

Vol. VIII.—No. 53.]

DECEMBER 30, 1888.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.



A PUZZLED PILGRIM.

THE DYING YEAR.

TIME is not an entity. It is a form of thought. Nature knows nothing of days, or months, or years. We make those periods ourselves by watching the movements of the sun (as it appears to us) and of the moon. And the break between one day and another—whether we reckon from midnight or from sunrise—the break between month and month, and the break between year and year, are purely imaginary. There is no solution of continuity in the universe, but only in our own thoughts. Thus it is incorrect to speak of the old and new year, Nature being just as lusty on the thirty-first of December as she is on the first of January. Nevertheless, the divisions of time are useful to mankind. We need not, indeed, be so foolish as the Christians who gravely assemble on New Year's Eve, and solemnly watch the magical passage from year to year. But we may follow our accustomed methods, and, taking the year as *our* and not *Nature's* period, we may talk of it as an old acquaintance with whom we have travelled a whole sweep of the earth's orbit through the ocean of space.

What has 1888 been to us? What blessings has it bestowed? What evils has it left? What lessons has it taught? How, in other words, are we affected by what has happened during this last swing of the mighty pendulum of Time? From the political point of view, England has changed but little. Yet there has been some change, and we believe it is for the better. This is not the place for the jargon of mere party politics, and the everlasting squabble between the Ins and the Outs. Our business is with the world of thought and the abiding interests of mankind. These are included in liberty and equity, and we rejoice to think that both those august principles are shining more brightly. Not only is the Irish demand for rational self-government steadily winning its way among the British people, but reforms for our own masses are definitively included in the Liberal programme. Many great questions—political in treatment, but social in essence—are pressing for solution. The People are more alive than ever to the vital importance of reform, and we may look out for some sweeping changes in the immediate future. They may be effected more swiftly by a Liberal government, but they *will* be effected, even if a Tory government continues in power. For ideas rule the world, and when public opinion is ripe the necessary alterations in law and custom *must* take place.

Glancing at London, the centre of our national life, which has such a tremendous influence on the whole country, we may note three important things. Sir Charles Warren, the Christian hero of Trafalgar Square, is gone. When 1888 opened he was worshipped by the enemies of liberty, but his sins have found him out, and Scotland Yard

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knows him no more. Whether he goes out to Egypt, South Africa, or any other place where there is a demand for his peculiar combination of piety and impudence, no one cares, except, perhaps, his candid friend the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

The next thing is this. London has just elected a new School Board, which is a decided improvement (in some respects) on the last. Parson Diggle is still in the chair, but he rules the roost with less assurance. His wings are somewhat clipped. That irresistible majority has dwindled, and the voice of justice now sounds less tremulously in the Board Room. We fear, however, despite the return of Mrs. Besant and a handful of other members in favor of Secular Education, that there is no immediate prospect of diluting, much less of abolishing, the Bible teaching in our schools, with all its monstrous perversion of the children's minds. Still, we trust something will be done to redress the grievous wrong done to Mr. A. B. Moss. It is a poor excuse to say "It is only Mr. Moss, and one man must wait." Properly considered, the violation of one man's freedom is a violation of every man's freedom; and that is a poor courage which cannot see the necessity of standing up for the right until it is backed up by a big crowd. Mrs. Besant has done many brave deeds in the past, and we hope she will add this one to the noble list.

The third thing we note in London is the approaching County Council elections. Mr. Ritchie's measure is not an ideal one, but it is a fair beginning, and it gives London the rudiments of a municipal organisation. When this Chaos is reduced to a Cosmos, we may expect London to lead the nation in every way, instead of lagging behind, and presenting the worst picture of ignorance, illiberality, and corruption.

With regard to the general freedom of the press there is little to be said. On the whole, however, there is cause for congratulation. There appears to be no disposition to challenge our conquests. Whether such social studies as Zola carries on in La Terre are permissible or not will be decided when they find a champion in some braver spirit than Mr. Vizetelly. That gentleman knew what he was publishing, and his collapse in front of a hostile judge and jury was "a thing to shudder at, not to tell." Crying peccavi simply because you are found out is the most ignominious form of self-abasement.

Coming to the sphere of Freethought, pure and simple, we have first to note the passing of the Oaths Bill. No one in his senses can imagine it an ideal settlement of the question. Yet it is a very considerable reform, and we may all agree that Mr. Bradlaugh has carried the best measure possible in the circumstances. He must be very hard to please, too, who denies that Mr. Bradlaugh displayed the perseverance and tact of a consummate politician. Should these qualities, as we may well expect, carry him far in the House of Commons, the Freethought party will certainly rejoice at his success. When the next Parliament meets, it will be interesting

When the next Parliament meets, it will be interesting to watch the attitude of its Agnostic members. Mr. Bradlaugh will boldly say he has no religious belief. But what will Mr. Morley say, and one or two other members we refrain from mentioning? No doubt they will feel, in the words of Thomas Paine, that "these are the times that try men's souls."

We now come to the Gladstone-Ingersoll debate. This is one of the biggest events of the year for Freethinkers. Mr. Gladstone has, alas 1—as the Christian journals are wailing—made the confession that Colonel Ingersoll is worth answering. We cannot say that Mr. Gladstone's answer did him much credit. Judging from the timid and almost surreptitious way in which he had it reprinted in England, we should say that Mr. Gladstone is not proud of his performance. Still it served a very useful purpose. It clicited Ingersoll's reply, and a more brilliant and decisive one could scarcely be imagined. Ingersoll kept his temper—nay, he was able to read his opponent a lesson or two in good breeding; but he made splendid play with his exquisite rapier, and neither Mr. Rice's big cheque nor Mr. Gladstone's own ardor for the defence of faith induced him to renew the combat. Some thousands of people have read Ingersoll's superb reply in England, but probably a hundred times as many have read it in America, and its wide circulation will be of immenseservice to the cause of Freethought. The scathing reply to Cardinal Manning will not, of course, be read so extensively. Yet it will do an excellent work

for it opens a fresh vein in exposing the historic pretensions of Christianity. Above all, perhaps, we may be thankful for the profound impression this debate must make on the public mind. Here are such leaders as Mr. Gladstone and Cardinal Manning rushing against the great American infidel, while he takes their weapons easily on his single shield and transfixes both with his Achillean spear.

