and a doxology from that dash below it? How like you hallelujahs from that star-of-Bethlehem-looking creature at the top, and hosannas from that cart-wheel-looking thing at the bottom?

When you wrote your Book, you had no idea that these things praised you. Since I have had the honour to point out to you that so many queer wastrels praise you, perhaps, out of gratitude, you will excuse *me* from praising you. Be that as it may, it is clear that, if I do not provide myself with a filter, you and I must meet at an early date. I am in no hurry to meet you. I am a water-drinker, Lord; but giving me water like this is enough to drive me to drinking whisky. The best way to keep out of the kingdom of heaven is to use only distilled water. But the distillation of even a cup of water entails the death of millions of those worms and dots and stars and cart-wheels that "praise thee." Who am I that I should live when my life entails the death of millions? I do not know that your son died to save us; but the dots and cart-wheels do die to save us. Why should we not die to save them? As far as

I am able to judge, there has been a good deal of work expended upon them. I should say that some of them are as wonderfully got up as I am ; and on some of them you appear to have taken far more pains than you have taken on me. Adam named all the beasts. What did he name that brute near the centre ? Perhaps these creatures were the handiwork of Melchisedek. He, like you, had no "beginning of days ;" and, sitting through the silence and loneliness of the eternity that elapsed before the creation of the world, he may have amused himself by "creating" that which now amazes me, and which, possibly, amazes you.

Lord, while I am on the subject of creation, may I be pardoned for drawing your attention to the fact that you not only "created" animalculæ of which you were ignorant, but boundless and numerous worlds of which you knew nothing. You have turned out to be a far, far cleverer deity than you thought you were. You "created" the Earth on the first day ; while, on the third day, you apparently, as the result of an after-thought, "created" the Sun, Moon, and Stars, just as a sort of lamps to give light to the Earth. You seem to have had no idea that you had "created" the lamps vastly bigger and grander than the object they were "created" to light. Just read the following few lines, Lord, and you will see what I mean :—

This earth is nearly eight thousand miles in diameter. You, when you wrote your Book, supposed the earth to have been flat and immoveable, resting on four corners. The Christian theologians believed that theory down to the day when Galileo and Bruno declared the world was round, and moved, and Bruno was put to death. They continued in that belief even down to the day of Columbus, whom they caused to be imprisoned as a heretic for espousing the Copernican system that the world moved, thereby contradicting the Bible.

The sun, the centre of our planetary system, and which is represented to have been made after our earth to give light to it, is nearly ninety-five millions of miles from us. Its magnitude is one million four hundred thousand times greater than that of the earth.

More than ninety members of the group of asteroids,

planets exterior to the orbit of Mars, have been discovered ; while Jupiter, the first planet exterior to the asteroids, is nearly five hundred millions of miles from the sun ; it is ninety thousand miles in diameter, and is attended by four moons or satellites. Saturn's orbit is four hundred millions of miles beyond Jupiter, and is attended by eight moons or satellites ; while Uranus is double the distance of Saturn. Neptune is the most remote known member of the planetary system, its distance being nearly three thousand millions of miles. A cannon ball flying at the rate of five hundred miles per hour would not reach the orbit of Neptune from the sun in less than six hundred and eighty years.

The appearance of more than seven hundred comets belonging to our system has been recorded. These are new worlds thrown off from the sun, in gaseous form, travelling through space for millions of ages before assuming a solid form or producing vegetation ; and this was the process our earth had to pass through. In gazing beyond the planets we behold millions of stars, all worlds, many of much greater magnitude than ours, while far beyond these and Neptune are other solar systems of worlds stretching out through illimitable space.

You "created" not these, Jehovah ; but we created *you*. You are made in the image of man ; in the image of man are you made. Long ago ye were made out of the mists of our ignorance ; ye were dyed in the streams of our blood. We knew little of the expanse and glory of the subjective and objective world. But, even in our rude savagery, the stale contingencies of life were too narrow for us ; and, in the incipient longings of our immortal energies, we invented you. We made you rude as the stone cairn we piled over our dead, and gory as the axe with which we did battle with our foes. You were then the best god we were capable of making. And that we had even a god like you kept alive in our hearts the vestal flame of aspiration and hope, and differentiated us from the steed that obeyed our bridle and the boar overthrown by our spear.

Even you, Jehovah, rude as we had made you, were yet the highest line on the shore to which the tide-mark

of our thought had risen—the loftiest cloud whose fringe had ever been touched by the white wings of our hope. You gave a depth and meaning to the busy day and the melancholy night while we were yet strangers to the march of thought and the discipline of schools. The lightning was the gleam of your sword, the thunder was the battle-cry of God. You are not framed, O Jehovah, for the age when the steam-engine rushes through the glens and crashes through the bowels of the everlasting hills; when, on the wings of the lightning, we speed our messages over the nations of the continents and under the billows of the oceans; and when the press lays at the feet of the humblest the mind-wealth of the world. Such an era needs not, and never would have framed, a deity like you.

We are parting company with you, Jehovah, impelled to do so by the civilisation of mankind rising to loftier levels. You have played your part, and now we must play ours; and, in the interests of our race, argue you and jeer you out of the world. But we are students of history and anthropology, and we are not ungrateful. There lies an awe under our levity and a solemnity under our ridicule. We have tender reminiscences of the days when the world was young, of the dim and stormy flight of ages stretching between Abraham and Ur of the Chaldees and the day that Columba founded you a Church on Iona's lonely isle. You have waded with our fathers through rivers of blood and lakes of fire when, on the pillars of carnage, rested the thrones of the world. You were their guardian, in their few days of peace when the sun glinted down through the forest leaves, and when the hills lay dreaming under the silent stars. Your blessing was invoked over the cradles of our sires, and your benison over their graves. In old churchyards, and in churchyards which the dead never enter now, but which are streets over which the feet and wheels of commerce clash and whirl, there are memories and relics of you. We dig down to the broken marbles and the ancient graves, and we find references to your Book and you mixed up with the epitaphs of our ephemeral and our immortal dead. The blood that runs in our veins is drawn from those who lie under the ancient and broken

gravestones that call you God. And the wedded love of the mothers of our race for more than a thousand years has been, in your name, consecrated at the altar, and the fruits of their love in baptism offered to you. And yet we must desert you, Jehovah, even as we deserted other deities to worship you.

“In the vast cemetery, called the Past, are most of the religions of men, and there, too, are nearly all their gods. The sacred temples of India were ruins long ago. Over column and cornice, over the painted and pictured walls, cling and creep the trailing vines. Brahma, the golden; Vishnu, the sombre, the punisher of the wicked, with his three eyes, his crescent, and his necklace of skulls; Siva, the destroyer, red with seas of blood; Kali, the goddess; Draupadi, the white armed, and Chrishna, the Christ, all passed away and left the thrones of heaven desolate. Along the banks of the sacred Nile, Isis no longer wandering weeps, searching for the dead Osiris. The shadow of Typhon’s scowl falls no more upon the waves. The sun rises as of yore, and his golden beams still smite the lips of Memnon; but Memnon is as voiceless as the sphinx. The sacred fanes are lost in desert sands; the dusty mummies are still waiting for the resurrection promised by the priests, and the old beliefs, wrought in curiously-sculptured stone, sleep in the mystery of a language lost and dead. Odin, the author of life and soul, Vili and Ve, and the mighty giant Ymir, strode long ago from the ice halls of the North; and Thor, with iron glove and hammer, dashes mountains to the earth no more. Broken are the circles and cromlechs of the ancient Druids; fallen upon the summits of the hills, and covered with the centuries’ moss, are the sacred cairns. The divine fires of Persia and of the Aztecs have died out in the ashes of the past, and there is none to rekindle and none to feed the holy flames. The harp of Orpheus is still. . . . The gods have flown from the high Olympus. . . . Hushed forever are the thunders of Sinai; lost are the voices of the prophets, and the land once flowing with milk and honey is but a desert waste. One by one the myths have faded and the phantom host has disappeared; and, one by one, facts, truths, and realities have taken their places. The supernatural has almost

gone, but the natural remains. The gods have fled, but man is here. Nations, like individuals, have their periods of youth, of manhood, of decay. Religions are the same. The same inexorable destiny awaits them all. The gods created with the nations must perish with their creators. They were created by men, and, like men, they must pass away. The deities of one age are the bywords of the next. The religion of our day and country is no more exempt from the sneer of the future than the others have been. When India was supreme, Brahma sat upon the world's throne. When the sceptre passed to Egypt, Isis and Osiris received the homage of mankind. Greece, with her fierce valour, swept to empire, and Zeus put on the purple of authority. The earth trembled with the tread of Rome's intrepid sons, and Jove grasped with mailed hand the thunderbolts of heaven. Rome fell, and Christians, from her territory, with the red sword of war, carved out the ruling nations of the world; and now Jehovah sits upon the old throne. Who will be his successor? " *

* R. G. Ingersoll.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jesus as a Prophet—Jesus' most Important Prophecy not fulfilled—1800 Years too Late—Jesus' Geographical Knowledge—Proof of Jesus' Prophecy of His "Second Coming"—Terrible Uproar connected therewith, shaking the "Powers of the Heavens," etc.

To strike at God and his Book on every point that is exposed and vulnerable would be to write a bigger and, possibly, a more questionable book than the one attacked. According to Homer, Achilles had a vulnerable heel; but Jehovah is vulnerable all over, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head. There is no profit in attacking his prophets. They usually attack themselves by foretelling events after they have happened, or by vaticinating in such a vague and misty fashion that one set of polemicists may contend that the prophecy has been fulfilled, and an equally honest and able set of dialecticians may aver that the prophecy has *not* been fulfilled. Pushing aside all the major and minor prophets, from weeping Jeremiah to raving John of Patmos, we will take a solitary glance at the prophetic attainments of the only begotten son of the author of the Bible. Jesus himself, it must be remembered, tried his hand at prophecy. If he was no prophet, he was also no fool; for he took care that his great prophecy was to be fulfilled *after* his death. This is always a wise precaution; for, if the prophecy do not be fulfilled, the prophet is saved the hazard of being branded an impostor.

Jesus, when he tried his hand at prophecy—having previously tried his hand at the jack-plane—foretold that he would return to the earth for the second time before the generation to which he appeared had passed away. His followers distinctly understood this promise and

looked for him. He is now more than 1800 years over due. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly !

It must be kept in mind that punctuality was never a characteristic of the Lord. Perhaps it was for lack of this valuable quality he had to give up the respectable calling of carpentering to take to lay preaching. He took "no note of time." He prophesied that he would remain in the grave three days and three nights (seventy-two hours), and he remained in it at most twenty-nine hours and a half. He prophesied that he would come back to the earth before the demise of the then generation. That generation passed away eighteen centuries ago, and Jesus has not yet come ! Well may he be expected to now "come quickly."

He has, to this day, dupes who believe in his prophecy, and who possibly have a cab constantly standing at the nearest railway station "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus." It is admitted that the world is not yet quite prepared to receive him. Perhaps this is the reason he has not yet come. All the kingdoms of the earth were to be his when he came ; but, should he come to-morrow, he would find only a small number of the kingdoms his. He has allowed his gospel leaven nearly 2000 years to work, and yet many millions of the human race upon the face of the globe to-day have never heard of him, and millions more who have heard of him reject him.

This being so, it is no wonder he does not "come." The world is not nearly ready for him, and what is worse, it is getting more and more unready every day. He should have come in the dark ages : he would have found much more Christianity in existence then than he could possibly find now. The Christian countries were then really Christian ; now they are little more than nominally so. All the Christianity that to-day exists outside the Salvation Army has been explained away into a kind of conventional formula bowed and scraped to by Hypocrisy ; while, wherever earnest Honesty erects his head, the so-called Christian countries are riddled with more or less openly-avowed "Infidelity."

Jesus is eighteen hundred years too late, and had better not allow himself to be nineteen hundred years

too late, or when he comes he may find no Christianity at all. He may discover one or two rotten pulpits preserved in the British Museum; he may find that Westminster Abbey has become the publishing office of the *Agnostic Journal*, and that St. Paul's has been converted into a skating-rink. Therefore, I advise him to "come quickly."

Although Jesus was to return before the end of the then generation, "all nations" were, by that time, to have heard his Gospel. But, then, poor Jesus, although he had helped his father to "create" the world, had no notion of what "all nations" or "all the world" meant. With him, "all the world" was little more than the limited area in which he had lived and moved as a planer of boards or a spinner of sermons. There were no maps on the wall of the schoolroom where he learnt his *Aleph, Beth, Gimel*, or A B C; and his schoolmaster never said to him: "Well, Jesus, my boy, take that pointer and point out to me Rhode Island, Labrador, Patagonia, Australia, and New Zealand." "Jesus, my boy," and his father had "created" those places; but it was so long ago that Jesus had forgotten all about them, and was of opinion that he could see "all the kingdoms of the world" from the top of "a very high mountain," where he had a lesson in geography from the devil. If Jesus had not forgotten the extent of the world he had helped to "create," he would likely not have expected that his gospel would cover the whole of it, "even as the waters cover the channel of the sea," before the generation he knew had passed away. Peradventure, although he "created" the world in six days, he has been devoting the last eighteen hundred years to cosmography and geography, so as to be *en rapport* when he comes again with the necessary attainments of a first-rate "redeemer." Although he "created" the world in six days "by the word of his power," it is apparently one thing to "create" a world and quite another thing to keep it jogging after it is "created." A mere word "created" the world; but apparently a mere word could not keep it out of serious difficulties. Once it waxed so wicked that deity had to drown it; and even that failed to put matters right, and he had to come down in

person and get nailed to a stick. And even that is not sufficient: even yet people are so egregiously wicked that it requires tens of thousands of parsons to keep them from going straight to perdition; and still myriads go to perdition in spite of them. Therefore, you see that, although a word—perhaps an idle word—may “create” a world, it is no joke to keep a world going. And, although the Lord promised, when he flew up to heaven from Olivet, to come back to the earth almost immediately, he has apparently changed his mind, and has taken eighteen hundred years to consider what he will do when he does come, determined not to make such a bungle of it as he did the last time.

Did Jesus not foretell his second coming? Then, in the name of all that is sane, what is the meaning of the following passages:—

“Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”*

“And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, that there be some of them which stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”†

“But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.”‡

“Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.”§

“Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”¶

“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all things be fulfilled.”||

“Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.”**

“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.”††

Paul declared “The Lord is at hand;” ‡‡ but he was

* Matthew xvi. 28.

† Luke ix. 27.

‡ Matthew xxiii. 36.

** Mark xiii. 30.

† Mark ix. 1.

§ Matthew x. 23.

|| Matthew xxiv. 34.

†† Luke xxi. 32.

‡‡ Philippians iv. 5.

mistaken. James wrote, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" * but James was in error. Paul assured the Thessalonians that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." † Whether Paul expected to be "caught up" to "the clouds" by the hair of the head I know not; but he gave up the ghost and went to his grave, no doubt much disappointed that he had never officiated as a divine paper-kite by rising "to meet the Lord in the air."

Jesus did not threaten, either, to come in a quiet, gentlemanly fashion, but with the most terrible accompaniments of smoke, thunder, blood and blazes the world had ever seen. "The abomination of desolation" (whatever that might be) was to stand "in the holy place;" but it is not recorded how many legs it had to stand upon. And Matthew the publican tears away in this fashion: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his Elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." ‡

So, you see, when Jesus comes there is to be a very considerable row. And the row is to be of such a character that I do not clearly see how the police will be able to stop it. Matthew talks of the stars falling from heaven. No doubt he was of opinion that he would be able to catch three or four of them in his cap as they fell. Possibly he contemplated taking them down into a cellar and breaking them up with a hammer, just to see what they were made of, and what made them twinkle and shine. Nobody seems to have been so ignorant of the magnitude and awfulness of the universe as the "creator" thereof and his special apostles and saints.

* James v. 8.

† 1 Thessalonians iv. 14.

‡ Matthew xiv. 29-31.

“The powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Who are “the powers of the heavens”? Say Jehovah is the principal power: who is to shake him? Is the Son to catch the Father by the nape of the neck and somewhere else, and shake him as a terrier shakes a rat? And, with celestial courtesy, is the Father to reciprocate, and so shake the Son till all his teeth chatter? And then is the Ghost to try his hand at shaking the two of them, and to finish off by knocking their two heads together? This is the most rational mode of shaking the “powers of heavens” that occurs to me. The shaking should have taken place some eighteen centuries ago; but quite likely it will be all the more terrible when it does take place. The tribes of the earth are to mourn when they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds. Well may they mourn without ceasing if his second coming is to be as prolific as his first has been in hate and bloodshed and ignorance and misery!

His angels, flapping and flying about and blowing trumpets, will cause considerable hubbub and be somewhat annoying to those afflicted with neuralgia and headache. But the angelic business is to “gather the Elect from the four winds,” and it is quite likely that a duty so important cannot be discharged without trumpet-blowing and, peradventure, fiddle-scraping; so those afflicted with headache and neuralgia had better tie a handkerchief round their heads and go to bed till the Elect are gathered. This noisy but important business over, all those who have not been knocked deaf may, at their leisure, take the handkerchiefs off their heads and the wadding out of their ears.

It would have been well that Jesus had come when he said he would. We should then have had the thing over and forgotten. But it is difficult to be thankful for the divine goodness that has kept us waiting for the Second Coming for eighteen hundred years—waiting in trouble and suspense. Seeing that he is so long overdue, we, of course, know not the day Jesus may take it in his head to come. The first intimation we are likely to get of the affair will most probably be the phenomenon of an angel or two lighting upon the summits of the church steeples and upon the telegraph wires.

We are likely enough to remember the event if the swoop of an angel's wing knocks half the teeth out of our head and a blast from his trumpet leaves us for life as deaf as a post. But who would grumble at losing half of his teeth and all of his hearing when such important business is on hand as gathering "the Elect from the four winds"? The Lord Mayor's Show is well enough in its way, but, in several respects, inferior to the "Second Coming," if Matthew's description thereof be authentic.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Devout Ignorance—Mr John Smith's Belief—Gospel-Forging—Fixing the Canon at the Council of Nice—Jumping and Non-Jumping Gospels—The Pious English Girl's Happy Ignorance of Her Bible—Christianity Covers much Less of the Area of the Globe than She did 1000 Years Ago.

"IGNORANCE is the curse of God," says Milton, and undoubtedly God's Book has, at this hour, more to do with the promotion and retention of ignorance than all other influences put together. There is no savage in any isle of the ocean who believes more monstrously and on weaker evidence than does the ordinary rank-and-file Christian of the English church and chapel. Fables and absurdities which, if vouched for at this day by the dearest, most judicious, and most veracious of his friends, he would reject with derision, he will not only accept, but consider sacred, if they are said to have belonged to a period 1800 years ago, to an out-of-the-way part of the globe he never saw, and are vouched for by he knows not whom.

Can the maddest infatuation of credulity further go? I have heard that "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." This is a mere speculation. Man's chief end is, practically, to be a dupe and a cat's-paw in the hands of a designing and interested priesthood. Man's chief end is to be divided into two sections—the Deceivers and the Deceived; and frequently the Deceivers are good but weak men, who, amid the shackles of conventional bondage, have never the force to discover that they deceive. "What is born in the bone," quoth the old proverb, "is hard to drive out of the flesh." By educating his mother, the priest gets hold

of a man some twenty years before he is born, and inspires him with a pious reverence for the one set of fables by which the priest makes his living, leaving all other sets of fables to stand upon their own merits, and thereby ignominiously perish.

Mr. John Smith, of the Young Men's Christian Association, is of passive opinion that "St. John" and the rest of them hob-a-nobbed with Jesus, and then scribbled off the biographical sketches of him, just as Aurifaber did the *Tishreden* of Luther, or Boswell "The Life of Johnson." Poor little Mr. Smith! it is perhaps better, after all, that he should be only a pious automaton to sell cheese—a kind of mildly galvanised beef-steak; and I have, accordingly, my misgivings when I try to make him anything else. Poor little Smith is so miserably crawled over by professional gospel-grinders, and not one of them has the honesty to rear up on his hind legs and say that in the fourth century, the learned Christian bishop, Faustus, declared it to be "certain that the New Testament was not written by Christ himself, *nor by his Apostles, but a long while after them*, by some unknown persons, who, lest they should not be credited when they wrote of affairs they were little acquainted with, *affixed to their works the names of Apostles*, or of such as were supposed to have been their companions."* And this jumble of pseudepigraphical forgery is Mr J. Smith's "Holy Bible, book divine"—not written by the unlettered carpenter or his unlettered followers, but by long-subsequent and much cleverer swindlers. Mr. Smith pours out the vials of his wrath upon him who forges a cheque or a bank-note, and, till lately, made him gasp on the gallows for it; but he has no punishment for him who will forge a baby-tale and call it a Gospel.

Indeed, for a century or two, gospel-forging seems to have been a flourishing branch of industry. The world of pious credulity was flooded with vast numbers of Gospels and Epistles, to one of the latter of which was actually forged the name of Jesus himself!† This mass of literature became, by and bye, rather bulky and unwieldy;

* Lardner's "Credibility," vol. ii. p. 221.

† The Epistle to Abgarus.

so about the year 327 A.D. a council of 318 bishops was convened at Nice to determine, *inter alia*, which among the host of Gospels and Epistles should be declared canonical and which should be rejected as spurious—to decide which books were divine and which of human origin; and, as far as I have been able to look into what remains of the Apocryphal New Testament, they seem to have set down the maddest and wildest tracts as the work of God and the sanest and the most meritorious as the work of Man. That imperial saint, the Emperor Constantine, presided over the council, and the first thing, of course, which the bishops did was to engage in a general, bitter, and recriminatory quarrel among themselves, just by way of showing that they were the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. It was proposed that the tracts having the greatest number of votes recorded in their favour should be considered canonical. So, from this, it appears that the way to decide whether a book is written by God Almighty or only by Mr J. Smith is to vote upon it, just as you would upon a candidate for admission to the Junior Garrick Club. The Chairman, by his casting vote, could decide, by a majority of one, whether a certain work were from the pen of God, “the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth,” or from the pen of Man, “a poor worm of the dust.” Who can doubt, after this, of the tremendous chasm which yawns between inspired and non-inspired literature, and that the Lord certainly moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform?

I presume the inevitable quarrelling and vituperative abuse in which the bishops mutually engaged against each other must have rendered the taking of a vote impracticable, for Pappus, in his *Synodicon*, gives quite another version of the fixing of the canon at this Nicean Council. He tells us that the numerous and various books that laid claim to be canonical were all placed together under the communion table, and prayer was offered up that the books of divine origin might place themselves *on* the table, while those of human origin should remain *underneath*—and it was so. In other words, to show their superiority to the rest, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, etc., jumped upon the table; so the great and distinguishing feature of the Lord as an

author is that he writes books that can jump! Long may we, as individuals and as a nation, have the judgment to ground our belief upon evidence so inexpugnable, and rest assured that the *jumping Gospels* are "the source of England's greatness!"

Is it true that Ignorance is the only safe sentinel-giant to guard Innocence and Purity? The maidens of England return from church with the Bible in their dainty hand. The kid glove touches the calf-skin binding, and no contamination results. The book teems with fescennine revulsions and abominable pruriences. But Miss Araminta Fitzgerald Tompkins only *loves* her Bible; she does not *read* it; and therein lies her purity and her safety. She knows a few terribly-hackneyed texts about the Lamb somehow or other taking away the sins of the world, and about believing in a certain Galilean carpenter in order to be "saved;" but, beyond this, the Bible is to her an unknown book; and here, not only is ignorance bliss, but it would be more than folly—it would be crime—to be wise. Miss Araminta Fitzgerald Tompkins furthermore suspends from her neck a golden or a silvern cross, as she thinks, bless her! in fond memory of the execution of a certain seditious Jew. It would never do to tell her that that cross was, relatively speaking, almost as old in the days of that Jew as it is now, and that, really, it is neither more nor less than a modified symbol of the *phallus* of olden phallic worship. Surely, in this case, ignorance *is* bliss. We cannot afford to honestly instruct our girls, or our boys either, for that part of it, till we have abolished much of the abominable and obscene symbolism of a moribund and filthy faith. The very pallium of the priest, the oval shape of sacred medals, and the oval frame round the Madonna, are hidden, and, happily, almost unknown, representations of the *yonis* round which a religion centred which had grown decrepit and hoary before Christianity had been born.

Mr. J. Smith is further of opinion that "the source of England's greatness" will, by-and-by, be the source of the greatness of the whole world. According to Mr. J. Smith, nonconformist and cheesemonger, this is a mere matter of time. The gospel of Jesus will yet cover the

whole earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea. All the Stigginses rant this sort of thing from their pulpits. Their ignorance keeps them from being *conscious* imposters. They dare not appeal to history to justify their predictions anent the future universal diffusion of heir faith. Far from there being any prospect of Christianity embracing the whole earth, it does not embrace nearly so much of the whole earth as it did a thousand years ago. Might I most respectfully draw the attention of Mr. J. Smith and of Exeter Hall to the following facts?—

Indubitably, when Alfred reigned (871-90), Christianity prevailed in some parts of India, for Alfred sent an embassy to Calamine to the shrine of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Gibbon says (vol. iv., p. 599): "When the Portuguese first opened the navigation of India the Christians of St. Thomas had been seated for ages on the coast of Malabar." In the sixth century there was indubitably a large Christian community in India, as, indeed, Gregory of Tours testifies. Gregory tells us that one named Theodore, who had been to India, described the monastery where the body of St. Thomas was buried.

Not only in India, but in China also, Christianity was once prevalent. It was certainly so in the seventh and eighth centuries. Thus the learned Assemani says (p. 28) "that preachers of the evangelists had penetrated into the kingdom of China." This fact, he states, is made evident by a stone tablet discovered in the year 781. His words are: "*Prædicatores Evangelii in ipsarum Sinarum regnum penetrasse, ex monumento lapides, anno 781 erecto compertum est.*" About the year 720 Salibazacha, the Nestorian patriarch, created metropolitans in China, as well as in Samarcand (" *Salibazacha circa annum 720, Heriæ Samarcandæ, et Sinarum, metropolitans creavit,*" Assemani, p. 28); and in 820 Timotheus appointed one David head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of China (" *Timotheus Davidem Sinensibus metropolitam dedit,*" Assemani, p. 28). So that in the eighth century, at any rate, Christianity prevailed to such an extent in China as to justify the support of a regular hierarchy, with a metropolitan at its head.

The famous traveller, known as Cosmas, surnamed "Indico Pleustes," in 532 mentions the Christians of the East, not only in India, but in Ceylon and Male (*i.e.*, Meliapur, on the Malabar coast), as well as those of the Bactrians, Huns, Persians, etc.; and Ferishtah, in his "History of Hindustan," tells us that Christianity continued in India till it was driven out by the Mussulman faith.

Besides India and China, Ceylon and Persia, Africa was once famous for its Christian churches, bishops and patriarchs. We need not refer the reader to the seven churches of Asia Minor, addressed in the book of the Revelation. It will also be remembered that, from the reign of Constantine, Constantinople was the head city of Christianity for centuries. All these are now in the empire of Turkey, and Mohammed has stamped out the work of God and of his Christ.

