

ENLARGED TO TWELVE PAGES.

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE BLASPHEMY BILL.

MR. BRADLAUGH'S first-rate Bill for the Abolition of Religious Prosecutions, or, in other words, the suppression of the Blasphemy Laws, has been defeated by a majority of more than three to one. The numbers were 141 to 46. This is an important fact, though its importance will strike various persons very differently. Some will see in it a decisive check to the principle of religious equality, while others will see in it a remarkable testimony to the spread of free ideas. It is not surprising that the Bill was defeated, for the men who voted against it are its natural enemies. The surprising thing, some will think, is that a fourth of the members of the House of Commons are ready to make a clean sweep of the Blasphemy Laws, and place Freethinkers on a legal level with Christians.

Personally we agree with George Henry Lewes on the principle involved in such a phenomenon. Scepticism and toleration are two aspects of the same thing. When heresy is allowed orthodoxy is weakened. Were Christianity as potent now as it was three centuries ago, Freethinkers would still be burnt at the stake. Were it as potent now as it was sixty or seventy years ago, Freethinkers would be imprisoned in batches. But, shorn of half its strength, dreading the future, and yearning hopelessly for a revival of its past, Christianity is obliged to trim its sails to the altered wind. It left off burning people, not out of tenderness, but because too many people objected to being burnt. It left off imprisoning people wholesale, not out of justice or mercy, but because too many people objected to being imprisoned. It only persecutes Freethinkers occasionally at present, because it is afraid to do so frequently. But the old inclination remains. While Christianity is Christianity it will persecute to the full extent of its power and opportunities. The lumping majority against Mr. Bradlaugh's bill shows that the Christians, although they are afraid to beat heretics too often, are resolved against parting with the stick until it is wrested from them. Like their predecessors, they prove the hard, immutable truth, that the only way to extinguish bigotry is to extinguish Christianity.

The Solicitor-General, who opposed the Bill tooth and nail, gave expression to this view. After dilating on "the circulation of those very scandalous publications"—to wit, the *Freethinker*—he plainly confessed that the Government only refrained from prosecuting them from a "natural reluctance to advertise them." The Christians, that is, are anxious to beat us, but they fear that some of the blows will injure themselves. What a beautiful mixture of bigotry and timidity! What a precious commentary on Christian vaunts of charity and courage! Eager to wound, they hesitate to strike. Not humanity, but fear, paralyses their wicked arms.

Mr. Bradlaugh's speech, judging from the *Times* report, was able, lucid, and thorough. He explained

the origin and real nature of the Blasphemy Laws, and asked the House to do an act of justice to an injured minority. The House listened to one who, by sheer force of ability and character, commands its ear; but it declined the invitation, and voted for keeping the good old rod in pickle.

Hardly a member who opposed the Bill had the slightest idea of logic or justice. They were both unfair and inconsistent. They did not remember, or did not know, that the Blasphemy Laws were originally directed against simple unbelief; and that the talk about "protecting the religious feelings of the community" was a device of the judges to give some show of justification to the most odious enactments. At first, you were not to deny the truth of Christianity. That was plain and straightforward. Then you were not to deny any doctrine on which all Christians were agreed. Finally, you might call the truth of any part of Christianity in question, but you might only do so in a decent way; that is, not in your way, but in the Christians' way.

Now just imagine such a law as this in political and social discussion. We are free to fight each other, but we must always consult our opponent's taste and convenience. Radicals must send their speeches and articles to Conservatives, with a view to eliminating what hurts their feelings. Socialists must submit theirs to the Primrose League, and Land Reformers to the House of Lords. Mr. John Morley should beg the revision of the Marquis of Salisbury, and Mr. William O'Brien should send the proofs of *United Ireland* to Mr. Balfour. Would not everybody laugh at such an idiotic idea? Yet that is precisely what the Blasphemy Laws lay down with regard to the discussion of Christianity by Freethinkers.

But that is not all. There is something still worse. What would be thought of a proposal that Radical advocates should be tried for violating "the decencies of controversy" by Tories, Socialists by the Primrose League, Land Leaguers by Landlords, Liberationists by the Clergy, and Republicans by Royalty and the Aristocracy? Yet that is precisely what the Blasphemy Laws do with regard to Freethought. Could there be a greater mockery of justice than to empanel a jury of Christians, under the direction of a Christian judge, and let them try a Freethinker for wounding Christian susceptibilities?

A paper or a speech is put into their hands. The judge says "Gentleman, do you like this?" They reply "No, my lord." And the poor devil of a prisoner gets twelve months on the spot. This is what they call justice. This is supported by hypocrites who pretend that the age of persecution is past.

The only respectable bigot in the House, or in the debate, was Colonel Sandys. He complained that, although we hang those who kill the body, the Bill proposed to allow men to murder souls with impunity. He cited with approval the "law of Moses," under which blasphemers were taken out of the camp and stoned to death. For our part, we

have no objection to a law like that. Everybody can understand it. There is no blending of reason and faith, no ambiguity, no hypocrisy. Such a law, too, could never be carried out, and that is one of its chief advantages.

Mr. Addison, who moved that the Bill be read that day six months, said there had been no recent prosecution for Blasphemy under the statute. He should have said there never had been any. He also declared that "Foote was not proceeded against for religious opinion." Evidently he has never read the indictment. Dr. Hunter, who made a manly speech, pointed out that Judge North punished Mr. Foote for dedicating his talents to "the service of the Devil," which "in plain English meant that Mr. Foote held opinions on religion that differed from the opinions of Mr. Justice North." Mr. Addison actually quoted Wharton's definition of Blasphemy, which includes "denying to the Almighty his being and providence," and then had the impudence to assert that "opinions in this country are free." But he sounded the depth of imbecility or hypocrisy in declaring that "religious persons," even if they were in a minority, should have their "feelings" protected. Colonel Sandys himself would laugh at this absurdity. Every man with a gleam of sense is perfectly aware that Christians can only dictate the rules of discussion while they are in a majority.

Mr. Foote and the *Freethinker* figured largely in the debate. The vocabulary of abuse was ransacked to describe them. Vile, corrupt, abominable, loathsome, lewd, obscene, and similar adjectives were flung about in the most reckless manner. They prove the Christians to be in a passion, but they prove nothing else. We keep our temper better than they do, though we have none of their "charity." Ridicule is far more effectual than blatant denunciation. Lord Coleridge exonerated us from these silly charges, which, by the way, had no place in our indictment. "He may be blasphemous," said his lordship, "but he certainly is not licentious, in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."

If the bigots want to put down "indocency"—which they don't, for they like it—let them deal with some of the posters on our public hoardings, or some of the semi-nudities in the comic papers; or, better still, let them deal with portions of the Bible that might bring a blush on the face of a harlot.

Some of the nonsense of the debate, especially that of Mr. Samuel Smith, the member for Liverpool and piety, will be dealt with in my lecture at the Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when I will answer the bigots more fully, and give my views of their blasphemy. Had a good, trenchant comic sketch been ready, it would have appeared in this week's *Freethinker*, as a prompt retort on the persecutors, and a defiance of their malice and hypocrisy.

Before the debate closed, Mr. Bradlaugh expressed his readiness to accept the clause from the Indian code. It runs as follows:

"Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person, or makes any gesture, or places any object in the sight of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment, with or without hard labor, for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both."

This clause may or may not be acceptable to the Freethought party. The *Freethinker* could hardly be prosecuted under it, but newsagents might be in danger, and Freethought posters and handbills might be struck at. If so, the change is questionable. It does not seem right to relieve the leaders of our movement at the expense of the rank and file. Mr. Bradlaugh, however, should be heard on this point before any decision is come to, and there is no desperate hurry, for the Bill cannot come up again until next session. Mr. Bradlaugh will have spoken to the

party before then; the subject will be amply discussed, here and elsewhere; and every Freethinker will be able to form a deliberate judgment on the new departure.

G. W. FOOTE.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.—JOHN i., 1.

IN the charming stories which the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected from the folk lore of the German peasantry, and which, under the name of *Grimm's Goblins*, delighted my childhood, there is one that had the fascination of a mystery. It is called Rumpelstiltskin—there, the whole mystery is out—for like many other mysteries, it rests mainly in a word.

The story tells how a maiden was set the task of spinning straw into gold. She is assisted by a dwarf, who claims her first child unless she tells him his name. She marries the king and the dwarf comes for the child, but she has learnt his name. It is Rumpelstiltskin. Similar stories were current in England and other countries, indicating a notion that the name is an integral part of the personality and that to know it puts the owner in subjection.

Few suspect that this childish nonsense has anything to do with religion. But it has. The power of a name lies among the very roots of religion and is still a great source of its sustenance. In the minds of savages, among whom religion arose, names and personalities are confused, and this confusion leads to many curious superstitions. Traces can be found in all faiths, including the Christian.