The Freethought party in England is, we believe, gradually recovering from the reaction which followed the excitement of the Blasphemy prosecutions. There has certainly been no retrogression during the past year, and in our opinion there has been an advance. The pressing need of improved organisation is almost everywhere recognised, and the report of the Organisation Committee appointed at the South Shields Conference is now before the branches for discussion. For our part, we are confident that the result of this effort will be purely beneficial. Nay, we believe the Report in question will become an historical document of the highest importance to the National Secular Society of the future.

Turning to the metropolis, we are happy to say that the London Secular Federation has shown the best symptoms of vitality. During the summer the open-air propaganda has been carried on with vigor, and some stations have been maintained which, without the Federation, would have collapsed. Besides printing a common monthly lecture programme for all the London Branches, free of cost to any of them, the Federation has made grants in aid of the exhausted exchequers of the poorest Branches. The utmost harmony has prevailed. During the whole year there has not been a single hitch or unpleasantness. The good of the cause has been the only object in view, and the stronger Branches have taxed themselves to support the weaker ones in a manner which is the best augury of success. Such a brave and generous spirit must win in the end. The Federation, we may add, is not discouraged by the results of the recent School Board election. It did not carry its candidates, but it fought hard, and is ready to fight again at the next opportunity. The mere fight even was inspiriting after such long inaction.

We cannot close without a word of thanks to the scores of brave workers in our cause. A few of us earn (or get) the notoriety, and hear our names shouted from the housetops. The rest labor on, with no reward of popularity, and often at a personal loss in pocket and reputation. All honor to them, men and women alike, valiant soldiers of the army of progress ! Here, at the end of the year, we salute them with all our heart. G. W. FOOTE

THE uncertainties of existence may after all be placed among its charms. Each New Year brings with it new speculations and hopes, though each passes much like its predecessor. Prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error, and we shall not emulate Zadkiel in prognostications for 1889. To the coming centenary of the outburst of the great French Revolution, no lover of freedom and progress can fail to look forward with anxiety and hope. With anxiety, because it is only too likely that the combined reactionaries of Europe will do their utmost to strangle the Republic about to celebrate its anniversary. With hope, because it is equally certain that the great Centennial Exposition will not only serve to draw nations together, but to spread the principles it celebrates, and to inaugurate a stride in advance on the part of other countries.

No doubt during the coming year we shall hear a good deal about the great French Revolution, and on the part of the reactionaries there will be much pointing to the terror of 1793 and '94, as though that were the essential outcome of the Revolution of 1789. When the time comes we may enter fully into this matter, and meanwhile content ourselves with a few observations. Macaulay remarks, with justice, that the violence of a revolution corresponds to the degree of the bad government which has endangored it. The violences of the French Revolution may be deplored by all parties now, but they were the natural sequence of the bad traditions of centuries of terror when the Church had the rule. For the constant terror under which the people of France, and indeed of all Europe, groaned before the Revolution, there was no such excuse as for the so-called Reign of Terror, when a starving and fevered populace were in deadly peril both from traitors within their own country and a coalition of the European powers without. The terrors of Catholicism were constant. It struck not at conspiracies, but at opinions. It employed in cold blood every means of terror, torture, persecution, the Inquisition, civil war, and massacre. The doctrine of exterminating enemies was endorsed at solemn Christian Councils. The Lateran Council of 1215, the most imposing one ever seen, and of which the authority, says Bossuet, is so great that posterity has called it the Council General *par excellence*, decreed the extermination of heretics by fire and sword, and called upon the temporal powers to put the decree into force under pain of excommunication and forfeiture of power, and this decree was endorsed by subsequent Councils down to the Council of Trent, which expressly declared that those who kill by order of God are not guilty of homicide.

Lists were drawn up of the whole number of people put to death during those many months when, not only Paris. but all France was virtually in a state of siege, with the people starving, bad paper money everywhere, civil war and reverses in La Vendee, Toulon given up to the English, and royalists rejoicing at every reverse received by France—and they were found to amount to less than two thousand, not a tithe of those slaughtered by pious Christians on the eve of St. Bartholomew. The Abbe Montgaillard asserted they were above four thousand, upon which Carlyle remarks, "It is a horrible sum of human lives M. l'Abbé :—some ten times as many shot rightly on a field of battle, and one might have had his Glorious Victory with *Te Deum*."

The excesses of the French Revolution are often most unjustly attributed to the spirit of Atheism, which it is supposed prevailed. As a matter of fact the Atheists of that time were comparatively few, and were almost all of them among the victims of that most fervent Theist, Maximilian Robespierre, whose devout belief in the divine providence contributed to render him callous to human suffering. The Atheists were mostly found among the Girondins, who devoted to humanity as fervent spirits as ever the Puritans devoted to personal salvation, and who went to the guillotine singing of their hopes for human progress. The name of Danton, the only one against whom charges of instigating massacre have been insinuated, has risen year by year above the clouds of detraction with which it has been darkened.

But the reign of terror was only an unfortunate incident of the Revolution which has been so much calumniated by confounding its essential principles with the terrible combat it had to sustain in order to maintain them. The outburst of 1789 shattered the reign of privilege and oppression, and substituted the citizen for the serf. It swept away the feudal tenure of land and created the peasant proprietary of France, which can now sustain so great a blow as the loss of sixty millions of pounds in the Panama crash. It proclaimed the equality of citizens before the law, the right of electing representatives, freedom of meeting and of association, and the complete liberty of the press and of religion. This is said rightly to have been the work of the freethinking philosophers of the eighteenth century, whose thoughts so powerfully stimulated human progress that it remains doubtful if the present century will see any movement at all comparable with that which commenced with the capture of the Bastille in 1789.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON contributes "A Christmas Sermon' to Scribner's Magazine, and a pious contemporary complains that "from beginning to end there is not a word of the old Christmas story, not a ray from the Holy Mother and Divine Child." Dreadful !

