

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

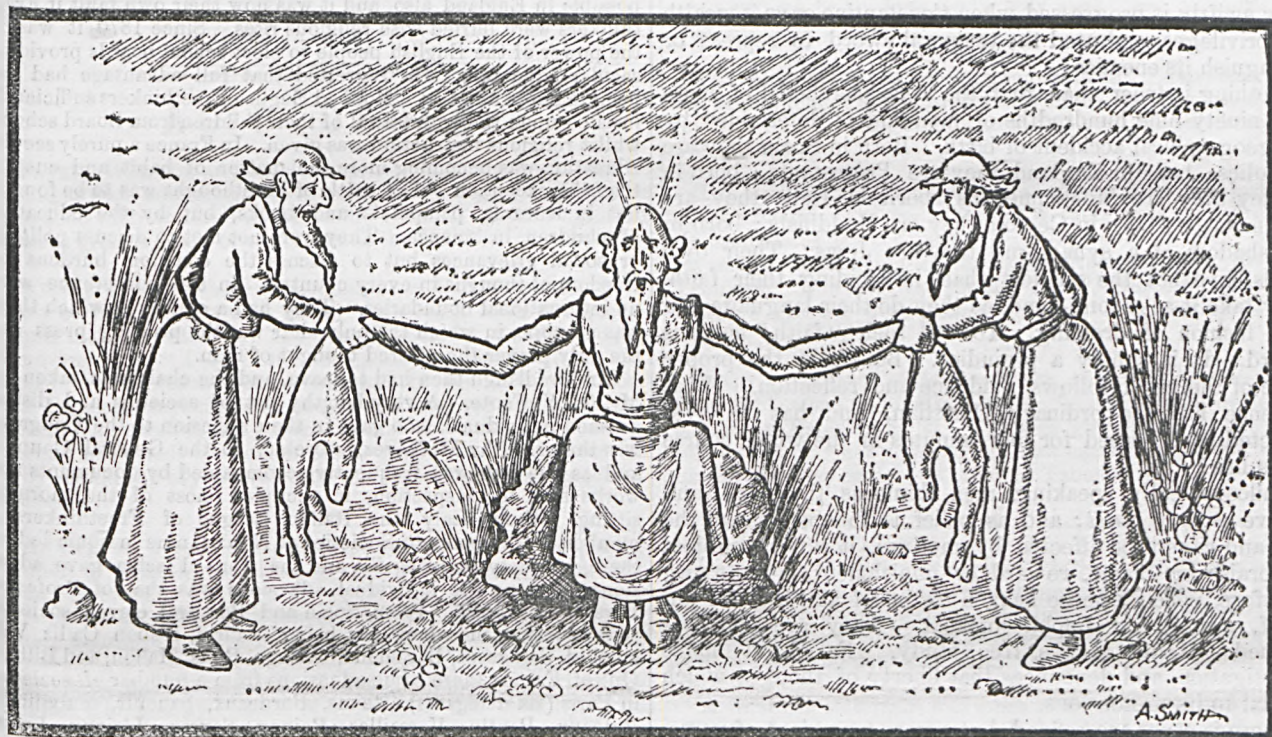
Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. VII.—No. 38.]

SEPTEMBER 18, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 216.



## HANDS UP, MOSES!

*And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek. . . . And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.—EXODUS XVII., 9-13.*

## BELIEVE OR BE DAMNED.

CHRISTIAN ministers are showing a disposition to fight shy of the second half of the last chapter of Mark, where Jesus is represented as saying to his apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Some of them tell us to look at the Revised Version, where we shall see in the margin that all this portion of the chapter does not exist in the earliest manuscripts; and they innocently expect that Freethinkers will therefore quietly drop the offensive passage. Oh dear no! Before they have any right to claim such indulgence they must put forth a new edition of the whole Bible, showing us what they desire excised, and what they wish to retain and are ready to defend as the infallible word of God. We should then discuss whether their selection is justifiable, and after that we should discuss whether the amended Bible is any diviner than the original one. But we cannot allow them to keep the Bible as it is, to call it God's Word, to revile people who doubt it, and to persecute people who oppose it; and yet, at the same time, to evade responsibility for every awkward text. This will never do. The clergy cannot have the authority of inspiration in their pulpits and the ease of eclecticism on the platform and in the press.

Besides, although the text in Mark is the most striking piece of impudent bigotry, there are many passages of Holy Writ that display the same spirit. The Jews were expressly ordered to kill heretics in this world, and the victims only escaped eternal damnation because the chosen people knew nothing at that time of future rewards and

punishments. A glance at the first few pages of *Crimes of Christianity* will also show that the earliest apostles of Christianity were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of persecution. Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and even "the beloved disciple" said "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul tells the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." These passages plainly imply that the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and that the teacher of unbelief is a devil. What difference is there between this and the passage in Mark? As a matter of fact, all the Christian Churches, from the beginning till now, have taught that faith is necessary to salvation; and this historic consensus of opinion justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry as of the essence of the Bible.

Now what is belief? It is an automatic act of the mind, over which the will has absolutely no power. The will might, indeed, turn the eyes from regarding evidence in a particular direction, or the entire mind from attending to the subject at all. But given the evidence before you, and your own powers of thought, and your judgment is a logical necessity. You cannot help believing what your intellect certifies as true; you cannot help disbelieving what your intellect certifies as false. If you were threatened with everlasting torment for believing that twice two are four, you could not, by the most tremendous effort of volition, alter your conviction in the slightest degree. You might be induced to *assert* that twice two are five, but whatever your tongue might utter, your belief would remain unchanged.

The effect of threats, therefore, is not to change belief, but to produce hypocrisy. Yet this much must be allowed. The threats may succeed *if they are carried out*. Fear will make multitudes *profess* without *investigating*, and as liars often come to believe their own lies, habitual profession produces a state of mind that has a superficial resemblance to real belief; and, on the other hand, if the threats of future punishment are supplemented by penal laws against heresy, there is a process of artificial selection by which independent minds are eliminated, while the slavish survive. Even when penal laws are relaxed, social ostracism will have a similar, though perhaps a weaker effect. Prizes offered to one form of opinion, and losses inflicted on others, will necessarily make a difference in their relative success. How slowly Christianity advanced during the first three centuries, when it was under a cloud! How swiftly it progressed when Constantine gave it wealth and privileges, and used the temporal sword to repress or extinguish its enemies!

Nothing is truer than that the religious belief of more than ninety-nine hundredths of mankind is determined by the geographical accident of birth. Born in Spain they are Catholics; born in England they are Protestants; born in Turkey they are Mohammedans; born in India they are Brahmanists; born in Ceylon they are Buddhists; born in the shadow of a synagogue they are Jews. Their own minds have not the smallest share in deciding their faith. They take it at second-hand, as they do their language and their fashion of dressing. To call their "faith" belief is absurd. It is simply a prejudice. Belief, in the proper sense of the word, follows evidence and reflection. What evidence has the ordinary Christian, and has he ever reflected on his creed for five minutes in the whole course of his life?

Philosophically speaking, men think as they *can*, and believe as they *must*; and as belief is independent of the will, and cannot be affected by motives, it is not a subject for praise or blame, reward or punishment. Religions, therefore, which promise heaven for belief and hell for unbelief, are utterly unphilosophical. They are self-condemned. Truth invites free study. Falsehood shuns investigation, and denounces that liberty of thought which is fatal to its pretensions.