An Indian asked Kane, the Arctic traveller, whether his wish to know his name arose from a desire to steal it; the Araucanians would not allow their names to be told to strangers, lest these should be used in sorcery. Mr. Clodd, in his book on *Myths and Dreams*, has a chapter on "Barbaric confusion between names and things." There he tells how in Borneo and other places, the name of a sickly child is changed to deceive the evil spirits which have tormented it. An aged Indian of Lake Michigan explained why tales of the spirits were told only in winter, by saying that when the deep snow is on the ground, the voices of those repeating their names are muffled; but that in summer the slightest mention of them must be avoided, lest the spirits be offended. The Australians believe that a dead man's ghost creeps into the liver of the impious wretch who has dared to utter his name. Dr. Lang tried to get the name of a relative who had been killed from an Australian. "He told me who the lad's father was, who was his brother, what he was like, how he walked, how he held his tomahawk in his left hand instead of his right, and who were his companions; but the dreaded name never escaped his lips, and I believe no promises or threats could have induced him to utter it." Wagner's beautiful opera of *Lohengrin* has this necessity of a supernatural being concealing his name among its motives.

We have a remnant of the old faith in the popular saying, "Talk of the devil and he is sure to appear." All over the barbaric world we find a terror of naming the dead, lest the ghost be raised. Mr. Clodd says:—

"A survival of the dislike to calling exalted temporal, and also spiritual, beings by their names, probably lies at the root of the Jews unwillingness to use the name of Yahveh (commonly and incorrectly spelt Jehovah), and in the name "Allah," which is an epithet or title of the Mohammedan deity, and not the "great name"; whilst the concealment by the Romans of the name of the tutelary deity of their city was fostered by their practice, when besieging any place, to invoke the treacherous aid of its protecting god by offering him a high place in their Pantheon."

The name of the tutelar deity of Rome was kept so profound a secret that Valerius Soranus is said to have been put to death for daring to divulge it.

Sir John Lubbock, in his *Origin of Civilisation*, relates that in one of the despatches intercepted during our war with Nepal, Gouree Sah sent orders to "find out the name of the commander of the British Army; write it upon a piece of paper; take it, and some rice and tumeric, say the great incantation three times; having said it, send for some plum-tree wood and therewith burn it."

Bancroft, in his work on *The Native Races of the Pacific States*, says: The Chinook of Columbia are averse to telling their true names to strangers; with them the name assumes a personality; it is the shadow or spirit, or other self, of the flesh and blood person, and between the name and the individual there is a mysterious connection, and injury cannot be done to one without affecting the other; therefore, to give one's name to a friend "is a high mark of Chinook favor."

Any careful reader of the Bible must have been struck with the frequency with which "the name of the Lord" is mentioned, and the care not to profane that name. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is the second commandment, and Christians still speak of God "in a bondsman's key with bated breath and whispering humbleness," for no better reason than this old superstition. In Leviticus xxiv., 11 and 16, the word translated by us "blasphemeth" was by the Jews rendered "pronounces," so that the son of the Israelitish woman was stoned to death for pronouncing the ineffable name of יהוה* The Talmud says "He who attempts to pronounce it shall have no part in the world to come." Once a year only, on the day of Atonement, was the high priest allowed to whisper the word, even as at the present day "the word" is whispered in Masonic lodges. The Hebrew Jehovah dates only from the Massoretic invention of points. When the Rabbis began to insert the vowel-points they had lost the true pronunciation of the sacred name. To the letters J.H.V.H. they put the vowels of Edonai or Adonai, *lord* or *master*, the name which in their prayers they substitute for Jahveh. Moses wanted to know the name of the god of the burning bush. He was put off with the formula I AM THAT I AM. Jahveh having lost his name has become "I was but am not." When Jacob wrestled with the god, angel, or ghost, he demanded his name. The wary angel did not comply. (Gen. xxxii., 29.) So the father of Samson begs the angel to say what is his name. "And the angel of the Lord said unto him, why asketh thou thus after my name seeing it is *secret*." (Jud. xiii., 18.)

The charge brought against Jesus by the Jews was that he had stolen the sacred Word and by it wrought miracles.† We read in the gospels that Jesus "cast out spirits with his word" (Matt. viii., 16). Jesus promised that in his *name* his disciples should cast out devils, and Peter declared that his name healed the lame (Acts iii., 16). When the Jews asked, "By what power, or by what name have ye done this" (Acts iv., 7), Peter answered, "By the name of Jesus Christ." Paul says, God hath . . . given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and in earth and under the earth (Philip ii., 9, 10).

This is why converts are baptized "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The names were spells to ward off evil demons. All prayer indeed is the development of the belief in the efficacy of words as charms or spells to obtain the wishes of

the petitioner. Colonel Olcott, the Theosophist, says "All the ancient authorities affirm that there is a certain Word of Power by pronouncing which the adept subjugates all the forces of Nature to his will." Spoken prayer is at bottom only an incantation. Hence we see the many repetitions in liturgies of *Kyrie eleison*, "Good Lord deliver us," &c. The Hindus invoke the sacred Trinity through the mystic word *AUM*. The Buddhists have mills to grind out millions of the invocation *om mani padme hum*, "Oh the jewel in the lotus," though they know no more of what the jewel in the lotus is than Christians know of their God, whose real name is Rump-el-stilt-skin.

J. M. WHEELER.

NEW VERSIONS.

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand,
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Poor man from error's chain.

What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only gods are vile:
In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of man are strewn;
The clergy in their blindness
Bow down to gold alone.

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high—
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of truth deny?
"Damnation—oh, damnation!"
The reptile brood proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learnt the Devil's name.

Waft, waft, ye winds this story,
And your great waters roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er enlightened nature
"The Truth" her throne regain—
The world's regenerator—
In bliss returns to reign!—Amen!
CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

Dr. Hutchinson-Stirling, according to an interviewer from the Edinburgh *Dispatch*, has beaten Huxley and all the materialists. He said: "In my book on *Protoplasm* I completely refuted their mechanical theories, though Huxley quite failed to acknowledge the discomfiture, and made a feeble reply. In a rejoinder to him I routed them again, but unfortunately students do not read my books, and there is a widespread but utterly erroneous belief that the arguments of materialism are unanswerable." The good old metaphysician laments, too, that he is almost the only worker in the field. "Natural Theology is an extinct pursuit; Darwinism killed it."

Here, in the same paper too, is the Rev. John Kirk, of Fountain Bridge, Edinburgh, lamenting that all the strong men are being drafted into science and literature and deserting the Church. Unless the ministry is strengthened, he declares that all the visitation and organisation in the world will not make the Church prosper. There is something almost pathetic in these laments of the fossils that the world is advancing beyond them.

The rector of Rugby objects to a parishioner putting on the monument to his mother the words "Her end was peace," on the stupid plea that the Scripture is not for private and individual application. What on earth is it of use for, then?

* The L.X.X. reads "and the son of the Israelitish named THE NAME."

† See *Jewish Life of Christ*. The sacred name could only be pronounced in a state of perfect purity, which may account for its having been lost by the Jews.

THE LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION'S FIRST ANNUAL DINNER.

THE handsome dining-hall of the London Bridge House Hotel was crowded in every part with those who had come to celebrate the first dinner of the London Secular Federation. A goodly number of ladies were present, and veterans like Mr. E. Truelove smiled as merrily as the youngest present. Mr. G. W. Foote occupied the chair. Much amusement was caused by the butler shouting "Silence for grace." After a substantial repast, with the quality of which all were satisfied, Mrs. Wheeler rendered a pianoforte solo which received an encore. Mr. A. B. Moss, who was congratulated by the president upon being again able to exercise his right of speaking from a Secular platform, then proposed the toast of the evening, "Success to the London Secular Federation." He thanked the Federation for being the first to take up his case, and alluded to its good work in sustaining weak branches, fighting at the School Board Election, and educating young lecturers.

Mr. Foote, in responding, alluded to the attention which the work of the Federation received from the Christian Evidence Society, which made it the occasion of soliciting cash to its coffers and also in a recent circular of imploring the prayers of the faithful. Dealing with the work and resources of the Federation, he remarked that funds were needed to render it efficient, and hoped that the treasurer would be favored with subscriptions. Freethinkers existed by thousands, and they wanted organising for common effort. That was what the Federation had been attempting in London. During a short existence it had been eminently successful, and he ventured to predict still greater success in the future. The splendid gathering he saw before him was an augury of triumph.