TALKING of Christmas, a pious journalist asks, "How is it that so much that is good and beautiful is identified with Christian festivals and institutions?" The answer is that Christianity has appropriated popular festivals and institutions, and merely labels these products of human nature with its own name while credit is to be gained thereby. When Atheists are in the majority is there any reason to suppose that Christmas will not be kept in the same spirit of rejoicing and brotherly kindness and charity? Christmas is a pagan institution which is thoroughly anti-Christian in its main ideas and methods. There is no praying and fasting about it, the idolatrous mistletoe replaces the gloomy cross, and religion is about the last thing in people's thoughts during the pagan feasting and friendliness of the season. Christianity mixes with Christmas about as well as oil does with water. WHY don't Christian eulogists occasionally look at the othe **r** aspect of the question? Let them point out the good and beautiful that is associated with the Christian Saint's-day of St. Bartholomew, or the Easter massacre at the taking of Jerusalem, or the Christian institution of the Inquisition, or the gloom which Christianity has thrown over the weekly pagan holiday still dedicated to the Sun as the god best worth worshipping for his active beneficence and fruitful power.

At this season we always hear a deal about brotherly love and Christian reunion. The talk of harm mising the three hundred or so of Christian sects always reminds us of Samion's tying the tails of three hundred foxes together. Even if the foxes submitted to these bonds of brotherly love, and had the sacrament administered to them in common, they would no doubt be an edifying exhibition of God's sublaing power, but they would merely remain united by a series of miracles and would be only the more dangerous to other people.

AT Nantes, Armand Bouten, known as Brother Cosmo, instructor at the Communal school of Saint-Etienne de Montluc, has been sentenced to eight years' hard labour for indecent assaults upon his pupils. Jean Marie Oheix, known as Brother Felix, has received three years for the same offences. The Abb Ory, curé of Ausanville, has also received four years' imprisonment for assaults upon girls of eleven years of age, and at Versailles the Curé Viroflay has been condemued to one year's imprisonment and 100 francs fine for adultery with a young married woman. All these cases are found in one single number of *La Lanterne*, that for Dec. 18.

THE Rev. F. Scully, of Fortieth Street Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, has been arrested on three informations charging him with unnatural crime.

WRITING against the proposed state-establishment of Buddhism in Ceylon, the Christian World denounces the scandalous character of the Buddhist priests in terms which we believe to be quite unwarranted. "Considerable revenues," it adds, "have been under the control of a licentious and indolent priesthood, whose vows, on the contrary, committed them to celibacy, and whose duties included the education of boys." There is a very odious insinuation in the words we have italicised. Were it made, as it sometimes is, against Christian priests, our contemporary would cry out against it as an intolerable insult.

The distraints for the tithes levied at Llandwrog, Carnarvonshire, by the rector, the Rev. Banks Price, were accompanied by exciting scenes of the demonstrative character now usual in Wales. Horns and brass instruments were vigorously blown and a large crowd assembled. The auctioneer was hooted, and a rough wooden cofflin, containing an effigy of the rector, was carried by pall-bearers and accompanied by a procession. A mock funeral service was conducted, and the coffin and effigy were consigned to the flames.

THE Rev. J. L. King, of Ardrossan, has been preaching on "Christian Inefficiency." This is a very extensive theme. To deal with it adequately—not to say exhaustively—would require as many volumes as St. John fancied necessary to chronicle the career of Jesus Christ. Mr. King has evidently got hold of a good subject. It will last him for the rest of his life, and he will still be able to hand it on almost as good as new to his ministerial successor.

According to Mr. King's account—and we heartily agree with him—the churches have been on a wrong tack. "Much evil," he said (we quote from the *Christian Herald*), "had been caused by directing men's minds merely to freedom from future doom, to the gain of a future heaven, instead of directing attention to present salvation." But this is obviously a condemnation of Christianity altogether. If there is a future life of happiness or misery, its interests must be more important than the interests of this life, and the clergy who are always preaching "kingdomcome" are simply doing their duty. On the other hand, if that future life is a dream, or a wild surmise, Christianity is false and Secularism is the only true gospel.

ORTHODOXY—that is, real Christianity—is rapidly dissolving. Here is the *Christian World* sneering at Dr. Dale for insisting that Christian ministers should resign their pulpits if they are troubled with "honest doubts" about Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. This, says our contemporary, is demanding "belief in incomprehensible mysteries." Excellent! There could not be a better objection to the whole bag and baggage of Christianity.

DIGGLE is at his old games again, and he is abetted by his Vice-Chairman, who was nominated by the "unsectarian" minority. In making a selection of names for the Management Committee of the London School Board these worthies put down the names of ten Church clergymen, though three Nonconformist ministors had asked to be placed on the list; and when an attempt was made to put one of them on the Committee, Diggle's majority voted it down. NEVERTHELESS, unfair as Diggle's tactic is, we are unable to feel very much affected. The squabble is simply one between church and chapel, and we have little interest in the result. Nay, we are rather amused at the quarrel, and even venture to hope that the "unsectarians" will be snubbed and overridden to the end of the chapter. It may teach them the wisdom of standing on the broad principle of Secular Education, which includes and harmonises the rights of all.

MRS. BESANT complains of Mr. Bowman Spink, one of the members for Westminster on the London School Board. It appears that although he was "elected as a representative of the advanced party," his vote is "not used in its support on party divisions." Mrs. Besant has found Mr. Spink out at last. But if she had kept her mind open she would have found him out before. Mr. Spink sat on the last Board, and he is the member on whose falsehoods Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant relied, and on the strength of which they refused to assist Mr. Moss against his persecutors. We denounced Mr. Spink's treachery at the time, but we were not listened to. We are glad, however, that he is being seen through. It is late in the day, but better late than never.

> PROFILET and text purveyor, Baxter shines As Moses shone of yore, like burnished brass, And as an editor on worldly lines, Is scarce outdone by Balaam's fluent ass.

SI SLOKUM.

Baxter with zeal prophetic crammed, Assures us we shall all be damned; How much we wish the ranting elf Would only answer for himself.