There is a not too refined, but a very true piece of verse, which was first published more than a generation ago in a pungent Freethought journal, and we venture to quote its conclusion. After relating the chief "flams" of the Bible, it says:

And when with this nonsense you're crammed,  
To make you believe it all true,  
They'll say if you don't you'll be damned;  
But you ought to be damned if you do.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS.

JUDGED by the enthusiasm and cordiality displayed at its meetings the International Conference must be pronounced a great success. It is now some half-a-dozen years since London was the scene of the annual gatherings which were inaugurated by the "Anticoncilio" of Naples, called by Count Giuseppe Ricciardi, in 1869, in opposition to the Œcumenical Council of Rome. English Freethinkers may congratulate themselves that at a time when the Council General placed on the agenda paper for discussion some of the most debatable points among Freethinkers, they have had their full share in settling such questions.

Among the foreign delegates present at the Conference we took the names of Signor Teodoro Contieras, representative of various Italian groups; Signor G. Viscardi, representing Freethinkers and Masonic Lodges of Naples; M. Jules Grimaldi, from the Friends of Progress, Madrid; M. and Mme. Navez, and M.M. Gorissen and Funemont, of Brussels; M. Jules des Essarts, of Charleroi; J. Ten Vorden and daughter; L. Van Hoven; Dr. Modeste Terwagne and Dr. Adolphe Dellsalle; M.M. Van der Dues, Labrille and Buckens; J. Swaagman, of the Dageraad; Herr Funcke, Menschenthum; M. Odin, of the Socialist group of Freethinkers, Paris; M. Paul Foucart, Cercle des Proletaires Positivistes, Paris; M. Clemetshaw and Madame Rocher representing a large number of French Freethinking groups, and Mr. Fish, of Brisbane, representing the Australian Secular Society.

Among the English delegates we noticed Mr. and Mrs. Brumage, Portsmouth; Mr. Porter, Long Eaton; Mr. Searle, Plymouth; Messrs. Bolt, Jones, and Snell, Nottingham; Moon, Southampton; Thomson and Rhodes, Chatham; J. Horne, Birmingham; J. Greevz Fisher, Leeds; J. Gillespie, Newcastle;

J. W. Crowther, Halifax; R. Green, Lynn; J. Jones, Dingeton (Monmouth); J. T. Hillier, Bristol; A. Gill and P. Halls, Brighton; J. Gray, Edinburgh; A. Pomeroy, Swansea, etc.

Messrs. Foote and Robertson and Mrs. Besant represented the N. S. S. Council. London Branches were represented by Messrs. Davey, Sowden, Rosetti, Evans, Haslam, Hiscock, Pyatt, Leekey, etc.

The proceedings were opened by Mr. Bradlaugh welcoming the foreign delegates to England in a few well chosen words. M. Odin replied expressing the foreign delegates sense of English hospitality, and the hope that the concert of various nations would aid the movements of emancipation.

MR. BRADLAUGH, having been elected to the chair on the proposition of foreign delegates, then gave the presidential address. He alluded to the improved position of Freethinkers during the last three-quarters of a century. In France, Belgium and Italy most of the prominent public men were buried without religious ceremonies. The Burial Bill of 1880 had rendered that possible in England also, and it was now their own fault if Freethinkers were buried with religious rites. Since 1870 it was in the power of the English people to elect school boards providing secular education. He regretted that full advantage had not been taken of the law. Nor had English Freethinkers sufficiently insisted upon the withdrawal of their children from Board schools whilst religious instruction was given. In France a purely secular education was becoming more the matter of habit and custom than the exception. The battle of Freethought was to be fought, not in lectures, pamphlets and books, but by the education of children in science. They were not met to discuss political or social grievances but to discuss the common burdens on freedom of thought in every country. In this conference were no international boundaries. They had a church in which there was no pope, in which the only altar was the printing press and the only prayer the uttered thought of man.

Mr. Bradlaugh then had to leave, and the chair was taken by Mr. G. W. Foote. A very lengthy list of societies and distinguished individuals, who gave in their adhesion to the Congress, was then read by M. Navez, secretary to the General Council, and as the list was frequently accompanied by documents and works sent for inspection, it occupied most of the morning sitting. From Italy, the Italian League of Freethinkers, a number of Freethought Societies at Naples, nine masonic lodges there, a society at Senegallia and the Foro d'Ischia gave adhesions. Among the individual adhesions was that of Professor Borsari of Naples. From Spain and Portugal eleven societies sent adhesion, their locations being Madrid, Lisbon, Cadiz, Valladolid, Saragossa, Barcelona, Tabugo, Reus, Mahon, and Bilbao. Out of France there came adhesions from a number of societies in Paris (six delegates), Reims, Bordeaux, Saumur, Malvilliers, Puteaux, Pantin, Versailles, Rainey, Sevres, Lisioux, Lyons (three societies), Montataire, Forges-les-Eaux, Bicêtre, Angoulême, Angers, Boulogne, Saint-Arvant-de-Boixe, and Orleans. German adhesions came from societies in Ilunburg, Darmstadt, Stuttgart, Weisbaden, Eick, Cologne, Hagen and Gotha. Switzerland sent representations from Geneva and Zurich; Belgium was strongly represented, some fourteen delegates hailing from Brussels and Antwerp; among them M. Fournément, avocat, Député, of the Belgian Parliament; and from Holland, *De Dageraad* sent its adhesion and delegate. Among other letters read were those from Dr. Buchner, who sent papers giving his views on the questions before the Conference, from A. S. Morin, and from Dr. Bovio, who sent a copy of his *Filosofia del Diritto*.

In the afternoon the Conference discussed the question whether teaching should be indifferent or directly hostile to religious dogmas. Mrs. Besant occupied the chair.

M. ODIN, on behalf of the Federation of Parisian Socialists, read a paper urging that the child belonged to the future. Society should prevent the reactionaries from stultifying the advance of humanity. Religion should be guarded against like pestilence or cholera. We needed a complete expurgation of all books placed in the hands of children.

MADAME JOSEPHINE ROCHER, on behalf of the French Republican Freethought Federation, also demanded that all instruction should be non-religious. Education should strike at obscurantism. The priests only exist to enjoy domination at the cost of those who believe. In the schools and confessionals they have strong weapons, and they must be met with secular education, which was becoming a mighty force to shatter the errors of the past.

MR. J. M. ROBERTSON, of the N. S. S., urged that while Freethinkers should give their own children such light as they possessed, frankly and directly hostile to religious dogmas, national education must by its nature be co-operative. While we should strive to get religion excluded from the schools, it was both useless and unjust to ask that teaching should be hostile.

M. PAUL FOUART, of the Positivist Circle of Paris, contended that science itself was a religion—indeed the only true religion. To teach the facts of science was bound to be contrary to theology, not by direct opposition, but by substitution. Secular education he held should be indifferent to theology.

SIGNOR CAVALIERE CONTIERAS, of Italy, declared indifference was the plague of society. Criticism, which had entered even to mathematics, must also be applied to religion. Indifferentism was worse than every kind of religion. The school should definitely take the place of the Church, the citizen of the priest, the workman of the ascetic.

MRS. HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER considered it very wrong of Freethinkers not to withdraw their children from religious instruction. She thought we should neither be indifferent nor hostile. Religion need not be met with hostility, but explained as myths of human growth out of our ignorance.

J. G. FISHER, of Leeds, declared himself one of those who thought that all education should be undertaken by the parents, and that Freethinkers while telling their children what they believe and what others believe, should endeavor to keep their minds open to judge for themselves.