Madame Burgwitz then ably rendered the song "Forget the Past." The toast of The National Secular Society was then proposed in a humorous speech by Mr. G. Standing, who alluded to his long connection with "our good old Mother." Mr. Forder admirably responded. Mr. Howard Lee then sang "The Longshore man." The toast of "Our Lecturers" was proposed by Mr. Angus Thomas, to whom is due much of the credit of the excellent programme. Mr. Thomas included in the toast the lecturers who in other countries were carrying on the work of Free-thought, mentioning by name Messrs. Symes, Collins, and Rose, and our friends who have recently suffered in Sweden. Mr. Touzeau Parris responded. Although a free lance, his heart was fully in the work, and he appreciated the work of the Federation, especially dwelling upon the utility of the educational course for the benefit of young lecturers. Mr. B. Hyatt then effectively recited Southey's difficult study in rhyme "The Cataract of Lodore," and Miss A. Flint sang "Fiddle and I," with a violin obligato by Mr. D. Hearn, in a charming manner, which won an encore. Mr. Wheeler, who was introduced in a feeling speech by the chairman, then spoke to the toast of "Secular Education." He alluded to the protest of the Federation against public time, servants and buildings being employed to teach useless doctrines, which the world was outgrowing, and declared they did not regret that protest, though it had crippled their resources. He hoped the Holy Spirit—the spirit of humanity—would put it in the hearts and minds of the wealthy to enable the Federation to carry on its work with improved resources.

Mr. J. H. Ellis, in responding, said that the accusation of Christians that we desired "godless education" was quite true, but it was not true that we desired education without morality. (Hear, hear.) He had been looking over some pictures designed for moral instruction in the Board Schools. Jesus walking on the waters, Daniel in the lions' den,

Jesus raising the widow's son, etc. There was no moral training in that. Moral training in cleanliness, honesty, industry, and virtues useful to man might be efficiently given in the course of school instruction, and that would lead to an improved state of society. "The Bedouin's Love Song" was then sung by Mr. Howard Lee.—Mr. Foote then proposed "The Freedom of the Press." He read a letter from Mr. Ernest Parke of *The Star*, regretting that Budget night detained him, and sending Mr. Henderson in his place. Mr. Foote said it was peculiarly appropriate that the toast should be both proposed and responded to by those who had suffered for their opinions.—Mr. Henderson, in replying, said that he was not only there as a pressman, but as one whose whole heart was in the freethought cause. He alluded to the possible danger to the freedom of the press from the stringency of the law of libel.—Madame Burgwitz then effectively rendered Crouch's fine song, "Kathleen Mavourreen," and the proceedings concluded with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne." Much gratification was expressed at the success of the gathering, and at the thought that such meetings would be continued every year. The handshaking in the hall and at the doors was worth seeing. Everybody seemed delighted with everybody and everything.

ACID DROPS.

Most of our readers will get their *Freethinker* by Good Friday. That is supposed to be the anniversary of the Crucifixion, though the date varies with the moon, and the Christians call it *Good*. Their God died eighteen hundred and fifty-six years ago, and they celebrate the unfortunate event in the most rollicking manner. Really it is too bad. They might show a little more decency. Why not call it Bad Friday? Perhaps that sounds unlucky. Or Black Friday? But perhaps that suggests the companion of Robinson Crusoe. Anyhow, Christians might find an alternative to the present method; for it certainly seems unnatural to commemorate the murder of your best friend, or your elder brother, with riotous festivities; while calling the dreadful anniversary Good Friday is what Rabelais would have styled *sanglante dérision*.

When the Christians eat their hot cross-buns, they little think they are keeping up an ancient Pagan custom. But so it is. Jacob Bryant derived the Good Friday Bun from the sacred Cakes which were offered at the Arkite temples. Sacred bread was offered to the gods by the Greeks. It is described as a cake with a representation of two horns. A similar rite obtained in Egypt, and was imitated by the Jewish women, as may be seen from Jeremiah vii., 18; xlv., 18, 19. Here, as elsewhere, the cross had probably a phallic significance, and Friday happens to be the day which is dedicated to Venus. Hence the custom of eating fish on Friday; Venus being the goddess of love, and the fish the emblem of fecundity.

But the great Christian cross is not on the Good Friday Bun. It is on the back of the jackass, just the place where you would expect to find it. Christians have always been proud of this asinine proof of their faith. Indeed, they concocted a legend about it. Jesus Christ, they said, rode into Jerusalem on a mule, and ever since then the donkey species has been marked with the Savior's symbol. The legend forgot to explain how the whole species was biologically affected by the particular donkey on which Jesus took his final ride.

The Jews have been celebrating their Passover. Christians tell us that festival is a monument commemorating the Lord having slain the firstborn of Egypt and having passed over those of the House of Israel. As, however, many ancient nations celebrated a similar festival when the sun passed over the vernal equinox, let us hope this is only one more of the many calumnies the Jews uttered against Jehovah.

The Christian Evidence Society is circulating a little pink document among the faithful, and a copy has fallen—somehow—into our hands. It is very amusing, with a curious blend of piety and commerce, and it displays all the logic of the Society's position. Formerly, it appears, the Society was "viewed by multitudes of Christian people with doubt, or even dislike." But all that is changed, and its services are "highly valued and heartily welcomed." Yet, singular to relate, the Society's popularity is marked by a "decreasing exchequer." In these distressing circumstances it makes "a solemn appeal," first for cash, and next for prayers. Of course money takes precedence. That is natural, for you must live to pray; and how can you live, in these degenerate days, without the one thing needful? Still, prayer is valuable too—in its way, you know, in its way; and the Society begs its friends to ask the Lord to prompt people to subscribe, especially during "March and April of this year"—that is, two months before the annual report and balance-sheet.

Excellent! Messrs. Engstrom and Waterman, whose salaries are at stake, and who sign the pink document, are good hands at this business. They appeal to the Lord, and to his children who have long purses, with such a serious and disinterested air, that we cannot help wishing them a partial success. We hope, at any rate, their friends will "join with them in united intercession to God." There's no harm in prayer, and there may be some good, when you put your requirements in print. Nor shall we cry if the funds roll in, for the C. E. S. is a Society in Aid of Free-thought. The more it stirs up the question of Christian Evidences the more it exposes their inadequacy, and the more it suggests doubts that might not otherwise have entered into orthodox heads. Its apologists always remind us of the French proverb, *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*.

The C. E. S. has "just made the following appointments." The Rev. A. J. Harrison, a scholar and a gentleman, of whom we have every reason to speak with respect, is to act as Lecturer and Secretary for Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland. Mr. Wise, late of London, is to demolish Free-thought in Liverpool and Birkenhead. The third appointment is the most important—Mr. H. J. Reid "as representative of the society for obtaining funds." Curiously, very curiously, *funds* is spelt without a capital.

Canon Liddon preached at St. Paul's last Sunday afternoon on Judas Iscariot, a theme which is worthy of his eloquence. There are thousands of Judases in pulpits, men who take big salaries to preach "Blessed be ye poor." Jesus died on the cross, and they live on it. There's the difference.

Judas, however, in Canon Liddon's opinion, is typical of infidelity, which "goes for" Jesus Christ in obedience to its overmastering sinful passions. This is the old argument. Unbelievers, especially militant ones, are bad characters; they attack religion because it frowns on their moral depravity. Just as though there were not moral depravity enough in any Christian sect to sink all the infidel societies in existence.

Judas, by the way, is a much-abused man. He betrayed Jesus; that led to the crucifixion, and that to the Atonement. Judas, therefore, by pushing Jesus on to his death, was as much our Redeemer as his Master.

The new Prayer-books are constructed to go into the waistcoat pocket. They are also provided with a place to hold a small coin, and so relieve a lady from the necessity of fumbling in her pocket for the collection. These improvements may be carried still further, and we may find the pocket Prayer-book devised to hold lozenges, tooth-picks, and even matches.—*Weekly Dispatch*.

In the House of Commons, Sir W. Hart-Dyke, in answer to Mr. Cobb, who asked a question with respect to the Rev. F. H. Watson having examined the children in the Board School at Smithfield in the Apostles' Creed, said that during the discussion on the Cowper-Temple clause that creed was mentioned by the author of the clause as one which could be taught in Board Schools on the ground that it was not the property of any particular denomination, but belonged to

all Christendom. This view of the case had since obtained the sanction of successive heads of the department. So it appears that because all Christendom believes the nonsense that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and descended into hell, Christians may insist upon teaching these salutary beliefs as matters beyond the sphere of dispute.

Benjamin Spencer has been personating Lord Randolph Churchill, and the magistrates have found him insane. Several persons, in religious history, have personated God Almighty; and one of them, at least, instead of being found insane, is worshipped throughout Christendom.