FATHER LARKIN'S miraculous cures, it is said, won't bear examination. Of course not. The only genuine miracles are those which occurred a long way off or a good while ago. Miracles are like wine and vastly improve by age.

If an untruth is only a day old it is called a lie; if it is a year old it is a falsehood; if it is a century old it is called a legend; but if it is a thousand years old it is gospel.

THOSE who read the religious papers need never turn to *Punch* or any of the so-called "comics" for anusement. Some time ago the *Record* described the view of the Universalists that all will be saved instead of most being damned, as "indescribably saddening," and now the same paper pities the poor Atheists who cannot enjoy the beautiful associations of Christmas. The beautiful associations of Christmas happen to be all human, and indeed all Pagan. The enjoyment of the poor Atheist is enhanced by the pity of the Christian.

MR. BRYCE tells us in his great new work on America that some fashionable churches over there are provided with sofas, carpets, and other drawing-room accessories. That's a long remove from the J.C. condition of having nowhere to lay your head. "Ladies and gentlemen," the preacher might say, "let us kneel in prayer to God. There are plush cushions for your silk gowns and ten dollar trousers."

MR. BYRCE does not think scepticism is spreading faster in America than in England. He is a good observer, but we hold he is mistaken. Look at the number of Freethought papers and magazines in America. And look at the immense popularity of Colonel Ingersoll. It is true that Mr. Bradlaugh is popular in England, but he is popular only as a politician, while Ingersoll is popular simply as a Freethinker—though, of course, an exceptionally brilliant and great-hearted Freethinker.

SHOULD America become more sceptical, what effect will it have on her institutions? Mr. Bryce does not hazard an answer, but he makes the somewhat oracular observation that "free government has prospered best among religious peoples." Quite so, and so has despotic government; for the simple reason that the "peoples" have always been religious, and there never has been a nation of Freethinkers.

THE Rock laments that it is "very difficult for the crews of ships to receive the laying on of hands." The boys anyhow find no difficulty in receiving the "laying on of hands," or of rope's ends either. They wish the difficulty were as real as the *Rock* imagines it to bo.

CHRISTIANS can't agree as to the right method of worshipping. One Christian journal describes a ritualistic church in London as a "perfect puppet show." The rector and curates are determined Ritualists, and the churchwardens cannot get them to alter their ways. The Bishop declines to interfere to prevent their illegal acts, and will not even answer the churchwardens' letters. The rector appears to enjoy his sinecure of £1,000 a year at the seaside, and the Bishop with his £10,000 a year may naturally sympathise with him, although this church is described as one of these which are a thorn in the Bishop's side. The he urehold of faith are not quite at one yet.

"Is Pleasure Wrong?" Such is the title of a long article in the *Christian World*. Could there be a worse condemnation of Christianity? So deeply has its ascetic spirit perverted the human mind that even at this time of day, and in one of the most advanced of Christian journals, the lawfulness of honest pleasure has to be gingerly discussed as an open question.

The writer of the article "has not the slightest shame in saying" that he takes his wife and daughters to see Shakespeare's comedies. Fancy a man feeling no sham in saying that he lets his wife and daughters spend two or three hours in the society of the noblest genius that ever gladdened and adorned the earth !

THE Christian Commonwealth holds that no more apologies for Christianity are needed, and that the Secular enemy is in continual retreat. All attempts to vindicate Christianity do more harm than good to the sacred cause. They merely advertise the sceptic's objections and teach the believer to doubt. But how differently Christian journals would talk if they had reason and evidence on their own side. As they cannot satisfy the inquiring intellect when once aroused, they act wisely in their generation in avoiding a fight which they find from experience is sure to be a defeat for them.

GLADSTONE, however, thinks very differently from the Christian Commonwealth. He laments "the flood of infidelity" which is "sweeping over the country," and he regards it as "one of his most sacred duties to do his utmost to check it." He does not think the enemy is defeated and in continual retreat, and therefore the profitless contest with him should be shunned. He sees the wonderful progress that Freethought is making, and goes forth to champion religion—much to the disgust of the C. C., which is disappointed at the back-handed result. The C. C. indeed says that the good intentions of Mr. Gladstone have done more to help the increase of active "infidelity" than otherwise. "His recent notice of Ingersoll did vastly more harm than good." "The same is true of a popular novel he has recently noticed. Nothing could have done more to circulate that work."

THE C. C. concludes that "Christians should let infidelity alone. When it becomes active it is generally incurable." Well, why don't they let us alone, and why doesn't the C. C. advocate letting us alone? Surely sending Freethinkers to Holloway Gaol is not letting them alone. Lot the C. C. insist that the iniquitous Blasphemy Laws shall let us alone. But Christian bigots don't mean this. They mean letting us alone so far as reasoning is concerned, and leaving the hounds of persecution to attack us whenever their masters can muster sufficient courage or sufficient support.

The Marquis of Carmarthen is credited with saying, "I like the alliance of 'Beer and Bible'; I read the one and drink the other." A wag asked, "which?" But the sentence is surely clear enough—for a Beer-and-Bible Marquis. What we are anxious to know is, which he likes best, and how he looks when he is full of each separately or both together.

ABRAHAM'S sacrifice of Isaac was the theme of a recent sermon by the Rev. John Hunter, of Glasgow, whose auditory included Professor Max Müller. According to this minister, "the narrative was simply a highly imaginative expression of a historical fact. It pointed to the period when animal sacrifices were substituted for the sacrifice of human life." Precisely so. But why not go the whole length of the theory, and frankly admit that Abraham, and all the rest of the patriarchs are mythical figures ? Why use the legendary theory for one purpose, and the historical for another? Why play fast and loose with Scripture and veracity? Why cheat God and man at the same time ?

WE can respect the Agnosticism that throws up the sponge in the presence of the intricate workings and weavings of nature. It is the Agnosticism that doesn't know whether a god was born of a virgin mother, and whether his blood and body, represented by a wafer and a gulp of sour wine, doesn't save us from eternal torture in hell fire that we buck at. The man that doesn't know whether this orthodox rot is false or true is not an Agnostic ; he is simply an ass. So also is the Agnostic who doesn't know whether or not there exists a personal god who saves and dama, according to his whins, and is influenced by prayer. Into the Salvation Army and other asylums for feeble minded idiots should drift all such Agnostics as this.—Ironclad Age.

