

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



THE SWEDISH PRISONERS FOR BLASPHEMY.

CHRISTIAN bigotry in Sweden has added two more names to the long and glorious roll of the noble army who have suffered on behalf of Freethought—those of Viktor Lennstrand and Alfred Lindkvist. The first-named is still undergoing his sentence of three months' imprisonment for denying the Christian religion, and the latter has but recently accomplished his milder term of one month's imprisonment.

Both the prisoners, it will be seen from the portraits we are able to place before our readers, are young. This is as it should be. Positions of danger among those who work for the future must be taken up by those upon whom the future will mainly depend. Both have received a university education, and have by their studies independently emancipated themselves from the creeds of their childhood. Both, it may be seen in their portraits, are highly intelligent, and of that firm, resolute independence which refuses to prostrate honest thought before authority and power. Both are of unblemished character, and are, in short, emphatically made of the right stuff for the arduous fight in which they are engaged.

Viktor E. Lennstrand, the younger of the two, is as the founder and president of the Freethought Utilitarian Society in Sweden, the greater culprit. He was born in Gefle on the 30th of January, 1861. His parents were extremely pious, belonging to a fanatical Methodist sect founded by one Lector P. Waldenstrom, under whom he was at first educated. In his youth Lennstrand ardently desired to become a missionary. He matriculated at the University of Upsala, where his studies of *Channing* and other theological works, with a view of becoming a clergyman, unsettled his faith, and he advanced by gradual stages from being an Unitarian, to confirmed Freethought, and is at present in the very front rank of the small but energetic Freethought party in Sweden.

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In 1887 Lennstrand lectured for the first time in Upsala, against the Christian religion. This we believe was the first occasion upon which uncompromising Freethought was promulgated in conservative Sweden, although it has obtained footing in radical Norway, where most of the ablest writers such as Ibsen, Bjornsterne, and Kielland, are Freethinkers. After several lectures in Stockholm, Mr. Lennstrand established there on the 27th of March, 1888, a Freethought body, the *Utilistiska Samfundet*, or Utilitarian Society, their principles being almost identical with those of the National Secular Society. This attracted much attention, and it was not long before proceedings were instituted for "blasphemy and denial of the Christian religion." In May last, Lennstrand was sentenced to a fine of 250 crowns. Owing to his continuing to propagate his views this sentence was increased by the Supreme Court to three months' imprisonment. He appealed to the King, but without result. Meantime he continued lecturing and establishing new branches of the Utilitarian Society, of which there are at present two branches in Stockholm, and one each in the towns, Gothenburg, Orebro, Eskiltuna, Söderhamn, Södertelje, Norrköping, Helsingburg, and Malmo. The last one he established two days before being arrested (29th November, 1888) and incarcerated at Malmo to undergo his sentence. Another prosecution was then instituted at Malmo, and it is expected that this will probably terminate in an additional three months' imprisonment.

Lennstrand is as undaunted as ever and his one vexation is being unable to write to the press while in prison. He has written several pamphlets showing the stages of his mental growth. The last one, occasioned by his prosecution, bears the title *What I have Said and What I have Not Said*. Captain Otto Thompson, to whose kindness I am indebted for these particulars, says that as a lecturer Lennstrand carries every one along with him by his oratorical powers and pleasing unpretentious appearance. Fanatics who have never heard him are his worst enemies, but they have been unable to detect a single blemish in his private life.

Alfred Lindkvist, in an interesting sketch of his career, which he wrote at my request while in the Crown prison, Langholmer, Stockholm, but which he could not forward until his term expired, says that he was born (also at Gefle) in 1860. His parents were intensely pious, and inculcated upon his mind from early childhood, the necessity of becoming a child of God in order to escape the flames of eternal hell. His first and only book with pictures was an old illustrated family Bible, in which the barbarities of the Jewish warriors were depicted. He was brought up most rigorously, denied all sports and companionships and kept strictly to religious duties. His father sternly exhorted him to conversion. "Many a morning when I awoke" he says, "I found my mother kneeling by my bedside, and in fanatical despair praying to God that he might pluck her son as a brand from the fire, else he would be burning in hell for ever." The youth's mind revolted from this barbarous deity and sought in the masterpieces of literature a livelier world than that around him. It was not, however, without much anguish of mind that he emancipated himself from those beliefs in God and immortality which he had been brought up to regard as indisputable truths. At the university of Upsala he studied European literature, and became acquainted with the works of Mill, Darwin, and Spencer. He has published two volumes of poems *Snow Drops* and *April Days*, and lost a stipend at the university by translating from the Danish a rationalistic life of Jesus entitled *The Reformer from Galilee*. Mr. Lindkvist has visited Paris and collaborated on a daily journal at Stockholm. Last year he joined his friend Lennstrand in propagating Freethought, and was apprehended on the 21st of

November, for having translated and published a pamphlet on Christianity by our friend Joseph Symes. This circumstance was not wanted to call out our deepest sympathy with our brave young Swedish comrades, but it lends additional interest to their case.

J. M. WHEELER.

FREDERIC HARRISON ON ATHEISM.

MR. FRANK HARRIS, the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, must be a sly humorist. In the current number of his magazine he has published two articles as opposite to each other as Balaam's blessing on Israel was opposite to the curse besought by the King of Moab. Mr. Frederic Harrison pitches into Agnosticism with his usual vigor, and holds out Positivism as the only system which can satisfy the sceptic and the religionist. Mr. W. H. Mallock, on the other hand, makes a trenchant attack on Positivism; and the readers of both articles will learn how much may be said against anything, or at least anything in the shape of a system. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in the name of the Unknowable, proffers his Agnosticism, and Mr. Harrison says "Bosh." Mr. Harrison, in the name of Positivism, proffers his Religion of Humanity, and Mr. Mallock says "Moonshine." Mr. Spencer is a man of genius, and Mr. Harrison and Mr. Mallock are men of remarkable talent. Yet, shuffle them how you will, any two of them are ready to damn what the third blesses. What does this show? Why, that systems are all arbitrary, and suited to a certain order of minds in a certain stage of development; and that system-mongers are like spiders, who spin their webs out of their own bowels.