Alderman Sir Robert Fowler, of pious and ever-blessed memory, is one of the bosses of an English Society for converting the people of Paris to the sweet religion which leads to the beautiful expression, "Kick him out," when a Free-thought member of Parliament is trying to take his lawful seat.

No London paper but the *Star* took any notice of the Secular Federation dinner on Monday evening, and the *Star* report was a skimpy and not too accurate one. Had half or quarter as many people dined to celebrate a small political event, the press would have given it attention. Free-thought will continue to suffer from this conspiracy of silence for a long while yet.

The Rev. John Robertson, of Stonehaven, has been preaching to a crowded congregation at Glasgow. His eccentricities are far more attractive than the sober old sermons of the holy Kirk. The modern Godites are delighted when they hear Mr. Robertson parodying a Jacobite song in this fashion:—

Follow thee, follow thee, wha wadna follow thee,
King of all trustful hearts, bonnie Prince Jesus.

Still more consumedly do they laugh when Mr. Robertson says he "believes the Westminster Confession of Faith, because he never read it." That's the style. Go it Robertson; play the clown in all the pulpits, and drown Christianity in derision and contempt.

Our pious contemporary, the *British Weekly*, evidently feels severely the blows of Prof. Huxley against the Christian Evidences. It accuses him of "a furious, savage, blinding hatred of Christianity."

The orthodox Baptists are wild with Dr. Clifford for lecturing at South Place Institute on Sunday afternoon. Their denunciations, however, only secured him a bumping audience and hearty cheers.

The Church Extension Association put out a monthly pamphlet in which it calls the School Boards "Infidel." Yet it applied to the Nottingham School Board for grants on behalf of a school which it had taken over. The School Board refused and the matter created a considerable squabble between the Church and Dissenting members.

Here are some passages from the second catechism of the Rev. Mr. Grace, who was reprimanded by his bishop for teaching the doctrine of the Prayer-Book, that "all heresy and schism is deadly sin," and that consequently a dissenter is to be classed with a thief. Mr. Grace's catechism asks: "Is the Church the best form of religion worship? A. The Church is not comparative, but is the only form of worship in this country having divine authority; all others are the result of wrong interpretations, perverted or mis-applied texts. Q. Is there any alternative between the Church and Atheism. A. No middle state is tenable. Non-conformists will relish this second catechism as little as they did the first.

This Rev. Mr. Gace seems to be a curious fellow. The other Sunday he observed a person taking notes of his sermon. He said he was not going to have his sermons sold in the streets and peremptorily ordered the gentleman to put by his pencil or he would "close the service at once." The offending person immediately rose and left the Church.

Last week the parish church of Cowden, Kent, was seriously damaged by the lightnings of the Lord. The spire was struck and a large portion of the steeple carried away

The roofing shingles were scattered all over the village. The sudden flash and apparent bursting of flames from the steeple greatly alarmed the inhabitants. Mr. Tindall, the vicar's son, and a friend who was with him, had narrow escapes. They were at the moment of the shock standing within the tower, upon the beams from which the bells are hung; but, fortunately, they were uninjured. Some damage was caused to the hammer of the great bell, and to the interior of the church. When the Lord is in his tantrums at the progress of infidelity, he won't even look after his own churches,

Another church, that of Walkhampton, has been struck and much damaged by lightning. Large stones were dashed over a hundred yards, and a pinnacle of the church crashed through the roof on to the organ, where the daughter of the vicar a few minutes previously had been seated.

Finkelton Wesleyan Chapel, Workington, has been entirely destroyed by fire. The Lord is, perhaps, getting confused in the multitude of sects, and is unable to distinguish his own buildings for preservation.

At Java there is a plague of tigers. In some places they have depopulated the country, the inhabitants in some cases leaving the mainland to live on an island. The tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works, and he preserves the tigers from the Javanese by inculcating a superstition that it is unlucky to kill one.

The late Henry Ward Beecher's house and grounds have been sold for 75,000 dols. The handsome mansion alone cost him 70,000 dols. He could be very eloquent upon the text, "Lay not up to yourselves treasures upon earth." Spurgeon is a gentleman of similar kidney.

The Rev. J. H. Skewes, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Liverpool, publishes a story to the effect that Sir John Franklin's remains in the Arctic regions were discovered by a supernatural revelation. Such an allegation, made for the first time forty years after the alleged communication, subjects his story to reasonable suspicion. But the Rev. J. H. Skewes can say that he is in no worse case than the gospel testimony to the miracles, which was certainly not published within the same length of time from the events professed to be narrated, nor, like his, in the country where the events are said to have occurred.

The Catholics always say that Satan was the first Dissenter. Mr. J. A. Picton, M.P., has, however, been preaching on Paul the Founder of Nonconformity. True, Paul was a nonconformist to the doctrines of the twelve apostles, about whom he spoke so slightly; but he objected to nonconformity to his own views, and cursed those who preached any other gospel.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury visited St. John's Church, Norwood, recently, he desired the vicar to put out the candles which had been lighted for the occasion. The action is considered significant in view of the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln. It is significant also in quite another sense than he can have intended.

An article in the *Westminster* on "The Apple and the Ego of Woman," casually mentions that "in 1838 the then Bishop of London, forbade ladies to go to Wheatstone's Lectures on Electricity." Barring the bad policy of forbidding ladies anything we believe the bishop was wise in his generation. To let women once concern themselves in matters outside religion and attention to man, is to fly in face of Paul's direction, that if they want to know anything they are to apply to their husbands, and to open the flood-gates of feminine freethinking.

The Rev. Thomas Champness, editor of *Joyful News*, says he has been asked to partly support a village school in India, which should be called Joyful News School. He declines, and says, "Our mission is not to educate so much as to evangelise. Our men are not, many of them, scholarly enough to be, even if we wished it, efficient teachers of anything but that whereunto they were called, viz., the 'Way to Salvation.'" Just so. Christians will send to "the heathen" religion which they don't want and won't have,

but will not help them in the matter of secular education, which they do want and are willing to receive.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, editor of the *Methodist Times*, now says that Dr. Duff was quite wrong in urging missionaries to concentrate their efforts on the Brahmins, since they are not converted and only use their knowledge against Christianity. Mr. Hughes says the gospel in India must be preached, as at first, to the poor. Does he not know that the poor in India are under the influence of the Brahmins, and that even when any of the inferior castes are converted, that conversion is only a greater hindrance to the acceptance of Christianity by the more educated classes?

Mr. Mason Long, who a short time since was the proprietor of a large gambling house in northern Indiana, spoke from a Presbyterian pulpit in this city last Sunday evening. Mr. Long retired from the faro business 52,000 dollars ahead, and will now devote himself to gospel temperance and the extirpation of the gambling habit.—San Francisco *Freethought*.

The late Lord Carlisle was insane during the last thirty years of his life, and he never possessed an average share of intelligence, being the only stupid member of a singularly gifted and brilliant family. Lord Carlisle was brought up as a clergyman in order that he might be inducted into the rich family living of Londesborough, and his mental condition was even then so unsatisfactory that Archbishop Vernon-Harcourt was requested to be kind enough to oblige Lord and Lady Carlisle by ordaining their son privately in the chapel at Castle Howard, and Sydney Smith was present on the occasion, and preached the ordination sermon.—*Truth*.

The wife of the Rev. Henry Overy, vicar of St. Veep's, Cornwall, who wants a judicial separation from her husband, among other things accused him of blasphemy in reference to a sermon of his own. He appears, however, to have been taken under the protecting wing of the Bishop of London, who gave him a situation away from his wife. The case has been adjourned for a separation deed to be agreed upon.

The Rev. James Evans, curate of St. Stephen's, Poplar, who was charged with taking away a girl for an immoral purpose, appears to be a married man. The facts were undisputed, but the jury were unable to agree as to the girl's age, and the case is again adjourned.

The Rev. J. S. McKay, clerk of the Free Synod of Caithness and Sutherland, has put forth a new theory of the evictions of crofters in the Highlands. He explains that it is all on account of Sabbath breaking. Sabbath desecration brought a curse not only on families, but on the whole community. He knew the chief cause of eviction arose from Sabbath profanation. Now that the selected instrument of an offended Providence has spoken, the Scotch know what to expect if they go on in the path of Sabbath profaning.

Even the ministers are beginning to be ashamed of the puerility of their bogey Hell and Devil. Spurgeon laments them, few of them will preach the good old doctrine, and some, in the columns of the *British Weekly*, openly repudiate them. It is now the plan of the pulpits to say: Be good, not out of fear for the divine wrath, but out of gratitude to the Creator for his goodness. As though "the creation" did not show as much wickedness as good, and there could be no possible inference that if we followed the footsteps of the Creator we should certainly do as much good as ill.