ACCORDING to Professor Max Müller, the Babylonians boasted of no less than 65,000 great gods of heaven and earth, besides an unlimited number of obscure deities. How poor is Christianity in comparison with such an opulent theology as that! "Our holy religion" has only three gods, and the worst is it is blasphemy to say they are any more than one.

FROM a Secular point of view, however, Christianity offers a certain advantage. Bad as it is to be always in danger of the penalties for blaspheming the Trinity, how much worse must it have been when the gods were so numerous that the most cautious wit could scarcely crack a joke without insulting one of the holy multitude. As Shakespeare says, "For this relief much thanks."

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

January 6, Ball's Pond ; 13, Liverpool ; 20, London Hall of Science ; 27, Camberwell. February 3, London Hall of Science ; 10, London Hall of Science

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- LITERABY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Olerken-well Green, London, E.O. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.O. THE Freethinker will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the follow-ing rates, prepaid :--One Year, 6s. 6d. ; Half Year, 3s. 3d. ; Three Months, 1s. 74d.
- Months, 18, 7gd. SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: —Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*: —One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions. C. MILLAN.—The date is booked. We trust the lectures will be
- adequately advertised. MILLAR.—Thanks, but the epitaph appeared in the Freethinker a couple of years ago, when it was first quoted by Sir John Lub-F. MILLAR.bock.
- bock. H. B.—Pleased to find you agree with us on the Sunday closing question. A bigoted Liberal is as bad as a bigoted Tory, and a bigoted Radical is worse than either. People who clamor for the closing of public houses on Sunday make little or no effort to open palaces of instruction and rational recreation. The fact is, the clericals see that Temperance is a growing power, and they are trying to turn it to their own advantage. Still, it is a queer admission that the churches must be recruited from the drinking G. H. B.shops
- J. G. BROWNE.-You can obtain the Freethinker and all other Secular
- J. G. BROWNE.— You can obtain the *Freetinker* and an obtain the Securar publications of Mrs. Fisher, 48 Park Grove, Battersea.
 J. HOWARD.—Stamps received for balance. No apology is needed.
 W. LITTLEJOHN.—Your Lonely Pirate is rather out of our line in the Freethinker, but it is amusing, and should take as a comic recitation. tion.

- A. LOVETT.-Glad to see your tone is more cheerful. D. SHEE.-Sorry we cannot inform you. Better apply to some classical bookseller. W. C. TAYLOB.-Christmas Number forwarded. It is gratifying to know that your bookseller had sold out, but why did he not
- to know that your bookseller had sold out, but why did he not obtain a further supply ? J. H. GATES.—" Moonlight's" verse has merit, but he does not understand the *technique* of versification. His lines frequently do not scan, as he would discover if he read them aloud. Still, we are pleased to hear from readers in India. PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freieligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Brighton Argus —Leeds Times—Thinker—Freidenker—Truthseeker—Liberator— Bulletin de Sommaires—Fair Play—Lucifer—Boston Investigator —Open Court—Ironclad Age. As this number of the *Freethinker* was printed on Monday owing to the Christmas holidays, those correspondents only are answered
- As this humber of the Freemaker was printed on monday owing to the Christmas holidays, those correspondents only are answered whose letters arrived by that date. CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week,

SUGAR PLUMS.

M. ALFRED FOUILLEE, one of the leading philosophers in France, writes in the current number of the *Revue Philosophique* an ap-preciative notice of his late most promising disciple, M. Guyau, author of The Irreligion of the Future and other works. M. Guyau, author of The Irrelation of the Future and other works. M. Guyad, after a most brilliant career, being crowned by the Institute of Moral Sciences at the age of nineteen, died of consumption in the spring of the present year in his thirty-fourth year. Like M. Fouillee, he rejected all supernaturalism, and founded morality on motives apart from religion. One of his works is entitled, Sketch of a Morality Without Obligation or Sanction.

THE latest volume, the sixty-first of the International Scientific series is by M. Camille Dreyfus, the French deputy, and has the embracing title of *The Evolution of Worlds and of Societies*. The world is a general synthesis of natural phenomena linking the nebular hypothesis of the formation of worlds with the geological development of our planet, the development of plants and animals and the origins of humanity with the evolution of mankind in society.

THAT the French are a reading people is evidenced by such a publication as the Bulletin des Sommaires, which gives a summary of the contents of all the leading papers and magazines, as well as notices of new books. Under the head of Publications de la Libre Pensée it includes the Freethinker and by a curious misprint gives among the list of our contents Profane Yokes. We hope our readers do not find the "yokes" burdensome.

THE average product of nineteenth-century civilisation would unhesitatingly condemn the brutality of the old Roman mob, which shouted "*Christianos ad leones* !" and revelled in the ghastly scenes of the amphitheatre. But the same sensitive creature will take a good deal of trouble and cheerfully pay his gate-money (which, by the way, the Roman did not) to see a lion-tamer risk his life in an exhibition which has the same tragic

results as those of the Coliseum in an unfailing percentage of cases.-Christian World.

DAVID, the man after God's own heart, is no longer defended DAVID, the man atter God's own heart, is no longer defended with the old thorough-goingness. The greatest of Bible heroes is coming to be regarded, even by the orthodox, as a pious scamp. Criticising Renan's new volume, the *Christian World* says he speaks of David's wars and cruelties with "a frankness of detestation with which every Christian may be expected to sympathise." *Every* Christian! How the world is improving! It is not long since Bayle's *Life of David* was regarded as a tid-bit of blasphemy, to be circulated under the rose; while Vol-taire's play could hardly be mentioned without a pious shudder

JOHN W. CHADWICK, an American Unitarian of the advanced school says, speaking of infidel death-beds, "It so happens that school says, speaking of initidel death-beds, "It so happens that of late the death-beds of believers have been possibly less peace-ful than those of unbelievers. Terrible doubts have intruded themselves. Orthodoxy is bound to believe that Voltaire and Paine, and other so-called infidels, died miserable deaths, and still goes on asserting it, though there is not a particle of proof. But it would not be difficult, were the proof (as to the miserable death of these so-called infidels) abundant, to match these cases with a score to one of the unhappy deaths of orthodox Christians of the most saintly character." of the most saintly character."