Mr. Harrison's definition of Agnosticism shows it to be merely Atheism in disguise. Milton said that new presbyter was but old priest writ large, and we may say that the new Agnosticism is but old Atheism written larger—and more respectably. Agnosticism is the cuckoo of philosophy. It appropriates the nest of another bird, turns it out in the cold, and even adopts its progeny. All the time-honored positions of Atheism—man's finity and nature's infinity, the relativity of human knowledge, the reign of law, and so forth—are quietly monopolised by this intruder, who looks upon the object he has despoiled as the Christian looked upon the Jew after borrowing his God. Yet in England, the classic land of mental timidity and compromise, Agnosticism is almost fashionable, while poor Atheism is treated with persecution or obloquy. Elsewhere, especially in France, we find a different condition of things. A French sceptic no more hesitates to call himself an Atheist than to call himself a Republican. May it not be, therefore, that the difference between Agnosticism and Atheism is one of temperament? We might illustrate this theory by appealing to examples. Darwin was an Agnostic, Professor Clifford an Atheist. Or, if we turn to pure literature, we may instance Matthew Arnold and Algernon Swinburne. Arnold, the Agnostic, says that "most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." Swinburne, the Atheist, exclaims "Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten, thy death is upon thee O Lord."

This brings out the cardinal—we might say the *only* distinction between Atheism and Agnosticism. The Agnostic is a timid Atheist, and the Atheist a courageous Agnostic. John Bull is infuriated by the red cloak of Atheism, so the Agnostic dons a brown cloak with a red lining. Now and then a sudden breeze exposes a bit of the fatal red, but the garment is promptly adjusted, and Bull forgets the irritating phenomenon.

Mr. Harrison says "the Agnostic is one who protests against any dogma respecting Creation at all, and who deliberately takes his stand on ignorance." We cannot help saying that this difference him from the Atheist. Seeing that we cannot solve infinite problems, that we know nothing, and apparently *can* know nothing, of God or the supernatural, the Atheist has always regarded religious dogmas as blind guesses, which, according to the laws of chance, are in all probability wrong; and as these blind guesses have almost invariably been associated with mental tyranny and moral perversion, he has regarded theology as the foe of liberty and humanity. The Agnostic, however, usually adopts a more pleasant attitude. He does not believe in attacking theology; and "after all,

you know," he sometimes says, "we can't tell what there may be behind the veil."

With his master, Comte, Mr. Harrison "entirely accepts the Agnostic position as a matter of logic," but it is only a stepping-stone, and he objects to sitting down upon it. Every religion the world has ever seen has been false, but religion itself is imperishable, and Positivism has found the true solution of the eternal problem. Parsons and Agnostics will eventually kiss each other, like righteousness and peace in the text, and the then existing High Priest of Positivism will say, "Humanity bless you, my children." But all this is for the sweet by-and-by. Meanwhile the Churches thrust out their tongues at Positivism, the great Agnostic philosopher calls it the Ghost of Religion, Sir James Stephen declares that nobody can worship Comte's made-up Deity, and Mr. Mallock says that the love of Humanity, taking it in the concrete, is as foolish as Titania's affection for Bottom the Weaver.

Professed Atheists may watch this hubbub with serenity, if not with enjoyment. When all is said and done, Atheism remains in possession of the sceptical field. Mr. Harrison's flouts, at any rate, will do it no damage. His hatred of Atheism is born of jealousy, and like all jealous people he is somewhat inconsistent. Here he defines Atheism as a "protest against the theological doctrine of a Creator and a moral providence," there he defines it as "based on the denial of God," and again he defines it as a belief that the universe is "self-existent and purely material." Even these do not suffice, for he also adopts Comte's "profound aphorism" that "Atheism is the most irrational form of metaphysics," and proves this by a fresh definition involved in the charge that "it propounds as the solution of an insoluble enigma the hypothesis which of all others is the least capable of proof, the least simple, the least plausible, and the least useful." *Of all others* is what Cobbett would have called a beastly phrase. It shows Mr. Harrison was in a hurry or a fog. He does not specify this unprovable, complex, unplausible, and useless hypothesis. We forbear to guess his meaning, but we remind him that Atheism "propounds *no* solution of an insoluble enigma." The Atheist does not say "there is no God"; he simply says, "I know not," and ventures to think others are equally ignorant. Now, this was Comte's own position. He wished to "reorganise Society, without God or King, by the systematic cultus of Humanity," and if warning God off from human affairs is not Atheism, we should like to know what is. Mr. Harrison lustily sings the praises of religion, but he is remarkably silent about Comte's opposition to Theism, and in this he is throwing dust in the eyes of English readers.

In "militant Atheism" Mr. Harrison says that "all who have substantive beliefs of their own find nothing but mischief." But this is only Mr. Harrison's sweeping style of writing. He is always vivid, but nearly always superlative. We venture to think that his "all" merely includes his own circle. At the same time, however, we admit that militant Atheism is still, as of old, an offence to the superfine sceptics who desire to stand well with the great firm of Bumble and Grundy, as well as to the vast army of priests and preachers who have a professional interest in keeping heresy "dark," and to the ruling and privileged classes, who feel that militant Atheism is a great disturber of the peace which is founded on popular superstition and injustice.

Mr. Harrison seems to imagine that Atheists have no ideal beyond that of attacking theology, but a moment's calm reflection would show him the absurdity of this fancy. He might as well suppose that the pioneers of civilisation who hew down virgin forests have no conception of the happy homesteads they are making room for. We go farther and assert that all this talk about negative and positive work is *cant*. To call the destroyer of superstition a negationist is as senseless as to call a doctor a negationist. Both strive to expel disease, the one bodily and the other mental. Both, therefore, are working for health, and no more positive work is conceivable.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE *Methodist Times* is having a correspondence on the subject of "Smoking in Vestries." The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes asks "Why not?" We understand that some religious edifices in America provide the pews with spittoons. Why not? Nobody cares for religion nowadays unless it is made pretty comfortable

ACID DROPS.

MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD (why should we say "the late"?) dropped the title of Professor, because he thought it was so much better adorned by Professor Anderson and Professor Pepper. Were he living now he might add Professor Friend, the American adventurer who gulled the Electric Sugar Refining Company. A more grotesque fraud cannot be found in the annals of cheating or a more glaring illustration of the proverb about fools and their money. Professor Friend's right-hand man was his wife's stepfather. He is described as "a trained mechanic, pensioner, of the Federal army, and missionary preacher before placing his services at the disposal of Mr. Friend." The ex-missionary preacher is now "gone West" with Mrs. Friend, the Professor having gone to heaven—or somewhere—a few months ago.

THE Lord watcheth over the ways of the righteous, and keepeth their feet from stumbling. But he forgot poor Spurgeon the other day, and the pious preacher fell down a flight of marble steps, knocking out two of his teeth. Spurgeon is thankful that the lost teeth were loose ones, and praises God that he is still alive. This is very natural, though very inconsistent, for Spurgeon is one of the elect, and as his seat in heaven is booked he should be glad to occupy it as soon as possible. But somehow these believers in kingdom-come rejoice at being allowed to linger in this world of sin and sorrow. They yearn for the celestial heights, but stroll as long as they can in this miserable vale of tears.