M. CALLEWAERT, of Antwerp, demanded that only proved facts should be taught in schools.

MR. TOUZEAU PARRIS briefly answered that if education was given by the State it should be indifferent to religion, but if by Freethinkers hostile.

M. NAVEZ held that scientific teaching must in reality be hostile. Teaching in official schools should be neutral, based on facts.

MR. DAWSON pointed out the difficulties in separating even elementary teaching from either confirming or opposing religious opinion.

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## ACID DROPS.

FATHER WALKER, an American priest, tells his flock that he would as soon administer the sacrament to a dog as to Catholics who send their children to the public schools. Priests naturally have as great a dread of education as the Devil has of holy water.

At the Board School examination in Scripture knowledge many curious answers were given. We learn from the picked pupils that at Pentecost "The disciples heard a Russian mighty wind" and that "Tons of fire rested on the heads of the disciples" who "preached every language in the world at once." The Inspector says rightly enough that the repetition is often mechanical, careless and irreverent, and the explanation is frequently neglected. Teachers prefer giving secular instruction. Why should the sky-pilots thrust their work on unwilling schoolmasters?

AN item in a religious paper informs us that "Mr. George Müller, of Bristol, reads little beyond the Bible and Mr. Spurgeon's sermons." Well, no one would ever imagine that a person who places his reliance on prayer could be acquainted with any better literature.

TALMAGE sometimes thinks God will blot out American and English Christianity because of their sloth and stolidity. But he will raise on the ruins a stalwart, wide-awake, missionary Church. Always in the future God is going to do grand things, and the Church is going to be genuine and thorough.

AN amusing incident is related in a memoir of the venerable John Alcock. A strong-minded farmer determined to vote in the interest of the landlord, against the priest. The latter threatened that if he disobeyed he would turn him into a rat. "It's all nonsense," said he to his wife, before going to the poll, "he cannot do anything of the sort; but I say, Biddy," he added in a lower tone, "I think you may as well put the cat out of the way!"

THE Rev. Ebenezer E. Jenkins, of London, brother of the late member for Falmouth, has been preaching at Exeter on Modern Thought, and it appears that in his opinion Atheism "stands forth to-day convicted as a fool." No doubt, when tried in a Wesleyan chapel, where only one side is heard. Is the Rev. Ebenezer Jenkins ready to discuss fairly before a public audience, and to let the jury decide which party, to use his own elegant language, is a "fool"?

By the way, Jesus Christ said that whosoever called his brother a fool was in danger of hell-fire. The only way, therefore, in which Ebenezer Jenkins can keep out of hell is, by successfully repudiating the Atheist as a brother. We dare say he is ready to repudiate the kinship at any moment, but this is a singular comment on the doctrine of good will towards men.

THE rector of Cheadle has been writing a "special article" in the *South Manchester Chronicle*, on the "State Church and Disestablishment." He says the Church "never was established at all," but "as it is the nature of Englishmen to fight with shadows," he will discuss the question as a tub thrown to the whales. The rector tries hard to be facetious and succeeds in making himself ridiculous. He says he is not a rich man, but he will give a penny to anyone who will point to any Act of Parliament establishing the Church. The correct view which he as a married man holds, is that the Church and the State are joined together in holy matrimony. "They coquetted together before the Reformation, they were married after." The Pope was the rejected suitor. The rector informs us that "the wedding day was rather a long one; it lasted 100 years—roughly speaking from 1536 to 1662, during the whole of which period the State and the Church were sparring, each seeking to get the better of

the other—a state of things not unknown in married circles—while the Church was further worried by naughty children in the shape of Romanists and Puritans." The rector evidently thinks that this flighty kind of nonsense is convincing argument on so serious and important a subject as the Disestablishment of the Church of which he can hardly be an ornament. Has he partaken too freely of the communion cup, or is he out of his mind, or is he training himself for the high and noble office of circus clown? His friends had better look after him.

JAMES BATCHELOR, booking-clerk at Buckingham station, committed suicide by throwing himself under a train. The jury could not agree on a verdict; ten wished to return "temporary insanity," and two *felo de se*. The deceased was a member of the Young Men's Bible Class at the Congregational Church.

AN inmate of the Prestwich Lunatic Asylum, named Turner, was charged on Friday, at Manchester, with causing the death of one of the attendants of the institution, by striking him about the head with a spade. The prisoner, who in a rambling statement said he had "done God's holy work," was committed for trial.

THE ruling passion is often strong in death. Napoleon, in his last agony, fought all his battles over again, and the last word of the Rev. A. Hill, vicar of Downton, Salisbury, who died recently, was "Amen!"

THE Bath Young Men's Christian Association has just got a new secretary. The committee says there were a hundred and six candidates for the post, "including men of great ability, several of them being distinguished literary men." No doubt Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Lecky, Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold were among the list. Christianity is looking up!

MARY SWIMPTON, of Railway Place, Mile End, after returning from Bible Class on Sunday evening, September 4, drowned herself in the Regent's canal. The poor girl seems to have been badly used by "her young man," who had taken her to a brothel on the Saturday night. What does Talmage say?

THE St. Giles' Christian Mission to discharged prisoners publishes a little book entitled *Just for Me*. Among the stories it contains there is one of a prisoner who was convicted at Hastings and afterwards found the Lord, and is now working for the Mission. The only drawback is that, according to the *Hastings Observer*, the local police give "a complete denial of the facts of the story." Still, we have no doubt the story will flourish for all that.

A SINGULAR statement was made at a meeting of the Bromley (Kent) Board of Guardians. It has been customary for the board to allow ladies to attend the workhouse and read to the inmates. It appears that on one occasion a lady brought three others with her, one of whom carried a cat on her shoulder, and the quartette sang hymns to the elderly men, when the latter were impatiently expecting their dinner, which was kept waiting until the visitors left. On another occasion a lady had visited the lying-in ward, and in stentorian tones told the mothers of the newly-born babes that they were doomed. The board decided to restrict the attendance of lady visitors to four hours a week, and this only on a written permission from the board.

"A HEATHEN," in the *West Briton* remarks that now the tin trade is looking up, the "Wheal Kitty stamps work incessantly both day and night. Not only that, but on the Sabbath too their endless roar is heard from morning to night. This, considering that St. Agnes is the godliest place on earth is passing strange." It is only passing strange, however, on the theory that all Christians are sincere, which is one of the wildest suppositions that ever entered the human brain.

A LETTER in the *West Briton* mentions that the ancient Church of St. Germoe is in a state of disgraceful decay, although the Rev. E. M. Pridmore as vicar has an income of £910 a year, as well as a glebe of five and a half acres.

It seems that the Government of New South Wales has offered 300,000 acres to any missionaries who would undertake the civilisation of the natives. The Roman Catholic Propaganda have at once sent out missionaries to take possession, and the *Church Times* complains that such a business should be settled in a corner. It thinks the Church missionaries ought to have a share of the 300,000 acres. We think that it does not much matter which kind of missionaries are received, as they are much more likely to assist in the extirpation of the natives than in their civilisation.

WE learn from the *Northampton Reporter* that "there has been a pretty little quarrel between the bell-ringers at the various churches in the town." A St. Peter's ringer has publicly inquired whether the All Saints' ringers "have never assembled at that church with pipes in their mouths, and whether something worse than empty bottles is not occasionally seen in the belfry." The last sentence is a little obscure. The St. Peter's ringer should explain.