A SOCIETY, calling themselves "Agnostic Moralists," has been established by F. H. Rau, at Hannibal, Missouri, and claims to number over five hundred members.

A LETTER from a Christian in the Wood Green Times calls attention to the successful meetings held in that district by "Freethinkers and Infidels," and calls on the ministers to refute their soul-destroying and pernicious teaching.

MR. W. W. COLLINS has left Sydney on a propagandist tour through Queensland. Mr. Wallace Nelson is now lecturing in Sydney and apparently with much acceptance.

THE Thinker of Madras continues its useful reprints. The numbers before us contain instalments of Colonel Ingersoll's Rome or Reason^{*}, Mr. Foote's article on "God in Heaven," and those of Mr. Wheeler on "The Great Missionary Failure," a subject which is creating much attention in India.

The right of public meeting is attacked in Melbourne as well as in London, but it has a vigorous champion in Joseph Symes, who, nothwithstanding the adverse decision of the Supreme Court of Appeal, continues to hold Sunday meetings on the Wharf, and says he will go to prison rather than desist.

MR. JOHN MORLEY has administered a dignified rebuke to the from his writings. The Bishop it appears relied on "the authority of a previous speaker," and the previous speaker on the "authority of an anonymous correspondent of the *Times.*" The anonymous correspondent, however, did not profess to quote Mr. Morley's words, but gave "his own inferences" from them. This is the "accuracy" of a bishop in the nineteenth century. What must have been the accuracy of bishops in the first and second centuries? If, in the age of the printing press, clergymon can palm off on the faithful a perfectly fictitious passage from Mr. Morley, how easily, when there was no printing press, could they pass off perfectly fictitious passages from Jesus Christ and the apostles.

MR. FRITH'S new volume of *Reminiscences* contains as many good stories as either of the previous two. Here is a good story of a certain French Jow who was anxious to fill some posi-tion under. Government, for which he was well qualified but was debarred in consequence of his creed. On bemoaning his fate to a friend, who was a Catholic, the friend said: "My dear fellow, why do you allow your religion to stand in the way of your advancement? Change it—change it at once." "Ah!" said the Jew, "I never thought of that. I certainly will." He did so, and the valuable post became his. Shortly after his promotion he was met by his Catholic friend, who had heard of his advancement, and, after congratulating him upon it, said : "When I advised you to change your religion. I meant that you should change it for the only true religion—the Catholic. Now I hear that you have turned Protestant." "To be sure," said the Jew; "I wanted to be as little of a Christian as possible." MR. FRITH'S new volume of Reminiscences contains as many

"UNITARIANISM lacks the motive power. Orthodox peopl who insist that nearly everybody is going to hell, and that it i their duty to do what little they can to save their souls, hav what you might call a spur to action. We can imagine a philan thropic man engaged in the business of throwing ropes to person about to go over the Falls of Niagara, but we can hardly think of his carrying on the business after becoming convinced that there are no falls, or that people go over them in perfect safety." —Repairing the Idols, by Colonel Ingersoll.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

VII .-- MARITIME MIRACLES.

As Christ apparently never trusted himself on the open ocean and never even saw the Mediterraneau, none of his miracles can properly be described as maritime except by courtesy or by the biblical licence which, like the poetical licence, can magniloquently describes an inland lake of five miles in breadth as if it were the open sea. This Sea of Galilee, as this petty lake is grandly termed, is alleged, however, to have been the scene of several of Christ's miracles, and it is these lacustrine miracles which I group together, according to the spirit of the Gospel accounts, as "maritime."

On more than one occasion Jesus did the fishes an ill turn by causing them to be caught in multitudes. The great multitudes of fish were perhaps not so great as might have been expected, for on one occasion the fish were counted and amounted to exactly 153 (John xxi., 11).

Luke alone describes the miraculous draught of fishes which caused Peter and his partners to forsake their nets and follow Jesus, while John alone records the miraculous draught of fishes which Jesus caused after his resurrection. Inspiration apparently often failed to impart the knowledge of miraculous events to individual evangelists, and often seriously misled them. Matthew and Mark are not only totally ignorant of the miracle on which Luke bases the calling of the first four apostles, but the narrative is positively in conflict with that of Luke on several items. Matthew (iv., 18-22) says that Jesus, walking by the Sea Matthew (iv., 18—22) says that Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea, and he said to them "Follow me," and they straightway did so in order to become "fishers of men" as he promised them. Then Jesus "going on from thence" saw James and John in a ship mending their nets; and he called them "and they immediately left the ship and followed him." Luke's fulles hat utterly immediately left account describes Jesus as fuller but utterly irreconcilable account describes Jesus as finding the fishermen on the shore washing their nets. He then enters Peter's ship, and from the ship as his pulpit he preaches to the people who assembled on the beach. When he had finished his sermon he tells Simon Peter to "launch out into the deep" and let down his nets. Peter and his partners have toiled all night and taken nothing, but they try again and their faith is rewarded with such a multitude of fishes that the net breaks. Peter and Andrew then beckon to their partners, James and John, who managed the other "ship," to come and help them. They came and the future apostles very stupidly and covetously "filled both the ships" so that they "began to sink." Peter, amazed and confounded, fell down before Jesus on the sinking ship and besought him to depart from so sinful a man. Jesus, however, calmed his fears and assured him that from henceforth he should catch men instead of fishes. Peter and his partners were so impressed by Christ's miracles that "when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

Which of the inspired accounts is correct? Did Jesus casually see Poter casting a net, or did he ask him to row him out and then cast the net? Was Jesus on the shore or on the ship when he called Peter and Andrew and John and James? Did he call Peter and Andrew while on the shore, and "going on from thence" see James and John and call them from "mending their nets" on the ship with their father, or were the whole four called simultaneously while on the sea with Jesus immediately after the miraculous draught of fishes, as Luke relates? Or are both inspired accounts to be set aside by the totally different account of Peter's call given in John i., 40—42 ?