DR. PARKER's gratuitous and flashy advertisement of the stage has brought upon him a satirical whipping from a smart writer in that very sober paper, the *Inquirer*. Here is the concluding cut:—"It is time that a new character should be added to the long list of clericals in comedy. It is that of the stage-smitten puritan who mingles his aspirations towards the heavenly mansions with longings after free seats in the stalls, and atones for the curses of his ancestry with blessings in the acceptable form of cheap advertisements."

PREACHING at Sunderland the other night, Dr. Parker said that intellectual men like Martineau and Stopford Brooke were very well in their way, but they "have nothing to say to the broken heart of the world." When the world's heart is aching it sends for Charles Spurgeon, General Booth, and Moody and Sankey. The list would probably have included Dr. Parker, if even his modesty had not been unequal to that.

SPURGEON, Booth, Moody and Sankey may be capital heart-doctors for all we know to the contrary. We never tried them, and are not likely to. But they are certainly not head-doctors. The four together haven't brains enough to discover a new truth.

DR. PARKER, it is clear, knows how to play to the gallery. Dr. Martineau does not reach the Christian mob like the preachers who are just on their level, and only differ from them in having a gift of the gab; but he has written one or two books which will probably be read when all these successful small fry are forgotten.

LET us take a Parker illustration from the field of literature. The great heart of the world doesn't cry over Shakespeare. It is not moved by Lear's "her lips, her lips." But it blubbers over the cheaper sentimentalities of Dickens at his worst, and the story-tellers in the penny papers at their best which is the same as their worst. The running is dead against Shakespeare. But then he has a way of remaining, age after age, while these ephemera buzz no longer than their little day.

GENERAL BOOTH blows the trumpet lustily in the new number of his monthly organ which bears the modest title of *All the World*. After giving himself out as a modern Savior, he tells us the grand secret of his success. He has discovered that when the Bible said, "He that believeth shall be saved," it meant not only from the miseries of the future life, but from the miseries of this also; not only from hell hereafter, but from vice and crime here.

VERY well then, let us take a crucial test. Drunkenness is a vice against which Booth directs his chief efforts. All the Salvationists have to be teetotalers, and for some of the products of Christian civilisation he gets hold of this may be an excellent restraint—while it lasts. But abstinence from drink is no part of Bible morality. Every toper is able to find plenty of texts to countenance his bibbing, and a smart old sot might remind the General that wine "cheereth God and man."

ON the other hand, there is no need of a teetotal propaganda under Mohammedanism. Twelve centuries ago Mohammed damned the use of strong drinks, and it is still a point of faith with his millions of followers. General Booth carries on a teetotal work under the banner of the Cross, but it is only in Christian countries that such a work is necessary.

Now a word for General Booth's catalogue of sins. He classes

doubt and blasphemy with crime, uncleanness, and disease. Here is tenderness for sceptics! Yet the very same people who read this with approval cry shame on the sceptic for hurting their feelings by simply attacking their doctrines.

THE *Church Times* does not like the latest outcome of Christianity. It says Boothism "has receded from its professed undenominationalism, it has done little or nothing to break through the inert mass of practical heathenism, and it has unsettled many who were quietly pursuing their own paths."

SOME people have a good deal of time on their hands. A London evening paper inserts a correction as to the Duke of Newcastle's ecclesiastical proclivities. His Grace, it appears, does not attend at St. Alban's, Holborn. He attends at All Saints', Margaret-street, the flowers which adorn that gospel-shop being sent from his conservatory. Oh Jeames, Jeames! What the deuce does it matter to anybody, save those who handle his cash, whether the Duke of Newcastle goes to this church or that, or to any church at all?

SELL all that thou hast and give it to the poor. This was Jesus Christ's counsel of perfection. Colonel North's swell ball at the Hotel Métropole cost nearly £10,000. Yet the Colonel and at least ninety-nine per cent. of his guests profess and call themselves Christians. What a roaring farce it is, to be sure!

MONSIGNOR CAPEL, the astute Jesuit who is credited with the conversion of the Marquis of Bute, has been heard of in America. His latest utterance is reported as follows:—"The time is not far away when the Roman Catholics of the United States, at the order of the Pope, will refuse to pay the school tax, and will send bullets through the breasts of Government agents rather than pay it." If this time comes, as Monsignor Capel hopes, the American Republic will probably discover that those who pay primal allegiance to the Pope and who refuse to pay the school tax, cannot be numbered among the citizens.

"CUTTING the Messiah" was a heading in Monday's *Star*. It was enough to appal anybody with the least tincture of orthodoxy in his composition. What had happened? Had some haughty individual, perhaps a "dook" or popular actor or actress, declined to shake hands with J. C.? Or was it something still worse? Had Jack the Ripper, or one of his clumsy imitators, been practising upon the gentleman whose birthday millions of people were recently celebrating? Happily it was nothing of the kind. "Cutting the Messiah" merely referred to the excision of certain choruses from Handel's oratorio at the Albert Hall. All's well that ends well, but the *Star* should really be more careful in future.

OF a volume of poems by the Rev. Clarence Walworth, the following is a sample:

Jesus and Joseph at work! Hurra!
Sight never to see again;
A 'prentice Deity plies the saw,
While the Master ploughs with the plane.

THE New York ministers have been discussing the question why people do not go to church. As no two gave the same reason, the problem may still be considered open. The idea may have dawned upon them—but none ventured to express it—that possibly some people don't go to church because they no longer believe in the doctrines taught there. Say anything but that!

THAT eccentric Presbyterian minister of Stonhaven, the Rev. J. Robertson, has been at it again. Attending a meeting of Good Templars, and getting well primed with tea, he let out in favor of making teetotalism a condition of church membership. He would do, he said, with the man who objected to the teetotal kirk what he would do with a barking dog, and say, "Get out, you tyke." His peroration ended as follows:

Who drinks little is an ass;
Who drinks much a swine. Amen!

Mr. Robertson resumed his seat amid applause. Evidently people can be drunk without bottled spirits. The spirit of the Lord often does instead.

MR. ROBERTSON shone at the watchnight service. He wondered why people did not leave their avocations and seek a ticket for heaven. God had given them breath in order to get that passport, and they lived long enough if they got saved. No doubt Mr. Robertson has got saved, and the conclusion from his own logic is that he has lived long enough. Some of the Stonhaven folk cry "hear, hear" to th.s. They believe Mr. Robertson has got his ticket for heaven, and the sooner he travels through the better.

THE *Tattler* has a leaderette on "Secularism and Good Taste," in which it has the good taste to refer with apparent approval to the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, and to predict a similar fate for a Freethought contemporary. The *Tattler* will be worth arguing with when it has the good taste to risk something, as we do, in the fight for principles; but not while it has the very

common good taste to turn an honest penny by chronicling the smallest of small talk about the world and his wife.