THE Catholics of Ottawa are scandalised by the arrest of the Rev. F. Paradis, who is now in gaol for forgery and systematic appropriation of other people's timber.

THEY seem to have an overplus of sky-pilots in godly Scotland. White chokers abound everywhere, and especially in the watering-places, where females congregate. We notice that no fewer than 110 candidates have applied for the living of Kennoway. It is often the ambition of Scottish mothers to have one of the family a "meenister," but the trade is evidently overrun and declining in general esteem.

A "WORCESTERSHIRE CHURCHMAN" complains in the *Rock* that the "eastward position" in the Lord's Supper is blasphemy and idolatry. The Ritualists or Romanists are guilty of both these religious abominations, he considers, by the vestments they wear and by bowing to the consecrated elements. He holds that "devils" are consequently present, and that no true Christian can partake of this "table of devils." How beautifully Christians sympathise with each other. No wonder Christ said he came not to bring peace but a sword. Highest God to one Christian is lowest Devil to the other.

WE find the following after-dinner toast quoted in the pious *Christian Commonwealth*: "Dam the canals, sink the coalpits, blast the minerals, consume the manufactures, disperse the commerce of Great Britain and Ireland!" If the editor is as conscientious as the coroner who recently fined himself two guineas for non-attendance, he had better send himself to gaol for six months for blasphemous profanity.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* thinks "the Salvation Army may be destined to be the pointsmen to shunt the reawakened religious sentiment of the Hindoos from the cult of Juggernaut to Christianity." But it is hard to shunt a train which is not moving. The cult of Juggernaut has long been declining, and is now nearly dead, but the Hindoo mind is not accepting Christianity. Still it is natural that the Christians should form great expectations in that quarter, for hope springs immortal in the human breast, and Christianity is fast losing its hold on the people here.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* gives a long account of the Glory Hole business at Brighton. It appears that the dancing girls, who caper about full of the spirit, frequently pause in front of some innocent spectator and cry "He is a spy," whereupon the unfortunate person is requested to retire, and if he is slow in his movements godly hands assist his progress to the door. "Women," says the *P. M. G.*, "are turned out in the same manner, and language used towards them that would not be tolerated for a moment from ordinary people or under ordinary circumstances." These fanatics also speak in "unknown tongues," and "certainly the idiotic noises they make disclose the fact that the meaning of what they say is as much unknown to themselves as it is to those who look on."

AFTER all, however, this is but a piece of the New Testament history revived. Just as the Glory Hole fanatics carry on, so did the primitive Christians. Yet orthodoxy laughs at the one lot of lunatics while it regards the other with veneration.

ONE of the Glory Hole hymns, which is sung with great heartiness, begins thus—"The Devil's mad, and I am glad; glory hallelujah!" Evidently it is not the Devil who is mad. When Old Nick puts in an appearance he generally talks very good sense.

THE Bishop of Lichfield has an excellent idea for cadging. He proposes to get women and others to call upon every house in the diocese, asking every member of the Church of England to put down one penny for the Church. No doubt a very large sum might be realised, only many hitherto supposed to belong to the Church of England will no doubt discover when they are called upon that they have no connection whatever with that body.

TRUTH sometimes does come out of the mouths of babes and children. A smart little lad the other day was asked at Sunday school, "What is the meaning of laying up treasures in heaven?" He answered promptly. "Building a church and providing for the minister."

THE Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. has been trying to get up a public debate in that city, but the Christian ministers fight shy of the idea. The Young Men's Christian Association also "thinks it better not to entertain the proposal." What is the reason of this reluctance? Forty years ago the clergy rushed into debate with great alacrity; now they dread it as the Devil is said to dread holy water. Why? Can it be that they are all cowards? We fancy not. What then? Why simply this—they feel they are on the wrong side.

A CLERGYMAN was arrested at Shrewsbury on Thursday, September 8. He was found riding in the train from Oswestry without a ticket. At first he said he had no money, but his

cheque-book was in his bag. This proving false, he said he had a cheque for £25 in his pocket, but this also was untrue. Then he went into two banks and asked for a cheque-book, which of course he did not obtain. Finally, after he had given two different names, he was taken to the police-station, where some sympathetic bystander paid his fare. He was then liberated, and vanished into space. The erratic parson is described as about thirty-five, with a heavy moustache, but otherwise clean shaven. His trousers were torn, his coat was splashed with mud, and the state of his back suggested that he had slept in a hay-loft. Perhaps he had been sleeping off a spree.

THE Young Men's Christian Association boasts that "more rising young men are consecrating themselves to the work." Well, most young men are "rising," in their own esteem; but how many of these recruits are "rising" in any intellectual sense of the word? Perhaps the Secretary will explain.

A SAILOR of a Chinese war vessel having died of consumption, he was buried with pagan rites in Southsea Cemetery. Thirty officers and men attended the funeral. A large crowd assembled at the grave and behaved with most unseemly levity, elbowing themselves in front of the mourners. And we send missionaries to teach the Chinese good behavior. Hadn't we better try to civilise ourselves first?

AT Tydd St. Mary, Lincolnshire, the vicar refused to marry a young man because he had not been baptised. The man agreed to be christened, but the vicar then demanded that he should go through a three days' course of the Church catechism. This was declined. Finally, as the bridegroom threatened to try some other church, it was arranged that a strange parson should be allowed to officiate. The vicar is evidently doing his best to bring Christianity into contempt.

DURING the burial of the victims of the catastrophe at Exeter, a clergyman conducted himself so disgracefully that he was mobbed. He declined to bury a body because he believed it was a pauper's grave, but he withdrew his objection on being assured to the contrary. He then behaved most strangely, and showed manifest signs of being strongly inspired by the Spirit. He had to be assisted to the grave. He informed a policeman that he could not do it without his assistance, and then gripped the constable by the belt. Thus supported he "mumbled what some said was the burial service and others said was the marriage service." He had to be led away by the police to save him from the violence of the indignant crowd. When seen by the reporter of the *Daily News* he seemed quite unconscious of the scenes he had gone through or of the danger to which he was still exposed. He had to be taken away in a cab, which the hooting crowd endeavored to upset. He denies that he was intoxicated.

THE Rev. Robert Gray, rector of Toller Porcorum, near Dorchester, has been fined £5 for assaulting a farmer named Yeates, who had been his churchwarden, but had resigned. A severe struggle had taken place, but the first blow had been given by the minister, who struck the farmer a violent blow on the side of the head. This is how the Rev. Robert Grey turns the other cheek also.

A CATHOLIC priest named Michael Hunt has been killed while drunk in a public-house in the Irish quarter of Liverpool. The deceased was notoriously addicted to drink.

THE Rev. B. W. Wright, M.A., vicar of Norton Cuckney, Notts, has gone mad, and committed suicide by stabbing himself in several places with a pocket-knife.

MR. THOMAS SLATER, formerly of Bury, now of Leicester, has been in the habit of going about enlightening the inhabitants of the villages around Leicester. At Enderby he, in company with Mr. Barkley, lectured at a place forming part of a square, where meetings had always previously been held by the inhabitants. They were, however, summoned for obstructing the highway, and the magistrate, probably in view of the parties being Freethinkers, construed this public place into a highway, and fined them one shilling each with costs, which amounted to thirty-two shillings. It is to be hoped that if, as we are informed, the place is one where traffic cannot be interfered with, the right of the villagers to their place of meeting will be stoutly contested, and that at any rate some place shall be found where Freethought can be introduced to the villagers of Enderby.