Here we have a much larger area than that now occupied by the Cross: India, Ceylon, China, Persia, Bactria, Asia Minor, and the North-West Coast of Africa. In all these enormous fields the seed was sown; but, like the seed-corn we read of in the Gospels, it sprang up and withered away, because it had no root. No root? Why, was it not good seed? Was it not sown by the hand of Divinity itself? No root? Why, are we not told that it is the Holy Ghost that prepares the soil, implants and waters the seed, making it fructify and bear fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some a hundred-fold? It is not man's work at all, but God's work; and are we not told over and over again that all he does prospers; that he does nothing by halves—nothing in vain? Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good? Is it not proverbial that "truth must and will prevail"? Which, then, is truth? Islamism, not Christianity; Buddhism, not the Gospel; for these systems have devoured Aaron's rod; these systems have wrestled with Israel, and overthrown the angel of the covenant. The wild olive of Buddhism was grafted with the "true vine;" but the wild olive has overpowered the graft; whereas, in Africa, the converse has taken place—the graft of Mohammed has overpowered the stock of Calvary. In both cases the Divine

plant has been overpowered : in one case as a graft, and in the other as a stock.

The Christian religion has left Asia and Africa, and was brought to Europe by barbarians ; but how long may it be expected to last before it is overpowered, as it has already been in Africa and Asia ? At Exeter Hall we hear much of the spread of Christianity, but nothing of its extinction. Probably the number of square miles over which the shadow of the Cross is now thrown is less than a third of what it was a thousand years ago. It has wholly lost its old footing, and depends for its existence on new fields. China is gone, Persia is gone, Hindustan is gone, Chaldea and Mesopotamia are gone, Asia Minor is gone, Egypt is gone, Constantinople is gone, Ceylon is gone, Arabia is gone ; and yet we are told the leaven is gradually leavening the whole lump. If abiding work is a test of Divine work, Christianity can make no such claim. If prevailing work is a proof of Divine work, Christianity can make no such claim. If God's work is stronger than man's work, Christianity can make no such claim. If progress—constant, enduring, certain—is a proof of God's work, Christianity can make no such claim. If adaptability to all men is a proof of God's work, Christianity has been tried in Asia and found wanting—in Africa, in India, in Syria, in all Turkey ; and these numberless peoples have found Buddhism or Islamism more suited to their cravings than the Virgin Mary and Calvary.

So much for Mr. J. Smith's Bible, and the prospect that its doctrines will yet "cover the whole earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea !"

CHAPTER XXV.

Success of the Ghost as an Author—The Ghost a Plagiarist—The “Lord’s Prayer” far older than Christ or Christianity—The “Lord’s Prayer” stolen from the Jewish Kadish—The “Lord’s Prayer” culled out of Ancient Jewish Prayers—Scriptural Plagiarism from the Talmud—The “Lord’s Prayer” examined—The Golden Rule a Plagiarism—Its Formulation by Different Writers Centuries before Christ—The Golden Rule examined.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me that that distinguished *littérateur*, the Ghost—usually yclept the *Holy Ghost*, for some reason I have been unable to make out—has quite given up the literary profession. Nobody else would have had any chance against him. He has written one book only, or rather a series of small tracts tacked together by nothing else but the binding. And, O Jerusalem, what a sale the work has had ! The Ghost’s principal publishers in London are in Queen Victoria Street, and his book goes off in hundreds of thousands of tons annually. Its sale seems to be, in great part, attributable to the fact that the work is written by the King of Heaven and dedicated to the King of England. All books proceeding from royal pens are, in character, quite exceptional, from the olden royal volume that treats of Abraham the sheik down to the more recent royal volume that immortalises Brown the gilly.

Any ordinary mortal would have supposed that the Ghost would have found his publisher in Holywell Street ; but the Ghost is no ordinary mortal. He had the effrontery to offer his book in a far other locality ; and effrontery was rewarded with its frequent concomitant, success. The profits out of this book alone must render

the Ghost the wealthiest member of the Trinity. Some optimists, including myself, are sanguine that he may yet buy out the other members of the firm. Much might reasonably be expected from this anticipated transaction. The Father's character is exceedingly questionable; the Son, to put it mildly, is suspected by Jules Soury and others to be somewhat queer in the upper storey; while the Ghost has many negative merits. True, he got into some sort of scrape over a girl in Palestine; but generous minds will not make too much of this; and all else that is known of him is that he once transformed himself into a pigeon, and that he once, on a pentecostal occasion, took the form of "cloven tongues as of fire." Those who have observed a pile of Paysandu tongues in a shop window can easily gather what the Ghost is like by fancying each tongue to be of red-hot iron, and cloven—that is split, as boys split a magpie's tongue with a sixpence to make it speak.

And yet the man with the barrowful of photographs that I pass so often in Fleet Street, although he has a portrait of the Son (last time I saw him he was stuck between Henry Labouchere and Connie Gilchrist), has no photograph of the Ghost. I myself would try a sketch; but it is dangerous. G. W. Foote once gave a portrait of *a part*, mentioned in Exodus, of the Father, and he was rewarded with twelve months in Holloway Gaol. If he had represented the whole of the Father, he would undoubtedly have been in prison for many a year yet. This consideration restrains me from sketching Monte Videan ox-tongues, or attempting to limn any one of the numerous pigeons that frequent Blackfriars Station.

One of the faults of the Ghost as a writer is his tendency every now and again to drop down to the culpable level of a downright plagiarist. Certain of the points and passages which have brought him literary renown are not his at all. The Duke of Wellington was wont to allege that, to him, the Lord's Prayer proved the truth of the Divine origin of Christianity. No one has a higher estimate of the Duke's military talents than I have. Perhaps few have followed his career with more eager appreciation, from his first landing in India to the copestone of his life-work at Waterloo. I am interested in

the reputation of his Grace, and I sincerely wish I could link his name only with such landmarks in the world's annals as Talavera and the lines of Torres-Vedras. There is no sight more lamentable than that of a lion in his own special department voluntarily stepping out of that department to make himself an ass in the special department of somebody else. I should have been quite as competent to have led the British forces at Badajos as Wellington was to give an opinion upon Christian evidences.

Apparently, it had never crossed the mind of the great Duke that what Christians call the Lord's Prayer is vastly older than Christianity. Evidently he had never heard that Christianity *stole* the prayer. His proof of the "divine origin" was based on *theft*. The Lord's Prayer is, incontestably, Jewish, not Christian; and, consequently, if it prove any "divine origin" at all, it must prove the "divine origin" of Judaism, the enemy of Christianity. Whatever the Prophet of Nazareth may have been, he was certainly far from original. The Golden Rule, the Lord's Prayer, and every sound and practical item in the ethical code of Christianity, existed centuries before Christ was born.

The poor and semi-illiterate Jewish mechanic had had few educational advantages; but he seems to have been pretty well versed in the doctrines of the Therapeuts and Essenes, and to have perused portions at least of the Talmudic writings. The Paternoster is simply a slightly-garbled copy of an ancient Jewish prayer, known as the Kadish, and has, *in toto*, been stolen from the Talmud. Here is a translation of the Kadish, not given by a wicked "Infidel," but by a pious and reverend Christian*:—

"Our Father which art in heaven, be gracious to us O Lord, our God: hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above and in the earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us now and for ever. The holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil

* Rev. John Gregorie.

*thing. For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and for evermore.**

Christ does not seem to have had a very retentive memory, and appears to have quoted the Kadish rather imperfectly. He had, apparently, forgotten the turn of several of the expressions, if he be properly reported in Matthew and Luke; but, upon the whole, the very *words* are identical, and there is certainly not a single *idea* in the Paternoster that is not in the Kadish. So much for the Duke of Wellington's *proof* of the divine origin of Christianity!

In addition to the "Lord's Prayer" being found in the Kadish, it can be constructed thus out of ancient Jewish prayers:—

Our father which art in heaven (Maimonides, in Zephillot); *thy name be sanctified* (Capellus, ex Euchologiis Judæorum); *thy kingdom reign* (Drusius, ex libro Musar); *do thy will in heaven* (Bab. Berachoth); *forgive us our sins* (in almost all Jewish prayers); *lead us not into the hand of temptation* (in Libro Musar apud Drusium); *deliver us from Satan* (in precibus Judæorum); *for thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign gloriously for ever and ever* (in Jewish Liturgies).

As far as Scriptural plagiarisms from the Talmud are concerned, "Moncure D. Conway, in his 'Sacred Anthology,' affords us further means of instituting comparisons. I draw from him the following passages from the Talmud, to which I have added the corresponding texts from the Christian Scriptures. 'Whoso looketh upon the wife of another with a lustful eye is considered as if he had committed adultery' (Matt. v. 28). 'Let thy yea be just, and thy nay be likewise just' (Matt. v. 37; James v. 12). 'What thou wouldest not like to be done to you do not to others; this is the fundamental law' (Matt. vii. 12; Rom. xiii. 10). 'Study not the law, that thou mayest be called a wise man, a Rabbi, and a teacher' (Matt. xxiii. 8; James iii. 1). 'Judge not thy fellow man until thou be similarly situated.' 'Judge all men with leniency.' 'With the measure we mete

* Cf. Matt. vi. 9-13; Luke xi. 2-4.

we shall be measured again' (Matt. vii. 1, 2; Rom. ii. 1; xiv. 4, 13; 1 Cor. iv. 5; James iv. 11, 12). It would greatly astonish me if there could be any one found in this age who would receive an admonition; if he be admonished to take the splinter out of his eye, he would answer, 'Take the beam out of thine own' (Matthew vii. 1-3). 'Love thy neighbour as thyself': this is a fundamental law in the Bible (Matt. xix. 19; xxii. 39, 40; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14; James ii. 8). 'Imitate God in his goodness. Be towards thy fellow-creatures as he is towards the whole creation. Clothe the naked. Heal the sick. Comfort the afflicted. Be a brother to the children of thy father' (Matt. v. 43-45; vi. 26-30; xxv. 35, 36; Mark xvi. 18; Luke iii. 11; Acts v. 15, 16; 2 Cor. i. 4; xi. 1; 1 Thess. i. 6; v. 14; James i. 27; ii. 15, 16; v. 14, 15; 1 John iii. 17). 'A man who studies the law and acts in accordance with its commandments is likened to a man who builds a house, the foundation of which is made of freestone and the superstructure of bricks. Storm and flood cannot injure the house. But he who studies the law and is destitute of good actions is likened unto the man who builds the foundation of his house of brick and mortar and raises the upper storeys with solid stone. The flood will soon undermine and overturn the house' (Matt. vii. 24-27)."

Even if we make him a present of the Lord's Prayer, which is not the "Lord's" Prayer at all, except in the sense that the "Lord" stole it, what then? It is, upon the whole, crude and anachronistic, and would point to the origination of Christianity from natural Ignorance, not from supernatural Intelligence. We pass over the astounding admission that God (whatever *he* may be) leads men into temptation, and has to be prayed to in order to prevent him from doing so, to "Forgive us our debts" (in Luke our *sins*) "as we forgive our debtors." Sin cannot be forgiven. Every act, good, bad, or indifferent, brings with it its own respective and special effect, not only to the actor in his individuality,

* "The Sources and Development of Christianity," by T. L. Strange.

for no man, properly speaking, has a definite solipsal individuality ; he is a link in the endless chain of being, an atom in the totality of Kosmos, a throb of the pulse of the *anima mundi*. Nature knows no such word as *forgive*. If you leap from the cross of St. Paul's to the street below, you will be dashed to pieces ; if you thrust your naked hand into the fire, you will be burnt. If you waste your strength in debauchery, Nature will never forgive you. If you ruin your brain with alcohol or opium, it is just as possible for water to flow up hill as for you to go unpunished. And, shade of the Iron Duke, Nature's laws are God's laws, except when he subverts them and works "miracles," which he never worked and never will. Nature has no laws that are capricious and others that are not. The crucified corpse getting out of its grave, and, from Mount Olivet, flying up into heaven, was no more a "miracle" than it would be to forgive Mr John Smith his sins. And he must have even more effrontery than I credit him with if he imagine that the machinery of the universe is to be thrown out of gear for him and his "sins," even if he could commit them against a God who has foreordained all things, and to whom Mr John Smith is clay in the hands of the potter.

"Whate'er is done is done ! No futile prayer
Can lure the falcon back into the snare ;
Cause and effect is Nature's revelation.
Reap as ye sow. This is the co-relation :
Sin cannot be forgiven !" *

Not only Mr John Smith, the Nonconformist and cheesemonger, but many specimens of the parson *vulgaris* —the kind distinguished by narrowness, cant, and snivel —will tell you that no other religion has or ever had such a superhumanly wise moral apothegm as the Golden Rule. The better-class and more highly-educated order of parson knows well enough that the so-called Golden Rule antedates Christianity ; but the howler of little Bethel and the rank-and-file bible-banger of Dissent know nothing of the kind. Their merit is that they are as unsophisticated as was the carpenter and his fisher-

* "Songs by the Wayside of an Agnostic's Life," p. 43.

men, and are good for nothing under the sun but pocketing pew rents and turning the world's bread into *καπρος*. This is all any priest ever turned bread into, in spite of his juggling rite by which he has for long pretended to transmogrify it into the flesh of a defunct deity, that still remains the same size, though millions have been eating him for centuries.

Confucius, the great philosopher of China, and who flourished at least five centuries before the Hebraic "virgin" bore a son, and the wise fools of the East went to Bethlehem star-gazing, wrote thus in the twenty-fourth maxim of the "Ta-heo": "Do unto another what thou wouldst he should do unto you, and do not unto another what thou wouldst not should be done unto you." And yet even Confucius did not originate the Golden Rule. Away back in the dimmest mists of history, in the Rig-Veda,* we find the moral maxim which, more than a thousand years afterwards, Christianity *stole* and foisted as new and divine upon the rabble which were the first proselytes of the creed of the manger, and whose rabble of descendants are the *only* real Christians of to-day. In the Panchatanbra, another Hindu work of remote antiquity, we have the maxim, "Do not to others what would be repugnant to thyself."† The maxim is also found in the ancient Hindu Works, the Hitopodesa and the great epic poem, the Mahabharata, translated into English, in 1875, by Professor Monier Williams. But there is a strong presumption that Jesus was too illiterate to have obtained the Golden Rule from any of the sources to which I have referred. For a certainty he pirated it from the easily-accessible Talmud, in which, as I have shown, he found the Lord's Prayer. Emanuel Deutsch refers to the Golden Rule as "quoted by Hillel, the President, at whose death Jesus was ten years of age, not as anything new, but as an old and well-known dictum."‡ The dictum, by the way, is also to be found in the Buddhistic Dhammapada, and Buddha flourished *circa* 623-543 B.C.

* See Max Müller's translation, pp. 71, 72.

† Muir's "Religious and Moral Sentiments from Sanscrit Writers," p. 107.

‡ *Quarterly Review*, October 1867, p. 437.

From Confucius down to close on the era of Christ, the Golden Rule may be stated and catalogued as follows:—

Golden Rule by Confucius, 500 B.C.: "Do unto another what you would have him do unto you, and do not to another what you would not have him do unto you. Thou needest this law alone. It is the foundation of all the rest."

Golden Rule by Aristotle, 385 B.C.: "We should conduct ourselves towards others as we would have others act towards us."

Golden Rule by Pittacus, 650 B.C.: "Do not to your neighbour what you would take ill from him."

Golden Rule by Thales, 464 B.C.: "Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing."

Golden Rule by Isocrates, 338 B.C.: "Act towards others as you desire them to act towards you."

Golden Rule by Aristippus, 365 B.C.: "Cherish reciprocal benevolence, which will make you as anxious for another's welfare as your own."

Golden Rule by Sextus, a Pythagorean, 406 B.C.: "What you wish your neighbours to be to you, such be also to them."

Golden Rule by Hillel, 50 B.C.: "Do not to others what you would not like others to do to you."

There was indeed, no sane and practical moral maxim taught by Jesus that had not been enjoined before by such teachers as Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, the Indian Brahmins or Gymnosophists, the Peripatetics, the Therapeuts, Essenes and Stoics. Moreover, certain long-previously-existing ethical maxims the heated mentation of the prophet of Nazareth inverted, distorted, and burlesqued. For instance, he enjoined upon his followers to repay evil with good!* But, on Confucius being asked, "What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?" he answered: "With what, then, will ye recompense kindness? Recompense injury with *justice* and recompense kindness with kindness."† The words

* Matt. v. 44.

† Lun Yu, xiv. 26.

of Confucius are the wise and deliberate dictum of a responsible ethical leader; the teachings of Jesus the injudicious and irresponsible jabber of a fanatic. As has been cogently remarked, "to love our enemy involves both an absurdity and an immorality: to do so would be wrong if possible, and impossible even if right." So much for the Lord's Prayer and the Golden Rule! Of Christianity it may be said of a verity: What of it is true is not new, and what of it is new is not true.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Divine Falsehood, Ancient and Modern—Archdeacon Farrar's Allegment that Christianity originated Hospitals—Evidence of the Falsity of Archdeacon Farrar's Allegment—Cowardice of Ecclesiasticism—Non and Anti-Christian Philanthropy.

ONE privilege of religions and religionists is their facility for lying with impunity, and, when occasion requires, getting deity in heaven to be so obliging as to give some evidence of the truth of their lies. The Christian creed, although perhaps the greatest of all sinners in this respect, does not by any means stand alone. Indeed, for a trifle, deity has been known to be so accommodating as to propound a new doctrine to render sinless a sin by a saint. One of the most conspicuous instances of the deity being good enough to approve of sin in order to gloss over the vices of the pious occurs in the life of his servant Mahomet.

At a certain period in his career, Mahomet received a present from Makawkas, Viceroy of Egypt. The present included among other items two young maidens. "One of these, named Mary, of fifteen years of age, Mahomet debauched. This greatly offended two of his wives, Hafsa and Ayesha, and, to pacify them, he promised, upon oath, to do so no more. But he was soon taken again by them transgressing in the same way. And now, that he might not stand in awe of his wives any longer, down comes a revelation, which is recorded in the sixty-sixth chapter of the Koran, releasing the prophet from his oath, allowing him to have concubines if he wished. And the two wives of Mahomet, who, on the quarrel about Mary, had gone home to their fathers, being threatened in the same chapter with a divorce, were glad to send their fathers to him to make their peace

it is to relieve the object of distress.”* It is a far cry from the present hour to the days of St. Chrysostom; but from his time till now—nay, long prior to his time—the surgical and medical science of Christianity has remained essentially the same. We find the saint “haranguing on the mighty wonders which were performed among them every day by the relics of the martyrs in casting out devils [Christ and his saints mistook apoplectic fits for devils], curing all diseases, and drawing whole cities and peoples to their sepulchres. He displays also the miraculous cures wrought by consecrated oil and by the sign of the Cross, which last he calls a defence against all evil and a medicine against all sickness, and affirms it to have been miraculously impressed, in his own time, on people’s garments.”†

So much for the medical science of the Christians who, Archdeacon Farrar alleges, originated hospitals! Who would trouble about the pharmacopœa, when the Cross—by the way, only a modified representation of the *phallus*—had in it the potency to cure all the ills which flesh is heir to? “This sign,” says St. Chrysostom, “both in the days of our forefathers and in our own, has thrown open gates that were shut, destroyed the effects of poisonous drugs, dissolved the force of hemlock, and cured the bites of venomous beasts. The Sacred Oil also of the Church was held in great veneration in these same days as a universal remedy in all diseases, for which purpose it was either prepared and dispensed by priests and holy monks, or was taken from the lamps which were burning before the relics of the martyrs. St. Jerome mentions great numbers who had been cured of the bites of venomous animals by touching their wounds with the first sort; and St. Chrysostom speaks of many who had been healed of their distempers by anointing them with the second; and St. Austin affirms, from his own knowledge, that a young woman had been freed from a devil, and a young man *restored even from death to life, by the use of it.*”‡ What Christian would

* Townsend’s “Travels in Spain,” vol. iii. p. 215.

† Rev. Dr. Middleton’s “Free Inquiry,” pp. 136-7.

‡ Rev. Dr. Middleton’s “Introductory Discourse,” lxiii.

keep a druggist's shop, when, by a flask of train oil, he could not only prevent the living from dying, but even, when necessary, restore the dead to life? Is it not something of a wonder, Archdeacon Farrar, that the Christians troubled their heads about hospitals at all, when it was in their power to bless a flask of oil so as to make it a panacea for every disease known to nosologist's and when, with two bits of stick or two straws, they could make a Cross, and with it transform a decomposing corpse into a living, kicking, hallelujah-shouting saint?

I do not find that your great Churchmen did much in hospital-founding, O Archdeacon Farrar; but I do find that a very prominent Churchman, Pope Sixtus IV., in 1471, founded at Rome an extensive and well-equipped brothel. I find also that the prostitutes of the said brothel paid his Holiness some twenty thousand ducats a year for his protecting them in the exercise of their profession.* With this twenty thousand ducats per annum exacted from the wages of prostitution no doubt his Holiness was enabled to do much in the way of furthering the interests of the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified; and, no doubt, there was something beautifully appropriate in pushing the interests of such a gospel with money obtained from such a source. Twenty thousand ducats per annum is rather a liberal income, Archdeacon Farrar. The establishment must have been carried on with considerable vigour and business tact. Your Christian hospitals do not seem to have been run quite so successfully. Christianity could not conduct an hospital as effectively as the Hindoos, Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, or Saracens. But the managing of a brothel was more in her line; in that department of polite learning she could hold her own against all competitors.

"Long before Christianity had a place there were vast libraries. There were thousands of schools before a Christian existed on the earth. There were hundreds of hospitals before a line of the New Testament was written. Hundreds of years before Christ there were

* *Vide* Corn. Agrippa. Cave ii. 8; ult. Append.

hospitals in India—not only for men, women, and children, but even for beasts. There were hospitals in Egypt long before Moses was born. They knew enough then to cure insanity with music. They surrounded the insane with flowers, and treated them with kindness.

“The great libraries at Alexandria were not Christian. The most intellectual nation of the Middle Ages was not Christian. While Christians were imprisoning people for saying the earth is round, the Moors in Spain were teaching geography with globes. They had even calculated the circumference of the earth by the tides of the Red Sea.

“Where did education come from? For a thousand years Christianity destroyed books and painting and statues. For a thousand years Christianity was filled with hatred towards every effort of the human mind. We got paper from the Moors. Printing had been known thousands of years before in China. A few manuscripts, containing a portion of the literature of Greece—a few enriched with the best thoughts of the Roman world—had been preserved from the general wreck and ruin wrought by Christian hate. These became the seeds of intellectual progress. For a thousand years Christianity controlled Europe. The Mohammedans were far in advance of the Christians with hospitals and asylums and institutions of learning.

“Just in proportion as we have done away with what is known as orthodox Christianity, Humanity has taken its place. Humanity has built all the asylums, all the hospitals. Humanity, not Christianity, has done these things. The people of this country are willing to be taxed that the insane may be cared for, that the sick, the helpless, and the destitute may be provided for, not because they are Christians, but because they are humane; and they are not humane because they are Christians.

“The colleges of this country have been poisoned by theology, and their usefulness almost destroyed. Just in proportion as they have gotten from ecclesiastical control, they have become a good. That college to-day which has the most religion has the least true learning;

and that college which is the nearest free does the most good. Colleges that pit Moses against modern geology, that undertake to overthrow the Copernican system by appealing to Joshua, have done, and are doing, very little good in this world.

"You must also remember that Christianity has made more lunatics than it ever provided asylums for. Christianity has driven more men and women crazy than all other religions combined. Hundreds and thousands and millions have lost their reason in contemplating the monstrous falsehoods of Christianity. 'Thousands of mothers, thinking of their sons in hell—thousands of fathers, believing their boys and girls in perdition, have lost their reason.

"So let it be distinctly understood that Christianity has made ten lunatics—twenty—one hundred—where it has provided an asylum for one.

"Then as to hospitals. When we take into consideration the wars that have been waged on account of religion, the countless thousands who have been maimed and wounded, through all the years by wars produced by theology—then I say that Christianity has not built hospitals enough to take care of her own wounded—not enough to take care of one in a hundred. Where Christianity has bound up the wounds of one, it has pierced the bodies of a hundred others with sword and spear, with bayonet and ball. Where she has provided one bed in a hospital, she has laid away a hundred bodies in bloody graves."*

Christianity's hospital-founding, like the majority of her pretensions, has no basis except in the uncritical credulity of her dupes, and no existence except in the inventive impudence of interested imposture.

* R. G. Ingersoll.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Mohammedan Civilisation, Literature, and Science—Mr. John Smith as a Product of Christian Civilisation—Pious Slaughterings—Ante-Christian Architecture and Masonry—Insanitary Christendom—Persecution of the Jews—Ancient and Modern Hedonism.

It is to the followers of the Arab camel-driver, not to the votaries of the Jewish carpenter, that we owe it that the lamp of learning was not, during the Dark Ages, extinguished throughout Europe.

"The Khaliphs of Cordova," writes Draper, "distinguished themselves as patrons of learning. Cordova, under their administration, boasted of more than two hundred thousand houses and more than a million inhabitants. After sunset a man might walk through it for ten miles by the light of the public lamps. Seven hundred years after this time there was not one public lamp in London. Its streets were solidly paved. In Paris, centuries after, whoever stepped over his threshold on a rainy day stepped up to his ankles in mud."

The palaces of the Khaliphs were the most magnificent in Europe. The residences of the ordinary merchants among the Spanish Mohammedans were better than those of the rulers of Christian Europe. Rich tapestries, mosaic floors, marble fountains, and beautiful gardens were seen on every hand. The library of the Khaliph Alkahem was so large that the catalogue alone comprised forty large volumes. Even in the matter of calligraphy and the illumination of MSS., something in which the monks have generally been looked upon as unequalled, the Spanish Arabs were far superior. They taught to Western Europe the fashion of clean linen and bodily cleanliness. "Not even the commonest Arab would have offered such a spectacle as did the corpse of

the saintly Thomas à Becket when his hair-cloth shirt was removed." Literature flourished under the Kaliphs. One of them was the author of no less than fifty volumes. Another wrote a treatise on algebra, for which science we are wholly indebted to the Spanish Arabs. They translated the works of the principal Greek philosophers; but the lewdness of the Greek poets deterred them from their translation. Haroun Alraschid, however, had Homer translated into Syriac. The Khaliphs established libraries in all the chief towns. To every mosque was attached a public school, where the children of the poor were taught. Let us respectfully ask, In how many monasteries of Christian Europe was instruction, except in miracle-mongering and theological credulity, given to the poor?

It is the current belief, and it must have some foundation, that the hostility of the Romish Church to public education has not abated even in the noonday glare of the nineteenth century. What must it have been in the midnight darkness of the mediæval time?