THE *Star* is down on the Church Extension Association, which issues a monthly magazine called *Our Work*. The principal part of "our work," it says, seems to be begging. Miss Ashdown is described as the "chief plate-carrier." She gives a long list of charitable objects, for which she is prepared to receive subscriptions; and "the only thing lacking," the *Star* says, "is a full and correct statement of what Miss Ashdown does with the money."

JAMES HEYWOOD, a sapper in the Royal Engineers at Woolwich, committed suicide on the morning of what was to have been his wedding day. He left a letter for his affianced wife, hoping that God would help her to bear the blow. Another case for Talmage.

THE Salvation Army Barracks, in Lower Road, Deptford, was burnt down on Sunday. The fire broke out half an hour after the afternoon performance, and all the holiness that filled the building could not prevent the flames from demolishing it. The man in charge cannot assign any cause of the origin of the fire. Perhaps Old Nick dropped in for an hour's diversion, and, hearing himself insulted so gratuitously, dropped some brimstone about the place; and this coöperating with the fire invoked from heaven may have caused the conflagration. Anyhow, we dare say Booth was amply insured.

THE *Academy* reviewer of the new volume of Hume's letters, edited by Dr. Hill, has the—well, what shall we say? coolness or ignorance—to aver that Hume's "writings are now neglected, and their author is little remembered." The *History of England* is, of course, out of date; though it is still sold in more than one cheap edition, and is prized by students of literature for what Gibbon called its "careless inimitable beauties" of style. But the immortal *Essays* will never be forgotten. Have they not been edited for this generation by Professor Green? Have they not been praised and criticised by Professor Huxley? And is not the famous essay on Miracles still dealt with by all the formal apologists of Christianity? Hume is a great name in English philosophy; and Huxley was not far wrong when, in his lecture on the Physical Basis of Life, he praised Hume's "vigor of thought and exquisite clearness of style," and called him "the most acute thinker of the eighteenth century—even though that century produced Kant."

WHAT a comment on "peace on earth" is the *Daily News* article on "The Armed Continent"! Since 1872 the preparations for the great war which is yet to come have cost the Central Powers no less than £1,500,000,000. Omitting England, the total war strength of Europe is 10,480,000 men. Besides these there are the second reserves, amounting to 8,335,000 men; and the final reserves, amounting to 9,106,000. In all, twenty-eight millions of men ready to be hurled into the devil's cauldron of war whenever the signal is given to let loose hell upon earth. No such spectacle was ever witnessed in the ancient world. This is the beautiful outcome of eighteen centuries of Christianity. Let us pray.

RENAN thinks the Jews won't go back to Palestine. He told a *Figaro* interviewer that they "are too fond of the Stock Exchanges of Europe and of the good things to be found amongst Gentiles to care about ending their days in the suburbs of Jerusalem."

THE "law of polarity," which Mr. S. Laing puts in the Agnostic Creed, is claimed by Mr. J. B. Crozier, a very remarkable writer, who expounded it in his *Religion of the Future* seven or eight years before Mr. Laing published his *Modern Science and Modern Thought*. Mr. Crozier, in turn, borrowed the doctrine from Emerson, who flung it out, as usual, without development. Mr. Crozier acknowledged his obligation to Emerson, but Mr. Laing did not acknowledge his obligation to Mr. Crozier.

THE Bishop of Southwell has suspended the Rev. C. J. Fox, vicar of Little Eaton, for two years, consequent on the report of the commission who inquired into the allegations of drunkenness and profanity against the reverend gentleman.

THE common connection between religion and immorality has been again illustrated at Chester le Street, where a pious Methodist preacher, named Fairbairn, has been ordered to pay for the maintenance of the child of his father's servant, who also did a little preaching. Some very pious epistles addressed to his "Dear Sister in Christ" were put in, and exhibited the usual combination of spiritual Christianity with more sensual primitive worships.

THE difficulty of the heathen in appreciating the truth "as it is in Jesus" must be surprising to those who consider Christianity adapted to every nation upon earth. The Chinese will not have the one divine religion at any price, and further risings against the missionaries are reported.

ALAS for the decay of religion! It affects even Africa. Mr. H. H. Johnston, in his article on "The Ethics of Cannibalism" in the *Nineteenth Century*, tells of a chief's lament over the decline

of piety in his country. A white fowl it seems is now sacrificed. This, he said, was "poor man's juju." A few years ago it would have been a white goat, and, in his father's time, the good old days a white boy (Albino Negro) would have been spitted on a stake as an offering to the gods.

THE editor of the *Bournemouth Guardian*, in answer to a correspondent, gives facts substantiating that our Christmas customs antedate Christianity. He says "it is not easy to say where the Paganism ends and the Christianity begins." In our opinion the Paganism ends with the festivity and the Christianity begins with the hypocrisy.

THE *Leader*, of Auckland, New Zealand, a paper which professes to be "published in the interests of Christian and Temperance work," has reprinted C. Braden's malignant attack on Colonel Ingersoll. It, however, opened its columns to a reply from Mr. William Cooper; but on the reply threatening to become about a quarter the length of the indictment, peremptorily declared that "we think it well not to publish anything further on the subject;" though at the same time it published a letter directed against Mr. Cooper from the Christian side.

THE Presbyterian clergy have been striving again to shuffle with the Confession of Faith. The question is how to continue subscribing to doctrines which they no longer believe or preach, or, as the *Edinburgh Evening News* well puts it, "how to hide the new pea under the old thimble." Of course the attempt leads to a deal of dishonest evasion. Confront a Presbyterian minister with the standards he has sworn to uphold, and he is as evasive as Jesus himself was when difficult questions were offered to him.

THE Bishop of St. Albans declared that Calvinism was "an awful mistake: it had produced awful consequences; it had driven thousands of thoughtful men into sheer unbelief; it was a flat libel on the character of him who willed that all men should be saved," etc. The Bishop ought to know that Calvinism is about the most consistent creed that can be drawn from Christianity. Postulate an Almighty, and also a devil and a hell, and the gloomy doctrines of predestination are the necessary outcome, as all the great Christian theologians have seen, from Saint Augustine to Jonathan Edwards.

DR. MATTHEW FIELD has been reading a paper on "Spiritualism and Insanity" before the New York Medical Society. He divides the Spiritists into three classes—the mediums, who delude and mystify; those who are deluded and mystified; thirdly, those who really believe that they see and hear from the dead. This last class he unhesitatingly sets down as insane. The medical members of the society, who discussed the paper, were found practically to concur in Dr. Field's views.