OBITUARY.—It is with deep regret we announce the death, though at an advanced age, of Major Evans Bell, the author of *The Task of To-day*, who expired on Monday, Sept. 12. In that work, published above thirty years ago, Major Bell boldly announced the attitude of the Freethinker towards religion. During the early days of the *Reasoner* Major Bell supported that paper with both purse and pen, writing many Freethought articles over the signature of "Undecimus." He indeed contemplated selling his commission in order to devote himself entirely to Freethought propaganda. By the advice of friends he was, however, deterred. He served his country well in the Indian service, but his advocacy in many books and pamphlets of the claims of the natives is believed to have stood in the way of justly-earned promotion.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, Sept. 18, Grand Circus, New Station Street, Leeds, at 11, "Is Christianity True?" At 3, "Life, Death and Immortality." At 7, "The Blood of Christ."  
SEPT. 25, Milton Hall.  
OCT. 2 and 9, London Hall of Science; 16, South Shields; 23, Portsmouth; 30, Hall of Science, London.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE Rev. J. Wodhams, of Brackley, seems to have been unjustly reflected on in our issue for August 7. The reverend gentleman was misrepresented by the daily newspapers, on whose reports we based our paragraph. He informs us that he is not a member of the Primrose League, and that he takes no part in politics, and he sends us a refutation of the boycotting story from the columns of the *Northampton Reporter*. We owe Mr. Wodhams an apology, and we tender it unreservedly.

R. FLOYD.—If you compare the first volume of *Crimes of Christianity* just published with the odd numbers we issued before the fire on our premises, when the whole of our stock was destroyed, you will see that large and important additions and emendations have been made, and that all the parts which are retained have been subjected to a drastic revision. As the work now stands it is about as perfect as it could be made within the same compass. A glance at the footnotes will show the great labor the authors have expended on it. One great difficulty in the way of its circulation is this—the ordinary press, to which we have sent copies for review, say nothing about it. They cannot attack it with any success, so they treat it with silence. For a long time, we are afraid, Freethought will have to suffer from this form of persecution.

W. DODD.—Thanks for all the trouble you have taken. We fear the Newcastle sky-pilots know better than to discuss their creed.

F. O'FLAHERTY.—Mr. Ball had already written on the subject.

HARRY RICHARDSON, 46 Brunswick Street, Blackfriars, London, S.E., will be happy to distribute any Freethought literature that may be sent him.

J. H. ROGERS.—Thanks. The *Personal Rights Journal* may assist you with the information you require.

H. D. KAYE.—Apply to Weldon, scientific publisher, Great Queen Street, Holborn.

H. RICHARDSON.—Thanks. We have a copy of Bishop Watson's Apology. A translation of the Apology of Tertullian may be found in the "Ante-Nicene Christian Library," published by T. and T. Clarke, of Edinburgh.

W. H. BURTONSHARD.—No doubt the *Freethinker* "would be none the worse for a few extra pages," but we should be something the worse. It is the expense that prevents us from enlarging. Sixteen pages could be filled as easily as eight. But you must remember that a Christian paper which circulates among hundreds of thousands can easily give more for the money than Freethought papers that only circulate among the thousands. Our space being so limited, we have no room for a lecture list, which is already provided in the *National Reformer*. Certainly a town like Cheltenham should have a Branch of the N. S. S., but what is the London Executive to do if the local Freethinkers do not bestir themselves? If seven of them combine to form a Branch, the Executive will do its best to support them.

EX-Y. M. C. A.—Yes, there is a Branch of the N. S. S. in Sunderland, and an active one too. The secretary is Mr. J. Rutherford, 206 High Street. The pamphlet you ask for has, we believe, long been out of print. Glad to learn that the *Freethinker* is gaining ground among your acquaintances.

W. H. WATSON.—Delighted to receive your cordial letter from India and to hear that you are still circulating this journal and other Freethought literature. It is astonishing how any Christian can live in India, amidst such exuberant superstition, without seeing through his own creed.

W. CABELL.—Received with thanks.

F. W. JONES.—We do not remember such a passage in Lecky. The whole subject of Christianity and Slavery will be dealt with in a future volume of *Crimes of Christianity*.

P. BRACKER.—We do not intend to advertise the paper you mention. When you tell us that although hospitals existed before Christ they are still of Christian origin, your logic is as good as your kindness in reminding us of "the fires of hell."

A. POLLYON.—Shall appear.

E. PANKHURST.—Always glad to receive jokes and stories.

CASA BIANCA.—Pleased to hear that you and other friends have distributed so many of our tracts in Bath. No doubt a Freethought lecture could be arranged in your city. You might communicate with Mr. R. Forder, secretary of the N. S. S., 28 Stonecutter Street.

A. H. HUNTER.—We are obliged for the cuttings, etc.

J. HOCKIN.—Evidently we did not make ourselves clear. We have not the slightest objection to abstinence from alcoholic liquors, and if you as a laborer have spent your beer-money in filling your bookshelf we heartily say, "Well done." What we meant by teetotalism was "signing the pledge," which seems to us an act of childish weakness, although we do not even object to that in the case of a drunkard, if it helps him to abstain, just as we should not object to a crutch for a cripple.

M. MABIN.—There is a three-volume edition of Gibbon published by Warner, and we suppose it is complete, though we have not examined it. Pleased to hear that you find the *Crimes of Christianity* "a most valuable work," and intend lending it to all your friends.

HATER OF CANT.—The silly bigotry of your Christian fellow-townsmen may naturally exasperate you, but they are too commonplace to merit public attention. If a fanatic consigns you to hell, what

does it matter? He may label you, but how will he get you conveyed? We are pleased to hear that you find *Bible Contradictions* so useful in discussing with Christians, and that you wish to thank us "heartily for that startling and unique book, the *Crimes of Christianity*."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Pendleton Reporter—Devon Evening Express—Leeds Mercury—Truthseeker—Freethinkers' Magazine—Bristol Mercury—Western Mail—La Semaine Anticléricale—Le Journal du Peuple—Sunday Chronicle—Monmouth Times—Daily Chronicle.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE were excellent audiences at Mr. Foote's Manchester lectures on Sunday. Now the winter season is commencing we hope the Branch will make the utmost use of its new hall, but success will not be achieved without energy and business tact. The chairman appointed for last Sunday afternoon and evening's lectures did not turn up, and Mr. Griffin had to be pressed into the service on both occasions. Mr. Payne undertook to preside in the morning, and of course he was there, though it rained heavily and he was not too well.

THERE was a crowd of critics after the evening lecture, and as most of them were unworthy of a serious reply, Mr. Foote gave the meeting something to laugh about in answering them. Some said the fun was better than a pantomime, and one auditor was so tickled that his friends could not stop his explosions.

WE are glad to hear that the North Middlesex Branch of the N. S. S. has been resuscitated. Those who wish to join it, and push on the work in that district, should communicate with W. Stewart, 48 Moselle Avenue, Noel Park.

A MEETING of the Dundee Freethinkers will be held to-day (Sept. 18) at 2.30 in the Lower Hall, 31 Reform Street. The object is to organise Freethought in the district. Every Freethinker should attend.

WE hope the Aberdeen Freethinkers will also make a fresh start. They have been too long quiescent. There should be a good strong society in the granite city. If the older members are not inclined to move, the younger ones should take up the matter without them.