In the land of the Khaliphs there were cyclopædias, grammars, and dictionaries; there were Greek, Latin and Hebrew lexicons; one Arabian dictionary consisted of sixty volumes, each word fortified by quotations, thus ante-dating the style of Littse and the great English philological dictionaries. The topics discussed by the writers were many. Let us mention a few:—Avicena, on medicine and philosophy; Averroes, on philosophy—he was the discoverer of the spots upon the sun, A.D. 1190; Abu Otham, on zoology; Rhazes, Al Abbas, and Al Belthar, on botany; Ebu Zoar, on pharmacy. There are scores of others on topography, statistics, chronology; numismatics, agriculture, and irrigation. The same people brought chemistry to a high degree of perfection, while the Popes of Rome—they thought it was a duty—were engaged in issuing bulls against those who practised it in Christian Europe as "necromancers and practisers of the black art."

Surgery and obstetrics were practised by the Spanish Arabs, at the same time that Pope Innocent III. forbade surgical operations; and Pope Honorius went still further and forbade the practice of medicine by clerics.

In 1243 the Dominicans banished books on medicine from the monasteries, and Pope Boniface VIII. prohibited dissection as sacrilege. Andreas Vesalius, founder of the science of modern anatomy, was hounded to his grave by the Church. Arnold de Villa Nova, the great physician and chemist of his day, was excommunicated for "dealing with the devil," and forced to fly from Christendom to the land of the pagans. There, although bereft of the society of Christians, he was at least among intelligent men.

To the Spanish Arabs we owe the introduction of rice, sugar, and cotton into Europe; nearly all the fine garden fruits and the culture of silk; the system of irrigation by flood-gates, wheels, and pumps; the manufacture of textile fabrics, earthenware, iron, and steel. We owe our very numerals to them, and the items herewith particularised are only the more important. In a thousand small particulars we are the debtors of the "Infidel" Arabs.

"We are a civilised people," quoth Mr. John Smith, "now that we have the 'blessed Gospel.' We have newspapers (the *War Cry*, for instance) and steam-engines; before we had the Gospel we were howling and naked savages." True, Mr. John Smith; but what have newspapers or steam-engines, or any invention that ever benefited the race, to do with that jumbled record of wars and lecheries and inanities known as the Old and New Testaments? True, Mr. Smith, you were only a savage when you worshipped Bel and Hesus: but what are you now that you worship Jah and Jesus? You are only a poor little parody of a savage—a savage emasculated and with his teeth broken, a cheese-paring little dolt, without a savage's grace and fire and brain and muscle.

But think you that nobody can be civilised till he has heard of Lot and his daughters, and David and his slaughters, of impractical Jesus and moonstruck Paul? Before the manger of Bethlehem had been heard of, Hipparchus, Erasthones, Aristotle, and Ptolemy had mooted and discussed the rotundity of the earth. The towns of Assyria were built of brick 2000 years before the time of your Christ; and linen, as fine as that you

can make to-day, was wrapped round the mummies of distinguished Egyptians 4,000 years before the commencement of the Christian era. The libraries of Alexandria contained 800,000 volumes, all, of course, written by pre-Christian "Infidels;" and the museums of Alexandria comprised schools of philosophy, mathematics, history, biology, zoology, astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, and medicine long before your New Testament, Mr J. Smith, had been cobbled up and foisted upon the world.

But Christianity hurled the world back into devout ignorance and pious barbarism. For centuries there were no colleges for science and philosophy between Mohammedan Seville and Mohammedan Bagdad. "From the third to the thirteenth century," writes Draper, "Christianity gave to the world no scientific man;" and "for eight centuries," writes Buckle, "there were not in all Christian Europe four men who dared to express an independent opinion." There were only abbey-fuls of designing monks, and some thousands of swash-buckler nobles and devout serfs wallowing in ignorance and filth and bloodshed. Instruments of torture and the diabolical machinery of the Inquisition were their great inventions and discoveries; and their efforts were directed with too much success towards converting the cities and fields of earth into a fire-blackened and blood-soaked wilderness. It is estimated that over one million persons perished during the early Arian schism, one million in the Carthaginian struggles, seven millions during the Saracen slaughters in Spain, five millions during the eight Crusades, two millions of Saxons and Scandinavians, one million in the wars against the Netherlands, Albigenes, Waldenses, and Huguenots; and one hundred millions during the Justinian wars, saying nothing of minor conflicts, secret murders, and the extermination of from twenty to thirty million Peruvians and Mexicans. The great and good King Charlemagne baptised and beheaded four thousand five hundred Germans in a single day.

When the Christians, by brute force, drove the Mohammedans out of Spain, they found an astronomical observatory at Seville. What on earth the "Infidels" whom they had displaced had done with the edifice and

its instruments could not be discovered, so Christian blockheadism converted the observatory into a bell-tower. The Mohammedans were far advanced in medical science; but medical science among the Christians consisted in making journeys to holy shrines and holy wells and paying heavily for sacred charms and forged relics of saints. It is only in quite recent times that medicine, in Christian countries, has shaken itself clear of religious supernaturalism. It was only yesterday that medical jurisprudence shook itself so far clear of dualism, mysticism, and supernatural terrorism that Sir William Gull dared to declare that "it has become the immovable standpoint of physiology that a living creature is dependent for all its bodily functions upon the forces of inorganic matter—in other words, that our corporeal life is but the operation of material atoms and material forces within the reach of experimental inquiry." Till lately, in Christian countries, physic, the noblest of sciences, was still trammelled with traces of theological quackery and incantation. "I have mentioned," writes Dr. Munk, "the human skull among the articles of the *Materia Medica*, and I may add that a spirit distilled from it, *Spiritus Cranii Humani*, was a favourite medicine in former times, and was the essential ingredient in a cordial julep prescribed by the seven physicians who were in personal attendance on Charles II. through the night of February 4th, 1684, '*ad refocillandas Regis vires*,' when the King was evidently sinking. And here I may recall the strange expedient resorted to by the physicians in attendance on another member of the same royal race, Henry, the eldest son of James I. When that prince was at the point of death, 'a live cock,' writes the chronicler, 'was cloven by the back and applied to the soles of his feete, but in vayne.' Shortly after it was announced that all hope was gone."* For all the ills that flesh is heir to, St. James continues to recommend prayers and oil; and the Peculiar People—"peculiar" only because they are consistent Christians—interpret Christianity in its true absurdity, ignorance, and barbarism.

* "The Gold-headed Cane," edited by William Munk, M.D.

Thousands of years before Christianity had ever been heard of, the polity of nations had obtained, there were commerce and manufacture, there were large and flourishing cities, agriculture was as well understood in China as it is here to-day; there were wise and salutary laws, and there was Freethought. Every thinker in the great school of Alexandria was encouraged to think with all the strength his mental constitution warranted, and in whatever direction his mental tendencies pointed.

It is too true that the world "grew grey at the breath" of Christianity, and that, as Professor Tyndall remarked at Belfast, the "victorious advance of Science" was arrested, and "the scientific intellect was compelled, like the exhausted soil, to lie fallow for two millenniums before it could regather the elements necessary to its fertility and strength." If this charge be true—and it is, alas! too true—what a record of unutterable guilt this monstrous and blood-stained creed has to answer for! And what have we got in return from it for all the darkness and blood and misery through which it has dragged us? Nothing. I speak deliberately and advisedly when I repeat we have got literally nothing. Now we have had eighteen centuries of the baleful thing. It has done its best to stand in the way of Humanity's onward march and to break the chariot wheels of human progress.

But at length the old dragon is dying, and some of us have taken advantage of his moribund weakness to try to turn the world back to the place it occupied when Christianity first darkened and cursed it. Two thousand years have been lost to the world! Millions of human beings have existed in ignorance and misery whose lot should have been enlightenment and happiness. No civilisation before Christianity! What about the buried cities of central America, which had risen and flourished and fallen before history had begun? What of the genius and the chisel that hewed out India's caves of Elephanta and the temples of holy Benares? What of the hands that laid the foundation-stones of Babylon and Nineveh? What of the artizans who placed the friezes of silver and the filigree of gold upon the huge battlements of Agbatana? What of the long upward career of civilisation in

Egypt before Memphis was founded, before Thebes had its hundred gates, and before Cheops or Cephrenes had built a single pyramid? What of the glories of Greece? What of the grandeur of Rome?

Herodotus mentions that, centuries before Christ, the very Scythians had baths; but for hundreds of years of our era there was not a bath in Europe outside Moham-medan Constantinople. This rendered hospitals necessary; but they were unknown. Cleanliness may be next to godliness; but Christianity and dirt went together, on the principle, I suppose, that like draws to like. A Christian city, when Europe was really Christian—before it was permeated with “Infidelity” as it is now—was revolting and filthy beyond description. Offal and excrement rotted and stank in the streets, and in the city squares dogs and swine snarled and fought with each other for favourite morsels of the mortal remains of decomposing cats, dogs, horses, and even human beings, that sent up their pestilential stench under the broiling sun or the plashing rain. Then a horrible disease would break out, and, in less than a week, glut the churchyards with the carcasses of more than half the citizens. These were the “Black Deaths” and the “Sweating Sicknesses” we hear so much of in mediæval history. They were truly Christian visitations, and hurried hundreds of thousands of dirty and ignorant saints right into Abraham’s bosom. Where were the hospitals?

These Plagues and Black Deaths were considered a direct visitation of Almighty God. The smug Christian priest enjoined upon his dupes that Jehovah had so afflicted them for their sins, and for a wise purpose, in his gracious goodness! They looked to Jehovah and forgot the heaps of offal rotting in the streets. Instead of appealing to Jesus, they should have thrown quicklime on the dead dogs; instead of expecting anything from the Holy Ghost, they should have sprinkled Condy’s fluid on their filthy floors; in lieu of troubling the Virgin Mary, they should have sent their garments to the laundry.

But it was so far well when they merely traced the plague to the hand of Jehovah; for they sometimes attributed it to the agency of the Jews. This “chosen people” were accused of having poisoned the springs

and wells and ditches and pumps, so as to bring about a pestilence ; and, accordingly, a furious persecution would set in ; the most inhuman cruelties would be perpetrated and the murder-knife of the followers of the Lamb drip red with massacre ! This is only one feeble glimpse at one random spot on the blotted scroll of Christian guilt and misery. But volumes could be filled with the records of the degradations of Christian superstition, the shameless immoralities of the Christian clergy, and their alliance with despotism against a hopelessly-ignorant and down-trodden populace.

It is not Christianity, but the progressive principle in Humanity, that has given us a better state of things in London and Paris now than obtained in that "starless midnight of our race" known as the Dark Ages. It is not the plastic influence of priestcraft that has made us what we are, but the principle of Evolution inherent in our race, and which has raised us from the pristine rudeness of the Stone Period to the position we occupy to-day. This development has proceeded, not by Christianity's genial assistance, but in Christianity's bitter despite. The Caucasian is the finest race in the world as regards intellectual force and moral elevation. We belong to that race, and yet what are we to-day that we were not two thousand years ago, when Christianity first threw its baleful shadow across our path ? The *summum bonum* of existence is the attainment of individual and collective happiness. Were our race two thousand years ago not happy as to-day ? Were the millions who lived under the symbols and significances of Greek philosophy and Roman majesty not happier than the millions who have existed since the day of science and philosophy sank in night, and the shuddering shadow of Calvary and its cross put out the light of the Western world ? I ask, What have we to make us happy now in the Gospel that we had not from the Serapion and the Academic groves ? What are there in this London and Paris of the elements of rational happiness that were not to be found in Athens and in Rome ? Were there more wretches who died of hunger in Rome than now die annually in London ? Were there more men and women and children in ignorance and squalor and rags ? Was

there more shameless and flaunting prostitution in the forum at Rome than there is in Belgravia? True, Rome had a Tarquin; but his name is held in odium and execration; while London has a thousand Tarquins, and their names are not held in odium—they occupy the high places of the earth; they sit beside God's own bishops in the Upper House, and, in the name of God and the King, essay to arrest the car of human progress.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Pagan Rome versus Christian England—Roman Slavery and English Serfdom—How the Machinery of Statecraft and Priestcraft is maintained—The Fruits of Christianity at Home and Abroad—the First Christian Murderer—Constantine and Julian—Death of Julian.

AGAIN I ask, What have we in Christian London to render us rationally happy which they had not in Pagan Rome two thousand five hundred years ago? Have we, as the Roman people had, the stately lay of the poet, the ecstatic creations of the painter, the marble breathing into life in ennobling statuary, stupendous theatres for the people, and majestic temples for the gods? Alas! alas! our poets sing in conventional chains; our paintings and statues, such as they are, are shut up on the only day when the people could spare the time to see them; our Drury Lane is a hovel to the Coliseum, and our St. Paul's a mere pig-sty to the Pantheon. Then Pagan Rome had its Cæsars—men of brain and character and power, whose vast resource and imperious will shaped the destinies of the world. Christian England has no Cæsars; it has the Guelphs: the able man of the race has yet to be born. But it has produced idiots and debauchees such as would not, in Rome, have been permitted to wear the purple even for a single hour. Idiotic George III. and carnal George IV. were good enough for Christian England, with her beer and bible; but something different was required by pagan Rome, with her sword and manhood.

“Oh, but,” I think I hear some opponent expostulate, “in Rome they had slaves.” The less Christians say about slavery the better. It took all the vehement and

eloquent humanity of Clarkson and Wilberforce to carry the Abolition Bill against the pietists in the Commons, and even then the measure to abolish our slave-trade in the West Indies met with resolute opposition from the Christian bishops in the House of Lords. Many a pious text from holy writ has the parson quoted, both in the Old World and the New, in defence of slavery. The first ship which sailed from England, in 1562, under Sir John Hawkins, on the diabolical errand of buying human beings in Africa and selling them to the West Indies, was the *Jesus*; and the Spanish Government, during two centuries, concluded more than ten treaties in "the name of the most holy Trinity," which authorised the sale of more than 5,000,000 human beings, and received from it a tax of over 50,000 livres. But I am willing to concede that now, technically, England has no slaves. I say technically; for, virtually, England, even at this hour, *has* slaves groaning under a weight of thralldom and degradation such as was never known by the servile population of Rome. I refer to our rural labourers. Eighteen hundred years of this elevating and ennobling Christianity, and yet a number of our fellow-countrymen in England are wallowing in a sty of social and moral filth, brutal rather than human, trampled out of the condition of manhood into that of swinehood. To show that my language is not exaggerated, I quote from a Parliamentary Blue Book of only a few years ago: "Modesty must be an unknown virtue, decency an unimaginable thing, where, in one small chamber, with the beds lying as thickly as they can be packed, father, mother, young men, lads, grown and growing-up girls—two, and sometimes three, generations—are herded promiscuously; where every operation of the toilette and of nature—dressing, undressing, births and deaths—is performed by each within the sight or hearing of all; where children of both sexes, to as high an age as twelve or fourteen, or even more, occupy the same bed; where the whole atmosphere is sensual, and human nature is degraded into something below the level of the swine. It is a hideous picture, and the picture is drawn from life." No slaves!—better have slaves than haggard, nerveless, and attenuated monsters produced by a state

of things like this, and produced under the very eyes of the pious squire and his friend the parson. Rome never produced anything like this. Roman slaves had their strictly-defined privileges and rights; these creatures have none. Because they are valuable property, slaves are cared for, slaves are fed, slaves are housed, slaves are carefully bred; but these poor caricatures upon humanity are packed into unwholesome hovels, they swelter and breed upon a nauseating litter of rags and straw; the wild beast is clean and decent compared with them; and the hog has his wash; but they have semi-starvation. Rights!—they are too servile to know they have any. Privileges!—they are too spiritless to claim them. They exist to make the squire's rents possible; and, counted as members of the Church of England, they give the vicar a pretext for his useless and lazy existence.

Thus the machinery of statecraft and priestcraft is kept in motion. Thus the British Constitution is supported at the expense of the morality and the decency and at the sacrifice of the bone and thew and muscle and blood of the peasantry of our native land. O would we could find a deity, that we might call upon him to avenge such wrongs as these! O would that we knew of a heaven to which we might look for redress, and that the cry of the poor and the wretched and the wronged might not rise forever and ever in vain! What race of savages present a social aspect so heart-rending and hopeless as is to be found in the sties of Devonshire? Under what creed that ever before existed in the world will you find man trampled into a swine as you will find him in the hovels of Cambridgeshire, or in the "Sweaters'" dens of London? By its fruits shall ye know the tree. I accept the maxim. The tree of Christianity has grown here for many centuries, and behold its fruits—human beings with the lives of reptiles, who take as much interest in the national life as if they were six feet under the sod they till, who never heard of a Conservative or a Radical, who do not know the name of the Prime Minister. Some few scores of words, comprising the articles of their meat and drink and implements—a number of obscene expressions and a few horrid oaths, make up the whole of their

vocabulary. For them Shakespeare has never lived and Darwin has never been born.

And yet, even these are not the worst fruit of the Christian tree. What of the fever lanes and alleys of our great cities, with their tens of thousands of the criminal classes—blackguards and roughs and pick pockets and burglars and prostitutes and murderers? This Christian London produces such in abundance. Log towns on the outskirts of civilisation have to keep a sharp look-out lest the snake should crawl into their bedrooms, lest the tiger should stalk into their streets. But in our old Christian towns, where the gospel has been preached for more than a thousand years, worse than the snake crawls into our rooms, monsters more terrible than the tiger stalk in our streets. In this London we are taxed to support an army of over 10,000 police, and even then our lives and property are not safe from the criminals whose selves and their fathers have had more than a thousand years of Christian teaching. And, besides supporting the police, we have to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on the prison, the reformatory, and the gallows. This is our condition of affairs after many long and terrible centuries of Christianity; and yet, as if it had proved an inestimable blessing to ourselves, we have the impudence, the unblushing effrontery, while hundreds of our own people are dying for want of food, to raise money to carry this "gospel" to the "poor heathen," who rejects it with scorn.

Then, as to laws and forms of government, what has Christianity given us that we had not centuries before Christianity had been heard of? Did pre-Christian powers tyrannise over their subject provinces? Did Rome behave to Hispania as we have behaved to India? Did Rome tear the roofs off the cottages of the Helvetii, and leave infirm old men, delicate women, and little children to perish in the fields or on the roadside? Did Rome treat the Dacians as we did the Hindoos, as we blew them from the mouth of our cannon? Did Rome treat the Belgæ as we treated the aborigines of America, force upon them bibles and bayonets and brandy and gunpowder, and Christianise them off the face of the earth? Did Rome

behave to the Germanæ as we did to the Maiores of New Zealand, unappreciative of their gallant defence of their native land, hunt them down, and exterminate them like wild beasts? We were conquered by Pagan Rome eighteen centuries ago, and we are still a people. New Zealand was conquered by Christian England not one century ago, and already the natives have ceased to exist under the civilising influences of our bibles and bayonets and brandy.

The track of Christianity in America and Australasia has been marked by carnage and fire, and the native races have disappeared from the earth before the advance of the Gospel of the "Prince of Peace." Ask the Incas of Peru about this Gospel of "peace and goodwill," and the dying amid the slaughter heaps will gasp that it is a cruel and ironical mockery. Ask the butchered Pawnees and the slaughtered Sikhs of Hindostan their opinion of this "Gospel of Peace," and they will reply that it is the equivalent of relentless cruelty and merciless slaughter. From the time that its sword cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest, till the day its bayonets were blood-dimmed behind the earth-works of Tel-el-Kebir, virtually its watchword has been persecution and its motto tyranny. The cradle of its infancy is stained with blood, the couch of its manhood is polluted with lust, and now, over its bed of death, bend Hypocrisy and Mammon. To-day it is vulgar and discredited. Your thinkers, your Hæckels, your Büchners, your Mills, your Spencers, your Carlyles and Darwins, your Tyndalls, your Huxleys, and even your Napoleons, Garibaldis, and Gambettas, are all outside its pale. It boasts almost alone of such stuff as make up Spurgeon's holy servant girls and the roaring rabblement of the Salvation Army.

And what it is now it has ever been. Now it commends itself, but to no profit, to the ignorant off-scourings of the human race, and its first converts were the riff-raff of Jerusalem and the rabble of Rome. Its history is one record of ignorance and guilt and hypocrisy. Some great and noble characters have not repudiated it; some of the most high-souled specimens of our race have, without questioning them, received its teachings. But,

in spite of this, from the very first its credentials have been linked with dishonour, and its vouchers sullied with shame. The first Christian Emperor was Constantine. Constantine had murdered his wife, his brother-in-law, his nephew, his eldest son, and his father-in-law; and the Pagan priests refused to give the monster absolution. Christianity would, in exchange for his support, absolve the Emperor, although he had steeped his hands in the blood of half-creation. Absolve him it did, and from that time the faith of beggars and gaberlunzies became the faith of emperors and peers. It exchanged the cave and the hovel for the palace and the castle; the pauper's rags, crawling with vermin, for the cardinal's robes studded with gold; and, instead of its proselytes being thrown into the arena to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, they took the sword into their ferocious hands and waded to ascendancy through rivers of human blood. Jesus is a cipher. Constantine is the man who made the fortunes of Christianity. The ball may have been made by Jesus, the amiable visionary; but it was first kicked by Constantine, the unprincipled murderer.

A far different man was Julian, the nephew of Constantine, and who, because he disavowed Christianity and reverted to Hellenism, has been aspersed by historians as "Julian the Apostate." He was a man of mental power and moral grandeur. He had studied at Athens the most profound philosophy of the then world. When he assumed the purple he instinctively repudiated the barbarity, vulgarity, and fanatical cant of the Christianity which had been fostered by that debauched murderer, his uncle Constantine. But he was too sagacious to coerce and too generous to persecute; and Mosheim admits that Julian tolerated every sect and creed, and imposed religious disabilities upon no one. Constantine, the Christian, on his death-bed, underwent the silly rite of baptism to condone at death, by this miserable incantation, for a life of shame and crime. Far other was the death of the Pagan Julian, the philosopher and hero. His life-blood welling from his heart on the field of battle, he called his soldiers and counsellors round him, and addressed them: "Friends and fellow soldiers, the

seasonable period of my departure is now arrived, and I discharge, with the cheerfulness of a ready debtor, the demands of nature. I have learned from philosophy how much the soul is more excellent than the body, and that the separation of the nobler substance should be the subject of joy rather than of affliction. I have learned from religion that an early death has often been the reward of piety; and I accept, as a favour of the gods, the mortal stroke that secures me from the danger of disgracing a character which has hitherto been supported by virtue and fortitude. I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt. I am pleased to reflect on the innocence of my private life; and I can affirm with confidence that the supreme authority, that emanation of the Divine Power, has been preserved in my hands pure and immaculate. Detesting the corrupt and destructive maxims of despotisms, I have considered the happiness of the people as the end of government.”*

Thus died Julian, and with him the hope of Christianity's extinction; and the shadows of the Galilean's long and awful night settled down upon Asia Minor and Europe—the shadow from the wing of the Angel of (intellectual) Death.

* Gibbon's "Decline and Fall."

CHAPTER XXX.

Infallibility of the Bible—Endowment of Opinion—Canterbury Cathedral and How it is supported—Church Property exempt from Taxation—Ecclesiasticism and Morality—Bishops and Brewers—Shameless Promotion—The Secret of Christianity's Survival—Persecution and Cruelty—Pagan Decline and Christian Triumph.

APART from the irrational and immoral character of many of its dogmas, Christianity has exercised a baleful influence upon society, by its assumptions of infallibility, by its exclusiveness and its insane pretension that finality has been reached, that it is placed upon such an immovable basis of truth that all science and all philosophy must take their cue from its crude and untenable creation story and its revolting and immoral redemption myth. It came upon the world when the world was comparatively a baby, and set itself to the task not only of seeing that the baby should not be allowed to grow any bigger, but that it should, if possible, be dwarfed and pinched into something meaner and smaller. It enjoined upon its votaries that the wisdom of man is folly in the sight of God, and that heaven is not filled with philosophers, but with "babes and sucklings." It pronounced an appalling curse upon him who should alter by one jot or one tittle anything in the jumbled incoherences of its Scriptures. All knowledge was crystallised, all wisdom put into its eternal shape, eighteen hundred years ago. No secular book was of any use. If it taught what was not in the Bible, it taught what was unnecessary; if it taught anything opposed to the Bible, it was blasphemous. This pernicious doctrine of fixity has been the bane of our

political and social life. It has vitiated and frozen the very well-springs of our national vitality. Opinions were so incontrovertibly fixed and decided upon as truths that endowments were set aside to support them, the pious testators stipulating that the funds should be applied in support of those particular opinions or institutions *forever*.

For fifteen centuries, in Europe, opinions have been endowed. Masses of property, untaxed, but sedulously protected, have been attached to ideas. Modes of thinking and of education have been richly endowed; modes of dressing and of eating have been endowed. The boys of the Blue Coat School wear to day the blue petticoat and yellow stockings of Edward VI.'s time; and extremely strange they look when they tuck their petticoats up to play football. They wear no hats or caps. Even their food was endowed, and it required an Act of Parliament and vehement agitation to get cabbage added to their mutton, and potatoes to their boiled beef, those vegetables having come into use since the death of the founder.

We have some long-legged boys with bare heads and yellow stockings, and it required a special Act of Parliament to confer upon them the privilege of eating cabbage! We consider our legislative assembly the most august in the world, and yet it deliberates upon subjects which would look paltry and ludicrous if deliberated upon by a legislative conclave of savages in one of the South Sea Islands. As a drill-sergeant, Christianity never cries "March!" Its favourite attitude is "Stand at ease!" and its favourite mandate, "As you were!" As a corroboration of this statement, I shall refer only to that mediæval anachronism, Canterbury Cathedral.

Connected with this huge church there are about thirty clergymen, fourteen of whom are so liberally compensated that a man who gets one of their places is "made," since he enjoys an income of something like a thousand pounds a year. The other clergymen are also liberally paid; and there are a great number of secular persons employed in various capacities, at salaries upon which they subsist. The service is chanted twice every day in the year by an exquisite choir of twenty-four

voices, the pick of all the land, trained from boyhood, and maintained to old age. The annual expense of keeping up this magnificent establishment is about £23,000 a year, divided among about eighty persons, from the dean, with his thousands per annum, to the vergers who show the tombs of Henry IV. and the Black Prince in the crypt of the church, at forty pounds a year, and whatever shillings and half-crowns cadging can obtain or romantic visitors may choose to give them.

The city contained about 16,000 inhabitants, all of whom this while could have found standing-room within this stupendous edifice. Besides the cathedral, there are some sixteen parish churches belonging to the Establishment; museums of antiquity, all of them. These alone are amply sufficient for the accommodation of the whole population, and much more than sufficient to contain that fraction of the people who belong to the Church of England. For observe; besides that immense cathedral, with its retinue of dean, vice-dean, prebends, minor canons, preachers, singing men, singing boys, sexton, vergers, surveyors, and other Merry-Andrews of the Lord; besides the sixteen parish churches, each with its beneficed clergyman, a curate to help him, a clerk to say "Amen," a sexton to open the pews, and a woman to dust the cushions; besides this complicated, costly, and redundant religious system, which the people are compelled by law to maintain, whether they approve of it or not, whether they go to church twice a day or never in all their lives; besides all this, there exists in the town a complete apparatus of dissent. There is a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian, a Congregational, a Hard-Shell Baptist, a Soft-Shell Baptist, a Unitarian, a Roman Catholic, and another sect which passes by the name of the Ranters!