THE Japanese are said to be contemplating a great change. Their national religion is Buddhism, and the common people like it very well, though the educated classes are mostly Freethinkers. But they want to imitate the Western Powers, and to go in for manufactures and the gunpowder-and-glory business; and as Buddhism is too old-fashioned for some features of our civilisation, they think of making Japan a Christian country. Should the change be made by the government, it will be another illustration of the historical truth that the religion of the multitude is concocted for them, and that their rulers are actuated by political and worldly motives.

THACKERAY'S story in the *Four Georges* is a very appropriate one in connection with this matter. The Princess Sophia's mother, the Duchess of Hanover, was taken in hand by an agent of the French king's, Gourville, who strove to bring her and her husband to a sense of Catholic truth. One day he asked her of what religion her daughter was. "The duchess," says Thackeray, "replied that the princess was of no religion as yet. They were waiting to know of what religion her husband would be, Protestant or Catholic, before instructing her!"

ACCORDING to *Truth*, a vicar of a small town in introducing a paper on "The Works of George Eliot" to a literary society, observed that he had anticipated this paper with special interest, as he had for many years "enjoyed Mr. Eliot's personal friendship." The reverend romancer had, of course, to be reminded that "George Eliot" was a lady, and after sundry remarks of a very embarrassing nature, "the author of the paper," said a local reporter, "brought the painful situation to a close by commencing to read his paper."

UNDER the heading "The Bitter Cry of the Village Methodist," a writer in the *Methodist Times* complains of much persecution, and says that where Dissenters cannot be persuaded into conformity with the State Church they are boycotted. Such being the attitude of Christians towards each other, we imagine the feelings they will entertain towards any Freethinker who ventures to say, "A plague on both your houses."

CARDINAL MANNING has written "Fifty Reasons why the Voluntary Schools of England ought to Share the School Rates." England has fifty better reasons against anything of the kind.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, January 13, Camden Hall, Camden Street, Liverpool: at 11, "Salvation;" at 3, "Mr. Balfour's Praise of Christianity;" at 7, "How God Was Born."

January 20, London Hall of Science; 27, Camberwell.
February 3, London Hall of Science; 10, London Hall of Science;
17, Manchester; 21, Hackney Workmen's Club; 24, Plymouth.
March 3, Milton Hall; 10, Newcastle; 17, Claremont Hall; 24, Camberwell.
April 14, Hall of Science; 21, Hall of Science; 28, Camberwell.
May 11, Milton Hall; 19, Milton Hall; 26, Camberwell.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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. THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China, and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

J. BRUMAGE.—The news will reach us too late for this week's issue. We hope to hear of your success at the School Board Election.

T. LONGLEY.—A misprint so old as April, 1884, is hardly worth correcting now. It is Matthew, of course, and not Mark, who sends Jesus into Galilee to meet his disciples by appointment after the Resurrection; though, according to Acts, he "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem."

SCEPTIC.—(1) David was not a historical character, though his career is embellished with fictions; but patriarchs like Abraham are legendary characters. See Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes*. (2) Prideaux's book is useless nowadays. Ancient history has been re-written since his time.

E. C. M. B., in sending us an extract from Mr. W. S. Caine's new volume says, "I must tell you that the *Freethinker* is the most refreshing bit of literature I know. All my friends and relations are pious; and to invest in a copy of the *Freethinker* is a cheering reminder that I am not alone in my ideas on religion."

THISTLE.—Glad to hear our previous paragraphs were found useful, and trust the fresh ones will be equally so. Mr. Foote is in town a good deal during the next two months, and you will be nearly sure to see him.

J. RAWLINSON.—We may use the story some day, but it will require some working up.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Always pleased to hear from you.

S. J. B.—Your question is hard to answer. Why not join a friendly society in your own district? If you require temporary assistance as a distressed Freethinker, apply to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

A. SWINNEY sends us the second annual balance sheet of the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society, which is a satisfactory document. Our correspondent thinks every branch should have an institution of this kind.

R. S. SEAGO.—Glad to hear Sunday's performance was so successful. Had it not been for other engagements we might have dropped in to see one or two of your champion feeders.

R. CHAPMAN.—We are delighted to hear of the success of both secular candidates in the Tynemouth School Board election, and hope it heralds a thumping success for Mr. Peacock at South Shields. Thanks for the paper.

G. NAEWIGER, 5 Hull Place, Osborne Street, Hull, will be glad to meet local Freethinkers at this address, on Sunday, January 20, at 4.30 p.m. We trust his invitation will be largely responded to. Hull should have a flourishing branch of the National Secular Society; there is plenty of scope for propaganda among its two hundred thousand inhabitants. Mr. N. B. Billany has promised his support and advice, which will be very valuable.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Edinburgh Evening News—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Bulletin des Sommaires—Chat—Irish Catholic—Secular Thought—Freidenker—Western Figaro—Bournemouth Guardian—Women's Suffrage Journal—Radical—Open Court—Durham Guardian—Truthseeker Annual—Boston Investigator—Auckland Leader.

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.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Jan. 13) at Liverpool. We trust there will be a rally of Freethinkers, as the Branch is re-organising and needs a special impetus at this critical period. Mr. Foote's subjects are attractive enough.

MR. ÆNEAS SMITH, a Chelsea candidate for the County Council, will be nominated by Mr. J. Morley, M.P., and Mr. Firth, M.P., and we beg all our friends in that division to give him their votes. Mr. Smith has all along been the soul of the Eleusis Club, and the Eleusis Club has been the soul of Chelsea Radicalism. Mr. Smith has also a special claim on Freethinkers. He was a steadfast supporter of Mr. Bradlaugh during the long struggle for constitutional right; and he got the Eleusis Club to send a strong resolution to Mr. Gladstone's government on

Mr. Foote's imprisonment. Apart from principles, Mr. Smith is one of the sincerest and most capable men we ever met, and his election on the London County Council will give the metropolis the benefit of his character and capacity.

THE Camberwell Branch gave its annual dinner to poor and aged folk on Sunday afternoon. Mr. Seago reports that the vanishing food trick was carried out to the satisfaction of all. The dinner was followed by a musical entertainment. Of course, this was not reported in the daily press.

MR. W. COOKNEY, 1a Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., acknowledges the following further subscriptions for the Hall of Science Children's Party on Jan. 30.—G. Anderson, Esq., £2 2s.; Hemingway (Lancaster), 5s.; J. W. Ramsey, 3d. Per Robertson: Brutus, 1s.; a Well-Wisher, 3d.; Old Ben, 6d.; Fat Joe, 3d.; Bumual, 6d.; Sam, 1s.; Johnson, 1s.; Sausage Meat, 3d.; Beaysley, jun., 6d.; Old Tom, 3d.; Jack Driver, 3d. Per Miss Reynolds: R. J., 1s. Per Mrs. Billot: P. J. Billot, 1s.; J. W. Billot, 1s.; C. H. Billot, 6d.; Miss Alice Billot, 6d. Per Forder: Bertha E. Marks, 5s.; T. Bullock, 2s. 6d.; Jes. Derrock, 8d.; Invicta, 2s.; Invicta, jun., 1s. 6d.; W. S. O., 1s. Further subscriptions will be thankfully received.