The Rev. Morris Jacobs, in his lecture on Jewish Ethics at South Place Chapel, of course, highly praised the morality of his tribe. He cited precepts of much elevation from the Talmud, which, indeed, contains sufficient to show that Christian ethics were not so original as is popularly supposed. But the lecture failed to show, what is so evident from the Bible, viz., that later Jewish ethics were a growth from ruder and more barbarous beginnings.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, April 21, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 7, "Blasphemy: a Reply to the Bigots in the House of Commons."

April 28, Camberwell.

May 5, Manchester; 12, Milton Hall; 19, Milton Hall; 26, Camberwell.

June 8, N. S. S. Conference; 23, Hall of Science, London; 30, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

THE *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.

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.

It being contrary to post office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

H. SHARP.—A man with a name like yours ought not to be taken in by pious inventions. Colonel Ingersoll's daughters have not been "brought up to the Church of England." Their family Bible is a copy of Shakespeare.

ATHEIST.—We have absolutely no knowledge of God, and we know no one who has. We therefore decline to profess a belief where we and our neighbors are all equally ignorant.

HODGSON COLLINS.—You say you voted for the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Oakenshaw Literary Institute because you regard its principles as pernicious. Yet you resent being called a bigot. Well now, we regard Christian principles as pernicious, and we are confident you would apply the objectionable epithet to us if we sought to expel your journals from public institutions. Remember the lines of Robert Burns:

"O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us."

We advise you, as Burns advised the Devil, to "tak a thocht an' mend."

ARNOLD HALL.—It seems to us that Secular Societies should keep clear of clubs, except under very special circumstances. The social element, which is invaluable as an adjunct, is an unmitigated evil when it swallows everything else; and that is what generally happens in clubs, where the subscription is nominal, and profits have to be realised from drinking and dancing.

FOUND.—A leather cigar-case, left in Bridge House Hotel, at the dinner of the London Secular Federation. To be had on application to Mr. A. Thomas, 128A Grosvenor Park, Camberwell.

B. INGHAM congratulates us, on behalf of himself and his wife, on our enlargement to twelve pages, and says he shall take an extra copy weekly for circulation among his friends. He voted for discontinuing the Bible Sketches, but says his children will miss them. We hear the same on all hands, and we feel that the Sketches *must* appear occasionally—good ones if possible—to save the little ones from accepting solemn absurdities in a spirit of "reverential calm."

A. C. GASK writes, "The discussion in the House on the Blasphemy Laws, coupled with Friday's debate at Camberwell, has, I hope, changed a *laissez-faire* Freethinker into a militant one." Our correspondent suggests that Freethinkers should pull out and read their copies of this journal in trains, cars and buses, and get into conversation with their fellow passengers. The result would be a proof that prejudice is very blind, and that Freethinkers are not the monsters they are supposed to be.

ON THE WAR PATH.—Your indignation is very natural. But why invoke the aid of law, that is the policeman, to rectify every wrong? The moralisation of wealth under the pressure of public opinion—the real ruler—is going on rapidly. People do not suffer more than they did; the cry for redress shows impatience where an abject satisfaction once prevailed.

F. FOSTER.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.

C. E. FORD.—Such an activity must be useful to the cause, and we thank you on its behalf. Brighton is not the most promising field for Freethought propaganda, and the success scored there is consequently all the more remarkable.

J. G. SMITH.—Glad you are so pleased with our extra pages.

W. C. SAVILLE writes, "I have long wished to see the *Freethinker* enlarged, and I am truly gratified to find that wish is at length gratified. I can only hope now that the cause of Freethought will prosper in like proportion."

A. KING.—Glad to hear such good news. Keep working, and make the West Ham Branch a beacon to the benighted district.

F. GOODWIN, a mercantile sailor, says our illustrations started his Atheism, and he has found them very useful among his ship-mates.

L. B., writing from one of Her Majesty's ships in the West Indies, says: "The *Freethinker* is looked for every mail by a majority of the ship's company, and last week they seemed disappointed at finding no picture. I hope the pictures will be continued. Sailors are not so squeamish as some people. My *Comic Bible Sketches*, Parts I. and II., have been worn out in passing round the ship."

EX-RITUALIST.—We value your congratulations on "the immense improvement" in our "weekly blasphemer." Thanks for the verse, which shall appear in our next.

RECEIVED.—Freethought—Liberator—Freethinkers' Magazine—Chat—Le Danton—Open Court—Brighton Times—Freidenker—Nottingham Guardian—Bulletin des Sommaires—Secular Thought—Joyful News—Weekly Times and Echo—Edinburgh Evening Dispatch—La Raison—Nottingham Evening News—Glasgow Herald—Lucifer—Poverty Bay Herald.

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.

We give a report elsewhere of the London Secular Federation's first annual dinner. The gathering was a splendid success, and far exceeded our most sanguine expectations. We beg to remind the diners of the President's appeal for funds. The Federation is in want of the sinews of war for this year's campaign. Up to the present the bulk of subscriptions has come from the provincial donors. This is not creditable to Londoners, and we hope they will promptly send an earnest of their faith to Mr. R. O. Smith, the honorary treasurer, 142 Old Street, E.C.

The Federation, we may add, is managed very economically. From top to bottom—or side to side, whichever is preferred—the workers give their services, and are only too glad to labor for its success. But there are necessary expenses, such as printing, which is a heavy item; and these expenses can only be met by hard cash.

OUR enlargement to twelve pages seems to have given universal satisfaction. The change, of course, involves an increased expenditure, and we venture to appeal to our friends to help us in making the experiment successful. How they may do this will be seen from "How to Help Us" on another page.

DESPITE the bad weather, and the approaching holiday, there was a capital audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Come to Jesus." This evening (April 21) Mr. Foote lectures there again. But, instead of the subject on the bills, he will discourse on "Blasphemy; a Reply to the Bigots in the House of Commons."

ACCORDING to *Secular Thought*, Toronto, Mr. Foote's *Christianity and Progress* has given such satisfaction to one of its Canadian readers that he undertakes to recoup Mr. Watts, who reprints it over there, if he offers the whole of the remaining copies at five cents.

INFIDEL Paris is far ahead of Christian London in every-kind of public spirit and organisation. There are eighty free libraries scattered over the city, and during 1888 the number of books taken home to read by the visitors was over 2,000,000. Paris is godless, but Paris reads.

THE West Ham Branch opened its new premises on Sunday evening, when Mr. R. Forder, delivered an excellent address. Mr. D. Colville, writing to us on the subject, says:—"Many thanks for your kind notice in the *Freethinker*. It helped to bring us an audience that would have filled the hall three times over. We were sorry to have to send so many away, but nearly all the members came out to make room for others. We sold a lot of literature, and could not supply the demand for the *Freethinker*. Best of all, we made eighteen new members."

THE Committee appointed at Newcastle has adopted, with slight alterations, the constitution of the London Secular Federation, and May 5 is fixed for the first meeting under these rules of the Council of the Northern Secular

Federation. We hope every Branch in Northumberland and Durham will join, and that, after a good open-air campaign during the summer, the Federation will organise a vigorous winter's work indoors. We shall be happy to give publicity in these columns to its notices and appeals.

MR. E. T. GARNER, one of our young London lecturers, has been winning golden opinions at Brighton, where he discoursed on behalf of the local Branch on "Life's Best Guide." He had a good reception, and he delivered a good lecture, judging from the report in the *Brighton Times*—which, by the way, is a Tory paper.

MR. C. CILWA, editor of the *Danton*, sends us a little Republican and Freethought Calendar in French. It being the Calendar adopted by the French Republic, it is equally adapted to any year. M. Cilwa has increased the value of the Calendar by inserting the names of the heroes and martyrs of Freethought on the days of their birth or death. A history of calendars is given, in which the *Calendrier Republicain* is explained. A preface is contributed by Dr. Gabarra, editor of the *Tronada*. We hope the work will have a large circulation on the continent, and it is not without its interest here, little likely as it is that we shall adopt the Republican Calendar.

THE Liberation Society holds its Triennial Conference on the first of May.

A BUST of Dr. Priestley has at length been put in the Unitarian church at Philadelphia, where he attended early in the century, and which was also attended by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and other eminent men, who patronised Unitarianism as offering the least objections to their more pronounced heresy. We shall shortly offer our readers a portrait of Dr. Priestley together with a sketch of his life.

RABBI WISE, of Cincinnati, is one of the few Jews who speak out against the falsities of Christianity. In our *Jewish Life of Christ* we have quoted some pregnant words of his on the mythical nature of the account of the trial of Jesus and his execution at the passover, when the Jews never allowed executions. Rabbi Wise has recently been writing on the alleged prophesy of a virgin birth (Is. vii., 14). He impugns the English translation and says:—

"Ha-Almah does not mean "a virgin;" it means the maiden, or this young woman.