John delays his story of a miraculous catch of a hundred and fifty-three fishes till after the resurrection. A ghost stood on the shore and ordered the apostles to cast the net on the right side of the ship. On obeying they found the net so full of great fishes that they could not draw it. They then knew that the ghost was God the Son. Jesus had already prepared a fire of coals and fish laid thereon and bread, so that the newly-caught fish were not needed for the dinner to which Jesus invited the apostles and of which he himself partook.

Another fishy miracle was performed to furnish the necessary funds for paying the tax-collector. Jesus sent Peter angling this time with a hook, by way of change. An obliging fish with a coin in his mouth soon relieved Peter of his pecuniary difficulties (Matt. xvii., 27). Let us

hope that Peter's gratitude led him to restore his finny benefactor to its native waves. Even a saint ought hardly to be so selfish as to kill and devour so munificent and philanthropic a creature as this wonderful fish. If he had left it to multiply and people the rivers and seas of the world with its kind, what a boon such a race of fish would be to impecunious mortals ! If the tax-collector, too, who was satisfied with a single piece of money—whether copper, silver or gold is not specified—for all the apostles, could only have impressed his moderation on all succeeding tax-collectors the world would have had ample reason for being grateful to his memory. W. P BALL.

(To be concluded.)

THE DEVIL'S SPEECH.

THE Devil sat in state one day,
In regions called infernal, ' And griuned to think how 'neath his sway Man's conflict seem'd eternal.
Quoth he, to all the devils round, Who laughed and cheered his Highness: "On earth how small reward is found To modesty and shyness !
" Hypocrisy, the noisy note Of impudent assertion, Still buoyantly o'er merit float, To use no mean diversion.
"I love self-deeming righteous folk ; Whilst sinners need no mention. The Christian Churches are a joke, And flourish in dissension.
"The pious parson blinks and prays, And thinks on the collection; Whilst ladies, tighten'd up with stays, Heed not their souls' correction.
"They flounce and giggle, sin and deem Themselves superior mortals; But 'mid their follies little dream How near them my grim portals.
"Men worship too, or so they feign To better their position; Their honest hope of business gain Will bring (good luck) perdition.
" So, merry imps, haste down and try To keep up their delusion; Grant all they will, no wish deny, Deny them no confusion."

A CHRISTIAN journal says: "There are two things which wil make us happy in life—only two things. The first is, 'Never to vex ourselves about what we can't help,' and the second is, 'Never to vex ourselves about what we can help.'" But where does Christianity come in? If these two things will make us happy, and only these two things, Christ is left out in the cold. Why do religious journals so often talk pure Secularism without knowing it?

DR. PARKER says that when the apostles "all expected the Lord coming instantaneously as it were," they "were, in detail, wrong; they were, in principle right." He ridicules the poor fanatics who believe the Bible and expect the Lord to come "in a kind of handbill way" and who lecture in a back street on his Second Coming. The daring pervertor of the Word he professes to preach rebukes the poor believer thus: "O fool and slow of heart! he has come, he is coming, he is always coming. I saw him this morning; I spoke to him not a minute ago; he is here now. Such is the mystery of the kingdom of God. . . . The dear Lord came when the sun rose this morning. Nay, he was here, or the sun would not have risen; he never wont away during all the cold and fog of the night; he glittered in every star, he looked down upon us from every height; he laid his fingers upon our eyelids and gave his beloved sleep." Parker identifies Jesus with Nature and destroys his most solemn personal promises and prophecies by converting them into the mere generalities of poetry and morality. He substitutes flimsy rhetoric for the antiquated Christ of the Bible.

The Court of Appeal has reversed a decision of the Queen's Bench, and has decided that income devoted to the conversion of the heathen is applied to "charitable purposes," and hence is exempt from income tax. The Moravian Brethren have gained something by appealing. The examption of religious funds from its share of taxation is equivalent to a subsidy levied on the taxpayers in general for the support of religion.

WOMEN AND THE BIBLE.

[WHEN the International Women's Congress was sitting at Washington, a Christian journal on this side the Atlantic had the impudence to claim its chief convener, Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as an earnest Christian and a thorough believer in the inspiration of the Bible. Since then Mrs. Stanton has sent a sympathetic letter to the annual Congress of the American Secular Union; and, still more recently, she has written a remarkable article in the *Woman's Tribune*, from which we take the following very "orthodox" passages.—EDITOR.] At a recent reception in Chicago a gentleman asked ma "What is

At a recent reception in Chicago a gentleman asked me, "What is the chief obstacle in the way of Woman Suffrage?" I replied, "The apathy of women themselves, due chiefly to the perversion of their religious sentiments."

The same principle that has held woman in abject slavery, in all ages, under all forms of religion, degrades her to-day. "Thus saith the Lord," has ever been a talisman by which tyrants have held the masses in subjection.

It needs but little observation in other countries, if prejudice blinds us to the views in our own, to convince any fair mind of the truth of my assertion. It is a religious custom that dooms two living wives to the grave of a dead chief in central Africa; the widow to the

truth of my assertion. It is a religious custom that dooms two living wives to the grave of a dead chief in central Africa; the widow to the funeral pyre of her Hindoo husband. It is through their religion that women are held in the Turkish harem; and consent to polygamous relations in Utah. No other power but the religious sentiment could hold half the race in such degrading bondage. It is the perversion of the religious sentiment that crowds the convents with beautiful girls, the very cream of French society. I visited one retreat where an order, dressed in pale blue and white flowing robes, take turns to kneel and pray at the altar, where night and day their devotions never cease. The Jew in his ritual on each returning Sabbath day thanks the Lord that he was not born a woman, while the woman is made to say, "I thank thee, O Lord, that I am what I am, according to thy holy will." The women who crowd our Christian temples are sedulously taught thair inferiority in the scale of being, and their subjection to man. Paul's epistles abound with lessons of her obedience to man as sovereign, and the Old Testament represents her as a marplot in creation, an afterthought, the origin of sin, in collusion with the devil, cursed of God in her maternity, and marriage for her made a condition of slavery. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children; thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." rule over thee."