Let us not forget, also, that the money expended in maintaining religion comes out of the most sacred part of the scanty earnings of man—that precious little surplus which is left after the necessities of life are paid for; two or three pence a day per individual, in the more prosperous communities—that blessed fund which alone can be used to cheer, decorate, civilise, exalt, and advance mankind. It never can be large in amount.

And now, what does all that huge Church expenditure

that mountain of untaxed property, in the ancient cathedral town, do for the people of the place? And do not forget, either, that exemption from taxation is the secret of its accumulation. That vast estate, which has been increasing for ten centuries, could never have been gathered if it had contributed its portion every year to the expenses of the kingdom; and under the wearing, correcting influence of a just taxation, it would at once begin to shrink. But what does it do for the people?

According to theory, the inhabitants of that ancient city ought to be, not merely the most moral, but the most exquisitely spiritualised citizens in the whole Protestant world; for there ecclesiastical religion comes to a focus. There has been a concentration of the most expensive religious influence upon this lovely valley ever since St. Augustine preached there, as Archbishop of Canterbury, in the year 596. Since then one hundred and twelve Archbishops have expended themselves, more or less, upon the spot, receiving for their performances as divine mountebanks, large revenues, more than three times the salary of the President of the United States.

It is strange what an intimate connection there is between bishops and brewers, how naturally the cathedral runs to drink, and what "beauty of holiness," sits enshrined in the sublime alliteration, Bible and Beer, Gospel and Gin, Lush and Litany! The fact has lately been ascertained that the largest owners of gin-shops and beer-houses in London are its two cathedrals, St Paul's and Westminster Abbey. The Bishop of London, it is said in riding from his abode in St. James's Square to his official palace at Fulham, passes more than a hundred gin-shops built upon land belonging to the Church. A writer in the *Examiner* says: "Some years ago, after residing three or four months in Scotland, I had occasion to visit several cathedral towns—Norwich, Peterborough, and others. In the North I found hardly a person who could not read and write; in the cathedral towns I found very few who could." According to general testimony, the inhabitants of cathedral towns are exceptionally ignorant and drunken.

Some time ago the Archbishop, with his £15,000 per annum, was John Bird Sumner. And how did this John

Bird Sumner rise to the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, second hardly to any in the Kingdom of England, and second to none in the Kingdom of Christ? Did he have the enviable appointment because his piety was fervent and his learning immense? No; no such thing. He had his preferment for far other reasons; but tell it not in Gath, and publish it not in the streets of Ascalon. God's own anointed King, George IV., had, among others, as you may find from Greville's "Memoirs," a mistress named Lady Conyngham. This shameless female had a son, and John Bird Sumner was this son's tutor, and, through the recommendation of one of the royal harlots, he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. I hope Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles heartily approved of the appointment. It has been computed that one-third of the inhabitants of Canterbury have never had the curiosity to go inside the Cathedral even to look at it, far less to worship in it. There is a service in it twice a day, with much pomp and circumstance, it taking about thirty-five persons to perform the holy mummeries. But the congregation is oftener under than over thirty-five; so, frequently, every worshipper has one priestly performer and a fraction all to himself. This is as choice a burlesque as the proverbial Highland regiment, which had four-and-twenty pipers and five-and-twenty men.

The terribly significant and momentous question is, How is it possible that, among peoples that are reckoned sane, irrational and untenably-absurd doctrines and dogmas can hold their own through the long and unbroken chain of centuries? Answer to the momentous question can be given in one word. Christianity has been supported and perpetuated by brutal and merciless persecution. How does Christianity survive? Ask the bloody shells that scooped the living and quivering flesh off the bones of Hypatia, and the long and fiendish muster-roll of torments from that martyrdom at Alexandria downward. Sharp were the arguments of Celsus and Porphyry against Christianity; but Christianity had a still sharper reply—the point of the sword. The old Hebrew myths were recently subjected to sarcasm and savage ridicule; and, as a reply to the stings of satire,

Christianity had nothing to offer but brute force. Against a poor and friendless assailant it flung the heavy purse of the richest and most corrupt corporation in the world. In its brutal meanness, it brought down an array of wigs and swords and gold chains and purple gowns and forensic skill to crush a poor man who conducted his own defence, eloquently, manfully, till borne down and overwhelmed by the overmastering force of hired and mercenary bigotry doing service for Almighty God because so many guineas were marked upon the brief. God avenges himself: he is on the side of the heaviest cannon. The hirelings of the rotten faith retire victorious, and the keen-brained, clear-voiced herald of the coming day is arrayed in the dress of a felon, fed on bread and water, and caged up like a wild beast. In other way than this Christianity never did answer hostile criticism, and never will. It knows Paley's "Evidences" are moonshine, so it trusts instead to the convincing evidence of tearing away her child from the arms of the unbelieving mother. In its heart it recognises that Whateley's "Evidences" are bagatelle, so it resorts to the irrefragable evidence of the felon's den.

The policy it pursued to the "blasphemers" in prison it pursued for more than five dark and unhappy centuries, rendering life in Europe, for more than five hundred years, a nightmare of horror, a haunt of pale fear and shrieking terror. Never did any influence, since civilised man lived upon the earth, equal the iron despotism and unspeakable cruelty of the Inquisition. I could set your every hair on end, O reader, with horror at the bare and unvarnished recital of the refinements of cruelty invented by the Council of Cardinals.

If as much ingenuity had been expended in fostering art and pursuing science as was exerted in order that the most devilish agony might be inflicted upon heretics, we should to-day be living in a brighter, a happier, and a nobler world. Pope Innocent III. organised the Inquisition in 1206, and it did not expire till over five hundred years subsequently. In Portugal it was still alive at so recent a date as 1761. The state of things which Dr. Draper describes as happening in the thirteenth century may be taken as a fair sample of what has always

occurred where corrupt, selfish, and ignorant priesthoods have held sway: "The Inquisition had made the Papal system irresistible. All opposition must be punished with death by fire. A mere thought, without having betrayed itself by outward sign, was considered as guilt. As time went on, this practice of the Inquisition became more and more atrocious. Torture was resorted to on mere suspicion. The accused was not allowed to know the name of his accuser. He was not permitted to have any legal advice. There was no appeal. The Inquisition was ordered not to lean to pity. No recantation was of avail. The innocent family of the accused was deprived of its property by confiscation; half went to the Papal treasury, half to the Inquisitors. Life only, said Innocent III., was to be left to the sons of mis-believers, and that merely as an act of mercy."

Greece was in her glorious tomb, the Roman Empire had declined and fallen, before the serpent of Palestine began to creep athwart the darkening moorland of the world. In the "land of lost gods and god-like men" the marble creations of Genius no longer flashed from among the shadows slung by the cypress and the myrtle. The heart of heroic Rome was throbbless. Her lyre was mute and her sword was broken. Sensualists and sybarites wore the purple of the Cæsars, and fiddlers thrummed and harlots danced on the heroic streets that had thundered to the tread of the march of the legions. An epitaph was inscribed on every fort, and "Ichabod" was writ large on every temple. The mighty dead were in the grave, and the feeble living were in the courtesan's bower, in the wine-shop and the theatre. The sun of the Day had set, and the stars of the Night looked down upon smaller men and a meaner world. Under these baleful stars which shone upon the dwarfs that stumbled among their sires' colossal bones opportunity was seized for the establishment of Jehovah and his Book. The Semitic god and his miserable volume could not live when the giants were alive; but it could now live and fatten among the worms that crawled in their coffins and their cerements. For nearly two chiliads Jehovah and his Book have dashed over us with the iron harrow of War and the steam-roller of Ignorance.

But, by the trampled but immortal manhood of Man some of us have sworn to endure this ignominy no more, but to throw a light, even if it be from the fires of our own martyrdom, athwart the dark Gehenna that the Shadow of the Cross has cursed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

*Christian Propaganda—The Jehovah-Jesus Fuggle—
Christianity willing but Impotent to persecute—Is
Christianity compatible with Culture and Education?
—Who believes Christianity?—The God of Battles—
A Retrospect and Forecast—Onward to the Orient!*

GROTESQUE is the array of the embattled line of ecclesiasticism. In this England, in the olden time, when a feudal baron fell behind in the collection of his man-rent, and another baron, a hostile swash-buckler, roaring and strutting in feathers and iron, came to assault his castle, stone men, wooden ones, and even sartorial ones, stuffed with sawdust and straw, were placed upon the battlements. The sawdust vassal did not put a hand to the springald; the cross-bow was not in his line; he had no stomach for pulling up the portcullis, and he poured down no cauldrons of boiling pitch upon the "testudo" or the "sow" that thundered away at the ballium gate. But, for all that, exalted upon the battlements, and with the proper distance lending enchantment to the view of him, the retainer of wood and the vassal of straw looked quite as formidable as would have done a Patroclus or a Black Agnes of Dunbar.

Ever since the used-up nets of the Apostles were sold to the rag-and-bone man, more than one-half of the marshalled arguments of the Christian host have been execrable shams, stuffed with all sorts of rubbish, from the rent garments of outraged nuns down to the hair and hoofs of the sanctified "yee-aww" upon which the non-equestrian carpenter ambled into Jerusalem. But the dummies on the ecclesiastical battlements were never stuffed with anything common or unclean, for even stuffings of sow bristles and anvil sparks were designated by long and thunderous names in dog-Latin, and the

pious dupe believed and trembled. For those who could not believe, the Church had still more convincing proofs. It was a learned Church. It was profoundly scientific. Its natural philosophy had evolved the levers and pulleys of the torture-rack, and it was skilled in the agony-pyrotechnics of the stake. In these, and such machines as these, were its Science and Art exemplified.

The Praxiteles of the breathing marble was superseded by the snivelling saint. The æsthetic flights of poetry, in its fiery magnificence, were to give place to morbid drivel about the blood of a biped lamb. The practical science of Hero was to make way for a long series of sacred ages, in which everything ingenious was set down as the work of the devil. The thinkers of Alexandria were to make way for the hair-shirted and fanatical troglodytes whose withered flesh was eaten into holes with vermin, and who wore away the floorstones of their caverns with their prayerful knees. The sun of philosophy sank in eclipse, and for a thousand years struggled in vain to flash through the clouds that were dense and murky red with the blood of Calvary. The glory of Athens had vanished; the grandeur of Rome was no more; Byzantium had flung over the Golden Horn the saltire flag of the half-mad preacher of Galilee. And, instead of the magnificent cities which rose under Ormuz and Zeus and Aphrodite and Ares, there arose under Jesus, tacked on to Jehovah, the miserable towns of a miserable faith.

The hovels jostled the dunghills. In the streets, so-called, swine wallowed in the exuvæ of the living, and dogs crunched the bones of the dead. There was the ever-recurring rattle of the death-cart, and the Sweating Sickness and the Black Death peopled heaven with the elect and crammed hell with the damned. Europe had taken the arles of the semi-Hebraic faith of misery and darkness, and the shackle was on Europe's brain and the sword in Europe's heart. The toleration of "Pagan" Rome was no more. The Jehovah-Jesus juggle of the Semitic and the Aryan had smitten the continent like a canker. The fires no longer burned on the shrine of Vesta; they blazed in the market-place of every filthy but holy Christian city, and they scorched

the flesh of Europe's best and bravest. The prayers of the devout and the insufferable stench of the burning flesh of live men and women rose together as a sweet-smelling savour unto God. The dishonest palterer was a sybarite in the abbey; the honest thinker expired in the agony of the rack. The infant faith had never drawn the milk of human kindness from the breast of a loving mother. Its first aliment was the blood of the illegitimate son of Mary, and, like Catharine de Medici, it literally bathed in blood, in the baths of its merciless crusades and its unsparing persecutions.

This now senile monster crunched the bones of the gentle Hypatia. His fangs stayed the workings of the majestic brain and stilled the pulsations of the heroic heart of Giordano Bruno. His teeth, when he had them, were the arguments he used against the heresies of Vanini, Galileo, Spinoza, Volney, Priestley, Paine, and hundreds of others whose cause is my cause, whose memory is my incentive, and against whose wrongs and sufferings it is my privilege to protest. I know not who the beast does not bite when it cannot; but I remember bitterly whom it did bite when it could. It expresses the divine teaching of an unchangeable God, and, therefore, what it was once right for it to do it is always right for it to do. But the poor old dotard is now nearly two thousand years old, and cannot do what it once did, in spite of the omnipotent God in front of it and the unchangeable God at its back. Let them pat and tolerate this old monster who will. Let them crawl into its kennels who will, to yelp somewhat to its own tune anent a future life and the probable reward of a white night-shirt and a tin whistle and a halo and the probable punishment of hips blistered with burning brimstone. I sprung from a thousand generations of oatmeal, am made of sterner stuff, and the moorland psalm of the Covenanters, mingled with the scream of the whaup, is a bad æsthetic tradition to make one an adept in conciliatory genuflections, or to lead one to respect those who practise them.

I seriously question whether, in its entire career, any thoughtful and fairly-cultivated man ever believed in the intellectually- untenable dogmas of Christianity. Certainly, the old monks, with all their faults, were too

cultured a class to do other than to poke fun at its absurdly monstrous pretensions. But it was good for their craft, and they perhaps persuaded themselves that, upon the whole, its restraining hell-fire was good for the laity. That the clergy regarded the whole thing with impious ridicule is evident from much that crops up in the by-ways of monastic history. The celebration of the mad ceremony of "The Abbot of Unreason" was simply an orgie of the most terrible blasphemy. In their very abbeys the priesthood had paintings and carvings which treated the whole Christian system and their own priestly vocation with a ludicrous contempt. The painted glass (destroyed in the last century) of the great window of the north aisle of St. Martin's Church, Leicester, represented the fox preaching to a congregation of geese, and addressing them in the words: "*Testis est mihi Deus, quam cupiam vos omnes visceribus meis*"*—a terrible blasphemous parody upon Philippians i. 8. The priest representing himself as a cunning fox preaching to stupid geese that he might make his living out of them, and burlesquing Scripture to suit the allegory, as a flash of devilish humour, is perhaps without a parallel in its mockery, and Leicester has profited by that clever conception. It has translated the Latin, and determined not to be the goose for ecclesiastical bowels. Hence it has its enviable Secular hall, and it thrives by making stockings, and not exclusively for the feet of those who walk in the way of the Lord.

The better class of priests in the present believe no more than the priests of the past. Many of them will admit as much to you; but they believe, or pretend to believe, that their farrago of incredibilities is necessary for Corduroy. Corduroy, awake from your thousands of years of hibernation! Tell the priest that he can no longer addle your brains with his priestcraft; tell the king you will no longer shed your blood in his quarrels. Eighteen centuries of Christian priest and Christian king have left you the ignorant, half-clad, half-fed denizens of sties. Fear God and honour the king still, O Corduroy, and have another thousand years of darkness, serfdom,

* "God is my witness how I desire to have you all in my bowels."

degradation, and misery: the most accursed misery of all is the misery that is so ignorant that it hardly knows it is miserable.

Your Christian God, O Corduroy, boastfully describes himself as the "God of battles." Shiploads of soldiers' bones have been brought into England from Plevna; manure is made out of some, knife-handles and bone egg-spoons out of others. Fight away, John Smith of the murderous God of battles, who used, when he was stronger, to hurl stones out of heaven upon the enemies of the ancestors of the men of "shent per shent" and "ole clo'." There were phosphates in your bones, John Smith, and in this big world three well-manured cabbages grow all the ranker and greener because "you like a soldier fell." Smith, she was a winsome young girl that, whom your fall left a widow. Rather more than a year had passed, Smith, and she went out to bill and coo with him who is your marital successor. The evening was showery. She took with her her new umbrella. The handle, Smith, was made out of the bone of your right arm—the very arm that used to encircle her neck. She tried to forget you; little deemed she that she had a memento so near.

Another arm is round her neck now. Her face is warm and smiling; but your face is the front part of a white and grinning skull. Well done, Smith; you have not died in vain. The three rank cabbages are the laurels of your glory, and your ulna bone is immortalised in the umbrella handle of her who was yours, but who is now the wife of another. It was not in vain, stumbling over the dead, you rushed upon the line of bloody bayonets! If you had only had a little more education knocked into your head, John Smith, you would have objected to militarism knocking bayonet-holes into your diaphragm. But the godless School Board system will make things better for your children by your wife's second husband, John Smith.

Sometimes, when we look back over the gulf of the centuries and see Celsus and Porphyry and Libanius and Julian protesting against Christianity, even as I protest against it at this hour, a feeling of hopelessness and despondency is apt to damp the ardour of the boldest

and most sanguine among us. It would sometimes seem that our work is that of Sisyphus, destined forever to roll the heavy stone up the steep, which always, when we have, by intense toil, raised it to a certain height, rolls down again and crushes us. But be of good cheer, fellow-soldiers in the vanguard of Liberty, fellow-workers in the field of Humanity. True, much is still to be overcome; but already much has been won. It has been won by the devotion and heroism of the heretics who have gone before—won by their toil, their blood, and their agony. They rest in their honoured graves. They have done their work, and the trumpet-peal of their memory summons us to do ours. They are gone, the Brunos and Vaninis and Campanellas and Spinozas and Volneys; but the mantle of their inspiration has descended upon us. We lift the weapon that has fallen from their hands. We raise the flag that, under the axe and in the dungeon, fell across their dying forms. We raise aloft the old standard, reddened with gore and blackened with flame, dimmed with the dust of toil, marked with the stains of suffering, but unsullied by even the faintest breath of dishonour. We raise that glorious symbol of heroism and endurance they have bequeathed us, and we rush to the front to strike a blow for the human race.

Now is the time for toil; there will be rest in the grave. Onward to the Orient! The day is dawning, though the clouds obscure it. The front of the enemy is not so strong as it was. Some battlements are dismantled, some redoubts are stormed. The fires of martyrdom are quenched, the light of day has flashed through the roof of the dungeon, the gibbet is overthrown, and the torture-engine is broken. Fellow-soldiers in Liberty's army, shoulder to shoulder, let us march on, undaunted, unsubdued! Our dower is the splendid heroism of our fathers in martyrdom. Let us hand it down to our children with its glory undimmed, so that a not remote future may shout for joy that the long war is over, that the victory is won, that the world is free!

CHAPTER XXXII.

*Christianity's Claim to have originated Lunatic Asylums
—Religious Insanity—Religious Insanity incurable—
The Bible and Brandy—Better to go to Hell with
your Reason than to Heaven without it.*

CHRISTIANITY claims to have originated lunatic asylums. If I were to claim that it was I who made the moons of Jupiter and placed the belt round Saturn, I should be nearly as preposterously impudent as Christianity is when she claims to have originated asylums for the insane. But, even if Christianity had originated madhouses, she had a hundred times a better right to originate them than any other creed or system the world has ever seen. If the preacher would stand up in his pulpit and whine, "My dear Christian brethren, our blessed religion did not originate lunatic asylums; but it has made up for that by making millions of lunatics," he would speak only the sober truth. Through the vista of ecclesiastical history winds the long and mad array of frenzied monks and fanatic nuns. Seven Crusades leave athwart the prairie of the ages a long and terrible trail of insanity and blood. And flit across the stage of the centuries, in mournful tragedy, touched here and there with the spangles of burlesque, the Dancers, Shakers, Jumpers, Flagellants, and Iconoclasts. Make an asylum, O Christianity, to hold the worldful of men and women you made mad and miserable. The basis of the earth would tremble under the weight of the edifice, and its architrave would displace the stars.

Now, O Christianity, you have comparatively given up making men and women stark, staring mad, and have taken to driving them imbecile. Still, even in the present decade, the list of those you have driven insane would make a book as large as your Bible. Ever and anon, in

every land that the faith of the Galilean has blighted, the newspapers contain paragraphs like the following :—

In the village of Harmony (N.Y.), on Good Friday morning, was enacted one of the most terrible tragedies of the year. While in a fit of temporary insanity, Mrs Fanny Smith, a farmer's wife, with an axe as her weapon, attacked her four sleeping children. The little ones were slumbering in bed when the mad woman stole upon them. One, a four-year-old girl, was brained at one stroke, and a thirteen-year-old boy received three frightful gashes in the head. An eleven-year-old daughter was awakened by the murder of the boy, and, knowing that something terrible was occurring, knelt down by her bedside and began to pray. In this posture she was discovered a minute later by her mother, who, despite her piteous cries for mercy, attacked her with the bloody axe. The child crawled towards her mother on her knees, holding up her hands to protect herself; but, at the fourth blow, she fell forward on the floor, horribly gashed. Mrs Smith then went to another's bedside and struck her six or seven times. The child evidently put up one little arm to ward off the blows, and received a fearful cut across her four fingers. Then, putting out the other arm, she received another blow, which nearly severed her hand at the wrist. One of her eyes was entirely cut out, and her skull was fractured.

A daughter, eighteen years old, slept in another room. She was awakened by the screams of the children, and rushed to bolt her door, just in time to prevent her mother from forcing an entrance. An old coloured family servant, who was preparing breakfast downstairs, heard the noise above, and ran upstairs and tried to prevent Mrs Smith from completing her bloody work. The woman chased her downstairs, and she ran instantly for Mr Smith. He reached the room just as his wife was beginning to batter down her daughter's door.

As soon as his wife saw him she stopped, and he led her downstairs and placed her on the lounge. Her strength then seemed completely gone, and she lay there muttering: "God told me to do it. It was the only way. I killed them rather than to have them homeless and go to hell!" Previous to her attacks upon the children, it was found that Mrs Smith had taken a large dose of rat poison, and it is thought she will die. The husband is crazed by the triple murder and probable suicide. "God told me to do it. I killed them rather than have them go to hell!"

"Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not." Yes, suffer them to come unto thee, O Christ, murdered by their own mother! Suffer them to come unto thee, their tender bodies gashed with an axe! Suffer them to come unto thee, their childish prattle drowned in their blood! Leap from thy throne, O Christ, and leave it to the dæmons of Dis, and let us try

whether they can rival thee in sowing upon earth the dragon's teeth of Madness and Misery!

The next extract I will quote almost equals its predecessor in horror. The case is from the London *Globe*, and reads:—

A painful case of religious madness is reported by a Paris correspondent to have just taken place in the Hautes Alps, near Braincon. Two sisters, named Marie and Catharine Olaguer, aged respectively forty-seven and forty-five, lived there on a little property which they had inherited. They had also a sum of forty thousand francs which was well invested. They were noted for their piety, and both had profound belief in miracles and the supernatural. Last Monday morning Catharine told Marie that she had had a vision in the night, in which God appeared to her and demanded a proof of her obedience in sacrificing her sister. Marie lent herself to this idea, which did not appear to her as at all strange. So, after devoutly hearing mass on Tuesday morning, she came home to prepare herself to be a sacrifice. Catharine got a sharp razor, and cut with it into each of the arms in front of the elbow, and into the instep of each foot. The victim kept repeating, "Jesus, Marie, my hope, my saviour!" Catharine then collected the blood, to dry it and keep it as a relic. When Marie was lifeless, her sister dressed the corpse in white, and went with the will of the defunct to a notary, to whom she related what she had done. She also said that, in obedience to God's command, she had burnt all the debentures and scrip belonging to her sister.

Here is another newspaper paragraph:—

The account of a horrible instance of religious lunacy reaches us from Selles, St Denis, France. Two sons there, under the impression that they had received a mandate from God to do so, bound down their aged mother over a slow fire and roasted her to death. During the revolting tragedy the brothers—their name is Leboi—quoted Scripture texts, and kept now and again sprinkling their mother with holy water till she was burnt to a cinder. The event has produced a profound impression in the neighbourhood.

I could go on interminably with such incidents, but here is one only of a very common and stale kind of newspaper paragraph.

Christopher Maddocks, 17, a lad of peculiar appearance, was charged with being a wandering lunatic. Constable 49HR deposed that on Friday night he was in the Commercial Road, when he saw the lad being followed by a crowd. A man complained that the defendant had a sword-stick, with which he had threatened several persons. Witness spoke to Maddocks, who said he had been sent by God to help this country, which was about to be plunged into war by Russia. Finding he was wandering in his

mind, witness took him to the station, where the divisional surgeon certified he was not right in his mind. Maddocks, in the course of a long speech to the magistrate, said he had been inspired by God, as men were in the days of old, that there would shortly be a war in England, and that we should all be up in arms against Russia. God had deputed him to carry on the war, and he had already formed all his plans for carrying on the campaign. He was able to tell at a glance all who were not Christians, and those who were not would have to be exterminated. He had also been warned by God that, before long, he should be brought to justice, and wrongly accused of some charge; but he did not care for that, as he had faith in God. Mr Lushington ordered him to be sent to the workhouse.

If Constable 49HR had been about Nazareth or Capernaum some eighteen centuries ago, a certain carpenter who, like Christopher Maddocks, "had been sent by God," might have been conveyed to the workhouse or the lunatic asylum by some Mr Lushington of Galilee.

I could, Lord, as I have said, give you instance after instance on these terrible lines, the record of deeds which would curdle the blood of fiends, and which have been enacted by thy saints and all for the love of thee. We can hardly lift a newspaper in which we do not find some record of an instance in which religion has wrecked reason, and in which piety has done the deeds of devils. Ask psychologists, ask the physicians in lunatic asylums, what drove that thing which was once a man into a padded room to foam at the mouth like a tiger, to gnash his teeth as the damned do in hell, and he will answer, "Religion made him what he is." Pale, haggard, and with a mad light in her eyes, with a keeper watching her night and day, sits she who was the joy and love of her father's hearth and the ornament and glory of the ball room. Ask the specialists in cerebral pathology whence that mad fire in the eye, whence these jabberings idiotic, and he will answer, "Religion has made her a maniac."

O Lord of Sabbaoth, a "revival," an abnormal "outpouring of the Holy Spirit," invariably leads to a great sale of hymn-books, a high rate of illegitimate births, and a rush upon the lunatic asylums. These things we may always expect "when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Saints take exceedingly kindly to the propagation of saints, without troubling

about marriages and such gew-gaws as wedding rings. And the young saints which result from the conjunction of such stars as "Bill, the Converted Cat-eater," and "Tottie, the Blood-washed Harlot," have to be supported by sinners. When such sons of God as "Jim, the Hallelujah Burglar," see the daughters of men that they are fair, the ratepayers have to pay the piper. Do you think that this is fair, O Lord?

And when "Blood and Glory Tim" goes clean cracked about Jesus, and "Rachel, the Ransomed Randy," over "Christ and 'im crucerfied," goes mad as a March hare, I, Lord, and such as I, have to pay for the support of those whom your Book and you have driven insane. Do you consider this fair? You can have all the mad people, if you like, and you can knock as many mad as may suit your divine purpose. But, when you knock your saints mad, why do you not take them to yourself and feed them on manna and angels' eggs, and not leave them a burden upon mine and me? Moreover, of all sorts of lunatics your lunatics, Lord, are the worst, and the most hopelessly incurable. There is some hope for the crank whom whisky has driven crazy, some chance for the beldame whom gin has knocked silly; but when a man gets cracked over the Holy Ghost, or a woman gets daft about her being "safe in the arms of Jesus," their case is all but desperate. The publican's lunatics often recover; the priest's lunatics seldom. Once go insane about Christianity, and there is nothing left for you but a strait-jacket and Jesus.