"Harah does not mean 'shall conceive;' it means she is with child, as is evident from the parallel passage, Genesis xvi., 11; hence she was no virgin.

"Veteledeth is not in the future tense; it is the present participle, feminine gender; not "she shall bear a son;" it means (as the next verb proves) 'and thou (woman) bearest a son' (now or shortly hereafter).

"Vekarath does not mean 'and she shall call;' it means 'thou (woman) callest his name.'

"Emanuel is not Jesus; he is not called so anywhere. The translator, following Matthew, makes that verse all in the third person, while the whole verse is actually second person, feminine.'

MR. DILLWYN'S motion on Welsh Disestablishment comes on on the 14th of May, and will be pressed to a division.

OUR Spanish correspondent writes:—"In La Guayra (Venezuela) a Freethought paper has just been started to the great horror of the sky-pilots. It is called *El Libre-Pensador* (the *Freethinker*). By the same mail we hear that the Freethinkers of Ecuador have managed at last, and under terrible difficulties, to establish also a Freethought paper in their capital. It goes under the beautiful name of *La Verdad* (Truth). Bye-the-bye, one word about Ecuador. This republic is, of all the South American ones, the most bigoted and superstitious. The priests govern the country throughout, and woe to those who agree not with them in word and deed! When a priest has made his "pile" out there, he can become, if he chooses, a bishop without any further ceremony. We have heard of an individual who had been bishop of Cuenca (Ecuador) for the last five years, and who came to Europe to pay skinny Leo XIII. a visit. He introduced himself to the Pope as bishop of Cuenca, but His Holiness immediately dismissed him, declaring he did not know the town of Cuenca existed,

and furthermore he had never appointed any one bishop of Ecuador. After much squabbling, matters were amicably settled. The Pope received a handsome cheque, and his visitor is now, not bishop, but archbishop of Ecuador."

MR. ALMIR ALI has in the press *The Life and Teachings of Mohammed, with a History of the Early Caliphate*. The work will contain an account of the religious and philosophical sects among the Mussulmans; the Majoralty of the Buyides; their place in the history of Islam; and a sketch of Moslem literary and intellectual achievements. These are too little known to the Christian world, which little suspects how much it owes to the followers of "the impostor."

THE *Freethinkers' Magazine* for April contains an excellent steel portrait of Judge R. B. Westbrook, President of the American Secular Union. Among the articles of our contemporary is an excellent one on "The Logic of a Miracle," by L. K. Washburn, who concludes that "Jesus was born a man, lived a man, and died a man, or else he was never born, never lived, and never died." The nonsense about Bacon being the author of Shakespeare seems still to trouble our American friends.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that may remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our permanent placards, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (7) Do one of the above, or all of them if you can.

IS CHRISTIANITY THE FOE OF LIBERTY AND PROGRESS?

Debate between MR. G. W. FOOTE and MR. W. ROSSITER.

On Friday, April 12th, the Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell was crowded with an attentive audience who listened to a debate upon the above subject. Fewer Christians appeared to be present, and there was certainly less of the clerical element, than at Mr. Foote's debate with the Rev. H. B. Chapman upon the same subject in the same hall last summer.

At eight o'clock the chair was taken by the Rev. H. B. Chapman, who thanked the Camberwell Secularists for their courtesy in asking him to preside. It was a greater pleasure to hear others than oneself, since one very often said extremely foolish things. As chairman he should be perfectly impartial and without an opinion of his own. He supposed a vote would be taken at the close. Mr. Foote would have the most difficult task, that of opening the debate in a speech of half an hour.

MR. FOOTE, who was received with prolonged applause, prefaced his remarks by saying that Freethinkers were not in the habit of taking a show of hands in a discussion of this kind. That was a settling of the question by mob law. We do not believe in the verdict of majority in the high court of reason. True, in the long run, questions are decided by the majority of competent persons, but, more especially as the complexion of the audience showed that any vote would be unlikely to rest with Mr. Rossiter's side, he protested against any such method of ending the debate. He asserted that Christianity was the foe of liberty and progress. It was a plain proposition. He did not believe in dexterous ambiguities which only concealed the issues. At the same time, he guarded himself from the supposition that he contended that Christianity has never done any good, or that there

is nothing beautiful in the New Testament. If any creed were utterly destitute of good, it would soon sink. Unfortunately, the evil of creeds is usually interwrought with the good, and whereas from the pulpits only the good is dilated upon, it is also necessary to emphasise the evil. On the whole, Christianity has been, is, and must be the foe of liberty and progress. Look round and compare the state of society with that four or five centuries ago. The masses were hewers of wood and drawers of water to their social and ecclesiastical superiors. There was no science, which is the vital distinguishing feature of our civilisation, and which, taken away, we should return to the barbarism from which we have emerged. We must regard the attitude of Christianity to science. The New Testament was saturated with the unscientific spirit. Jesus and the writers of that book were in complete ignorance of science. What do you find? Miracles on almost every page; a theory of madness and other diseases being possession by devils; power attributed to prayer—which modern science found to be futile. Rénan well says that the doctrine of Providence is perishing, less from argument than because it is found to be contradicted by daily experience. The early Christians frowned on science. The first council held under a Christian emperor did not end without decreeing death to heretics. In the sixth century Cosmos Indicopleustes taught that, according to the true theory, the earth was square and flat, that the sky rested on mountains at the sides, and that the sun went under the earth by night and came up the other side in the morning. This was the theory which replaced the science of Alexandria until modern science, through the Arabians, led to Copernicus, Galileo, and Bruno, who were hindered, persecuted, and burnt, but whose labor secured to us much of the blessings we to-day enjoy. Copernicus, whom Luther called an old fool, delayed his book for twenty years; Galileo was imprisoned, and Bruno burnt at the stake. It was idle to say that Christianity was not responsible. He would not hold it responsible for individuals, for a bad son or a bad father; but Christianity is and must be held responsible for its corporate action. It only ceased from such persecution when the spirit of Freethought and humanity declared it should act so no longer. What was the treatment of Darwin in our own day? He had a compilation of the revilings of Darwin which went on in our day. Now the Church has buried Darwin in Westminster Abbey. It was the only portion of him they would ever have. The Church must patronise the victor or itself be crushed. The question is, What does it do before the victory? What has it done when the new truth came into the world? In the name of him who died on Calvary, it has made a Calvary for every hero of liberty and progress. It has always opposed the spirit of Freethought. Paul says, "If any man preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." The beloved disciple in his second epistle said "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." And Jesus says "whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment than for that city." Could any words be fuller of the spirit of intolerance and bigotry? What do we find in every Christian country? Laws against heresy. Who made them? Christians. Who suffer for them? Freethinkers. He was justified then in taking the words of Jesus. The tree is to be known by its fruit. The fruit of Christianity is persecution, and the tree must have a fatal defect down to its very roots. Persecution is the worst crime against humanity, for who are the victims? Not those who tread the customary smoothed path, but the men of originality and independence, the salt of their generation, its real saviors. By the constant elimination of these, society is stultified and reduced below the level nature would otherwise have reached. Christianity from the beginning till now has had this spirit, only now it relaxes its hold upon the throat of reason because there are other forces which compel it. He failed to see that Christianity has in any way secured political freedom. For one clergyman, like the chairman, who supports the cause of the people, there are twenty against it. Paul says, the powers that be are ordained of God—a doctrine well calculated to play the game of the tyrant. Garibaldi when he swept Bomba from Naples was flying in the face of the New Testament. Christianity never abolished slavery, but allowed it to exist for a thousand years; it was guilty of abusing its high opportunities and must be held responsible. What it did in late years could not weigh against the evil of centuries.

The scale of its good deeds kicked the beam. Then he came to woman. The home was the ark of civilisation, and there was no true home without the equality of man and wife. This was directly opposed to the scriptures. Sir Henry Maine showed that Christianity had not befriended woman. Would it be said that Christianity had to wait eighteen hundred years before emancipating woman? Mr. Foote then referred to the hurtful theological chaff of Christianity. He had read the Apostle's Creed often as a boy, and often five years ago when not a boy, and he found not a single sentiment in it that appealed to human wants and aspirations. St. Athanasius' creed also, a sublime specimen of the united wisdom of Christianity, and the Thirty Nine Articles; was there a single article that could usefully be put into the hands of a child. We cannot wonder that with so much chaff the sermons are windy.