COL. INGERSOLL'S *The Clergy and Common Sense* having been for some time out of print, we have published a new edition in good bold type. It makes a 32 pp. pamphlet, and we shall have it on sale next week at 2d.

THE first part of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* will be published next week in paper covers, price sixpence. A fresh part will be issued every month till the work is completed. Mr. Wheeler has been at very great pains to complete this work. Over a thousand names are included, and several times as many volumes have had to be consulted. Such a labor deserves its reward, and we trust every Freethinker will purchase the parts if he does not wait for the complete volume. A volume like this will not only be a standard book of reference, but an excellent thing to show to a Christian friend who fancies that Freethinkers have always been few and obscure.

MR. G. STANDRING'S *Radical* for January bursts through the fog with a portrait of John Watts. Mr. Standring evidently finds that Radical support is not sufficient for his paper, and he is giving it a Freethought turn. He announces a series of sketches from his own pen on Freethought in England since the days of Thomas Paine. Mr. J. M. Wheeler, we may add, has long been collecting materials for a complete History of Freethought in England from the earliest days before the Reformation to the present age.

MR. S. M. PEACOCK, of South Shields, sends us a copy of his address to the electors. He stands upon his old programme, and we should like to see him elected on the new School Board at the head of the poll.

MR. L. M. JOHNSON, a member of the South Shields Branch, has been re-elected on the Tynemouth School Board. He is second on the list of eleven. Dr. J. M. Robson, another member of the South Shields Branch, has also been elected, so that the Tynemouth School Board now includes two staunch friends of Secular Education.

THE London Secular Federation, at its last monthly meeting, decided to print its balance sheet for 1888 with a brief record of the year's work. The funds at present are rather low and money will be required for some excellent objects on which the Federation has set its mind.

ONE of these objects is the Classes previously referred to in our columns. Next winter a Christian Evidence Class will be held weekly or fortnightly, and the whole subject will be taught in detail. During the remainder of this winter two preparatory courses of lectures will be given by Mr. Foote and Mr. J. M. Wheeler. Mr. Foote will discourse on Theism, Animism, and Distinctive Christian Doctrines; and Mr. Wheeler will discourse on the Relation of Christianity to Previous Religions. Each course will run to three lectures, and the first will open early in February. Further particulars will be given next week.

THE Classes will be free. The Federation will bear the expense, trusting to be reimbursed by subscriptions from well-to-do Freethinkers. All our open-air and young London lecturers are invited to attend, as well as others who may wish to equip themselves for public and private controversy. The Classes are designed for their benefit, but, of course, any Freethinker is welcome. The door will be open and no questions asked.

AFTER re-electing Mr. Foote, Mr. G. Standring, and Mr. R. O. Smith, as President, Secretary, and Treasurer, with Mr. A. B. Moss as Vice-President, the Federation arranged for three social parties to take place at Camberwell, Pentonville, and Kentish Town. Besides this, it was decided to hold a dinner, and a committee was appointed to report. All the leading Freethinkers in London, from Mr. Bradlaugh downwards, will be invited, and it is hoped the celebration will be a great success.

FREETHINKERS in the district should support the Committee of the Balls Pond Branch, and not let all the burden of work rest upon one or two pair of shoulders. The Sunday evening lectures, now being resumed, promise to be successful. Mr. Foote opened the new year with a lecture last Sunday evening, and his pleading for renewed activity was heartily applauded. There is no reason why the hall should not be crowded every Sunday.

No. 4 of *Le Danton*, a Republican and Freethought paper, printed not in types but by lithography, gives a not very flattering portrait of the revolutionary hero after which the paper is named. M. Cilwa gives a list and some particulars of twenty-one persons who were burnt alive for heresy.

THE last number of *Secular Thought* (Toronto) for 1888 has just reached us. Mr. Watts's capital paper is, we take it, flourishing: at any rate, he is going on with it in a cheerful spirit. He notices the latest events in England, such as the passing of Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Bill and Mrs. Besant's election on the London School Board, and reprints one of Mr. Foote's recent articles from the *Freethinker*. During 1889 he promises to run some Debates through *Secular Thought*, and among them the debate between Mr. Foote and Dr. McCann. We wish our Canadian contemporary a prosperous new year.

It is, perhaps, as significant a "sign of the times" as can be anywhere found, that in the *Varsity*, the journal representing University College opinions, the names of some of the most eminent Freethinkers should be found quoted as authorities. In a recent number, Thomas Paine was quoted as an authority on the study of languages, the writer also naming the *Age of Reason* as the work in which Paine's opinion was to be found. In a later issue, Robert G. Ingersoll's "Oration at his brother's grave" and "Tribute to Henry Ward Beecher" are described as "prose poetry" of a high order. In the same issue appears the names of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, Annie Besant, etc., among a selection from the four hundred "prominent men and women in Great Britain" who signed the protest on the examination question. Truly we are advancing, when students of University College have boldness enough to put in print their acknowledgments of having studied the works of such authors as these.—*Secular Thought*, Toronto.

HAVING seen it reported that he regards Spiritualism favorably, Professor Huxley lets out on the subject with his customary vigor in a communication to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He denies that he ever met the medium Home, but adds, "I have had to do with certain other 'mediums' of hardly inferior notoriety; and my deliberate judgment is that they were, each and all, utter impostors; and, with one exception, not even clever at their shameful trade."

THE one exception was an American medium, of the female persuasion, and, says Huxley, "the ease and rapidity with which that quiet transatlantic lady fooled me was, as she herself might have said, a caution." But the wily Professor watched her carefully and at last saw through several of her tricks. Finally, he learned to do the rappings himself, and became so dexterous with his second toe that he could easily befool his friends.

"MR. CONWAY," says Professor Huxley, "observes that modern Spiritualism, though not half a century old, has gained more converts in that time than Christianity did in the first three centuries of its existence. It may, I believe, be as safely said that the older form of the same fundamental delusion—the belief in possession and in witchcraft—gave rise in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to persecutions by Christians of innocent men, women, and children, more extensive, more cruel, and more murderous than any to which the Christians of the first three centuries were subjected by the authorities of pagan Rome."