That strong man in the padded room had a prompting from the Holy Spirit that his soul was lost. Overleaping the poor little preliminaries of death and the grave, he fancies he is already dead and in hell. The sunbeams falling through the window upon the floor are, to him, the infernal flames. The roses on the sill waft to him only the breath of brimstone; and the clatter of plates and spoons is, to him, the clanking of chains on the limbs of the damned. His wrists are swollen with his desperate and incessant efforts to break his gyves. Should he succeed in rending them asunder, in a moment he would tear out his own windpipe and fling the horrid trophy on the floor. He was an able man of affairs, a

good husband, a kind father, a faithful friend, and a public-spirited citizen. But God's Book terrified him with the fire that shall never be quenched and the worm that never dies. He attempted to flee from the wrath to come—and there he is! That poor wraith with the lean, pale fingers, and the hollow but hectic cheek and the wild light in her eye, pondered and prayed over "The Immaculate Conception" till she imagined herself the specially chosen of the Most High and the destined mother of Shiloh. She is ever, day and night, expecting the pains of maternity, and these utterances of vehement incoherence, which she ever and anon pours forth till her throat is parched and her breath fails, is a mad *Magnificat* to the deity who once came to the world through the womb of a virgin, and who, according to her, through the womb of a virgin is coming to the world once more!

To walk through the wards of a lunatic asylum is one of the saddest walks that the feet of mortal can take. I, who write, have walked over the crunching bones of graves and have sat at midnight by a fire under the stars, a fire fed with exhumed coffin boards, which burned fiercely from being impregnated with the fat of the dead. The flames flung their unearthly glare over rocks and caves, and sent their smoke trailing over the starlit snow. But this scene was not so eerie as a walk through a lunatic asylum—that mad, morbid mixture of hell and the grave. There is the fearful Mazeppa-gallop across the steppes of Delirium, and there careers the steed of the brain, unbridled, with inverted saddle and with the rider dragging behind, agonised and battered, with one foot fixed inextricably into the twisted and blood-stained stirrup. The ruins of Baalbec are not so awful as the ruins of the human mind. To look through the eyes, "the windows of the soul," into the skull filled with madness, misery, and chaos, is more ugly than, in the dead of night, alone, to take a ladder and go down into the damp and darkness of a sepulchre.

And what influences people the madhouses of this Christian land? THE BIBLE AND BRANDY. But for Devotion and Drink the building of madhouses could be all but abandoned. Who sends the recruits to our

Bedlams? The Priest and the Publican. This is no random assertion, but the severe and naked truth. The statistics of the Lunacy Commissioners shall witness if I lie. Any great earnest soul, which earnestly believes Christianity, must necessarily end in madness. Tens of thousands who are sane profess to believe Christianity; but they are sane only because they are hypocrites. They do not believe. The thought of the probability—the certainty—of the greater part of the human race, including peradventure their own fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and children, being subjected to torture inexpressible and eternal would drive them mad. But, to keep themselves sane, they refrain from realising what they profess to believe.

You, Lord, have fashioned me so that I am always in dead earnest. If I had not rejected Christianity, I should long ago have been insane. Should you put before me the desperate choice, I prefer to go to hell with my reason rather than go to heaven without it. If I had not had the strength to reject your Book, I should, years ago, have become a pious maniac: I deliberately prefer to be an impious rebel. I have done and am doing that which the highest instincts of my nature approve, and I await the result without anxiety and the consequences without fear.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Confused Nature of God's Book—A Few Questions addressed to Jehovah—Was God ever in Hell?—Pulpit Lies—The Relative Ages of Sacred Books.

YOUR Book, Lord, I once more remind you, is terribly higgledy-piggledy and confused. I presume this results from you yourself being in a chronic state of mental confusion as to what you really are and who you really are. Your consciousness that you are "without body, parts, or passions," must be a source of constant bewilderment to you. For "without body, parts, or passions," is the best definition of *Nothing* divine or human ingenuity is likely to strike upon. And yet you have a consciousness that you are not *Nothing*. Indeed, from sundry expressions of yours, I infer that you are of opinion that you are *Everything*, including, of course, the fixed star Sirius, all steam-rollers, all fleas, all block-heads, all mountain ranges, and all halfpenny candles. The consciousness of this must render you confused, and, naturally enough, the confusion extends to that queer hotch-potch and salmagundi known as your Book.

Further confusion must arise from the fact of your being "one" with yourself, and the Son and the Ghost. You will never know clearly whether you are yourself, or whether you are the Son or whether you are the Ghost, or whether you are all three. Your congenital puzzle reminds me of the tragical confusion which haunted the twin brothers whom you "created" so unfortunately like each other that their whole career was blighted by cross-purposes, and went out in a flare of devilish burlesque. One of these twins exclaims :—

" In form and feature, face and limb,
I grew so like my brother,

That folks got taking me for him,
 And each for one another.
 It puzzled all our kith and kin,
 It reached an awful pitch ;
 For one of us was born a twin,
 Yet not a soul knew ' which.'

" One day, to make the matter worse,
 Before our names were fixed—
 As we were being washed by nurse,
 We got ' completely mixed ' ;
 And thus, you see, by Fate's decree,
 Or rather nurse's whim,
 My brother John got christened ' me,'
 And I got christened ' him.'

" This fatal likeness turned the tide
 Of my domestic life,
 For somehow my intended bride
 Became my brother's wife.
 Year after year, and still the same
 Absurd mistakes went on ;
 And when I died the neighbours came
 And buried brother John."

When the Son died, some eighteen centuries ago, did somebody come and bury *you*? He affirmed, "I and my father are one;" and yet he got so muddled as ultimately to cry to himself to save himself. The Ghost does not appear to have been so vexatiously like either of you. He seems to have descended from heaven in the shape of a pigeon. This is, no doubt, an exceedingly convenient form, and would, most likely, quite obviate his mistaking himself for either the Father or the Son. Still, his particular guise is not without its dangers. Some day, before he can say "Knife!" he may find a quantity of slugs or sparrow-hail driven into his gizzard by some unconsciously-profane sportsman, and next day he may find himself baked, along with a number of others, into a pigeon-pie, with his divine feet sticking up through the crust. One other of you, Father or Son, was once worse treated than this. The Romans nailed you up, as a farmer nails up a weazel to a barn-door; and, instead of finding yourself, heels uppermost, in a pigeon-pie, you found yourself in hell. Perhaps you will remember that, near a trifling town in an unimportant country, you had the misfortune to get executed on

a cross so deeply sunk into the earth as to reach hell, and that your blood flowed down the hole that sinking the cross had made, and, falling upon the flames, created quite a sensation in the infernal world.* For the most true and particular account of your descent into hell may I, Lord, take the liberty of referring you to the Gospel of Nicodemus? It is so long since you wrote the work, and your pulpit hacks so seldom refer to it, that you may have forgotten it exists. At one time it was much more prominent in England than it is now. Erasmus (you have him now beside you in heaven) tells us that, when he visited this country, he found the Gospel of Nicodemus chained to a pillar in Canterbury Cathedral,† that the people of England might see for themselves what a clever writer their deity was, and what pious pranks he had played in hell.

Was it you or your son that was in hell, or were you both there, or was neither of you there? Or can you not, at this distance of time, make out which of you was there? If you were both in hell for three days, was there no deity representing heaven and earth during that time except that poor pigeon? It is in vain I ask. Once, to a horde of ignorant Semitics, you were garrulous; now, to the nations of educated Aryans, you are dumb. Once you walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and cried, "Adam, where art thou?" now, in the torrid heat of noon, I walk in the wilderness of the universe and cry, "God, where art thou?" But the sun blasts and the deserts burns, and to my despairing cry there is only silence eternal.

Do you know, Lord, that some monstrous fictions, even in this age of doubt and research, are still taught by your hired lackeys as facts too well established to call for a moment's examination of the credentials that support them. In his sacred ignorance, the poor Bethel howler lies and lies and lies; and, in his scholarly and cultured evasions, the purveyor of palatable platitudes also lies and lies and lies. And thus the multitude has been

* This statement is actually affirmed by Bernardinus de Bustis, in the seventeenth of his Sermons on the Rosary, printed at Hagenaw in 1580.

† "Erasmus' Colloquies," by Baily, 1725, p. 354.

gulled into the belief that "the Bible is the oldest book in the world." The ignorant pulpit harlequin who knows no better does not hold his peace, and the educated gospel-Proteus, who knows better, does hold his peace, so that Mr. John Smith may believe a devout falsehood. I here present a file for thy hired flunkies, Lord, to gnaw and break their teeth upon—the testimony of eminent chronologists and scholars as to the relative ages of the Sacred Books of the great religious systems of the world:—

Critics differ as to the age of the oldest books of the Old Testament. Dr. Colenso places them between 1100 and 587 B.C. ("The Pentateuch," 1879, part vii. p. 230); Dr. S. Davidson, between 536 B.C. and the time of Saul ("Intro. to the Old Testament," comp. vol. ii. p. 36, with vol. i. p. 48); and Professor Kuenen, between 800 and 550 B.C. ("The Religion of Israel," 1874, vol. i. p. 17).

The greater part of the Egyptian Funeral Ritual is admitted by R. S. Poole to be of "extreme antiquity." He assigns a later portion of it to the year 2000 B.C. (*Contemporary Review*, vol. xxxiv. p. 331). Bunsen ("Egypt's Place," vol. iv. p. 646), F. Lenormant ("A Manual of the Ancient History of the East," vol. i. comp. p. 308 with pp. 196, 197), and other scholars, assign as great or a greater antiquity to it than does R. S. Poole. The great collection of hymns which formed the Chaldean Bible and Liturgy "was compiled," says George Smith "B.C. 2000" ("Hist. of Babylonia," edited by Rev. A. H. Sayce, p. 23).

But it would seem that the "Book of the Dead" can justly lay claim to a still more remote antiquity. One of its hymns has been found inscribed on the coffin of Queen Mentuhept, of the eleventh dynasty, the era of which has been placed by Bunsen at 2782 B.C. (See Stuart Glennie, "In the Morning Land," pp. 366, 367, 371.)

Sanskrit scholars differ as to the age of the oldest hymns of the Rig Veda, Dr Haug placing them as far back as 2400 B.C.; Prof. Witney, between 2000 and 1600 B.C.; and Prof. Max Müller, 1500 to 1200 B.C.

(E. Clodd, in "Childhood of Religions," 1875, p. 266). Bunsen places them 3000 and 2500 B.C. (Letter to Max Müller in *Chips*, vol. iii. p. 493). The age of the youngest books of the Old Testament is, by Dr. Colenso, placed between 335 and 165 B.C. ("The Pentateuch," part vii. p. 230); by Prof. Kuenen, between 250 and 165 B.C. ("Religion of Israel," vol. iii. pp. 70, 106). The age of the intermediate books is, by Dr. Colenso, placed between 600 and 434 B.C. The books of the New Testament are supposed, by Dr. S. Davidson, to have been written between the year A.D. 52 and some year after A.D. 170 ("Intro. to the Study of the New Testament," 1868, vol. i. p. 4; vol. ii. pp. 481, 483).

The oldest compositions of the Avesta—the Sacred Book of the Zoroastrians—"are considered," says Viscount Amberley, "by Haug to be as ancient as B.C. 1200; while the youngest were very likely as recent as B.C. 500;" ("Analysis of Religious Belief," vol. ii. p. 156). Sir M. Monier Williams considers that Zoroaster was born "about the twelfth century B.C.," and that he "and his immediate disciples were the authors of the Gāthās or songs, which constitute the oldest part of the Avesta, and which, in language, metre, and style, closely resemble some of the Rig Veda hymns" (*The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1881, p. 165). Spiegel, Oppert, and Lenormant place Zoroaster much earlier (F. Lenormant's "Manual of the Ancient History of the East," vol. ii. p. 25).

The Tao-te-King—the sacred book of the Taouists—was written "probably about B.C. 520" (Viscount Amberley's, "Analysis of Religious Belief," vol. ii. p. 63).

"The date of the oldest book—the Lun Yu—of the Confucian Scriptures is," says Viscount Amberley, "about 400 B.C. (*ibid.* vol. ii. p. 33).

The Tripitaka—the earliest Buddhist Scriptures—are, by Prof. Max Müller, supposed to have been written by three of the "pupils and friends of Buddha," and to have been "finally arranged, not at the first, but at the third Council.....This Council, we are told, took place 308 B.C.....[but it was] held 246 B.C." (*Chips*, 1867, vol. i. pp. 256, 283; 1875, vol. iv. p. 255; see also Lord Amberley's "Analysis of Religious Belief,"

vol. ii. p. 111), or "about 250 B.C." (T. W. Rhys Davids' "Buddhism," p. 86).

I apologise for this being rather dry matter, Lord; but it is not drier than certain chapters in your book of *Chronicles*. I have read your driest chapters, Lord, and I expect you to do me the honour to read mine. I expect the mutual interchange of literary courtesies.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Divine Plagiarism—The Canonical and Apocryphal New Testaments—The Talmud—Scriptural Plagiarisms from the Talmud—The “Creature” asks no Reward for enlightening His “Creator”—The Way the “Creator” has rewarded Certain of His Favourite “Creatures.”

I FLATTER myself, Lord, that I have made it quite clear to you that your Book is not by any means the oldest volume in the world. You were not the first author. Queen Mentuhept of Egypt was born and suckled, was wedded, and she died and was embalmed before you were invented, or at all events before, as a puny tribal deity, you had emerged from the ark or box in which your Hebrew devotees cadged you up and down in their barbarous and predatory wanderings. And Queen Mentuhept, out of a Bible which was written before you were invented, before your son had cut his eye-teeth and your ghost had done wearing pinafores, had an extract inscribed upon her coffin. It is exceedingly fortunate for you that there were numerous volumes in existence before you slung your inkhorn and commenced to produce your Book, for originality is not your *forte*, and plagiarism is certainly your *foible*. There is, Lord, a dash of rough candour about you, now and again ; so you have pretty freely, in the Old Testament, admitted the sources from which you derived the materials for your work ;* but in your omniscience, you have permitted all the works to which you were indebted to get lost. The “Book of Jasher”† is gone, the Book of Iddo”‡ has vanished, and the “Acts of Uzziah”§ is no more ; so

* See *ante*, pp. 6, 7.

† See Joshua x. 13 ; 2 Samuel i. 18.

‡ See 2 Chronicles xii. 15.

§ See 2 Chronicles xxvi. 22.

we have no means of ascertaining how far you have been indebted to these works, or of finding out whether you have always quoted correctly. You have, in your time, boasted, "I will send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie;" so that I, for one, to be candid with you, am not quite satisfied that you have always quoted correctly, and it may be that some of the books you pretend to derive your information from never existed. When you began to write your Book, or, at all events, to collect materials for it, you were only an insignificant Jewish godling that had no proper shrine or temple, but who, as I have said, went cadging about in the inside of a shittim-wood box, with the images of two cherubim or heavenly hens sitting on the lid of it. Were Jasher and Iddo and Uziah respectable persons, the lugging in of whose names gave weight and credit to a then undeveloped and insignificant God-in-the-Box?

You had, Lord, by the time you sat down to write the New Testament, left behind you the simple candour of your youth. There you do not, as in the Old Testament, advise us as to the authorities from which you draw. You would apparently have us believe that the work is boldly original, all done by you, or the ghost, assisted by the "holy men of God." But, Lord, the pretension is fraudulent, and you have been found out. There is an Apocryphal New Testament quite as large as your New Testament, and quite as sane and quite as credible. Having carefully read that Apocryphal New Testament, I find it so alarmingly like *your* New Testament that, if it had not been that the sagacious Council of Trent had determined by vote which was your Book and which was the book concocted by the early monks and the Apostolic Fathers, nobody now-a-days would have known which volume was by them, and which by the ghost and "holy men of God." But elsewhere I have drawn your attention somewhat compendiously to this point,* and it now occurs to me to direct your careful attention to the Talmud, a source from which the Ghost and the "holy men of God" seem to have drawn copiously without acknowledgment. Considerately taking

* See "Did Jesus Christ rise from the Dead?" pp. 55-6.

it into account that you are too busily engaged numbering the hairs of our head and watching sparrows fall to have been able to spare time to know much of the Talmud, the few succeeding paragraphs may not be uninteresting to you.

The Capuchin friar, Henricus Seynensis, held that Talmud was a writer, not a writing. "*Ut narrat Rabinus Talmud,*" quoth Henricus Seynensis. But I presume, seeing that long ago you copied from it, you know better than that, Lord.

To Christianity this Talmud has ever been a subject of reprehension and vague terror among the "silent community" of the learned, and, down till the times when we have been scandalised by the brutal exhibitions of Moody and Booth, Christianity has had its guardianship and direction from thinkers and writers who were at least scholars and gentlemen. True, a mob leader is reputed to have originated it, and from the mob it drew its earliest proselytes; but, from the hour on which it became established imperially on the enchanting littoral of the Golden Horn, it enlisted on its side Europe's highest intellect and ripest scholarship, and they guarded it well in the interests of themselves and to the disservice of mankind. The Christian priesthood became a *caste*, with a great gulf fixed between them and the illiterate mob; a *caste* that trampled rough-shod even over baron and emperor, or condescended to be hand-in-glove with them when being so would serve some dark but substantial interest of the mitre and the cowl. In the interests of the Church, the Scriptures, the very Oracles of God, were kept out of the hands of the laity; and the Talmud was recognised to be a Samson Agonistes, which, if let loose, would pull down the gates of the ecclesiastical Gaza. One over-mastering, inflexible idea possessed the priesthood—the existence and dominance of the Church.

And, accordingly, in the words of Emanuel Deutsch, the most learned of modern Talmudists, the Talmud has "been proscribed and imprisoned and burnt a hundred times over. From Justinian, who as early as 553 A.D. honoured it with a special interdictory Novella, down to Clement VIII. and later—a space of over a thousand years—both the secular and spiritual powers, kings and

emperors, popes and anti-popes, vied with each other in hurling anathemas and bulls and edicts of wholesale confiscation and conflagration against the luckless book. Thus, within a period of less than fifty years—and those forming the latter half of the sixteenth century—it was publicly burnt no less than six different times, and that not in single copies, but wholesale, by the waggon-load." Honorius IV., in 1286, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury anent what he was pleased to call *liber damnabilis*, that "damnable book," vehemently urging him to see that it was not read by any one whatever. This thousand years of silent suppression, relieved ever and anon by wild and futile attempts at extermination, will account for the all but universal ignorance of Christians, and perhaps of you, Lord, as to the Talmudical literature.

The origin of the 'Talmud is co-eval with the return from the Babylonish captivity, and is, therefore, of the same age as the oldest portions of your Book, Lord; and, as an ever-accumulating mass of oral literature, it extended downward to about the end of the second century of the Christian era. The transmission of such an enormous mass of oral literature does not seem incredible when we remember the retentiveness of the oriental memory as regards religious or tribally-traditional literature. "The 'Talmud," remarks Deutsch, "has been preserved, with absolute authenticity, in the memory of doctors and disciples, in the same way as many Brahmin and Parsee priests can repeat, without the variation of a single accent, entire Vedas and other chapters of their sacred books.....The same was true of the followers of Zoroaster." Dr. Prideaux states that the Jewish traditions went on to about the middle of the second century after Christ, when Antoninus Pius governed the Roman Empire, by which time it was found necessary to put all the Talmudic traditions into writing; for they were then grown to so great a number, and enlarged to so huge a heap, as to exceed the possibility of being any longer preserved by the memory of man. And, therefore, there being danger that, under these disadvantages, they might all be forgotten and lost, for the preventing hereof it was resolved that they should

all be collected and put into a book ; and Rabbi Judah, the son of Simeon, who, from the reputed sanctity of his life, was called Hakkadosh—that is, the Holy—and was then rector of the school which they had in Tiberias in Galilee, undertook the work, and compiled it in six books, each consisting of several tracts, which collectively amount to sixty-three. This made up the book known as the Mishna, which book was forthwith received by the Jews with great veneration throughout all their dispersions, and has ever since been held in high esteem among them. And, therefore, as soon as it was published, it became the object of the studies of all their learned men, and the most eminent among them set themselves to make comments upon it ; and these, with the Mishna, make up both their Talmuds—that is, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian. These comments were called the Gemara—that is, the *complement*, because, by them, the Mishna is fully explained, and the whole traditionary doctrine of their law and religion completed. The Mishna is the text and the Gemara the comments, and both together are what is known as the Talmud. That made by the Jews of Judea is called the Jerusalem Talmud, and that made by the Jews of Babylonia the Babylonian Talmud. The former was completed about 300 A.D., and is published in one large folio ; the latter was published about one hundred years after, in the beginning of the sixth century, and has passed through several editions since the invention of printing. In the two Talmuds is contained the whole of the Jewish religion. The Babylonian Talmud is the more popular.

“Such terms,” says Deutsch, “as Redemption, Baptism, Grace, Faith, Salvation, Regeneration, Son of Man, Son of God, Kingdom of Heaven, were not, as we are apt to think, invented by Christianity, but were household words of Talmudical Judaism.” So much has the Holy Ghost, when he inspired “holy men of old” to write the New Testament, been indebted to the Talmud, that “it is utterly impossible to read a page of the Talmud and of the New Testament without coming upon innumerable instances” of striking parallels. Not only the Golden Rule, as I have pointed out, but the very “Lord’s Prayer itself, is to be found in the Talmud.”

As regards this prayer, the learned Wettstein remarks: "*Tota hæc oratio ex formulis Hebræorum consinnata est.*" And, according to Gfrörer, it is laid down that in every prayer the "kingdom of God" must be named, and "Amen" must be repeated at the close. De Wette writes apologetically*: "The use of Jewish forms was not unworthy of Jesus, if made in a free spirit—nay, the avoiding them would have been affectation." This, of course, may be all very well for Christ as an eclectic; but it utterly shuts out all pretensions to Christianity being a new and original system, and makes the Holy Ghost a plagiarist.

Since I first asserted that the "Lord's Prayer" was to be found in the Talmud, it has been alleged, in defence of Christianity, that the Talmudical writer had *copied the Prayer from the Gospels*. Such a wild conjectural allegation is hardly worth the refuting. That the Jews should copy the hagiography of the detested Christians is as reasonable as the conception of the harmonious blending of fire and water, or a community of sentiment and worship between the temple on Mount Moriah and that on Mount Gerizim. As if anticipating this objection, which some Christian apologist, driven to desperation, might advance, Deutsch remarks†: "We need not urge the priority of the Talmud to the New Testament, although the former was redacted at a later period. To assume that the Talmud has borrowed from the New Testament would be like assuming that Sanskrit sprang from Latin, or that French was developed from the Norman words found in English." Truly, Christianity must be fallen upon terrible times when, outside the select circle of the learned, and in a cheap and he-who-runs-may-read work like this, I openly aver that the "Lord's Prayer" is not the "Lord's" at all, but was simply stolen by him from a "heathen" source, and the best that Christian Evidences can give by way of rejoinder is a conjecture too preposterous to merit a moment's serious consideration. My readers will gather, even from the few words I have said on an all but exhaustless subject, why Christian pontiff and

* "De Morte Christi," vi. 74. † "Literary Remains," p. 55.

prince evinced such an inveterate dread of the Talmud, the *liber damnabilis* of Honorius IV.

You will observe, Lord, that I, the "creature," have taken considerable pains to enlighten you, the "creator." But pray do not think, Lord, that, for this, I expect or desire any of your tender mercies, or any distinctive marks of your divine favour. Pray do not, in consideration of my services, think of elevating me to the position of one of your prophets. Thank you all the same; but I am much better as I am; and, without fee or reward, beyond the personal gratification involved in the consciousness of having enlightened you, I make you heartily welcome to all I have done for you.

To tell you the honest truth, Lord, I have a strong aversion to your considering me one of your prophets. I do not forget that Isaiah walked for three years together *naked* for a sign.* Now, although I am a sort of mongrel Celt, whose Highland ancestors wore little beyond a tartan kilt and a bonnet surmounted by an eagle's feather, I should not like to be doomed to run stark naked like your friend Isaiah. Your friend Jeremiah was, to humour one of your divine whims, commanded to carry his girdle as far as the Euphrates, and there to bury it in the hole of a rock, and after many days to dig it up again.† Now, I do not wear a girdle, but I wear braces, and I should not like you to play divine pranks upon me by sending me all the way to the Euphrates to bury my braces, and to be sent after many days to dig them up again, after the buckles were rusted and the worsted half rotten. You further commanded Jeremiah to make bands and yokes, and put them about his neck, and send them to several kings.‡ Now, I should like to be excused from doing this sort of thing, as I am not anxious to have any dealings with kings, neither the king of kings nor any of his punier myrmidons. Perhaps you will remember too, Lord, that you ordered your friend Ezekiel to draw Jerusalem on a tile and lay siege to it, build a fort against it, set a camp against it, and set battering-rams against it round about.

* Isaiah xx. 3.

† Jeremiah xiii. 4, 6.

‡ Jeremiah xxvii. 2, 3.

Moreover, he was commanded by you to take an iron pan and set it for a wall of iron between him and the city, and to lie 390 days on one side and 40 days on the other, and then to mix human excrement with his bread.* I can live on very plain food,—very plain food indeed, O Lord, and the bare thought of the divine pastry you prescribed to Ezekiel sickens me. Even Ezekiel himself, with all his desire to please you, could not stomach your confectionery; so you graciously permitted him to substitute cow's dung for human and use it in his barley cakes.† I can, Lord, only say Ugh! and I sincerely hope you will not do me the honour, in recognition of my services, to enrol me among your prophets. Then your prophet Hosea you commanded to take “a wife of whoredoms.” Hosea obeyed you, and he had three children by this wife. You, Lord, were so pleased with your servant marrying this harlot, Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, that you yourself gave names to the three children she bore to your prophet: the first boy you called Jezreel; then there was a girl, and her you were good enough to call Lo-ruhamah; and the next boy you named Lo-ammi, which was no doubt very good of you.‡ Still, even at your command, I should rather not marry a lady of the pavement; and I should rather that she did not bear me three children named respectively Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi. I am not worthy, Lord, to be so honoured by you. Just leave me to marry a simple maid of my own selection and call my children whatever I like, and I am not likely to wish to call any of them Lo-ruhamah.

It may be quite true that, in this treatise, I have obliged you in various ways; but, I repeat, you are heartily welcome to all I may have done, and I desire no recognition whatever. I feel that I am not worthy to eat the kind of cake you raised to the lips of your servant Ezekiel, nor to marry the sort of wife you gave to your prophet Hosea. Between you and me I wish all the advantages to be on the one side; take all the presents you get from my hands, but I can take none from yours. Take the

* See Ezekiel iv. 1-12.

† See Ezekiel iv. 14, 15.

‡ See Hosea i. *passim*.

information I tender you on such subjects as the Lord's Prayer and the Talmud; but, as far as I am concerned, keep to yourself the sort of cake you gave to Ezekiel and the kind of bride you gave to Hosea. An oat cake, and now and again a mutchkin of whisky is good enough for the like of me; and "a simple maid in maiden charms."