THE *Weekly Times* is one of the few journals that have broken the conspiracy of silence as to the *Crimes of Christianity*. Several journals like the *Athenæum* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* will not even include it among the "books received." The *Weekly Times* admits that the work is "fair, and on the whole correct," and adds that it is well worth reading. But of course the objection is raised that "real Christianity" is not responsible for the "horrors" we expose. Well, we have our own opinion as to what "real Christianity" is, and by the time the *Crimes of Christianity* is completed it will have been shown that through every century since its triumph the religion of Jesus Christ has been a frightful scourge. Jesus said that every tree should be judged by its fruit, and that is the method we apply. If "real Christianity" has somehow never had a chance in eighteen centuries, does it not strike the *Weekly Times*, as well as ourselves, that Jesus might as well have refrained from gracing this planet with his presence?

THE September number of the *Truthseeker*, edited by the Rev. J. P. Hopps, contains articles on Retitution and Hades as a part of the Symposium on "Is Salvation Possible After Death," and Sunday Morning Meditations on the Bright Side of Dark Things.

THE Rev. Stopford A. Brooke having dropped so much of his theological outfit has decided to drop the "reverend" also. He has gone through the legal form enabling him to dispense with the title. It is said that Mr. Brooke wishes to enter Parliament, and as an ordained clergyman he is disqualified.

FREETHINKERS who reside in Yarmouth, or who visit it during the holiday season, will find *Progress* on the Free Library table.

A CORRESPONDENT in the *Bristol Mercury* points out that Dr. Macdonald's lecture on Shelley misrepresents the poet's opinions in an amiable endeavor to make him stand well with orthodox audiences. Mr. Williams shows that Shelley lived and died an Atheist. He was turned out of Oxford for writing a tract on the *Necessity of Atheism*; later on he issued his *Queen Mab*, which is a tremendous impeachment of Christian Theism; he had his children taken from him for his Atheism; and he died at the early age of 29 without the slightest sign of recantation.

THE *Methodist Times*, edited by the fervid and erratic Hugh Price Hughes, is so enraptured with Mr. Bradlaugh's pamphlet on the Channel Tunnel that it claims him as an unconscious Christian. After quoting a strong passage on the war plague of Europe, the *M. T.* says: "Who wrote these wise and most Christian words? The president of the Methodist Conference or a Bishop? No; Mr. Charles Bradlaugh. When Christian ministers generally understand and obey the mind of Christ on this question as well as Mr. Bradlaugh, our long national insanity

on the subject of war will pass away, and we shall enter upon the era of peace and good-will promised by the Son of God." No doubt the secular substance of these sentences is true enough, but the notion of Mr. Bradlaugh understanding and obeying the mind of Christ is somewhat amusing. If this sort of thing continues we may live to see Mr. Bradlaugh invited to address the Wesleyan Conference.

FROM a cynical Colonial paper: "What is Religion?" inquires Dr. Bevan, of Melbourne. That's an easy one. Religion is mankind's vague belief of a good time coming. It is especially cultivated by condemned murderers, and all who know that until they are born again they are not a little bit of use to anybody. It is too often the cool, calculating villain's substitute for strong drink; the Christian young man's excuse for hugging the fair Sunday-school teacher; the tool of a fraudulent bank-manager in his hour of prosperity, and his refuge in the time of trouble. Religion is all the world to women with new bonnets at Sunday morning service. Lastly, it is the parson's pretext for making a collection."

Two good stories reach us from Nottingham. Here is number one. Mr. Saby, one of the committee of the N. S. S. Branch, while riding his bicycle a few miles from town, came across a broken-down tricycle, which a lady and gentleman, who turned out to be a sky-pilot and his wife, were trying to mend. Mr. Saby soon fixed it up, whereupon the sky-pilot exclaimed, "I knew the Lord would help me." "But, sir," said Mr. Saby, "if it had not been for the wrench-hammer and a Freethinker, the Lord would not have helped you." The man of God and his spouse hurried off sharp.

HERE is number two. A medical gentleman had the *Freethinker* sent to him from London. One day his sister and his aunt caught sight of it and resolved to burn it. The sister put it on the fire, but the aunt discovered it was placed under the kettle and was actually boiling her hot water for tea. She indignantly emptied the kettle, filled it with fresh water, and waited for tea rather than run the risk of drinking damnation from a blasphemy-contaminated tea-pot.

#### OCCUPATIONS IN HEAVEN.

(Concluded from page 292.)

MATHEMATICIANS "are busy with figures yet. No place in all the universe like heaven for figures. Numbers, distances, calculations infinite." Probably the redeemed arithmetician spends much of his time in attempting to master the theological arithmetic of three ones being one.

Metaphysicians will still study "glorious metaphysics, everlasting metaphysics." No wonder there are "many mansions" in heaven as there are in Bedlam. It is the only hope for the comfort of those who prefer saner pursuits, or who object to the perpetual annoyance of the fife and drum and blaring trumpets of the continual military and religious demonstrations of the heavenly regions.

Explorers are to go on exploring for ever. Ignorance will still prevail in heaven as on earth, and will never cease. Will geographical explorers spiritually investigate the North-West passage and the polar seas? Ornithologists will still stuff birds, and entomologists will still catch heavenly beetles and scorpions and butterflies, and pin them with spiritual pins on spiritual corks. Anglers will still catch heavenly pike that devour heavenly minnows and quite enjoy the spiritual hooks that drag them forth from spiritual streams. Hunters and sportsmen of course will still pursue their favorite game; but Talmage avoids the more awkward points of his sublime revelation by infallible inference. Whether Christian witch-burners and inquisitors will still enjoy their old pursuits, he neglects to inquire. If his infallible analogies are valid, Paul still blinds Elymas, Peter still strikes Ananias dead, and Christ still sends heavenly devils into heavenly pigs. Christian farmers, with better justification, will plough perfect fields with perfect ploughs, and reap perfect crops. Stock-breeders will continue the work of their life. Pigeon fanciers will send up tumblers to perform among the disembodied cherubim. Prize fighters will tap Apollyon's claret. Cricketers, athletes, cyclists, rowers, etc., etc., will all continue their earthly pursuits. Spiritual lady angels, in spiritual dresses, will still nurse immortal lap-dogs, and talk to spiritual parrots, and play angelic dance-music on winged pianos or seraphic harps. Brother Brown will still make a little collection, and Deacon Smith will send the glorious company of angels to sleep with long prayers and extempore sermons.

The "men of law, who in this world found their chief joy in the legal profession," are now "studying law in a

universe where everything is controlled by law"—that is, they are studying science; the common play upon the word "law" identifying legal enactment with the very different kind of "law," or sequence of event, that prevails in nature. It is hard to see how a devotee of the criminal law can gratify his old tastes by a study of the astronomical law of gravitation in its innumerable developments, or how an adept in the law of property, or bastardy, or bankruptcy can find congenial employment for his specialised faculties in working out the law of chemical equivalents or elucidating the law of evolution. But this does not matter. The play on the word "law" is quite good enough for Talmage and his congregation.

Physicians and surgeons still pursue the healing art—not in heaven, however, strictly speaking, for there is to be no sickness there—but on earth, where their spirits will presumably blister and purge poor patients still, and amputate shattered legs and arms as of yore.

To modern saints who delight in society and conversation there never was such a grand place as heaven is to be. Here is a part of the description:

"What a place to visit in, where your next-door neighbors are kings and queens, you yourselves kingly and queenly. If they want to know more particularly about the first Paradise, they have only to go over and ask Adam. If they want to know how the sun and the moon halted, they have only to go and ask Joshua. If they want to know how the storm pelted Sodom they have only to go over and ask Lot. If they want to know more about the arrogance of Haman, they have only to go over and ask Mordecai. If they want to know how the Red Sea boiled when it was cloven, they have only to go over and ask Moses. If they want to know the particulars about the Bethlehem advent, they have only to go over and ask the serenading angels who stood that Christmas night in the balconies of crystal."