Mr. ROSSITER, who was asked to speak up, said that if inclined to be frivolous he might make merry with much that Mr. Foote had said, but he desired as far as possible to see these matters through Mr. Foote's eyes, for though it is a startling proposition to say that Christianity is the foe of liberty and progress, if it is true it is desirable we should know it. In the history of this world we had never found a great reformer who did not follow in the steps of thoughtful men, and those were opposed to that proposition. He would ask Mr. Foote is it a mere chance that Christianity is at least nominally professed in all the countries that are the most advanced. He did not care which you say, whether that the most advanced countries are Christian, or that the Christian countries are most advanced; but he might reasonably ask what wonderful combination of principles it was that advanced civilisation in Christian countries, and what wonderful combination of principles kept it back in countries that were not Christian. Is it not near the truth to say that where Turkey has been driven back from Europe there the countries have made progress? Then he asked what Mr. Foote makes of the historians? Dean Milman and Dean Stanley may perhaps be dismissed as belonging to the Church, but there is Gibbon. Has it not been said that his wonderful book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, really records the rise and progress of Christianity? Where will you find a grander chapter than that which he devotes to this subject? Yet Gibbon is a witness to the fact that Christianity is the friend and not the foe of liberty and progress. There is Mr. Lecky, a living historian who ranks high and who has made himself an authority upon European morals. He is a powerful witness that Christianity is the friend rather than the foe of liberty and progress. The countries that stand in advance are nominally Christian. It is quite possible to select evidence in favour of any proposition. Mr. Foote should have given definitions of what he means by Christianity, and what by liberty and progress. Nineteen-twentieths of differences of opinion are caused by using words in different senses. If we start with common definitions, we are more likely to come to a common conclusion. Mr. Foote began speaking of four or five centuries ago. He (Mr. Rossiter) did not see what that had to do with the question. Then he said science was the basis of progress. Is that so? Does that mean that there is no progress without science? Did the Greeks and the Romans have much science? In the broader sense of knowledge, the old Greeks had as much almost as now. He doubted if modern science did not cause as much suffering to the really poor as it does comfort and luxury to the really rich. Then what has the theory of Cosmos about the sun going down on one side of the earth and coming upon the other to do with the subject? Mr. Foote spoke of Copernicus and Galileo. He (Mr. Rossiter) did not by any means feel assured that Galileo was imprisoned and tortured. When I tell you that his imprisonment consisted in living in the house of a cardinal, with a sentinel at the door, you will see he was not so hardly treated. The book of Copernicus was printed at the expense of a cardinal, and dedicated to the Pope. Galileo was an old man, and was treated shamefully, he admitted. Luther called Copernicus an old fool. Well, Luther was a very free-spoken gentleman. Lord Bacon was not a religious reformer, and he rejected the notions of Copernicus. You should read Milton's *Paradise Lost*: it would give some sense of the grace and refinement that was almost lost in London in those days. Yet you do not know from it whether the earth went round the sun, or the sun round the earth. Then we come to Darwin. He did not know how Christianity was responsible for the treatment of Darwin, who lived as happy, peaceful, and Christian a life as any manner

of man, and who was so perverse as to subscribe to the Church Missionary Society—a thing he (Mr. Rossiter) would never do. Darwin's views, of course, had to fight their way. Some friends of his own were Darwinians before Darwin. It was no good placing reliance on Bible texts. (Laughter.) They might think him an old fool. They might be Lutherans, and the speaker Copernicus. In regard to slavery, he asked Mr. Foote to separate Christianity from Christians. Every authority places Christianity, as a power opposed to slavery, very high indeed. He did not recall any historian of value who did not place the services of Christianity very high. He thought Mr. Foote had not given sufficient attention to history. He would ask him to compare the position of women in Christian countries with the position of women in Greece. In Greek society the married women were non-existent; other women not married appeared in society. Had not Christianity remedied this? Let Mr. Foote read through Plato. Creeds represent only the popular opinion of those at the time these were drawn up. There was always a large minority opposed to every article of creeds. Mr. Foote said they could not usefully be put into the hands of a child. For one they were in agreement. But do you make children the standard? Are you going to restrict your literature to children? He had tried as far as possible to see the subject with Mr. Foote's eyes; but he said that what he brought was not enough. In conclusion, he again asked Mr. Foote to explain why all the leading countries were Christian.

Mr. Foote said that a debate was not of much use unless the second speaker took up and traversed the ground of the opener. Instead of doing so his opponent had asked him a number of questions. He had asked him one valuable request—a definition of terms. It was a pity Mr. Rossiter did not take the opportunity of defining them himself. Progress he was rather surprised any one should need a definition of. By progress he meant better food, better clothes, better houses, better sanitation, better education, better books, better everything. By Liberty he meant the exercise of the right to think as you please. By Christianity he meant that form of religion which looked upon the Old Testament as divine and the New Testament as diviner still. Mr. Rossiter recommended him to read Milton and Plato. The recommendation was not needed. In Milton's finest prose work, "The Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," Milton settled the question of Galileo having been imprisoned by stating that when he was in Italy he himself visited Galileo in prison. Mr. Rossiter would see that he, Mr. Foote, had not only read Milton but remembered what he had read.

The proposition which Mr. Rossiter found startling, really only put the issue plainly. When Christianity began by making war against Paganism, they might have known that evolution would necessitate the extirpation of one or the other, so Freethinkers knew their Freethought was antagonistic to Christianity. They did not expect to sweep it away in a short time. But however long the battle might be it could only end in one side or the other being completely subdued. Mr. Rossiter was unfortunate in appealing to the historians. Buckle had remarked that the fathers of history, those who had made it a science, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon and Voltaire were all sceptics. Then there was the great historian of British-India, James Mill, the Atheist, and the famed historian of Greece, Grote, the Atheist. He agreed that Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was really the story of the rise and progress of Christianity, for it was the decline and fall of the old civilisation which made the way for the new superstition. Mr. James Cotter Morison truly said that the creeds of Christendom arose in an age of barbarism, and that Christianity itself arose "amid the corruption and decay of the greatest civilisation which the human race had seen." Mr. Rossiter asked how it is that the most advanced nations are Christian. This was a question so purely local that it could only be asked here and at this time. Abyssinia had been a Christian country for fifteen hundred years; yet it is a great deal more backward than any of the chief Asiatic countries. It was far behind China in civilisation. If Christianity was the civilising principle, how is it that Abyssinia still remains barbarous? If the question had been asked when the soldiers of the Cross threw themselves against those of the Crescent, it would have been answered differently. How was it that then the Mohammedan nations were in advance of the Christian nations? Dr. Tylor, an eminent authority, said in his work on *Anthropology* that "Physical science might almost have disappeared if it had not been that while the ancient treasure of knowledge was lost to Christendom, the Mohammedan philosophers

were its guardians, and even added to its store." So local was the argument, that three centuries ago it would have been without force. If Christianity was divine, why did Europe have to wait for civilisation until the Jew doctors brought Mohammedan science and learning, and so opened the way for the blessings we now enjoy? It hadn't the blessing to give, but, with the true unscrupulousness of its creed, after having done its utmost to thwart science and wreck civilisation, it now claims these as its own gift. What it resisted with might and main, and could not conquer, it now pretends to patronise in the days of its triumph. Science rested in a select number of human heads and a certain number of books. If you destroy the books and cut off the heads, you would kill science; and this was what Christianity tried to do. The work of Copernicus was printed by a cardinal. Yes, there were Atheistical cardinals in those days. There was, for instance, Cardinal Bembo, who refused to read the epistles of Paul lest his barbarous Greek should injure his own Greek style. Mr. Darwin subscribed to a mission. He never subscribed for Christianity at home. He subscribed to send it to South American savages, for whom it was just about fit. Mr. Rossiter took us back to Greece for his argument about women. That was centuries before Christianity. He should have gone to Rome just before and after the life of Christ, while the empire and its laws were still Pagan. Sir Henry Maine, one of the greatest jurisprudents, pointed out in his *Ancient Law* that Christianity tended from the first to narrow the freedom of women; and he added that "no society which preserves any tincture of Christian institution is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman law."