CHAPTER XXXV.

How Christianity vaulted into Power—Gospel Propagation a Pious Sham—The Masses as Religionists—Shirt and Sovereign Christians—Constantine—"Creating" Fools—The God of Battles—Krupp's Cannon Factory.

"WHAT progress your movement does make!" remarked an opponent to me the other day, in what he intended for effective irony. "What influential names you have on your side, how boundless is the opulence of your bequests, how striking the architectural grandeur of your temples!"

I suggested to this servant of the Lord that, at no very distant date, we might vault as suddenly to imperial sway as Christianity had done. I reminded him that his creed was three hundred years old before it was more influential and opulent than aggressive anti-Christianity is at this hour. But there was one striking difference between the early Christians and the aggressive "Infidels" of the present day: with the latter the marshal's baton is, as a rule, in the hands of earnest, honest, and educated men; with the former a number of wrangling, incompetent, and unscrupulous schismatics, such as Marcion, Basilides, Saturninus, Blastus, Tatian, Montanus, Manichæus, etc., etc., led an exceptionally ignorant and criminally guilty rabble.

If Constantine had not had a bitter feud against Licinius, there would have been no more worship in any Christian temple to-day than there is among the Standing Stones of Stennes. By declaring for Christianity, Constantine flung into the wavering balance the brute force of a ferocious, fanatical, and truculent mob, and thus

turned the scale against his rival, Licinius, who, in 324 was defeated and dethroned, and afterwards basely murdered for the greater glory of God and of his Christ. That Christianity exists to day is not owing to any crucifixion on Calvary, but to the bloody and victorious swords of the Milvian Bridge, which won the purple of the Cæsars for the despicable Constantine.

Give us an emperor on our side, exultant in the flush of military conquest, and our minority would, in the twinkling of an eye, be transformed, as if by an enchanter's wand, into an overwhelming majority. The mere brute numbers that go to the support of any creed really count for nothing. Over the, to them, intellectually barren wilderness of the world, the uneducated millions have ever drifted in the direction of throne and mitre and exchequer. I care nothing for mere numbers. The illiterate herd is accounted by the Church as Christians; but why does the Church not go to the Cheviot Hills, and throw its baptismal slush upon the heads or tails of 500,000 sheep, and claim them as Christians every one?

And, Lord, since you are omniscient, you know full well that an intelligent and educated pagan—take a Hindoo, for instance—converted to Christianity, is nearly as rare an animal as is a pig with horns. It costs about his own weight in gold to Christianise a respectable Jew. Your incredible Son-and-Ghost story is received only by those who have been skilfully prejudiced in its favour before reason has been trained to inspect the bigotries of prejudice. When your priests and priest-ridden mothers get hold of sucking infants, children lisping their A B C, and boys and girls learning the Rule of Three, they can be made Christians; but Omnipotence itself cannot make Christians of sane adults. The following quotations, which may not yet have been read in the kingdom of heaven, I beg to bring most respectfully under the notice of all such as believe that the gospel of Christ shall yet cover the whole earth, “even as the waters cover the channel of the sea” :—

“I was told that all the Khitmutargs in Culcutta were Christians. I was surprised to hear this, and asked him to what church they belonged. ‘Oh, sir,’ he

replied, 'they do not belong to any church ; but they will all eat pork and drink brandy.' " *

"The London committee concealed the report of the Madras committee, lest the subscriptions should be withdrawn from so hopeless an enterprise." †

"He attributed the exaggerated accounts of conversions to the necessity of creating a sensation at home [in England] at public meetings, in order to raise money." ‡

"The custom of paying Hindoo converts is so universal that the slightest success in Hindostan would eat up the revenues of the East India Company." §

"An inquiry made some years ago at Bangalore by a deputation from England resulted in the discovery that the converts and their families were nearly all of them stipendiaries of the mission." ¶

"The whole of them are rescued from poverty, and procure a comfortable subsistence by their conversion." ||

"The influence of the English missions is an absolute nullity ; they reckon no other proselytes than orphans, whom the missionaries purchase, and who, when they grow up, all return to the religion of their countrymen." **

"I have reason to believe that converts have in some cases been again and again baptised by the same minister to swell the number of candidates, and induce the belief that the work of conversion was steadily advancing." ††

"The preachers have sometimes [in Ceylon] baptised two or three hundred infants and elder children at a time (they are paid in proportion to the number) ; indeed, almost all the Buddhist priests in the maritime provinces are persons who have been baptised in their infancy." ‡‡

"With respect to the baptism of converts in Jerusalem, it is, as far as I know, framed to an accommodation with the most modern Judaism. Six thousand

* Minturn's "New York to Delhi."

† "India and the Gospel," Clarkson, sec. 5.

‡ "Six Years in India," vol. i. chap. ii.

§ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xii.

¶ "Way to Lose India."

|| "Observ. on Pres. State."

** "L'Inde Aug.," vol. iii.

†† "Land of the Veda," chap. xvii.

‡‡ "Campbell's Recoll.," chap. vii.

piastres (£50) are offered to the convert as a premium ; other advantages are said likewise to be considerable."*

"As they could not make converts at Jerusalem, Protestant Jews were brought hither at the expense of English Missionary Societies. The process was costly : it is estimated that each has cost the mission about £4,500."†

"The Protestants give earnest money and demoralise families. When a father sternly rebukes his children it is not unusual for them to reply with the insolent threat, 'I'll go to the mission.' "‡

"Converts from the Jews receive baptism in different cities before they reach Jerusalem, where they are finally re-baptised.....Baptism was the only good business we had, and who has spoiled it? The Jews themselves, by underselling one another."§

"No one will have anything to do with a 'missionary boy' if he can possibly get another. One broad truth remains, that, in attempting to convert a South Sea Islander into a Christian, the missionaries rarely fail to convert an innocent and industrious savage into an idle and worthless scoundrel."¶

When Christianity was introduced into this island, we have it on Christianity's own authority that thousands of converts were baptised at Canterbury in a single day. There are tens of thousands in England now who, were the "consideration" satisfactory, could be unbaptised in a single day and induced to spurn the Bible and burn it, and pin their destinies for life and death to the *Agnostic Journal*. As it was it is and ever shall be, world without end, amen. The masses will ever be the masses, while the hills continue to be the hills. All the thinking they can afford to do is to think how to exist. With the man possessing no taste or opportunity for speculative and abstract thought, one

* Tischendorf, Trans.

† Taylor's "Lands of the Saracen," chap. v.

‡ "Mislin, "Les Lieux Saints," vol. iii. chap. xxviii.

§ "Jews in the East," vol. ii. chap. ii.

¶ "Advances of Australia," by the Hon. H. Finch-Hatton, pp. 144-5.

god is as good as another ; his business is not gods, but bread.

Am I cruel to speak thus of the masses ? Bear witness, everything I love and revere, that the masses have no more sincere friend than I am ; but, unlike the demagogues, I will not flatter and betray. Unlike the priest, I will not prate to any man about the Trinity when I know that, by the direst and most inexorable necessity, the man's spoon is the father, the fork the son, and the knife the holy ghost. Kings and priests between them have fixed these wide gulfs between man and man, have dug these unbridgeable chasms, and, over the abyss, to their forlorn and trampled fellow men, they shout their heartless mockery. Lessen the hours of the poor helot's labour ; give him bread to eat, and at least some of the conditions of social and moral decency, and *then* pester him, if you dare, by the whining about your Trinity and the snivelling about your Atonement.

Canterbury, in the days of Augustine, presented no spectacle of "Revival" that unthinking mobs have not presented in all regions and in all times. After Constantine had firmly in his hand the sceptre of empire, the conversions to Christianity were multitudinous. "As the lower ranks of society," remarks Gibbon,* are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth or power or riches was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate if it be true that, in one year, 12,000 men were baptised in Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the Emperor to every convert."

I hereby promise to obtain an avowed anti-Christian for every white night-shirt and a sovereign that the Christian Church will give me, if it take up my challenge. So much for the depth and fervency of Christian zeal. I appeal to men's brain and heart, and the process of winning soldiers for Truth is consequently slow. I could enlist plenty of soldiers for a shirt and a sovereign ; but I would rather have one such adherent as I have at

* "Decline and Fall," vol. ii., pp. 472-3.

present than wave my arm in command at the head of as many brainless hirelings as could find standing room on Salisbury Plain. So much for Christianity's taunt that overt adherents to "Infidelity" are few. Give me funds to found a college to train and salary an anti-Christian ministry, and I will dismantle Cambridge and shake Oxford to its foundations, in spite of all the orisons in Christendom and all the hosts of heaven. Under the banner of theological revolt by which I stand rank a band of heroes who have brought to the Cause their brains and, if need be, their lives; but no man has, as yet, brought a purse and thrown it into the scale, like the sword of Brennus, to turn the balance in our favour. But we patiently and heroically wait, and our children may live through the hour of triumph long after the grass is green upon the graves of those who now, obscure and unknown, toil and yearn and struggle in a thankless but glorious Cause.

En passant, Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was the kind of character that many Christian heroes have been since. "He is," remarks Gibbon,* "represented with false hair of various colours, laboriously arranged by the skilful artists of the time; a diadem of a new and more expensive fashion; a profusion of gems and pearls, of collars and bracelets, and a variegated flowing robe of silk, most curiously embroidered with flowers of gold." To his other vices he added most bloodthirsty cruelty. He strangled Licinius, after defeating him; murdered his own son Crispus, his nephew Licinius, and his wife Fausta, together with a number of others. It must, indeed, have needed an efficacious baptism to wash away his crimes, and "future tyrants were encouraged to believe that the innocent blood which they might shed in a long reign would instantly be washed away in the waters of regeneration."

It would seem, as I have frequently observed, that you, Lord, when "creating" have great pleasure in "creating" fools. The ancient Son of Man had not where to lay his head; but I find that the modern Son of Man has seldom a head to lay, even if he had a

* "Decline and Fall," vol. ii., pp. 471-2.

place to lay it. This locomotive, forked radish called Man is most likely "created" for your amusement, and it would seem that you get most amusement out of him when you "create" him a fool; at all events, you "create" a hundred thousand fools for every one you "create" of anything else. It is said you "created" everything out of *nothing*. I am beginning to think there is some truth in *that*. When creating you seem to have had at hand plenty of abdominal, but very little of occipital, viscera. Your faith took its new lease of life from the hand of Constantine the villain; and, for stormy century upon century, you peopled the world with a crop of idiots, with whom the sword was everywhere and the pen nowhere, and into whose heads no convincing argument could be driven, except with the battle-axe. Among your people, Lord, this argument of brute force is *the* argument still. Your pet-name is still the "Lord of Hosts." You are, apparently, still gratified at being referred to as the "God of Battles;" and, in your name, your priests bless banners, which, torn and shot-riven, may be grasped at once by a hundred gory hands, tugging and grappling amid the smoke and the yell, and the blood and the thunder and the blazes by powder-blackened demons, whose feet are entangled in the entrails of the fallen that cling around their ankles—the red ropes and ribbons of carnage and agony.

O God, you have managed to make man a monster of stupidity that spends immeasurably more on beer than on books. Certainly you have given him little enough brain to begin with, and you have inspired him with a propensity to obfuscate the little brain he has with tobacco and opium, and fusil oil and alcohol. And, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, you have made him susceptible to pains and aches and suffering, the legacy from his own and his fathers' folly; and the industrious, sane, and frugal few are bent to the ground with the burden of having to provide alcohol and workhouses and hospitals and lunatic asylums and prisons for the lazy, imbecile, and improvident many. And, as if this were not enough, O Jehovah-nissi, you have constructed man on a principle which renders him strongly prone to cut his neighbour's throat and save you the

trouble of sending famine, plague, and pestilence, or any of the ordinary death-demons whose names are writ on your catalogue of nosology. By marriage and otherwise, you have contrived man so that he keeps up the birth-rate (such as it is) passing well; but you have been graciously pleased to place against that an ineradicable tendency to a most diabolical murder-rate.

At this moment, some 1900 years after the proclamation of "Peace and Good-will," Christendom is literally bristling with bayonets. If you care to look down upon this globe, Lord, you will see, pointing up to you, millions upon millions of spikes of burnished steel. Perhaps you would not think it, but these spikes have been made by men to punch holes in men's entrails. This punching is done principally under bits of silk rag fastened to long sticks and amid the noise of musical idiots blowing on brass instruments and thundering away on a piece of tightened calf's skin. Murder among us costs more than parturition! The washerwoman's son is born at the expense of about half-a-crown and a sucking-bottle; but, if he take "the Queen's shilling," it costs engineers and chemists and artillerists and metallurgists and army contractors much trouble and expense to murder him, or try to do so. The murdering business is a very big one, O Lord of Sabaoth; and, as you seem to have discontinued coming down to walk "in the garden in the cool of the day,"* you may not think it amiss on my part to give you a slight indication of how men busy their brains to knock men's brains out; and surely this is not worth while, for you know, O Holy One of Israel, that, in "creating" man, you have been extremely sparing in giving him his supply of brains; but you seem to have made up for this by giving him an extra supply of abdomen, for which glory be to thy holy name.

Be that as it may, I should like that, when you have a little leisure, you would take a look in at Woolwich Arsenal. A glance at the Arsenal will show you that your old friend Cain, who fled into the land of Nod, was a poor novice in the murdering line, and that vast improvements in the science of knocking human beings to

* Genesis iii. 8.

smithereens have been introduced since his day. Woolwich is a big Government concern ; but there are private murder firms that would interest you should you elect to come down to this earth, and walk through them "in the cool of the day." You will likely have heard of your servant Gatling—his guns have made some noise in the world ; but, above all, it would interest you to inspect the establishment of your servant Krupp. A number of people keep praying to you from it, so you will likely know Essen in Germany. Two or three of the more shady of your angels come from that town or its vicinity. Take a step down to Essen. There you will find your servant, Alfred Krupp, who owns probably the largest business in the world dependent on one individual. The works within the town of Essen occupy more than 500 acres, Lord, half of which are under cover. According to a census taken in September, 1881, the number of hands employed by Mr Krupp was 19,605, the members of their families 45,776, making 65,381 persons supported by his works. Mr Krupp owns 547 iron mines in Germany. He owns four sea steamers, and there are connected with his Essen works 42 miles of railway, Lord, employing 28 locomotives and 883 cars, 69 horses with 191 wagons, and 40 miles of telegraph wires, with 35 stations and 55 Morse apparatuses. The establishment possesses a grand chemical laboratory, a photographic and lithographic atelier, a printing office with three steam and six hand presses, and a bookbinding room. The establishment even runs a hotel in Essen. Keep your eye upon Essen and Alfred Krupp. With that 500 acres devoted to the manufacture of instruments of slaughter, you should be able to make hell, O God !

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Books and Bayonets—"Our Father which art in Heaven"—God's Drunken Children—Poverty's Malebolge—The Black Pipe and the Pawn Tickets—Sleeping under the Stars—The Sleep of one of God's Female Children.

TRY the effect, Lord, of more books and fewer bayonets. I should like to get out of my grave for an hour, even at the risk of knocking my tombstone a little out of the perpendicular, just to have a glance at your Europe when it spends more upon schoolmasters than upon soldiers.* There are many among us who wish for less war and for more bread for our children. You, up in heaven there, seem hardly to grasp the point. You have plenty of manna to eat, and you have your perennial Sarah.

"O happy is the god and blest,
Nae wonder that it pride him,
Wha'e ain dear lase that he lo'es blest
Comes clinkin' doon beside him." †

You, Lord, are "Our Father which art in heaven." I confess I do not know very much about you ; but I

* In Europe, according to the most recent statistics, the expenditure for Armaments and Education is as follows :—

	Armaments	Education
United Kingdom	£28,900,000	£6,685,000
France	£35,000,000	£3,200,000
Germany	£20,000,000	£6,900,000
Russia	£33,000,000	£1,000,000
Austria	£13,400,000	£2,900,000
Italy	£18,900,000	£1,100,000
Spain	£6,300,000	£1,200,000
Other European States ...	£8,300,000	£2,100,000
	£163,800,000	£24,085,000

† Burns' "Holy Fair," with one slight verbal alteration.

know something about your children ; and from certain facts in regard to these children I may infer what sort of personage their "Father which art in heaven" must be. The children, besides spending huge sums on Murder, spend enormous sums on Drink. Figures, I repeat, are not much in your way, Adonai, and when you attempt to deal with them in your Book you bungle them deplorably ; still, I venture to bring a few figures under your attention, and I trust they will not be beyond your comprehension. Your children in this country alone, spend £150,000,000 on drink. We have among us 500,000 confirmed drunkards, and "no drunkard shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven ;" so, when they depart this life, there is nothing left for them but the Kingdom of Hell ; and is that their fault or yours, O "Father which art in heaven" ? Then we have some hundreds of thousands who are not quite drunkards, but who come very near earning that appellation. What do you intend to do with them ? They are "neither drunkards nor let it alone." Perhaps you will contrive to keep one end of them in heaven, and the other in hell : the shoulders flapping celestial wings and the feet writhing amid infernal blazes might afford considerable amusement to yourself and Sarah. Do you know that in this country (your Book is the source of its greatness) there are 350,000 barmaids and barmen ? "Woe unto him who putteth a bottle to his neighbour's mouth and maketh him drunken also." And there are 150,000 publicans and beersellers. Not a sparrow falls without your knowledge, and not a publican in the world can sell a drop of Jameson's whisky or Bass's ale unless you had had, from all eternity, decreed that he should do so. So I must admit that, in the drink line, you have made ample provision that your children should be damned.

Long ago yourself, or the third part of you, exclaimed, "Blessed be ye poor ;" so, with that exclamation in view, you take care that we have always plenty of poor. We have, at present, 810,000 paupers, which is one to every thirty of our population, Lord. According to Dr. Drysdale, the condition of the poor involves, annually, the premature death of 15,000 persons, and in London alone there is, per annum, 100 deaths from absolute starvation.

So, blessed be your holy name, you keep sufficient poverty among us to suit your taste and make the benediction applicable to very many of us, "Blessed be ye poor." To thee be *gloria in excelsis* for the blessing of poverty and the felicity of starvation !

And it must be exceedingly gratifying to him who said "Blessed be ye poor" to know that there are, in this Christian England, millions who are poorer than the English pauper. Fifteen millions of God's children down here, after many centuries of Christian teaching, divide among them £163,000,000, or £10, 17s. 4d. per head, annually. The permanent cost of a pauper is £17 per annum. Under the deep gulf of Poverty's Maleholge there is an abyss deeper still. And our Christian civilisation makes the poor keep the poor. The poor-law machinery is parochial ; every parish has to maintain its own indigent. But, in the West End, for instance, the rich do congregate together to the practical expulsion of the poor, and, consequently, the paupers have often to be supported by those worse off than themselves. The man who has £10, 17s. 4d. has to help to support somebody at the cost of £17. "From him who hath not shall be taken away that which he hath." The lame are being carried on the shoulders of those lamer still. Those who have a little manhood and womanhood left—a feeling of independence and honest pride—are ground between Poverty's upper and nether millstone to support the wretches from whom, in many instances, all pride and all honour and all honesty have been crushed out by the superstructure of Christian civilisation, and who have simply limbs to wear moleskin at the expense of the toilers, and stomachs to hold skilly provided by the industrious and more heroic and self-reliant poor.

And, far away beyond all that statistics can take note of or ordinary humanitarianism lament, stretch the territories of Want and the frontiers of Starvation. I have read the legend of Poverty's "blessing" on the swollen and eyeless faces of suicides from time to time fished out of river and canal—suicides who, sent reeling by the arm of Famine, had leapt into the embrace of Death. I have seen the poor clothing of rags all clotted with mud and crawling with worms. Through the rents which

the boat-hook had made in the rotten waistcoat I have beheld the putrid flesh and sniffed its horrible odour. I have seen the mud-filled pockets rifled for marks of identification when all the marks were a black but empty clay-pipe, thirteen pawn tickets, and a penny-halfpenny in coppers. And, Lord, these grinning teeth from which the lips had been eaten away, and those eyeless sockets in which wriggled the tadpole and the newt, echoed in blasting irony the words of thy son, "Blessed be ye poor." And the black pipe filled with mud, and the thirteen pawn tickets soaked almost to pulp, and the two poor coppers that could not save their possessor from desperate ruin, chimed in with God's son, "Blessed be ye poor." Far away in a country bothy or a city slum there are misery and woe. On the mantel-shelf the old clock ticks no more. It was pawned to buy bread for the now long and hourless days. The lean wife's marriage ring has gone, and her honour too. The supperless children, boys and girls, lie huddled together on the floor on a litter of rags and straw. Their father was he of the black pipe, the pawn tickets, and the two coppers. They will emerge from that den of hunger and steaming filth into the world—where they have a career before them: the boys will be street-arabs and gaol-birds; and the girls, too plain to make their way at their natural vocation, will eke out their living by charing and washing and theft. "Blessed be ye poor!"

Adonai, these lines are written by one who had seen the slums long before *slumming* had become a pastime of the *dilettante* rich; for, an earnest theist and Christian, I burned with ardour to know practically all that could be known of your dealings with your children, and to test your title to fatherhood by the evidences you gave of a father's love. I saw, in spite of myself, that you treated thousands of your sons and daughters to want and misery and crime. By the discovery I was stunned and stupefied. I recovered from the stun to ask Philosophy to establish your being and History to furnish the credentials of the Christian creed. Philosophy cried *Absum*, and History proclaimed "Imposture."

How many of your children, Lord—those you have blessed with poverty—sleep at night on the stones or on

the bare earth, the drapery of their couch the clouds of the night? Only the other day the following from a correspondent appeared in the newspaper press:—

At two o'clock one morning there was at least two hundred poor outcasts sleeping in the open air on the Victoria Embankment. All the public seats along the Embankment were full, and there are about a score of them, and each holds six persons. The occupants were mostly men; but a few were women, and one or two of these seemed to be very thinly clad. In the City all around certain walls or hoardings human beings—men and women, and even children—were stretched at length on the naked earth, or huddled close together in corners, asleep. In one sheltered spot twenty-one men and lads lay close together within almost as narrow a space as it would be possible to pack them, and one old man was vainly endeavouring to make an old contents' bill serve as a partial coverlet for his weary limbs.

I often prowl about, Lord, when all the world is asleep, under the sky afire with stars or murky with winter rain; and I can personally testify that what the correspondent writes is true. I found, one night, a poor, hungry and threadbare clerk from the country sleeping on one of the stone seats on Blackfriars Bridge, partially protected from the sleet and snow by a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*, which, in the morning, he had bought with his last copper in the hope that he might find therein advertisement of some situation to which he might possibly be appointed. His last sixpence he had sent in stamps to his aged and indigent mother in Devonshire; and as he thought of her—the snow on her humble thatch roof, her larder empty, and her heart heavy with sorrow—the tears gathered in his boyish eyes; and, as he fell asleep dreaming of his mother, the winds of the night almost froze into icicles the tears upon his eyelids. Away in that Devonshire cot the aged mother was praying for her son, so he told me; and, Jehovah, I trouble you not with prayers; but I looked up through the drizzling snow to the blurred stars and moon, and wondered whether you, high over the moon and stars, were listening to that mother's prayer. I never so much wished before that you should exist and listen to prayer and answer it, so that you might give that simple-minded Devonshire lad a seat on a three-legged stool, with a desk before him—not much for a Deity to do—and there-

by make joyous his heavy heart and that of the aged and widowed mother, who, from her lonely cot, from amid the hunger and the snow, prayed to you, Lord, not for herself, but for her son. As I heard the churchyard cough and beheld the hollow chest covered over by the *Telegraph* and the snow, and thought of the anxious and pious old mother far away, I repeated the words of thy son, but in bitterest irony, "Blessed be ye poor!"

As you know, Lord, I frequently stroll in the midnight fields round London. There I was, only last night, while the grass, whitened with hoar-frost, crackled beneath my feet and the stars shone down fiercely from the black sky. Frequently out in these cold fields have I found specimens of the waifs of London asleep. What a sleep, Lord, in the frosty grass, in the eerie silence, and in the blink of the chilly moon! More than once, when I have come across these poor mortals, availing myself of my knowledge of the neighbourhood, I have gone and brought a small armful of hay to spread for a coverlet, O Father, over your sleeping children. I have never watched them when they awoke in the morning and found themselves comparatively warm under a coverlet of mysterious hay. Seeing no one near, perhaps they thanked *you* for your care of them; but you know full well you took no care of them; you left them there to sleep a sleep that would engender maladies which would induce the sleep that knows no waking.

Once, O thou who wast born of Mary, I found a *woman* sleeping out in a suburban field in a raw night, when the trees loomed like ghosts, and mist rose drearily from the grass. I thought of my mother, Lord, and my heart throbbed convulsively and my lip quivered. Do you ever think of *your* dear mother, the woman Mary of Palestine? The great-coat I wore was an old one I could spare. I spread it softly over somebody's daughter without waking her, and quietly walked away. I do not mention this to you, Jehovah, because I wish you to reward me for doing it; the act was, to me, its own exceeding great reward. When the woman awoke in the morning it is quite likely she gave *you*, not *me*, the credit of having sent her the garment; but it is quite likely that, when thanking Jehovah, she may have

put her hand into the pocket and pulled out an old letter or two addressed to Saladin the "Infidel." This took place in the county in which Canterbury Cathedral is situated. There the servant of him who had not where to lay his head has £15,000 per annum, and palaces to boot. "Blessed be ye poor!" Your pulpiteers, Lord, preach "Blessed be ye poor" to their congregations. They do not consider the text as applicable to themselves. You sometimes see fit to give a pulpiteer a "call" to leave one church and go to another; but he is not over sharp at hearing the "call" if the church he be called to has not a bigger stipend than the one he is called from. You will have observed this, Lord.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Poverty and Prostitution—God as Limned in the Bible—Jehovah's Handwriting—What the Educated Think of the Book—The Dissemination of the Scriptures prohibited by the Papists—The Jews and the Bible—Eating the Lord—Cannibalism in New Guinea.

THIS poverty which carries with it the divine blessing also carries with it all the benefits of prostitution. We are told, Lord, that thou art "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and it is, therefore, I presume, that you keep some 70,000 prostitutes in London alone. This poverty, which, on your authority, is so "blessed," placed them there. Poor girls, who cannot support themselves at making shirts at 1½d. a piece and folding the sheets of Bibles and pious tracts at starvation wages, have to eke out a living by taking to the streets. London's nocturnal avenues of damnation, trodden by the feet of 70,000 women following the profession of your friend Rahab, and your son's friend Magdalene, repeat "Blessed be ye poor" in a chorus of shame and misery. There is not on the streets one woman in three hundred but your "blessed" poverty has driven her there—"Blessed be ye poor!" The coin of the lecher stands between a young girl and famine, and he buys with it the embraces of counterfeit love.—"Blessed be ye poor!"