People who are fond of growing fine fruit will find themselves inside an "orchard where each tree has twelve kinds of fruit, and bears fruit all the year round." While he is about it had not Talmage better adopt the satirical street-boy's view that lovers of good dinners will find sucking pigs running about ready roasted, with forks stuck in them, and crying out Come and eat me? One fib is as good as another if it is intended to win souls or pew-rents. Smokers might just as well be provided with prime Cavendish, free of duty, and Havana's of the finest brand. The wine that Christ is to drink with the saints might also include all the best modern varieties. Promises are cheap enough. The gold and jewels of heaven will attract souls, and the spectacle of Solomon in his harem might even convert Turks to the true religion.

Preachers will spend their hours in heaven in visiting their congregation on earth. How this can be done "in heaven" Talmage does not explain. He only guarantees the fact that this is what preachers are actually "doing in heaven." He himself says on his own behalf, with the modest assurance of his own righteousness and zeal characteristic of the true preacher: "When I get to heaven—as by the grace of God I am destined to go to that place—I will come and see you all." The worst follies and fancies of the Spiritualists are thus supported by this reckless charlatan. It is strange, however, if his words are true, that so few clergymen ever visit their flocks after death. Perhaps the reason is that none of them ever get to heaven, and that no ticket of leave is issued from the other place.

Departed philanthropists are still "going right on with their work." They are visiting dungeons—and leaving them as they found them. They are seeking the wounded on battle-fields—and are imperceptibly carrying them into invisible hospitals on spiritual stretchers, or else pouring imaginary water out of non-existent flasks into real mouths that remain just as horribly parched as ever. They are also "watching" the poor—a safe way of putting it—and "looking after" the enslaved. But what tangible effect, pray, has their "watching" and superintendence? So far as facts can guide us, the assertions of Mountebank Talmage are mere falsehoods of the most reckless and groundless description.

Dead and buried theologians, or students of God, now study God face to face. "Now they can handle the omnipotent thunderbolts just as a child handles the sword of a father come back from victorious battle." If "omnipotent" thunderbolts were in the hands of the friends of God the world might well tremble. That it still remains safe is a tolerable proof that the theologians have never had any chance of handling such dangerous projectiles. Besides

playing with omnipotent thunderbolts surpassing those of Jupiter in power and glory, the theologically-minded Christians are also studying Christ the infant and Christ the crucified in both forms at once. Does he appear like a mixed dissolving view in this dual aspect? W. P. BALL.

## INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS.

(Concluded from page 299.)

MR. ROSETTI urged that Freethinkers should not be half-hearted, but insist upon their legal right to withdraw children from religious instruction.

DR. M. TERWANGE held it was impossible to give a neutral scientific teaching. The State had both the right and duty to educate as it pleased. A teacher should present the fact; if hostile to religion, so much the worse for religion. Enemies were not conquered by indifference.

MRS. BESANT held that secular education must be national, but this could not be if it was made directly aggressive. Train a child in science, logic, and the use of its own brain, and so nourished, it will not take up the poison of superstition.

MR. BRADLAUGH, after referring to the legal question tried in the State of Illinois as to whether the Bible should be taught in the Board Schools, reminded Freethinkers that they were still in a minority. The majority were indifferent, but if you trouble them they fancy themselves very orthodox and are hostile to you. He held that it was no part of our duty to give a child notions hostile to the creeds around it. If they assumed a distinctly hostile attitude towards religious teaching, they would set up every church and religious sect in Europe against them, and induce the majority to adopt panic legislation. In England they had gained ground since 1870. They were also gaining ground in France; and, despite the result of some elections, also in Belgium.

Mr. Bradlaugh's speech was to have summed up the debate, but the non-iconoclastic tenor of his remarks roused Madame Rocher, who declared that the priests were the enemies of progress; they are not indifferent to us and we cannot afford to be indifferent to them.

Upon a vote being taken the Congress decided in favor of neutrality by a very large majority.

SIGNOR CONTIERAS then opened the question "What is Freethought? Examination of philosophic doctrines—Spiritualism, Materialism, Positivism." The delegate quoted Prof. Bovio as defining Freethought as the autonomy of reason; Spiritualism was based on false hypotheses; Positivism was a step towards Naturalism, the term preferred by Italian Freethinkers.

M. PAUL FOUCAERT briefly reviewed the questions and then gave an able and lengthy exposition and defence of the method of Positivism, which gave up the search into the origin of phenomena, but inquired into their succession and relation.

This closed the Saturday evening sitting.

On Sunday morning at 10.30 Mr. Bradlaugh again presided, and the discussion was re-opened by Mr. A. B. MOSS, who argued against Spiritualism. He had no quarrel with the method of Positivism, but objected to its religious system, which, having dethroned one priesthood, would set another in its place.

MADAME ROCHER said that the Parisian Freethinkers declared themselves Materialists. As men became Materialists they became more alive to the needs of this earth and more bound in bonds of fraternity.

MR. ROSETTI urged that Freethinkers should give attention to the Bible. Though born in Russia he had worked his way to Freethought simply through reading the old book. He said he had intended, when a Christian, to become a missionary to the Hottentots and he came to London to study their language and ideas, a statement which provoked a good deal of mirth.

M. NAVEZ then read the reply of the Brussels Freethinkers. Freethought implied the free examination of the course of Nature. Spiritualism was always losing ground. Science explained the world without having recourse to any absolute or arbitrary will of the divine. God was a useless hypothesis.

MR. G. J. HOLYOAKE asked where should we be in science or politics but for Freethought. He had recently been at the meeting of the British Association at Manchester where he had heard three bishops, the bishops of Carlisle, Bedford and Manchester. They had science in the morning, religion in the afternoon, and logic in the evening. Most preferred the morning and evening services. In his young days scientific men timidly sought to reconcile science with religion; now bishops sought to reconcile religion with science. Hearing the bishop of Manchester he could not even recognise the Lord's prayer, for after having twice prayed Give us this day our daily bread, he was told by the bishop that praying for material things was erroneous. The pulpit now taught the beautifulness of wishing for what you want, and praying for what you won't get.

DR. C. DE PAEPE then read a valuable paper prepared by Dr. Ludwig Buchner, who was unavoidably absent, in which Dr. Buchner defined the relations of Freethought, and expressed himself at one with the present method of Positivism. Dr. de Paepé explained that he called himself a positivist in Science, separating the positive method entirely from the sociology and religious cult founded by Comte.

M. DES ESSARTS, of Charleroi, compared the three systems to a house of three storeys. Spiritualism was below, Positivism was above that, and Materialism the topmost, nearest to the light. As to theology it was down in the cellar.

M. ODIN took the motto of Blanqui, *Ni Dieu ni maître*. He was frankly materialist, and strongly anti-positivist. When we broke down the old gods there was no need to erect new gods to replace them.

MR. BRADLAUGH said he admitted as Freethinkers all who used their reason undeterred by creeds. Whether Positivism was right or wrong, he bore testimony that the Positivists of this country had always been in the ranks where there was fighting for liberty.

