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TORONTO, APRIL, 1878.

OUR REVEREND OPPONENTS.

The Rev. Mr. Handford asks: "What have Atheists to offer us in place of God and the Bible?" In the first place he will permit us to remark, that if a person was afflicted with a disease and a physician were to tell him that he could, by abandoning certain habits, be easily cured, would the patient be likely to ask, "what have you to offer me in the place of the disease?" If he did, the physician would probably answer him as we do Mr. Handford, *health*. The Rev. gentleman enumerated what he said he would have to give up. Besides his God and his Bible, he would have to part with his associations, his books, and last, but we suspect not least, his occupation. "Yes," said the preacher pathetically, "my dear old books must go. Shakespeare, Milton, Browning, Clarke, Keats, Goethe all all must go." "What," he exclaimed, "do I want of them if there is no God; if they have all this time been deceiving me!" Those who have read the writings of Baron Von Goethe, will understand how little the Rev. gentleman knew of what he was talking. But is it *true* that he will have to give up his books? Does he not admire the Iliad of Homer, the poems of Virgil, the orations of Cæsar and the histories of Xenophon, though they all talk of gods which he will tell us are myths; though they teach that Jupiter was the king and Juno Queen of Heaven? Can he not study and admire the morality taught by Socrates and the eloquence of Demosthenes, though they called on and worshiped the ancient gods of Greece? Mr. Handford will admit that those gods were but the creation of man's brain:—future generations will say the same of his God. We admit, however, that he would have to give up some things, and for which he has a right to demand an equivalent. He would have to give up the idea that the Bible is anything more than man's production; with the belief that the punishment of innocent children for the guilt of their parents is consonant with justice; with his belief in what Col. Ingersoll calls, "the bankrupt scheme of salvation and the credit system for sin," by which men can go on sinning during life and on their death beds charge the whole

debt to Christ and enter heaven a white-washed bankrupt. He would have to give up the chains of fear and superstition, which bind the intellect and fetter the mind. We offer in place of this, the religion of humanity, of love, of kindness and of charity. We offer him freedom from craven fear and superstitious adoration; we offer him an unfettered intellect, and an honest hatred to revenge, and cruelty, and wrong, whether committed by men or gods. Following in the train of a belief in gods, devils and ghosts are wars, plagues, drunkenness, cruelty and misery—these are *born* of a blind faith in gods and devils. The Religion of Humanity offers the opposite of all these; peace, health, progress and happiness here, and now. Happiness here is not *possible* to those who believe in a hell and a heaven hereafter. Along with the selfish hope of heaven *must* go the fear of hell. We do not envy the man who can call himself happy because he imagines *he* is safe, while he believes that untold millions are suffering, and will suffer, in hell eternally. Mr. Handford seemed to think he had made a strong point when he quoted Bradlaugh as saying that "all children are born Atheists," and then saying with Paul that, "when I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." The founder of Methodism had not only uttered the same truth long before, but said that "by nature we are mere Atheists and know nothing of God." Mr. Handford also said that his "inseparable environment would not would not allow him to be an Atheist." What is the greatest factor in the formation of that environment? If, as Wesley and Bradlaugh say, we are by nature Atheists *our early education* forms our beliefs for us. Persons interested in propagating the belief in a God instil it into the mind of the young Atheist before he is capable of judging right from wrong, the reasonable from the absurd. If Mr. Handford had been born in Constantinople his "inseparable environment" would probably have made him a Mohammedan, and as he was born an Atheist, had he not been taught to believe in a God, he would have been an Atheist still.

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NOTICES.

Professor (t) Clarke Braden has, for some weeks past, been reading essays before Canadian audiences in defence of Christianity, in which, with insufferable egotism, he assumes the role of a *teacher of teachers*. Here is his essay to the clergy on their "duties as ministers of religion in relation to Infidelity," epitomized. "You are not aware, Rev. gentlemen, of the great number of Infidels in your midst. Beside those who are openly such, they are in your colleges and schools, they are found in your pews, and have even invaded the sacred ranks of the holy ministry itself. Something must be done. The weapons you have been using are old, worn out, rusty and useless; in fact, Reversirs, you are powerless to combat Modern Infidelity. I, gentlemen, have been in this business for twenty years; the weapons I use are new, polished and invincible; Spencer, Tyndall, Darwin, all fall before my terrible blows, engage me for a course of lectures and you will not be again troubled by these terrible Infidels." Most of his essays are a compilation of the arguments of Warburton, Paley Butler, and Sir Wm. Hamilton. He knows just enough of the theory of Evolution to mis-state, mangle and distort it, and uses clumsily the arguments of Dawson, Cook, and McCosh against the theory. "Drowning men catch at a straw," but we did not suppose the clergy of Canada had become reduced to such