Mr. ROSSITER: Sir Henry Maine has written a book on *Ancient Law*, in which he instances Christianity as having done an act of justice, having set right what was wrong. Mr. Foote sees in this the very reverse of what I see. Maine says that there were different forms of marriage in Ancient Rome, and it had come about through the carelessness of the guardians and the powerlessness of the husbands that wives did much as they liked. Such marriage was merely nominal. Marriage is not a thing to be played with in this way; it is a solemn thing. And Christianity did set its face against this liberty. He thought Maine infers and means to imply that it is to the credit of Christianity. Mr. Foote saw it in a different light. Mr. Foote complained that he did not reply to his opening speech. It was because on most of his points he agreed with him; but he did not give them enough. It is not enough to go upon when every important historian does allow that Christianity is the friend of liberty and progress. If Mr. Foote may select at will any set of facts, he may of course support any proposition. Christianity wherever you go is in advance. Mr. Foote spoke of Babylonian astronomy being fairly ahead, and of the Mahomedans having had superior civilisation. Is it so? It may be as I do not know the evidence. What country is in advance that is not Christian? Are the Mahomedans more humane, have they more regard for women? He would now look at Mr. Foote's definition, liberty was better food for the body and the mind. Very good. Liberty was the right to speak our thoughts. It is the duty of thinking wisely, correctly and fully. A man has no right to express his thoughts in any way unless he has taken some trouble to make himself acquainted with the facts of the case. "Christianity looked upon the Old Testament as divine and the New Testament diviner still." By Christianity he did not mean a belief in any propositions; he meant acting in the general spirit of Christ; it means caring for other people more than yourself. Carlyle said that Christianity was the reverse of political economy. It did not mean buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest. John Morley, a great man, defined it as a great change which came over the minds of people nearly two thousand years ago as to our ways of looking at things, making us care more for our duties than our rights. Goethe, a man who cared nothing for formal religion, said that Christianity is a height to which mankind having once attained, it can never descend. These were the views of great men. Christianity was a spiritual motive to right duty. Mill, the historian, was an atheist, but did Mill speak of Christianity the foe of liberty and progress? All the historians spoke of its power. Mr. Lecky, a man not to be classed with the upholders of formal creeds, testified to its merits.

Mr. FOOTE: Mr. Rossiter impugned his conduct of the debate. He selected some facts and arguments, and did so because he had but half an hour. With more time he would have brought a good deal more. Mr. Rossiter says you can prove anything. Yes, with a sufficient body of evidence. It

was like saying, "If you live longer you will see more." He did not see the use of these truisms. Christianity doesn't mean buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest—it was the reverse of this! He thought buying in the cheapest market right, so long as the cheapness was not produced unjustly. The man who buys in the dearest market ought to be a Christian. Christians care more for others than themselves. Then the number of Christians is remarkably few. A creed that aims too high is as bad as one that does not aim high enough. But Christianity was not as unselfish as it was represented. It holds out the hope of individual reward and the fear of individual punishment, and this stultifies and tends to make it a gospel of illimitable selfishness. Gibbon, whose name Mr. Rossiter took in vain, said Constantine patronised Christianity as a religion favorable to monarchs by its doctrine of submission. "The throne of the emperor," he says, "would be established on a permanent basis if all their subjects embracing Christian doctrine should learn to suffer and obey." Mr. Rossiter qualified liberty of speech. There was no such thing as perfect wisdom, even in the pulpits. Yet the preachers are so sure that all they say is true that they do not even allow a question. How was Mohammedanism superior at the time of the Crusades? With every mosque there was a school. Colleges were found in Spain and in the East, such as did not exist in Europe. In Spain the Arabs introduced a science superior to that then found in Christendom. But he would not take only the question of science, but the common ground of humanity. The Christians captured Jerusalem from the Mohammedans. The Mohammedans also captured Jerusalem from the Christians. How did they respectively act upon these occasions? When the noble Saladin died he left charities to be distributed among Christians, Jews and Mohammedans. When he captured Jerusalem, when, according to the rules of war, he might have slaughtered or enslaved the inhabitants, he stopped the slaughter. With his own money he ransomed the captives, and the only weeping was tears of joy. How did the Christians act? They destroyed all and in one of the mosques, the Mosque of Omar, where the people took refuge, the blood was knee-deep. Seventy thousand men, women, and children were slaughtered. Compare the action of Saladin, the follower of Islam, and Godfrey of Bouillon, the Christian, and then say whether the Mohammedan was not superior. (Applause.) The evils of Christianity had flowed from its doctrines. The doctrine of salvation by faith was responsible for much. Mr. Rossiter was, he believed, a member of the Church of England. The eighteenth article of that Church declares that they are accursed who presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature, for scripture only holds out the name of Jesus whereby men can be saved. The book of Homilies was a book enjoined to be read in Church, and which if some of the clergy preached from they would utter sounder orthodoxy and better English. The Book of Homilies says, "All the life of them that lack the true faith is sin, and nothing is good without him that is the author of goodness: where he is not, there is but feigned virtue, although it be in the best works. And St. Augustine, declaring this verse of the Psalm, *the turtle hath found a nest where she may keep her young birds*, saith, that Jews, heretics, and pagans do good works; they clothe the naked, feed the poor, and do other good works of mercy; but because they be not done in the true faith, therefore the birds be lost." There you have the good old staunch orthodox doctrine. Mr. Rossiter does not approve, because he lives in the age of men like Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. This doctrine narrows human sympathies. It has lit the fire of every stake, and in the name of God, the father of all, has burnt his children. Christianity, with its old doctrine of the fall, is retrograde. All progress is walking the wrong way. If the golden age is behind us, if the millenium can only be reached by supernatural means by the Lord descending in the air with the sound of trumpets, we are going exactly in opposition. We believe not that man has fallen but that he is ascending. We believe he is learning, and becoming better little by little. The knowledge of man's progress in the past gives a reasonable hope of progress in the future. Then there was the doctrine of future punishment in hell, a doctrine that had never made a rascal honest or stayed the hand of a murderer, but that had been devoutly believed by brigands, murderers, and rascals of all grades. This doctrine only tortured the tender and sensitive hearts. It had filled the world with melancholy, and insane asylums with

the victims. His own heart had been wrung with such an instance, and this damnable doctrine was the bottom of it all. Mr. Foote concluded with a rapid impeachment of the Bible. He did not wish to see it burnt but put in its proper place with the other so-called sacred books of the world. Held as divine, this book is a fetish. It abounds in self-contradictions and brutalities which should bring a blush of shame to its upholders. In the New Testament we have the sublimation of villainy in the doctrine of eternal torment. So long as the authority of this book is used to crush liberty of thought, to rob Free-thinkers of their rights, their children and their liberty, so long would they fight against this fetish and make Christians either repudiate its teachings or publicly confess their shame. (Loud applause)

Many persons now leaving the hall, Mr. Foote called upon all his friends to stay and listen to what Mr. Rossiter had to say.

Mr. ROSSITER: It is impossible in talking on so large a subject to come to common ground. In regard to marriage he was speaking of Greece before it was conquered by Rome. Moreover it had been said that the Greeks being subdued by the Romans yet subdued the minds of their conquerors. He was quite sure he did not mean to say it was the duty of a Christian to buy in the dearest market and sell in the cheapest. He disagreed with Mr. Foote about its being as bad to aim too high as too low. He thought it better to aim at the moon and miss than to aim at a haystack and hit. There are two schools of thought, the intuitive and utilitarian, and it seemed there always would be these two schools. As to what Gibbon says of Constantine, he would ask: Is it a complete reply to the whole commendation which Gibbon gives? He was not opposed to science, and never thought of such a notion as going to sea without a compass. Then as to the taking of Jerusalem, there might be something in it if those two instances are to be taken as fairly representative. But can you say that all the Mohammedans acted in that spirit. Then we have a definition of Christianity by the Church of England. Although he was a member of the Church of England, he would never say that those who don't accept this article are not Christians. He would never think of denying that the Catholics and those of the Greek Church are Christians.

Mr. FOOTE: The Greek Church and the Catholic Church do accept the doctrine.

Mr. ROSSITER: If by salvation by faith you mean that you must exactly believe as I believe, then I agree there is no hope in such a system; but if it means that there is no hope for men unless they accept a divine guide, I speaking as one of the intuitive school, am bound to accept it, and Mr. Foote, as one of the utilitarian school, is bound to deny. Then he quotes St. Augustine's doctrine. I do not think this is evidence. Historians have always spoken of the great influence of Christianity for good. I think it quite possible to estimate too highly the science Mr. Foote thinks so much of. If Christianity gives us the mind to do right, science shows the right way; but science also showed the right way to do wrong. If you look back through history calmly, you will find that every period of scientific discovery has been preceded by a great religious influence without which it would have been impossible. Till men's souls have been moved by a desire to know something outside this world, they have never been able to make any progress in science. You will find that science is based on religion; and more than that, there has never been any great period of scientific discovery without a religious re-awakening. Then there is the doctrine of future punishment. Mr. Foote—for I find he is a well-read man—knows better than I do the great modern change that has come, the denial of hell-fire. Read the theology of the last twenty years, and see the change that came to teach and take away a doctrine that was a kind of nightmare. He remembered a little sixteen-page pamphlet published thirty-five years ago by a teacher he revered and associated with all his thought of religion—by Denison Maurice, who was the Luther of this century, and who men were beginning to recognise as the prophet of our time, thanks to whose teachings we do not believe in the God of fear but of love.

A vote of thanks to the chairman, who responded in a little speech full of geniality and humor, closed the proceedings.

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