But the poverty comes at last when all that is left of womanhood, supplemented by all that paint and feathers can do, cannot provoke the lust the arcls of which have staved off starvation. Then, breastless, eyeless, toothless, fleshless, hairless, and rotten, the erewhile healthy and beautiful woman is laid on the bed of the lock-hospital or the workhouse.—"Blessed be ye poor!" From the way his children are used I have some notion of what their father is like.

I do not want, Lord, to go back to your Book to find any more traces of you there. There, if you are limned aright, you are a strange compound of an idiot, a coxcomb, a savage, and a fiend. But, as I have shown, you write such an execrably illegible hand that we fear we have read your handwriting in a way you never meant it to be read, for which, of course, we shall all be comfortably damned. You wrote in Hebrew, a language which, as I have pointed out, was not a language, and which had not even a reliable set of alphabetical symbols. We have done our best to decipher your autograph; but, from it, we cannot make you out to be anything but a flannel-legged fiend. We recoil with horror from such a finding, and take refuge under the consolation that we must have wrongly deciphered your cryptography. Perhaps you will remember that your creature, Horace Greeley, used to write a miserable scrawl. One day he sent the following to the Iowa Press Association:—

I have waited till longer waiting would seem discourteous, and now decide that I cannot attend your press meeting next June, as I would do. I find so many cares and duties pressing on me that, with the weight of years, I feel obliged to decline any invitation that takes me over a day's journey from home.

Out of this the recipients, in consultation assembled, made:—

I have wondered all along whether any squirt had denied the scandal about the President meeting Jane in the woods on Saturday. I have hominy carrots, and R.R. ties more than I could move with eight steer. If eels are blighted, dig them early. Any insinuation that brick ovens are dangerous to hams gives me the horrors.

As far as caligraphy is concerned, I shall, with considerate generosity, class you with Horace Greeley, and thereby indemnify you against the damning evidence of your own Book as it is read by mortals.

Remember, Lord, that brains are just a little more common than when you held undisputed sway, and that many who could not face the dungeon for Truth's sake are yet brave enough to face the scowl of Grundy. Vague and subtle heresies, which neither he who inflicted nor he who suffered burning quite understood, were yet definite enough to call into action the flesh-devouring flames. But the flames of Smithfield are now quite

extinguished, and the flames of hell itself are fast dying out, and you are, in consequence, left a poor helpless thing, half ogre, half buffoon. Up, Lord, and re-illumine Smithfield and hell if you really mean to remain on your throne for a little while longer before you effect your inevitable retirement to the awful limbo of the world's broken altars and forgotten deities ! Everywhere men, who are men, know nothing of you. I have already given you some specimens of how the educated and honest of this era think of your Book. I will trouble you with only one thing. You will have heard of your creature, Samuel Laing ? He was formerly Member of Parliament for Orkney and Shetland (islands which, very likely, the devil did not show your son when he took him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world). This Laing was also Finance Minister in this England ; and your Bible is, as you know, the source of this England's greatness, Well, here is what Laing says about your Book : " Now, it is absolutely certain that portions of the Bible, and those important portions relating to the creation of the world and of man, are not true, and, therefore, not inspired. It is certain that the sun, moon, stars and earth were not created as the author of Genesis supposed them to have been created, and that the first man, whose palæolithic implements are found in caves and river gravels of immense antiquity, was a very different being from the Adam who was created in God's likeness and placed in the Garden of Eden. It is certain that no universal deluge ever took place since man existed, and that animal life existing in the world, and shown by fossil remains to have existed for untold ages, could by no possibility have originated from pairs of animals living together for forty days in the ark, and radiating from a mountain in Armenia. Another test of inspiration is afforded by the presence of contradictions. If one writer says that certain events occurred in Galilee, while another says that they took place in Jersusalem, they cannot both be inspired. They may both be reminiscences of real events, but they are obviously imperfect and not inspired reminiscences, and require to be tested by the same process of reasoning as we should apply in

endeavouring to unravel the truth from the confused and contradictory evidence of conflicting historians."*

At the very best, only a handful of Protestants thoroughly believe in your Book, Lord. I have shown you that the Papists, while professing considerable admiration for yourself, regard the *traditions* of their Church as far more important than your Book, and that papal anathema after anathema has been launched at the British and Foreign Bible Society and all such organisations for the dissemination of the Scriptures among the people. Even your own chosen race, the Jews, did not by any means consider your literary merits of the highest order. They cadged you about in a shittimwood box, and when you and they got up in the world their Solomon (a monarch very fond of you and the girls) built you a temple—not by any means one of the biggest or grandest temples on the globe, but a gorgeous and stupendous edifice for a place like Jersusalem and for a Lord like you. But even the Jews themselves did not venture to claim for you the foremost place as author and hagiographist. Their Talmudic Mishna and Gemera they considered better than your Law and superior to your Prophets; and "The Bible is like water, the Mishna is like wine, and the Gemera is like spiced wine," was an apothegm among their Rabbis.†

The Jews further enacted by ecclesiastical law that "All sacred scriptures render the hands unclean." For my own part, Lord, I will not go so far as your chosen people and assert that a perusal of your Book necessarily renders the hands unclean; but I solemnly aver that the said perusal has a tendency to make the mind unclean, which, in my opinion, is a matter much more serious. Perhaps you are aware that in our Christian courts of justice witnesses and jurors, out of respect for you, *kiss* your Book, when they mean to tell the truth, and equally so when they mean to tell lies. Not long ago a medical gentleman in the North of England refused to kiss your Book, for fear of contracting syphilis through the oscu-

* "Modern Science and Modern thought," 3d ed., 1886.

† See "The Talmud," by Rev. Joseph Barclay, LL.D., Prece, iii.

‡ See "The Talmud," By Rev. Joseph Barclay, LL.D., p. 328.

lation; for all the diseased pimps and half-putrid harlots are Christians, Lord, and they all believe in you and kiss your Book; but that set do not read *my* books: in that respect, Lord, as an author, you have an advantage over me—and I make you welcome to it.

How, then, your Book discarded, am I to know anything about you? I shall lay aside your Book, and take to your *Church*. Your Church, Lord, not only has heard of you, but it knows you, has you, and *eats* you. Read, mark, learn, eat, and inwardly digest. Perhaps you are not aware of it, Lord, but your creatures have been gnawing away and eating at you for centuries. It is possible that you may have the faculty of growing as fast as you are eaten. But, if you have not this faculty, some day when you go to put on your sandals you may find that you have got one foot only, and when you attempt to sit down at your father's right hand, which is your own right hand, you may discover that you have nothing in particular left to sit down with, but that it has all been eaten away. At your last supper you gave expression to some cannibal-like remark about eating your flesh and drinking your blood, and your saints and sinners have, ever since, taken you at your word. Eating and drinking is quite in their line—in fact, eating and drinking are almost the only two functions that have been conscientiously performed by a worldful of blockheads. Well, Lord, your idiots took to eating you. Many millions have eaten you in the sense that they have made their living out of you by buffooning in pulpits and elsewhere; but that is not what I mean. I mean that millions and millions and millions are eating at you daily and have been doing so for centuries. True, they eat very little bits of you at a time; but it must all tell in the long run. If you permit this eat, eat, eating to go on for another century or two, you will rise some fine morning to find yourself unpleasantly like a cabbage leaf that has been gnawed by caterpillars, or a carrot that has been perforated by worms. If I were in your shoes, I should stop this eating and eating at the altar and the communion table.

Lord, when I was a lad in Scotland I have had a slice of you myself, and a sip of your blood out of a

Britannia-metal beaker, the brim of it well garnished with rustic saliva from the mouths of the bucolic saints who had sipped therefrom before my turn came. I will not follow nature up to nature's God. Who would take the trouble to do that, going all the way up through nature to God, when he can hold God in his hand in the shape of a slice of bread: not only see God and handle God, but actually eat him? Every communicant should take extreme care of his teeth. The best tooth-brush and the most expensive dentifrice are not too good for them—they have masticated deity!

You have, O Adonai, made man "only a little lower than the angels." If this be so, how high are the angels? Talking of angels, I have never seen one, Lord; and I hardly hope ever to be one. But I have seen pictures of them in religious prints and on cathedral windows. A species of them at least seem to me simply flying heads. When an angel of this sort is tired flying how does he sit down? I can see nothing he has got to sit down on, except the crown of his head. Still, if by sitting on the crown of his head he glorifies the Lord, it is not, of course, for me to enter any objection. Well, you have made man only a little lower than the angels. Do the angels eat one another? Man eats you or your son every year in tons, and drinks hogsheads of your blood; and some men (you have made them only a little lower than the angels) eat one another. An English ship of war, the Nelson, recently visited New Guinca, also a newspaper reporter, from whom we find that Milne Bay is peopled with cannibals, and that very little intercourse has taken place between them and white men. They are constantly at war, one tribe with another, and those who are killed or taken prisoners are cooked and eaten. The Rabi natives had been fighting with another tribe, and had killed two men and one woman. The bodies of the two men they had cooked and eaten; the body of the woman they had thrown away—not because it was not likely to prove as palatable as the others, but because the others had proved sufficient to satisfy for the time their cannibal appetite. The bodies, when brought from the scene of the fight, were put over a fire and singed. The chiefs of

the war-canoes who had been instrumental in killing the three natives had the singed bodies brought before them, while they sat on a kind of stone pavement to receive them, as it were, in state. The chiefs then directed the bodies to be cut up; and they were then cut up, and the various portions cooked by being boiled in pots (which are never afterwards used) or wrapped in banna leaves and roasted on hot stones. The men of the tribe, in order to prepare themselves for the feast, shaved off part of their hair and painted their faces hideously—first an intense black, and then relieving this blackness with a series of white lines down the forehead and nose and round the eyes. The tidbits—the breast and the shin-bones, the latter because they are full of marrow—were handed to the chiefs, and the other portions, except the heads, to the rest. The skulls were cleaned and hung up as trophies at the doors of the chiefs' houses; and amid all the excitement attending these proceedings the women and children stood by, equally excited, but, in accordance with custom, not sharing in the feast. According to the best accounts, this is an exact description of what takes place at the cannibal ceremony which the natives engage in.*

Between eating you and eating each other, men should surely, Jeshurun-like, wax fat and kick. I mention this, Lord, as you may not yet have found out that there is such a place as New Guinea. You are likely so busy numbering the hairs of our heads and putting the tears of saints into bottles that you have no time to devote to geographical research.

* See "New Guinea," by C. Lyne.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Whom the Lord Loveth he Chasteneth"—Did God "Create" Hell?—Uncritical Ignorance the Bed-Rock of Sacred Lies—The Wooden-Legged Liar of Antietam—A Living Hell—Testimony that God can Indeed Make Hell.

LORD, I should be grieved should you be of opinion that I have devoted too much attention to your Book and too little attention to yourself. I shall, for the nonce, lay your Book aside and pay my *devoirs* to you.

I, personally, Lord, have never had much to thank you for. My lines have not fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have not had a goodly heritage. You blighted all my young life with a lofty nature and a paltry doom. You led me by no green pastures and still waters. "The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want." But the Lord was my shepherd and I did want; and I should not have known that the Lord was my shepherd at all if it had not been for his constantly cracking me across the head with his crook. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," from which I infer that the Lord must have loved me very ardently; and I trust he will not think me discourteous when I assure him that the love is not reciprocated. You set me, Lord, to walk about with my head among the stars, and then knocked me down to the dunghill to scrape for my dinner. Perhaps you, Lord, forget all about the misery of this period; but I do not. I shall not forget it in time; and unless eternity be a pretty lengthy period indeed, I am not like to forget it in eternity.

Your Book, Lord, says you "created" the world. I am inclined to think that, here, your Book rather exaggerates; but should it say you created hell, I should give the statement unqualified credence, as you may infer from what I have previously said.

Hell—and heaven, too, for that part of it—is based upon the crass ignorance and uncritical credulity of the early monks, and modern intelligence is only now beginning to break the fetters of ancient lies. All, except a valiant few, are the helots of the dead past. The wings of thought are heavy with the dust of the fourth century, and shreds from the gloom of the Dark Ages still lie athwart the path of modern man. Tens of thousands of living men and women—although the horizon is reddening with the dawn of a better day—still carry on their shoulders the corpses of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Augustine.

What Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and the rest of the early fathers really stood in need of was the existence of an intelligent critical spirit among those they addressed. This would have saved them from the perpetration of many a sacred lie. Those they lied to were all illiterate wonder-mongers, superstitious and credulous to the last degree. For ages, outside the ranks of the clergy, there were not five ounces of educated brain in all Europe. To lie was profitable to the monk, and to be lied to suited the gullible ignorance of the laity. The liar soon stops lying when he finds he is in the wrong atmosphere for it—in the atmosphere of that intelligence and inquiry which is illumined by a critical scepticism. In illustration of this contention I will give the following anecdote of an American tramp:—

“No, I didn’t lose that leg in the war,” said a stranger, as he leaned up against the cold wall of the post office. “I used to claim that my leg was shot off at the battle of Antietam; but one day something happened to cure me of lying. I was stumping along the highway in Ohio, and stopped at a farmhouse to beg for dinner.

“‘Where did you lose that leg?’ asked the woman.

“‘At Gettysburg.’

“‘Sit down till I call my husband.’

“He came in from the barn, and I was asked where my regiment was stationed in the battle.

“‘In the cemetery,’ I replied.

“‘Oh! well my son Bill was in the cemetery, too. I’ll call him in.’

“Bill soon came in, and he wanted to know what

particular gravestone I took shelter behind. I said it was a Scotch granite monument.

"‘Oh!’ grunted Bill. ‘My brother Bob was behind just such a stone, and I’ll call him in.’

"Bob came in, and he swore a mighty oath that he was there alone. He sort of pre-empted that monument, and remembered the inscription to a word. However, to give me the benefit of the doubt, I was asked my company and regiment.

"‘Company B; Fifth Ohio,’ I promptly answered.

"‘Oh! Brother Jim was in that company; I’ll call him in.’

"Jim came in, took a square look at me, and remarked: ‘Stranger, our regiment wasn’t within 200 miles of Gettysburg during the war.’

"‘I said Twenty-fifth. Of course the Fifth wasn’t there.’

"‘Oh! I’ll call my brother Aaron; he was in the Twenty-Fifth.’

"Aaron came in, called me a wooden-legged liar, and I was pitched over the fence into the road. They have got this war business done so fine that you can’t go around playing tricks on the country no more, and the best way is to own the truth that you got drunk and got in the way of a locomotive."

If Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Eusebius had had their statements subjected to the fierce light of scrutiny that was made to blaze upon the assertion of this wooden-legged hero of Antietam, we should never have heard a word about Jesus flying to heaven, about his swine-and-devil trick, and about his transmogrifying the water in the troughs at Cana.

But to return to hell. I fear not the coarse brimstone hell of sacerdotal teleology. It is simply the savage fable of a barbarous time, and is rapidly dying away before the sunrise of a higher civilisation. Albeit, Lord, I do not know that it requires brimstone and burning flesh to make a hell.

Hast thou ever sat, Lord, under the hawthorn breathing quiet and wafting fragrance, as day died away and as uprose the vesper star, and as peered from behind a horizon cloud one horn of the solemn moon? Of the

daughters of men the sons of God saw that they were fair :^{*} did the fairest of these daughters of men sit by thy side under that hawthorn white with bloom, while the day was melting into death and the night was being born? In an impassioned kiss did her gold-red hair mix with your locks of brown, and did her panting breath mingle with yours? Did you linger there when the day was no more, when night reigned in her mystery, and silence had blanched the mist with the gleam of a million stars? And, with Orion and the Pleiades for witnesses, did that maiden and yourself mutually vow to love forever and forever; and did you hear the beating of your own heart and hers in the hush of that night of joy?

And then! She lay silent. The orange wreath was not on her flushed brow, but in her pale hands were the lilies of Death. Hast thou ever counted the bridal-favours of Agony and sung the epithalamium of Despair? Hast thou ever stood in the dark in a field of tombs, letting the fingers fondly rest on the chiselled name of the darling dead? How terrible the plectrum-stroke that breaks every tense chord of the lyre of Being! How fearful the blow that dashes from the lips the cup of bliss and love, leaving only the goblet of Marah and misery! How terrible is the world that, for axis, revolves round a tombstone and a corpse, leaving its death-blasted denizen to write with his curdling blood the record of his suffering! Hast thou known the misery of him for whom the world's only architecture is a lettered stone and the world's only flora the violets he has planted on a grave? All subsequent love is a spectre and all subsequent joy a phantom. Love's raiment is the winding-sheet, and joy's spangles only the tinsel torn from the coffin lid of her you kissed in the hawthorn shade under the silent clouds and the solemn moon. Should any asperse thy power, call me as witness that thou canst make hell, O God!

And even should the rose-bud of love's morning bloom in the flush of life's midday, and retain its sweets till the mellow twilight of life's afternoon, there must come

^{*} See Genesis vi. 2.

for it the chilly night and the winter of death and desolation. The one heart must beat, while the other is clay. The one shall be taken, and the other left. The one remains at the old home in the village street; the other is in the village graveyard, under the ash and the cypress, among the matted wild flowers, where the grasshopper leaps and chirps and the lizard basks in the sun. In the old churchyard of the village there is a mound where the green of the grass has not yet quite covered the red of the earth; and in the old village home there is an eerie silence and an ever-empty chair and a desolate heart that will be no more what it once had been.

The day will dawn when one of us shall hearken
In vain to hear a voice that has grown dumb,
And morns will fade, noons pale and shadows darken,
While sad eyes watch for feet that never come.

One of us two must some time face existence
Alone, with memories that but sharpen pain,
And these sweet days shall shine back in the distance
Like dreams of summer dawns in nights of rain.

One of us two, with tortured heart half-broken,
Shall read long-treasured letters through salt tears;
Shall kiss with anguished lips each cherished token
That speaks of these love-crowned delicious years.

One of us two shall find all light, all beauty,
All joy on earth, a tale forever done;
Shall know henceforth that life means only duty—
O God! O God! have pity on that one!*

Not only on our feeble flesh—heir to a thousand ills—but on the subtlest and holiest susceptibilities of the soul and spirit, falls the doom of the damned. I who write have trodden the red wine press of thy wrath, on my head have been emptied all the contents of the seven phials, and I can bear witness that thou canst make hell, O God.

In almost every home there is a baby-chair, screwed to its pedestal to make it higher than the other chairs, that baby may sit at table, and with the guard in front that baby may not fall. Many a father and mother

would not exchange that poor chair for a regal throne. Thou hast framed them so, O God, that it would kill them to part with it, although it tortures them to possess it. It is haunted by a spirit, and in it and around it there is a vision of small pink feet and dimpled arms and innocent blue eyes and soft brown hair. And there is a terrible awakening from the holy dream. The babe can no longer be clasped in that father's arms, and its lips can press the nipple of that mother's breast no more. There only remain a lock of hair and a pair of small red shoes, with a power to fill with tears the eyes that look upon them and a spell that can wring two hearts in unspeakable pain and instil memories of a cold, sad day in the winter, when the gravel from the spade sounded hollow upon a little coffin covered with flowers. In the memory of two tiny feet, whose tread shall never again be heard on my floor, in the memory of the prattle of my child that shall greet my ears no more forever, by the tears that dim my eyes as I write these words, I testify that thou canst make hell, O God !

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God an Affair of the Enterics—Prayer Degrading—The Danger of Too Many Praying at Once—Christ's Second Coming Precepitated—Difficulties in the Way of Prayer—Jehovah's Autograph—His Efforts in the Epistolary Line—The "Prayer of Jesus, the Son of Mary."

FROM all you have written, Lord, there is not much to be learnt in regard to you. When I complain to the devout that I know little or nothing about you, they assure me that you are not to be found by study, that they know you because they have you "within" them. From this I learn that God is not an affair of the brain, but a matter of the intestines. I might possibly have you "within" me by grovelling away and praying till I became imbecile; but I have watched the saints who aver that they have you "within" them, and I feel constrained to say that I do not admire them. I have found that a saint is, as a rule, a swindler. Piety and pilfering go well together, and the praying sneaks of your pulpits and pews are the very last persons that an honest man should leave with his wife or daughter or purse. Therefore, Lord, I do not want to have you "within" me "bearing witness" as your saints sanctimoniously snivel it.

Furthermore, I deem praying mean and unmanly. I do not mind getting down on my knees to look for a pin when I have dropped it; but I should never dream of getting down on my knees to look for a deity. If a god be a god, I can find him best standing on my feet, towering to the highest standard of my manhood and nobleness, and groping on the remote frontiers of being for the Mystery which is in harmony with the yearnings of my soul. I am convinced that no god that is really a god likes to see man debase himself and cut a figure.

as a "worm of the dust." Gods proper do not like the obeisance of "worms of the dust" or the homage of fools who are nothing in themselves, but who are everything through the blood of a mythical Jew. Such brainless sycophancy drags eternal deity down to the mental and moral level of the earth's lowest types and races. The inculcation of this doctrine has made self-debasement a duty and self-degradation a virtue; and man, who, ennobled and angelic, should have strode with his feet among the groves of earth and his head among the stars of heaven, is, alas, little more than a shabby and foetid canal that has pabulum put in at the one end of it and ejected at the other. The whole world is wrong, O God. By the time the neglected, if not starved, noblest of our species reach the grave, they are too lean to feed the worms. But let a vulgar stable-boy, with the brains of an ape, with horses' teeth, and uglier than a monkey, ride a nag round a circle in two seconds less time than his fellows, and the plaudits and wealth of the land are showered at his feet. This creature, whom God Almighty meant to weigh eleven stones, attempts to reduce himself to eight stones in order to successfully ride a certain racehorse. In the process of shrivelling himself down to eight stones* he loses the little reason he ever had, and, with a revolver, blows out the few brains he ever possessed. "Society" is stirred to its depths, the press pours forth leagues of biography and elegy, and princes of the blood royal and turf aristocracy in galore attend the funeral of the cad who had the knack of sticking on the back of a horse. And this in the Christian land that left Milton to be a pauper and Burns a gauger. This, in spite of all the piety and all the praying, and in spite of your Book, Lord, which is "the secret of England's greatness." The planet called earth is a failure; when I pray I shall pray, Mend it or end it, O God!

Another reason, Lord, why I decline to pray. I might chance to pray only too successfully, and thereby create

* The jockey, Fred Archer, committed suicide from his attempt to reduce himself to eight stones to ride St. Mirin. He had fasted for three consecutive days.

disorganisation on earth and anarchy in heaven. If one such as I should so far forget myself as to pray, the result would most probably be exceptional. I find from the Talmud, for instance, a work which your chosen people consider more sacred than the Bible, that it is possible to pray to an extent that would upset the divine apple-cart. I read that "Elijah frequently attended Rabbi's seat of instruction (*מתיבתא*), and once, upon the first day of the month, he came in later than usual. Rabbi asked what had made him so late. Elijah answered, 'I have to wake up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob one after the other, and wash the hands of each, and wait till each has said his prayers and is retired to rest again.'

"'But,' asked Rabbi, 'why do they not all get up at the same time?'

"The reply was, 'Because, if they all prayed at once, their united prayers would hurry on the coming of the Messiah before the appointed time.'"*

Who knows but such an unaccustomed and extraordinary prayer as mine would be might take the same effect? I should not like to be responsible for running the risk of hurrying "on the coming of the Messiah." An ignorant and degraded world has not yet recovered from the baleful effects of his former visit. God forbid that I should be in any way instrumental in bringing about the calamity of his second coming.

Your New Testament, Lord, says, Pray without ceasing; but I do not know how far the teachings of the New Testament are obligatory, or how far, in fact, they are absolutely pernicious. The Jewish rabbis should know more about the New Testament and its credentials than I do, and they refer to it as *עץ ניליק* Avon-gelion—that is, *the roll of iniquity*, by which flattering title the Jews refer to the New Testament to the present day. But, what is worse, I do not know who to address, even if I should make up my mind to try the effect of a prayer or two. I call you Jehovah, and so forth; but your name is lost—and you are

* "Treasures of the Talmud," by Paul Isaac Hershon, p. 174, quoting Bava Metzia, fol. 85 B.

fast following it. It is more than eighteen centuries since your name was last pronounced. I am given to understand that, at best, your name was occasionally *written*, but that it was never *pronounced*, except by the High Priest and on the Day of Atonement. "The Jews, in a spirit of reverence, use the words 'Place' and the 'Name' to denote God. In reading, they do not now pronounce the word Jehovah, but substitute Adonai for it, and when Jehovah is followed by the word Adonai they then use the word Elohim. The true pronunciation of the name has been a subject of much contention. It has been variously given as Yeheveh, Yehveh, Yahveh, Yahavah, Yahaveh, and Yehovah. When it was uttered on the Day of Atonement the worshippers 'fell on their faces' in reverence for it. It was spoken for the last time in the Temple by the mouth of Simon the Just. Henceforward, the Gemara says, whoever attempts to pronounce it shall have no part in the world to come." * When I know your name it may be time enough to pray to you. But, even should I know your name and attempt to pronounce it, I should, therefore, get kicked out of the world to come. I neither know your name, nor your address, nor what you are, nor what you want. How can I pray to you? God, *per se*, lies utterly outside my gnosis, and I refuse to cobble up a god out of the ebullitions of my own idiocy and get down on my knees before the phantom of my own brain.

I have dealt somewhat copiously, and with the degree of respect they seem to merit, with such writings of yours, Lord, as have come down to us through the medium of the "holy men of God" you were good enough to inspire. It would not, however, be just and deferential to you to pass over in silence what you yourself have written, without troubling any holy or unholy man whatever. First, there is the Decalogue. You wrote that, on two tables of stone, with your finger, or your toe, without troubling to employ an amanuensis of any kind. All I have got to say about the Commandments, Lord, is that I have broken nearly the whole ten of them, and

* "The Talmud," by the Rev. Joseph Barclay, LL.D., p. 135 note.

I do not know of anybody who has not. You, yourself, as I could prove from your Book, have broken them all save one : that one is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That one you have never broken. You have ever held yourself to be the supreme cock of the midden of the pantheon. The proverbial Kilbarcan weaver prayed, "And, Lord, give me, above all things, a good conceit of myself." You never required, Lord, to pray for a "good conceit of yourself." You always had that. You once, when you felt it was all up with you, prayed to yourself to save yourself ; and the prayer was not very effectual. But let that fly stick to the wall.

The next time I find you, or your son—I never know which is which—writing was when you "stooped down and wrote on the ground ;" * but what you wrote has not been preserved, and, like much else that has been written, it was, peradventure, not worth preserving ; and I should like you to explain why the first eight verses of the eighth chapter of John, in which this writing of yours is referred to, seem to be spurious, and are not to be found in the two oldest codices, the Sinaitic and the Vatican. Your next writing was in the polite epistolary line. There was a town called Edessa in Mesopotamia. This town, or village, had a king, and his name was Abgarus. This Abgarus, like the patient of Dr Horn-book—

"Had ta'en the buts
O' some cur-murrin' in his guts,

and, having heard that you were a dab at putting clay and spittle into blind men's eyes and making them see, and at trotting dead men out of their graves, he sent for you to go and see him and put him on his legs. But you had other fish to fry, and so you sat down and scribbled him off the following letter, which you sent him by his servant, Hananias :—

Blessed is he that believeth in me not having seen me. For it is written concerning me, that those who see me will not believe in me, and that those will believe who have not seen me, and will be saved. But, touching that which thou hast written to me, that I should come to thee, it is meet that I should finish here all that for the sake of which I have been sent ; and, after I have finished it,

* John viii. 8.

then I shall be taken up to him that sent me ; and when I have been taken up, I will send to thee one of my disciples, that he may heal thy disease and give salvation to thee and those who are with thee.