HERE is another pregnant sentence from Professor Huxley's communication. "We are all intellectually handicapped in youth," he says, "by the incessant repetition of the stories about possession and witchcraft in both the Old and the New Testaments." This passage should be borne in mind by the white-chokered gentlemen who are fond of quoting another passage from Huxley rather more in favor of their "blessed book."

A NEW edition, the third of Dr. Ludwig Buchner's book on *Man: his place in Nature and Society*, has been published in Germany.

WITH the new year, *Menschentum* (Humanity), the organ of the German Freethinker's Union, enters upon its eighteenth year of publication. We tender its editor, Dr. August Specht, our congratulations.

DR. ROMEO MANZONI, an eminent Italian Freethinker, has put forward a work with the title *Religion as a Pathological Phenomenon*. The work has been translated into German by F. Zündt.

A NEW edition of the Letters which passed between Henry George Atkinson and Harriet Martineau on the "Laws of Man's

Nature and Development" will shortly be published by Messrs. Mendum and Co., of Boston.

MR. JAMES H. WEST, of 620 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, starts this year a monthly paper intended to occupy the same ground as that taken by F. E. Abbot's *Index*. Its title is the *New Ideal*, a Journal of Constructive Liberal Thought and Applied Ethics. Messrs. Abbot, Frothingham, Holland, Underwood, and other writers on the *Index* will contribute.

THE *Shields Daily Gazette* has opened its columns to a controversy on "Genesis and Evolution," in which the former has been ably attacked and the latter defended by Mr. W. S. Shield. Bold, yet courteous, and well written letters like those of Mr. Shield do much good in bringing Freethought views before the local press.

WE have received from Amsterdam copies of *De Dageraad*, the organ of the Dutch Freethinkers, edited by J. Van der Eade, A. H. Gerhard, H. Peijpers, T. Van der Tuuk and P. Westra. Among the contributors are many of the leading Dutch and Belgian Freethinkers. Some *Bible Contradictions* are appearing in its columns and will be published separately. *De Dageraad* (the *Daybreak*) gives reports of Freethought progress in all parts of the world.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

IX—THE FIG-TREE (Mark xi., 12—14; 20—24.
Matt. xxi., 17—22).

OF all the miracles of Christ that of blasting the fig-tree is the most ridiculous. After riotously expelling the traders from the Temple (according to Matthew), or before expelling them (according to Mark), Jesus, returning one morning to Jerusalem from the outlying village of Bethany, felt hungry and saw a fig-tree afar off. The hungry and omnipotent Jesus did not care to work a simple miracle to obtain a breakfast. He preferred that his omniscience should be miserably deceived, that his hunger should remain unsatisfied, that his temper should break down in petty irritation, and that he should resort to a paltry revenge, of which any sensible child would be thoroughly ashamed. Tempted by the abundance of leaves put forth in early spring, Omniscience walked a long distance only to find that the promising fig-tree had no fruit because, as Mark plainly tells us, "the time of figs was not yet." The God who knows all things did not know that early spring was not the time for fruit. He had not studied science or common sense. His knowledge of botany was of the most elementary description. He made the times and seasons for all things and knew not the simplest principles of his own handiwork. He ridicules men who morally expect to gather figs of thistles, but himself expects to gather fruit out of its due season. No one, moreover, expects to gather figs of thistles in the literal sense—but the perfect wisdom of the omniscient Jesus leads him astray on an actual wild-goose walk after spring figs. The omniscience of Jesus is evidently a miserable sham—or else the Holy Ghost has maliciously inspired two of the evangelists to caricature his words and actions.

Intellectually the God Jesus breaks down. Morally he stands this petty fig-tree test no better. Disappointed in his unreasonable anticipations, he fell into the same trap as the vulgarest son of Adam might do. He blamed the tree for his own folly; he cursed it for the satisfaction of his foolish anger; he employed his almighty power in the pleasurable work of avenging himself upon an inoffensive object. The Gospel records some thoroughly absurd scenes of supposed temptation of Jesus by the Devil for forty days in the wilderness. Might not Passion Week be far more plausibly assigned as the time of temptation by the insidiously artful trapper of souls? Jesus fell into the pitfalls again and again during his short period of exaltation and unsuspected trial. His seditious assumption of royal power, the high-handed way in which he scourged the money-changers and overthrew their tables laden with coin, his appropriation of the ass and its colt, the paltry and idiotic vindictiveness he displayed towards a flourishing tree, his threats of vengeance upon the city and the world that rejected him, his cry of despair on the cross, all point to this great week of events as the time of trial when an insidious tempter might most naturally be supposed to have set the snares of pride and vanity and folly and infinite spite into which Jesus fell so readily. The hell to which he doomed his opponents shows the monstrous nature of his temporarily repressed vindictiveness and cruelty. His

treatment of the fig-tree shows the virulence and extravagance of his personal resentment in its pettiest and most puerile form.

On the morning after the unconscious fig-tree had so deeply offended its disappointed God by not breaking the laws he had imposed upon it, the apostles saw that the wicked object of their Lord's displeasure had withered away and was dried up from the roots. Peter called Christ's attention to the fact with the words, "Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away." Jesus then, with a calm dignity whose pretentiousness is an utter contrast to the childish petulance and destructiveness of his previous cursing, proceeded to teach two great lessons. The first is "Have faith in God." Then, he assures them, they will be able not only to wither up all trees that decline to bear fruit out of season, but they shall be able to remove actual mountains and cast them into the sea. The thorough believer, he promises, shall have absolute control of the forces of nature: all things shall obey his word: all that he says or prays for shall come to pass. So huge a lie may well be founded on so silly a miracle. The second lesson is one of universal forgiveness. Because our great Exemplar did not forgive a tree, but blasted it to its very roots for an unreal offence, therefore we are to forgive our brethren their real offences so that God in his turn may forgive us. Why then did not Jesus set the example? And why does he mix great moral lessons with a miracle of senseless anger and destructiveness, and with a fallacious appeal to a greater selfishness, and with a sweeping absolutism of infallibility and command that leaves no play for the modifying influence of the judgment as to the occasion being suitable for forgiveness, or requiring the sternest punishment of the offender as perhaps absolutely necessary for the welfare and honor of other individuals and the safety of society at large? Why do the gospel records of Jesus present so strange a hodge-podge of false and true morality inextricably intermingled with childish follies and irrelevant miracles?