forth thy children; thy desire shall be to thy husband, and no shall rule over thee." The Pentateuch abounds with degrading expressions of everything female in the animal kingdom, women being considered too unclean to take part in the religious feasts and sacrifices. With such lessons taught in the Bible and echoed and re-echoed on each returning Sabbath day in every pulpit in the land, how can woman escape the feeling that the injustico and oppression she suffers are of divine ordination? She is educated to reverence the priests and bishops, to believe in the plenary inspiration of the scriptures, and as both alike teach her subjection and inferiority, it is not easy to teach her terms of self-re-pect and equality. Blind faith in accepted authorities, a reverence for the unknown and unknowable when enforced in the name of religion, are stronger passions in the human soul than love of country, then natural affec-tion for family and kindred, than even life itself. The history of the race is one huge record of individual sacrifice at the supposed pleasure of some invisible power, and under all forms of religion as an equal factor in any civilisation. Hor seeming satisfaction in the most degrading conditions could never have been accomplished except through her religion. Every

Hor seeming satisfaction in the most degrading conditions could never have been accomplished except through her religion. Every time I have made this assertion Tray, Blanche, Sweethoart, and all of them have vied with one another in barking the loudest. Now, it is plain to me that woman lacks a proper self-respect, and equally plain that the religious theories in regard to her nature and status as a human being are responsible for her condition of subjec-tion. Wherever the canon law has touched the civil law, it has made woman's condition more degraded. It is woman's position in the Church, and the holy books accepted as authority, that make political equality so difficult.

STARTLING DISPATCH FROM OUR EXTRAORDINARY AERIAL COMMISSIONER.

"HERE," December. AFTER bidding adieu to my ancient friend, the "Wandering Jew" sort of Christ, who started from "Ianthe" in an opposite direction to the one I intended going, so that I was unable to give the tired old man a lift, especially as he was timed for a planet that seemed to the priestly Salvationists ready for the second coming of Jesus, I succeeded after much trouble in getting into a current of air favor-able for my speedy return to "Earth," and no doubt should have spent the Christmas with my friends, but in passing "Hebe" I was almost stunned by a terrific clap of out of tune thunder, and the sails of my machine were rent by a blast from an enormous trampet-shaped fog horn sort of contrivance. On landing I found myself witnessing the most intoresting spectacle it has been my lot to see on these aerial voyages. It was resurrection morning, and the trampet blast I heard so out of tune was occasioned by the performer being out of practice. On

It was resurrection morning, and the trumpet blast I heard so out of tune was occasioned by the performer being out of practice. On making my machine secure, I found myself in a vast cemetery with jets of gas issuing out of cracks in the earth in all directions. This gas smelt like sulphrotted hydrogen, and was very nauseous. On close observation, these jets began to assume shadowy shapes, bearing somewhat the forms of gaseous human beings, but wanting the solidity and substance which had been assimilated by the earth and had passed into the composition of surrounding objects, and had been used over and over again in the building up of other beings, both vegetable and animal. The forms not being able to get completed and so assume the "attitude of

freedom and of man," lolled about the gravestones like so many half inflated gas bags, all wanting important parts of their anatomy to enable them to soar, their wings not evincing the least inclination to sprout. Other forms hung over the fence so limp and flabby it seemed a pity to have extracted them from their graves at all— some were hollow-headed, inanimate trunks, their brains having been invaded long ago by insects, the insects eaten by wild fowl, they eaten by man, these mon eaten by their fellow men, and the cannibals devoured by wild beasts. Those lately buried with six or seven on top were making a terrible noise to get out, whils those at the top were acting very loisurely, being so stiff through being short of a few ligaments, and very cold in consequence of their grave clothes being scanty and decayed. freedom and of man," lolled about the gravestones like so many half

noise to get out, whilst those at the top were acting very leisurely, being so stiff through being short of a few ligaments, and very cold in consequence of their grave clothes being scanty and decayed. The coffins were utilised for fires, as those forms most complete desired warming before starting up. Some crumpled-up looking specimens were loudly inveighing against the cruelty of the whole affair, no one being able to become a perfect specimen, some com-plaining that part of their individuality was included in the system of sundry predatory cats, others that their digestive and other organs were in a surgical museum many miles away, whilst others cursed the adjacent gas works for having absorbed nearly all their gases and so made them the ghost-like wrecks they were, hauging over the tomb rails and projections, so flaccid and so damp, reminding me painfully of those empty, breezy garments familiar in back yards on Saint Monday. I was compelled to leave earlier than I intended as two friends, nearly completed, recognise l each other, and were struggling, as far as they were able, to clasp each other by the hand, but one containing an excess of hydrogen, coming too close to the other with too much exygen, caused an enormous explosion and blew both to atoms, depositing them at my feet as a small puddle. The resurrected babes presented a touching sight, as all were trying to satisfy their hunger with their little fists. They couldn't walk, and, of course, couldn't recognise their mothers; they looked cold, empty, and limp, and not being completed, in consequence of parts of their integuments being absont, looked like underdone quartern lowes as they lay about on the cold, damp grass. Seeing the entire failure of the whole concern I hastily repaired my sails, shed a tear for poor humbugged humanity, and again launched my gallant bark, just hearing the clarionet give the key-note for the heavenly band offstringed instruments to take part with the wind ditto, which was enough for yours sincerely, so taking a hurri

SACRED MUSIC.

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PROFANE JOKES.

"I don't say marriage is a failure," said Adam candidly as he sat down on a log just outside the garden of Eden and lookod hungrily at the frait.on the other side of the wall, "but if I had romained single this wouldn't have happened." Inquiring Missionary (to East African Nativo): "And which do you like best, my dusky friend, the English or the Germans?" Native: "Oh, me likee Engleeshmans, plenty much more," Mis-sionary (rubbing his hands): "Ah, I thought so." Native: "Him am de better flabor, and over so much more tenderor." [Missionary is suddenly realled home.]—Fun.

The Freethinker.

December 30, 1888

Price Threepence. CHRISTMAS THE NUMBER

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