The discussion on the question "Can Freethought be separated from the Social Question?" was opened by M. NAVEZ. He held that the Freethinker could no more admit the dogmas of the despotic than of the religious régime. Political, social and religious reform must march side by side. At the same time Freethinkers were not pledged to any opinions known as Socialist.

DR. DE PAEPE then read a lengthy paper by Dr. Buchner, which will doubtless be published, and in which he gives a similar survey of the social question to that found in his work on *Man in the Past, Present and Future*.

Sunday evening was devoted to a public meeting, Mr. Bradlaugh being in the chair. The hall was crowded in every part by a most enthusiastic audience.

MR. HOLYOAKE spoke first, and alluded to the progress of Freethought. Mr. Navez followed. On behalf of the General Council he considered the Congress a grand success.

M. JULES GRIMALDI of Spain followed. He said many people thought Spain still in the same condition it was in at the time of Philip II. He had even been asked if the Inquisition was still in existence. Since 1868 when Isabella was sent out of Spain, there had been much greater freedom. Affirmation is permitted in Parliament as well as in courts of law. No one can be prosecuted for trading on Sunday. Among the society of Friends of Progress which he represented, they had several members of the Cortes, and there were about 100 Freethinking Societies with twelve Freethought papers. It was true the provinces sent out many pilgrims to Lourdes, but that was their Salvation Army.

MR. T. SLATER spoke of the advance of the Freethinking movement. Those from over the sea who, in past times, were considered enemies, were now working with us as brothers to make life better worth living to all the world.

SIG. CONTIERAS, speaking in mellifluous French, then gave a most eloquent address. He vividly sketched the life and martyrdom of Bruno, whose statue they hoped soon to inaugurate on the Campo di Fiore at Rome, and declared there could be no terms of conciliation between science and superstition.

MRS. BESANT declared that Freethought was beginning to do what Christianity had failed to achieve—to bring an international concert. Every church had been a symbol of division. Only by Freethought can the nations become one.

MR. MOSS gave his opinion that Christianity is doomed; our cause is the triumph of science. Freethought will knit all men in a common brotherhood.

MISS THORNTON SMITH spoke in tribute to the mighty dead who had made such an International Congress possible; and urged upon Freethinkers the duty of exercising constant vigilance.

M. BUCKENS, in English a little broken, declared that Freethinkers desired the unity of the world. People were learning that what was taught in the churches was only "nonsense and lies."

MR. BRADLAUGH concluded the meeting with one of his powerful speeches, and the large audience dispersed with the satisfaction of having listened to a flow of oratory, the equal of which could certainly not be heard at any church in the world.

Monday morning was devoted to the business of the Federation. The report and balance-sheet of the General Council were read and adopted, and some alteration was made in the rules, providing that in future a Congress should be held at least every two years. It was decided that the revolution of 1789 should be celebrated at Paris in 1889, and an hope was expressed that one would be held previously at Rome to celebrate the inauguration of the statue to Giordano Bruno. The proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to Mr. Bradlaugh, proposed by M. Leon Furnémont, who said that for many years past the eyes of European Freethinkers had been on Mr. Bradlaugh, whom they regarded with admiration and esteem. He coupled the name of Mrs. Besant, to whom he paid a well deserved tribute, for having throughout the Congress translated the French speeches into English, and the English into French. In seconding the resolution Dr. De Paepé thought it necessary to express regret that Mr. Bradlaugh was not in favor of Socialism, a point upon which Mr. Bradlaugh very properly did not deign to reply, although he referred in indignant terms to the calumnies to which he had been subject in Socialist journals.

In the afternoon the debate "Can Freethought be Separated from the Social Question?" was continued. M. Odin read a vigorous paper on the connection of Freethought and the social question. In France they were compelled to pay for a religion in which they do not believe. The priest was paid for teaching obedience. Freethought was inseparable from the social question, though not bound up with any particular school of Socialism.

MRS. BESANT remarked that the social question might be con-

founded with Socialism. If asked whether Freethought could be separated from Socialism, Socialist as she was, she would answer in the affirmative. But if it meant that Freethinkers must interest themselves in the social welfare, she would vote otherwise. She dwelt on the historic connection of Freethought with all social and political progress, and suggested a revision of the terms of the discussion.

DR. DE PAEPE, in a lengthy speech, declared that the social question was the all-important one. He bore testimony both as man and physician that poverty was the great obstacle to mental improvement. He did not wish to see Freethinkers bound to any economical dogmas, though for himself he adopted the teaching of Marx. He had [since the morning] discovered that Mr. Bradlaugh was a Socialist himself. He put the resolution in an amended form that Freethought cannot be indifferent to the question of social amelioration, but it is not distinctly socialist or anti-socialist.

M. PAUL FOUCART declared that philosophically Freethought and the social question were entirely independent. By an historical *resumé* he showed that the social question had been solved in various ages by caste, slavery, feudalism, etc., quite apart from Freethought. He wished this fact put as a preamble to Dr. De Paepe's resolution.

DR. TERWAGNE and MADAME ROCHER considered it was now impossible to separate the questions.

MR. SWAAGMAN considered the Socialist view was as if the party of progress in Russia was to pronounce that all Freethinkers should be Nihilists. He thought that English Freethinkers, at any rate, would hold, not only that the questions were distinct, but that they ought to be kept so.

MR. G. W. FOOTE thought it unfortunate a vote should be taken upon a theoretical question. In a Catholic Council the matter is simple, but no Freethinker was bound by the decision of this Congress. The "social question" is a very wide phrase and offered a multitude of contradictory solutions. It was, in fact, so comprehensive that one might as well argue that Freethought can be separated from life itself. If Freethought is to

do good work it must be restricted. Ranging in all directions you may fancy yourself a universalist without being even a good specialist. Freethought assumes the presence of superstition. It has, so to speak, to deal with a pathological condition of mind and has no right to dictate what use healthy minds shall be put to. Our power of foreseeing the future is very limited. Let us remove obstacles to thinking freely and social problems will work themselves out in proportion as we are enlightened. It is not for us to anticipate the future, but to clear away the clouds of error and leave to another generation the task that will devolve upon it.

Upon the vote being taken there was a considerable majority in favor of the amended resolution that Freethought cannot be indifferent to the question of social amelioration, but that it should not be identified with any Socialist or anti-Socialist solution. The proposed preamble declaring that the questions were philosophically distinct, was rejected by a very close division.

In the evening about one hundred delegates sat down to a banquet at the Holborn Restaurant. In the name of the foreign visitors Signor Contieras, in a few graceful words, presented Mrs. Besant with a handsome basket of choice flowers. After the repast, Mr. Bradlaugh, who presided, proposed the toast "To the oppressed of all nations," coupling with it the names of Messrs. Holyoake and Foote, who suitably responded. The toast of "The Foreign Visitors," proposed by Mrs. Besant, was responded to by M.M. Contieras, Odin and Fournement, and that of "The International Federation," proposed by Mr. G. Standing, was responded to by M. Navez.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to harmony, songs being given by Mr. Bonner, Miss Tiffin, Mr. Porter, Mr. Trevelyan, and Mr. Fowler. M. Fournévant sang "La Marseillaise" the whole of the audience joining in the chorus. When Mr. Foote, who succeeded to the chair towards the close of the evening, brought the meeting to a conclusion, all the delegates expressed themselves highly pleased with the whole proceedings of the Congress, and desirous of witnessing another fraternal re-union of Freethinkers of all nations. J. M. W.

JUST PUBLISHED.

# CRIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

VOL. I.

By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER.

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