About this time Jesus threatened Jerusalem with "the days of vengeance," and the whole world with destruction, amidst which he himself was to return from heaven in clouds of glory to judge the quick and the dead. All these things were to come to pass during the generation then living. As a sign, men were to learn of the fig tree, which by putting forth leaves showed that summer was nigh; so, by observing the signs given by Jesus, men would know that the end of the world was at hand. But what a pity Jesus himself did not learn of the fig-tree. And what a curiously unabashed effrontery he must have had, whether as a man or as a God, to point to a tree which had just misled him by its signs so egregiously. If, indeed, the signs put forth by the fig-tree are calculated to deceive men as they deceived Jesus, they would be very appropriate emblems of the threats and promises put forth by the fanatical carpenter of Galilee whose head was so turned that although in knowledge and in good sense he had just shown himself worse than a child, he yet solemnly assured everybody that heaven and earth should pass away, but *his* words should not pass away. His words indeed have not passed away, although it would be very convenient for modern Christian apologists if they had, for their falsification betrays the huge delusion or fraud on which Christianity was built. Fortunately for us, the man or the God who blasted the wickedly-obedient fig-tree has not been able to blast a world and to carry off his favorites into the clouds, as he solemnly declared he would do within the lifetime of his contemporaries.

W. P. BALL.

CHRISTIANS IN JAPAN.

There are very few foreigners resident in Japan, and these are confined to the treaty ports. There are about 2,500 Europeans and 5,000 Chinese. There are also in the treaty ports a considerable number of Eurasians, the illegitimate offspring of European fathers, whose existence goes far to justify the complaints of missionaries that it is the Christian and not the Buddhist heathen who keeps back the spread of Christianity in the East; and also, perhaps, explains the almost universal contempt with which the merchant class in the East speak about missionaries. The irreligion and open immorality of Europeans in Japan and China, with some honorable exceptions, is very bad indeed.—MR. W. S. CAINE, M.P., in *A Trip Round the World in 1887-8*.

The child of a well known West of England Freethinker has picked up at school or from its companions some notions of a deity in the sky. The other day he said would it be a bad job for God if the sky was to open and he fell through.

EDNA LYALL ON MR. BRADLAUGH.

"MAY I ask (said the *Pall Mall Gazette* interviewer to Edna Lyall) whether the characters of 'Donovan' and Raeburn, the Agnostic leader in 'We Two,' were suggested by any living persons?"—"Donovan' was my conception of a perfectly isolated man. 'We Two' was really suggested by a line which appeared in the *Daily News* about the time Mr. Bradlaugh was imprisoned in the Clock Tower: 'Mr. Bradlaugh has telegraphed for his daughter.' No doubt Raeburn is in many respects like Mr. Bradlaugh, though the character was not intended to be a portrait. Shortly after the publication of 'Donovan' I had entered into correspondence with Mr. Bradlaugh, as he had reviewed the work in the *National Reformer*. While *We Two* was in progress I thought it well to see him, thinking I could form much truer impressions of the character of a Secularist lecturer from conversation than from correspondence. An interview was arranged, and I learned much from it."

"Do you think the Secularist movement is gaining ground?"—"I have scarcely any means of judging. It seemed to me to be making headway two or three years ago when the attacks were made upon Mr. Bradlaugh. Since then he has largely devoted himself to politics. I believe politics to be his rightful sphere, and one in which he is bound to attain to a high position."

REVIEWS.

The Revolutionary Review, Jan 1889. Price 3d.—This paper is published by Mr. Henry Seymour, in a flaming cover, to celebrate this year of revolution. It advocates the same views as those found in his now defunct *Anarchist*.

Financial Reform Almanack, 1889. Simpkin, Marshall, and Co. — Good wine needs no bush, and this almanack needs no praise. It is simply indispensable to the serious politician. This year's issue has a capital portrait of Sir George Trevelyan.

The Radical for January contains a portrait of John Watts, the Freethought lecturer, who in the early days of the *National Reformer* officiated as editor, and died in 1866 at the early age of 32. Mr. Sam Standing offers some "Lecture Notes for Young Freethinkers."

The Birth of Jesus, by AGNOSCO and GIAOUR. W. Stewart and Co., 41 Farringdon Street, E.C.—This purports to be the first part of a critical examination of the gospels. The contradictions and absurdities of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke are so well brought out that we hope the authors will be encouraged to continue their task.

The Truthseeker Annual and Freethinker's Almanack.—Good typography and excellent illustrations make this one of the best annuals in the Freethought service. The chief feature this year is a symposium on "Liberalism," as the Americans term "Freethought," from the pens of twenty-four leading American Freethinkers, including Colonel Ingersoll. The calendar is well compiled, and a photograph of the statue to Bruno in Rome forms a fitting frontispiece.

Was Jesus Insane? By L. K. Washburn. *Truthseeker* Company New York.—Mr. C. B. Reynolds was prosecuted for some blasphemy, much of which was borrowed from Mr. Foote, yet vigorously defended by Colonel Ingersoll; and now Mr. Washburn, another American lecturer, takes the title of one of Mr. Foote's old pamphlets. He does not go into the subject of the insanity of Jesus so thoroughly as Mr. Foote did, but he says enough, in his usual bright style, to make out a very good case.

Agnosticism and Christian Theism (10 cents), and *Christianity: its Origin, Nature, and Influence* (15 cents). By Charles Watts. *Secular Thought* Office: Toronto.—Both pamphlets are ably and carefully written, and their wide circulation will certainly promote the spread of Freethought in Canada. The pamphlet on Christianity is especially effective. We have one fault to find with the pamphlet on Agnosticism. In dropping his old Atheism and advocating Agnosticism, Mr. Watts is making a distinction without a difference, and it is not surprising that he is betrayed into inconsistency. On p. 9 he agrees with Herbert Spencer that "a universe existing without a beginning is unthinkable"; yet on p. 24 he exclaims "Nature is one and indivisible. She had no beginning, and can have no end." Should the pamphlet run into a second edition, as we trust it will, we hope Mr. Watts will at least make Agnosticism consistent with itself.

PROFANE JOKES.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon and she was reading to him the Proverbs of Solomon. He was rapidly getting an attack of temporary oblivion. "Aren't they wonderful, George?" she said. "Yes, indeed," he replied; "if he had only mis-spelled his words, what a Josh Billings he would have made!"

Young curate finds a miner sitting on a gate smoking. Curate (desirous to ingratiate himself with one of his flock): "A fine morning my friend." One of his flock gives the slightest nod, and a grunt, and spits. Curate (supposing he had not been heard): "A fine morning, my good friend." One of his flock: "Did I say it warn't; do you want to argue, you beggar?"

A clergyman in a neighboring town is very absent-minded, and has a short memory. It is a common habit with him in the pulpit to forget something, and then, after sitting down, to rise up and commence his supplementary remarks with the expression, "By the way." A few Sundays ago he got half through a prayer, when he hesitated, forgot what he was about, and sat down abruptly without closing. In a moment or two he arose, and pointing his forefinger at the amazed congregation, he said, "Oh! by the way, amen."

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