Your servant, Eusebius, attributes this letter to you, and surely he ought to know. Moreover, in 1841, 1843 and 1847, Syriac versions of the letter, apparently of the fourth century, were discovered in a monastery in Lower Egypt. There has been much dispute among the learned as to the exact date on which you wrote the letter. What a pity you did not think to put the place and date at the top of it, and sign it, 'I am, dear Abgarus, your obedient servant, Jesus Christ.' And I deeply regret to inform you that the modern learned do not believe you wrote the letter at all. I am really ashamed of their lack of faith. What a pity hell has been turned into *sheol*, and is not so hot as it used to be ; you could have put those who doubt your letter in there, and have brought them to their senses. In case you may have, in the pressure of much subsequent business, forgotten about your letter to Abgarus, I append a few catchwords of the Greek version of it ; for you wrote it in Greek, at least, you wrote it just as much in Greek as you wrote it in anything else :—

"ΑΒΓΑΡΕ, μακάριος εἶ, πιστεύσας ἐν ἐμοὶ μὴ ἰσρακῶς με.
Γέγραπται, γὰρ περὶ ἐμοῦ, τοὺς ἰσρακίτας με μὴ πιστεύσειν
μοι, ἵνα οἱ μὴ ἰσρακίτες αὐτοὶ πιστεύσωσι καὶ ζήσωσιν, etc.

Does the above bring the whole affair to your recollection ? You know the New Testament, all except Matthew, was written in Greek. Greek was not the language of Palestine, and the Galilee fishermen and other illiterates who wrote gospels in it knew just as much about it in the first as Wick herring-fishers do in the nineteenth century. But lying and forgery are not quite so common now as they were in your time, and the heyday of credulity has gone by, so we are spared the infliction of treatises in Greek from the pens of the herring-fishers of Wick.

Your next performance in letter-writing, Lord, was undertaken and carried through under exceptionally distressing circumstances. It was actually written by

you while you were hanging upon the cross with the nails struck through your hands into the timber ! I find the letter and an account of the circumstances under which it was written in one of the books of the Apocryphal New Testament, entitled 'Narrative of Joseph,' and purporting to be written by Joseph of Arimathea, and with quite as good warranty as the Gospel of John can claim to have been written by John the disciple. According to Joseph of Arimathea, the two thieves who had the honour of being crucified alongside of you were named respectively Demas and Gestas. Demas was the good little thief who flattered you, and Gestas was the villain of the piece, who died blaspheming you. It seems that when you promised Demas admission to Paradise, you gave him at the same time a letter of introduction, a sort of informal free-pass into heaven. According to Joseph of Arimathea, this is the letter you wrote and gave to Demas :—

Jesus Christ, the son of God, who has come down from the heights of heaven, who has come forth out of the bosom of the invisible Father without being separated from him, and who has come down into the world to be made flesh and to be nailed to the cross, in order that I might save Adam, whom I fashioned, to my archangelic powers, the gatekeepers of Paradise, to the officers of my Father : I will and order that he who has been crucified along with me should go in, should receive remission of sins through me, and that he, having put on an incorruptible body, should go into Paradise and dwell where no one has ever been able to dwell.

According to your friend St. Jerome, you were illiterate and could not write at all. But surely Joseph of Arimathea should know more about the matter than St. Jerome. Not only have you, Lord, been able to write, but you must have been the most dexterously clever writer I have ever heard of. Not only could you write; you could write a polite epistle of about 100 words with both your hands nailed fast to a stick ! Perhaps St. Jerome was right, perhaps you could write just as well that way as any other way. The thief's hands were also nailed fast to a stick. How did you hand him the letter, and how did he catch hold of it ? I admit I cannot quite catch hold of the way the thing was done. I have not quite the necessary amount of faith. Possibly I might have the faith for the praying for, and possibly I

may take to the praying when I have nothing else to do ; but, for the present, I am very busy.

These specimens are all your autograph writings, Lord, that I have been able to trace. On all your other writings you employed a "holy man of God" as an amanuensis. But stay. I had almost forgotten to mention that there is a prayer of yours extant—one not so well known as the one called the Lord's Prayer, and which I have shown you is not by the Lord at all, but stolen by the Lord from the Talmud.* It runs thus :—

THE PRAYER OF JESUS, THE SON OF MARY.

Upon them be Peace. He said :—"O God, I am not able to extirpate (or overcome) that which I abhor, nor have I attained to that good (or usefulness) which I desired, but others, and not I, have their rewards in their hands. But my glory abideth in my work. There is no one in more indigent (or miserable) circumstances than I am. O most high God, grant me pardon. O God, suffer me not to be a reproach to mine enemy, nor bring upon me the contempt of my friends : and let not my piety be attended with (or occasion me) troubles. And let not this world be my main delight (or what I am principally at). And suffer not such one to have his will (or rule) over me, who will have no mercy upon me, for thy mercy sake, O thou most merciful, who pitiest all those who need mercy."

Is this prayer really yours, Lord, and did you write it? † It is hardly up to the mark of the Lord's Prayer ; but, on that account, it is possibly all the more likely to be yours. The Mohammedans allege that it is yours, and it may be they are quite correct. For a deity that could not write you have done wonders. You wrote on two stones. You wrote on the ground. You wrote a letter to Abgarus the king. You wrote a letter to Demas the thief. And you are, it would seem, the author of a prayer in which you confess yourself a great sinner and "not able to extirpate" that which you "abhor." The relics are interesting as the literary remains of one who was a god and a carpenter, a "creator" of worlds and a maker of three-legged stools.

* *Vide Ante*, pp. 179-80.

† See Selden's *Commentary on Eutychius' Arabic Annals of Alexandria*, p. 58.

CHAPTER XL

Which Version of the "Lord's Prayer" does the Lord Prefer?—Divergent Readings of the "Lord's Prayer"—Two Versions of the Decalogue—The Resurrection of the Marquis of Anglesey's Leg—Grandeur than the Resurrection and Nobler than Prayer—My Salvation—Is Heaven Worth the Going to?—Measurement of the New Jerusalem—Written Warranty to Give Away 99 of my 100 Rooms—If there be Hell, "then Heaven too is Hell."

BUT, even if I knew the name of the party I was praying to, and her, his, or its location, character, and desires, I still should not be able to pray, except in a very vague and at-random fashion. You, of course, taught us to pray by giving us the Lord's Prayer, which you stole from the Talmud ; but I do not care to run the risk of being the recipient of stolen goods. Moreover, the stolen prayer is verbally altered from the original, just as, in the old Border days, stolen cows used to be painted by the brush of the freebooting thief, so that the rightful owner could not tell his own cow, even if he saw her. Furthermore, there are several versions of the stolen prayer. Before I begin to pray I should like to know which of the versions you prefer. I append some versions of your prayer. Take a look at them :—

ROMAN CATHOLIC VERSIONS.

1. "Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen" (Matt. vi. 9-13).

2. "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also

forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation" (Luke xi. 2-4).

PROTESTANT VERSIONS.

1. "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matt. vi. 9-13).

2. "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Luke xi. 2-4).

3. "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Prayer Book).

4. "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One" (Matt. vi. 9-13, Revised Version).

In case I *might* take it in my head to pray, will you kindly indicate which of these six versions gives Sarah and you the greatest pleasure? Put a mark on your favourite version. Just put any kind of mark; the sort of mark you set upon Cain will do.

Then, Lord, if you would really like me to keep the Ten Commandments, would you obligingly say which version of them you prefer, and the adherence to which version would be most likely to secure me *post-mortem* harp and wings. You will find the one version in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy.* You may possibly say: Don't bother me; go ahead with your praying—any version will do. But I should not be sure but you had sent a lying spirit to deceive me; for, from your fussy and pragmatistical instructions about basins and ewers and lavers and skins and candlesticks and fringes and snuffers, I know you are a stickler over trifles. You

* Exodus xx. 1-17; Deuteronomy v. 6-21.

must prefer one version to another; for you have, in your day, done dreadful things to evince the keen recognition you had of the tremendous difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee and the west and south-west side of a hair. Which version of the Prayer and which of the Commandments, Lord, would you like me to adopt?

If I could only get the right version of the Prayer and the right version of the Decalogue, it might be better for me at the Resurrection. This Resurrection is another affair I do not quite understand. How are you going to manage it, Lord? You will, Lord, have heard of the Marquis of Anglesey? He was one of those who danced the death-jig on the terrible floor known as the Field of Waterloo. You have heard of the place, Lord, and of the year 1815, and how—

“All that war could do
Of skill and force was proved that day,
And turned not yet the doubtful fray
On bloody Waterloo.”

The visitor to this Aceldama of Europe is shown a monument, erected on the spot where the amputated leg of the Marquis lies interred. The table is pointed out on which the wounded nobleman was laid that his shattered limb might be severed from his body by knife and saw. In subsequent years his Lordship and the ladies of his family were wont to dine off that table, and, after dinner, to visit the tomb where the leg lay buried. How would you like, Lord, to stand on your one leg to survey the tombstone of your other leg? In your immutable decrees you sent the Marquis of Anglesey into the world to undergo that grotesque and horrible experience. At the Resurrection will the Marquis or his leg get up first? Will the leg and the Marquis start simultaneously to “meet the Lord in the air”? If the thing be not managed with circumspection, the gallant soldier might elect to fight Waterloo over again, rather than receive a bang on the abdomen from his own flying leg. I am quite agnostic as regards this Resurrection business. Even if I could get hold of a prayer to pray, and a god to pray

it to, I should not know what to pray for in regard to this Resurrection. As it is, I do not trouble about either Prayer or the Resurrection. If out of my poor purse I give a shilling to the needy, it is more than prayer; if I work hard to secure the elevation of the Living, I may exonerate myself from speculation as to the raising of the Dead. I cannot penetrate the black curtain that falls behind the footlights of mortal life and hides the arcana of Being. But I feel I am in the guardian hands of Eternal Love, and that my head reclines safely on the bosom of a God such as the glory of Dream never drew and the splendour of Vision never limned.

You cannot blame me, Lord, that, before making my "calling and election sure," I should take the pains to ascertain whether the game be worth the candle. The earth is no better than it should be; and if I had the means to determine that heaven is preferable, I should be ready enough to go there, without putting gospel-shops to the trouble of cadging and howling to secure what they are pleased to call my "salvation." My "salvation" or the reverse can be as little affected by their howling and kneeling as by the mewling and cater-wauling of the cat that walketh upon the wall. I think too highly of you, Lord, to deem you would alter your purposes one iota for the antics of that pitiable thing, a professional gospel-grinder. Independently of his howling I came to the mysterious cradle and will go to the awful grave. The universe is too tremendous to be moulded by preaching, and destiny too inexorable to be moved by prayer.

But, as I was saying, I have been trying to ascertain if heaven were worth the going to. In my opinion it is not. It is no inducement to me that there is no sunlight and no candle light, "for the Lord God giveth them light." * The eternal God gains nothing in my esteem by being converted into a gigantic glow-worm. It is nothing to me that heaven has "a wall great and high." † I do not like walls. Give me the wide landscape bounded only by the horizon-walls of the sky, with the mist slumbering on the hills and the forest murmuring mystery. I find

* Rev. xxii. 5.

† *Idem*, xxi. 12.

that there are in heaven the jasper, the sardonyx, the beryl, the chrysoprasus, and the topaz. But I am no frivolous dandy who cares about the jasper and the topaz. I should have been more anxious to get to heaven, Lord, if you had assured me that its gales were laden with the perfume of the birch and the heather, that primroses grew wild under the shadow of its hawthorns, and that happy children played among its meadows of new-mown hay.

I am free to admit that the house of many mansions is, however, one of commodious dimensions. "And he measured the city with the reed, 12,000 furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."* And, although, as I have before observed, figures are not much in your line, here are some calculations, O Lord. 12,000 furlongs equal 7,920,000 feet, which, being cubed, is 496,793,088,000,000,000,000 cubic feet. Reserving one-half of this space for the throne and court of heaven, and half the balance for streets, we have the remainder, 124,198,272,000,000,000,000 cubic feet. Divide this by 4,096, the cubic feet in a room sixteen feet square, and there will be 30,321,843,750,000,000 rooms!

Now, suppose the world always did and always will hold 990,000,000 inhabitants, and that a generation lasts thirty-three and one-third years, making in all 2,970,000,000 inhabitants every century, and that the world will stand 100,000 years, or 1,000 centuries, making in all 2,970,000,000,000 inhabitants. Then suppose there were 100 worlds equal to this in the number of the inhabitants and duration of years, making a total of 297,000,000,000,000 persons, and there would be more than a hundred rooms sixteen feet square to each person.

If I am one of those, Lord, for whom you have reserved a hundred rooms, each sixteen feet square, you have hereby my written and printed authority to give ninety-nine of the said rooms away to wretches requiring them; one room sixteen feet square will be enough for me. Give my ninety-nine rooms, Lord, to men and women who, when down here, never knew joy, whose minds and bodies were diseased, who, by thy divine

* Rev. xxi. 16.

decrees, were born with criminal blood in their veins, who spent much of their life in prison, and who ended it on the gallows. One turn of the wrist of the inexorable hand of Heredity would have made their brain my brain, their heart my heart, their nerves my nerves, their blood my blood. It is no merit of mine that I sit in my study among my books instead of in the gaol beside my oakum; no merit of mine that I am likely to close my eyes forever in my old-fashioned bedroom among my friends, instead of on the scaffold in the presence of the gaol-chaplain and the representatives of the daily press. Why I am what I am is due to some esoteric embryology in the arcanic womb of the universe, not to the mystery which is ME. By the verdict of magnanimous Justice, the criminal with the rope round his neck, and the mad mother whose hands are red with the life-blood of her own child, are as well entitled to one of heaven's sixteen-foot rooms as I am. Permit me to decline to occupy one hundred rooms while any earth-born fellow mortal of mine has no room at all.

And, O God of Jacob, I refuse to occupy a single foot of your heaven, in spite of all its jasper and all its beryl, if any hand I ever shook in friendship, if any lip I ever kissed in love, is to be shrivelling and suffering forever in hell. We men and women are all alike the children of any deity worthy of the name. No god who had not been begotten by a fiend and whose lips had not tugged at the dugs of a demon could fashion one section of his poor dependent children to twang their harps in heaven and the other to jangle their fetters in hell. Our faults and failings and virtues and merits naturally seem big to such microscopic monads as we; but surely the odds are all even with GOD, and surely the light of his love for all should dispel with its radiance the so-called guilt of all. If being in heaven involves the consciousness of the existence of hell, then heaven too is hell.

CHAPTER XLI.

Aversion to be Considered Sacrilegious—How Jehovah Punished Titus for Sacrilege—The Increased Distance between Heaven and Earth—The Gnat that Ate the Brain of Titus—The Louse a Distinctive Mark of “the Finger of God”—the Solid Earth not Stable—Improvements in the Earthquake since the Days of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—Quiet Death—Prepared for the Gnat of Titus or the Earthquake of Korah—Peroration Addressed to Jehovah.

IN referring to prayer and such-like aberrations, Lord, I should be sorry should you deem that I have been sacrilegious. You have such a unique way of resenting sacrilege that fear of the consequences would deter me from indulgence in that luxury, however strong might be my inclination to do so. I do not forget the prank you played on Titus, Roman general though he was. I will remind you of how you dished up this Titus for his blasphemy, not that you may revive the prank by practising it on me, but simply to call to your recollection how you settled blasphemers when you were young, and went at your enemies like a bull at a red rag. I will quote the incident from the Talmud, a book, as I have told you, that your chosen people, the Jews, regard as more sacred than your Book :—

“When Vespasian sent Titus to subdue Jerusalem the latter said, ‘Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted?’ (Deut. xxxii. 37). Thus Titus despised and blasphemed God. He entered the Holy of Holies in company with a harlot.....He then slashed the veil with his sword, and blood miraculously oozed out from it.....Then he took the veil and filled it with the vessels of the Temple, and, placing the same aboard

ship, he set sail for Rome. While at sea a storm arose and threatened to sink the ship. Then said he: 'It seems that the gods of these Jews have no power anywhere but at sea. Pharaoh they drowned, and Sisera they drowned (so in the original), and now they are about to drown me also. If they be mighty, let them go ashore and fight with me there.'

"Then came a Bath Kol (בת קול), a voice from heaven and said: 'O thou wicked man, son of a wicked man, and descendant of Esau the wicked, go ashore! I have a creature insignificant in my world; go thou and fight with that.' (This creature was a gnat, and was termed insignificant because it has a mouth to take in food, but has no outlet to discharge it.) Immediately he landed a gnat flew into his nostrils and made its way to his brain, upon which it fed for a period of seven years. Once he happened to pass a blacksmith's forge, and the noise of the hammer caused the gnat to cease working on his brain. 'Aha!' said Titus, 'here's a remedy.' He ordered a blacksmith continually to hammer before him, paying him four zouzim a day if a Gentile blacksmith, but paying nothing to a Jewish one; for said he to the latter, 'Thou art well paid by seeing me, thy enemy, in such a painful condition.' For thirty days he felt relief; but after that period all the hammering was in vain.

"Rabbi Phinehas, the son of Aruba, testified, saying, 'I myself was among the magnates of Rome when an inquest was made upon Titus, and upon opening his brain they found in it a gnat as big as a swallow, weighing two selas. Others say it was as large as a pigeon a year old, weighing two litre. Abaü said: 'We found its mouth to be of copper and its claws of iron.' Titus willed that, after his death, his body should undergo cremation, and his ashes should be scattered over the surface of the seven seas, that the God of the Jews might not find him and bring him to judgment.*

Titus entered with a harlot. You Lord, will understand what a harlot is if you recall to memory your own ances-

* *Gitten*, fol. 56 B., quoted in "Treasures of the Talmud," by P. I. Hershon, pp. 359-60.

tresses, Rahab and Ruth, and your friend, Mary Magdalene. Bath Kols cannot be heard calling from heaven now; heaven has got so distressingly far away since printing and telegraphy and steam-engines came into vogue. The steam-engine has abridged *térrestrial* space wonderfully; but it and its concomitants have immeasurably increased the distance between earth and heaven. The distance is now so great that gods and angels and Bath Kols have forsaken the earth, probably unable to bear the travelling expenses thereto. Your Gospel, too, has made slow progress since these agencies came into operation. The rattle of the printing machine and the roar of the railway train have drowned the credos and orisons of the Ages of Faith; and your Gospel, if it be making any progress at all, is tearing along at the pace that is adopted by an insulted snail.

Just let me know if I am sacrilegious. But where do you keep the sort of gnat now, Lord, that got into the head of Titus? It is bad enough to have a bee in your bonnet; but it must be infinitely worse to have a gnat in your head—a gnat with a copper mouth and iron claws. Do you keep the kind of gnat that ate the brain of Titus in the museum where you keep the kind of ass that spake to Balaam and the sort of whale that swallowed Jonah? The gnat fed upon the brain of Titus for many years. Titus must have had a considerable quantity of brain. Few of your saints and “holy men of God” have enough of brain to feed a gnat for even seven days. Judging from your Book, there is not enough of brain, even in you, to feed a gnat till it should become “as big as a swallow.” Gnats, and such vermin, are specially in your line. You will remember that the magicians of Egypt performed all the tricks you could perform till you made *lice*. That beat them. They could not make lice. They stood aghast and exclaimed, “This is the finger of God.” * Be that as it may, this fate of poor Titus deters me from anything like blasphemy, especially as I cannot afford to pay four zouzim a day to a blacksmith to hammer into quietude the infernal beast that might take up its abode inside of

* Exodus viii. 19.

my skull. I know you must still have that beast somewhere, and you must still use it upon the blasphemer; for *you* are "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." But *we* are not, and that makes all the difference.

The louse still remains among us to remind us of "the *finger* of God," and one Robert Burns, a greater than all your psalmists, wrote an ode to this divine *pediculus capitis*. But the kind of gnat that you hunted into the nostril of Titus, and in the contemplation of which I reverently remark, "This is the *toe* of God," seems to have become extinct, and no Burns or any one else has written an ode to the immortalisation of this gnat. Would you, Lord, like me to do it some day when I feel filled with seraphic fire and my hand touches with the thrill of genius the chords of the harp that hung on the willow-tree by the waters of Babel? I have stuffed cotton into my ears to keep out the extinct gnat you sent to live inside of the skull of the blasphemer, Titus; but yet I feel I am not safe, you take such mean advantages of us, your children. This earth on which you have placed us seems solid enough. We dig graves in it to bury our darling dead; we plough furrows in it to grow corn for our beloved living. Our funeral trains move along it in mournful majesty; our dancers trip along it on the light fantastic toe till we are led to deem the valleys eternal and the hills from everlasting to everlasting. And when our confidence is thus established you burn us with a volcano or bury us with an earthquake, just to convince us that you are our loving father and that we are the children you hold dear. As in the "Lamb's Book of Life" or the "Kid's Book of Death"—if there be such a volume as the latter kept in heaven—you may not find a record of your exploits in the earthquake line, I will furnish you with a few figures which the recording angel may make use of at his leisure:—

In 1822 earthquake in Aleppo destroyed	...	...	30,000
In 1850 " at Naples destroyed	...	...	6,000
In 1851 " in Italy destroyed	...	...	14,000
In 1857 " in Italy destroyed	...	...	22,000
In 1859 " at Quito, Peru, destroyed	...	...	5,000
In 1860 " at Mandoja destroyed	...	...	7,000
In 1863 " at Philippine Islands destroyed	...	...	10,000
In 1868 " in Peru destroyed	...	...	25,000

In 1879 earthquake in Persia destroyed	...	...	1,000
In 1881 " in Scio destroyed	...	...	8,000
In 1883 " in Island of Ischa destroyed	...	...	2,000
In 1883 " at Asia Minor destroyed	...	...	57
In 1883 " volcano in Java destroyed	...	...	100,000

You have, Lord, apparently improved in the earthquake line since the day that the yawning rift swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

I should prefer that you should, when the time comes, permit me to expire quietly in my bed, that this heart that has ever yearned for human elevation should calmly and imperceptibly cease from throbbing, and that this hand that has ever struck for, according to my light, Truth and Right, should gradually chill in the hand of her who loves me best, and that, as the window blinds are drawn down to tell that I am no more, the children with whom I have romped may cease for a half-hour from their play, and then return to their gambols and laughter among the sunbeams and the flowers upon which my eyes may open no more forever.

But, Lord, if, in spite of my burning earnestness to do good, I am in thy eyes only a perdition-doomed blasphemer, I have done my best, and I must brave your worst. Let the mountains rend amid gloom and thunder and fire, and swallow me down to a grave deeper than the foundation of hell: a fate stronger than your mountains, a destiny more stable than your earth, has made me what I am, and in making me what I am has made me what I shall be. I am ready for the gnat of Titus, I am prepared for the earthquake of Korah.

And now, Lord, I have done with you. After reading over what I have written, what do you think of your Book, what do you think of yourself, and what is your opinion of me? It may have seemed to you that, here and there, I have been flippant; but that is my way—the result of the manner in which you have, as the potter, fashioned this pot—and, however flippant I may appear, I am always desperately in earnest. I am inclined to think that your “creation” and envioning of me is some mysterious practical joke which you can see and I cannot. To me existence has been no joke. I have believed little simply on the ground that I was told

to believe. I can no more believe to order than I can love to order. That is not my *fault*, and it would be contemptibly mean of you to make it my *misfortune*. I was not consulted as to whether or not I should like to come into this world. If I had been consulted, I should most likely have declined the honour, as I am averse to having all the fuss of immaculate conception, crucifixion, and the like gone through on my account. The dim *Urschleim* of un-souled Being would have been enough for me. Why did you drag me out of the nebulae of protoplasm to wheel, and gurgitate, and regurgitate, a restless vortex of consuming fire?

You are not the first, O Jehovah, who has "created" a Frankenstein that it is easier to "create" than to subdue. I have nourished a whelp that became a dog that did not hesitate to bite me when I trod upon his toes. You have trodden upon my toes till you have crushed my phalanges and broken my metatarsal bones, and, with my pen for a canine tooth, I bite everything in the shape of a "god" that has yet been cast in the anthropomorphic matrix. If for this you think fit to sit on your White Throne, or your Blue Throne, or your Green Throne, and order me to go to hell because I have been rebelliously honest to you, and will be rebelliously honest again, I will tell you to your divine teeth that I will not voluntarily go to hell to please you. If for this you send *me* to hell, I can only say that, for this, I should not send *you* to hell. Are you meaner and more vindictive than I am, although you are a god and I am only a man? Step into my shoes, and, for the nonce, I will step into yours. Let our positions be reversed for an hour: you are Saladin the Heretic, and I am Jehovah-nissi. Sitting on the great White Throne, I should not doom you to hell for having written this earnest, strenuous, terrible work. I should say: "Poor mortal, you have burned your light with the most honest and intense flame that your quality of oil and thickness of wick would allow. You may have done badly, but you have done your best. I will not treat you to harps and crowns and wings and gew-gaws of that sort; but there is, for you, a quiet corner in heaven with a thatch-roofed cot under a sycamore tree, a waggon-load of

books, a crust of bread, three congenial friends, one loveable woman, and some joyous children. Be happy!" This is what Saladin would say to Jehovah were Jehovah Saladin and Saladin Jehovah.

Are you, the Lord of heaven and earth, meaner and more revengeful than I, only a poor student, ever chafing earnestly, but in vain, against the impalpable but impassable portcullis of Mystery? I cannot, I will not believe it. If, for doing my earnest, anxious best you would send me to hell, you are a smaller and meaner thing than I am, and I fear you not. Come before you when I may, I come before you in my honest, if erring, integrity, and order me to hell at your peril. If you do so, I will know from your sentence that I am greater and stronger and more magnanimous than you. And, in the spirit of the best of my race, in the spirit of the heroic living and of the mighty dead who still rule us from their graves, I shall make a HEAVEN, and a heaven alone. I shall make Evil perish and make Good eternal, and make every star in the universe revolve and keep time to the pæan of Happiness and the anthem of Love. I should lead the very damned from the Lake of Fire to streams of cool water murmuring through green meadows, kissed by the purplest sunshine, and gemmed with immortal flowers. Having founded a universal Heaven, I should fling open the gate of glory to receive the triumphal march of the world. All this would I do. Would God do less? No; God will do more than I can think or dream, and that independently of the poor, paltry belief in Bibles and the turning of the eye of credulity to a distant and obscure land and time and a poor victim bleeding and dying upon a tree.

To those who can pierce through the outward seeming to the inner soul, I write for the vindication, not for the destruction, of God. Behind the Veil there stands the awful Eidolon, the Pleroma filling more than conceivable Space, dispensing with the conditions of Form, and obtruding beyond the upper and nether ring of Eternity