

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.

ON "CREATION"—(Continued).

To the Bishop of Carlisle.

You refer to the nebular hypothesis, my lord, as though you firmly embraced it; but you fail to recollect, or you forget to mention, that the great French astronomer Laplace, whose account of this luminous theory you summarise, was a convinced Atheist. You proceed to assert that there must have been "something" behind this "primitive cause of the existing cosmos." "Whence," you enquire, "came the particular constitution of the materials, and the laws by which the constituent particles of the matter are governed?" The sentence is extremely vicious. You are guilty of tautology, for the "constitution" of matter and its "laws" are the same thing. You are also guilty of begging the question, for in asking whence they came you assume their advent, which you may justly be called upon to prove. The *petitio principii* is a favorite fallacy with theologians. I find a beautiful instance in another part of your volume, where you innocently observe that "we cannot contemplate Creation, without regarding the Creator." The remark is a truism, my lord; Creator and Creation imply each other, and by designating the universe a Creation you beg the whole question at issue.

That matter began to be, or will cease to exist, it is easy to affirm, and as easy to deny; but all analogy points to its eternity. Science shows us that matter cannot be destroyed any more than it can be created, and force is never diminished although it assumes different manifestations. The presumption, therefore, is in favor of the everlasting existence of both, whether in the ultimate analysis they are co-eternals, or different aspects of the one infinite substance of the universe. I say the *presumption* is in its favor, and before that presumption can be shaken you must give solid reasons for supposing that the universe had a commencement. It is futile, my lord, to observe that its eternity is inconceivable, since it is equally impossible to conceive of its beginning or ending. Where experience fails us reason moves but blindly, and speculation has no other guide than the light of analogy. And what analogy lends the slightest color to your hypothesis of Creation? The highest mind of which we have any knowledge is the mind of man, and the mind of man cannot create, it can only conceive. The utmost man is able to do is to move matter from one position to another. He does so in conformity with his conceptions; but, like himself, his "creations" are not imperishable. The universe which produced him finally absorbs him; his proudest "creations" may last for a few thousand years, but the effacing hand of time is ever at work upon them, and sooner or later they disappear, unable to resist the claim of Nature who allows of no eternity but her own.

No. 407.

Recurring for a moment to your treatment of Genesis, I see you remark that "to all persons capable of forming an opinion, the chief doctrines of geology are now beyond the range of controversy." You admit the great antiquity of the globe and the slow evolution of living forms, and you proceed as follows:—

"Many persons, perhaps at one time almost all thoughtful persons, who read the account of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis, concluded that the change from chaos to cosmos, though gradual, was one soon brought about by several quickly succeeding fiat of the Almighty will, Geology teaches with irresistible force that this was not so."

Those thoughtful persons, my lord, who were nevertheless mistaken, paid the Scripture the compliment of supposing it meant what it said. They never suspected the wonderful elasticity of language in the grasp of theologians. They took the Bible, as you, my lord, are bound to take the Thirty-nine Articles, in the "literal and grammatical sense." Geology, therefore, was honestly resisted as impious, until a new and more dexterous race of commentators arose, in whose hands the time-honored language of Revelation became as plastic as clay in the hands of the potter or the sculptor, and capable of being fashioned into any form that suited the exigencies of the struggle between Reason and Faith.

Your position is that there is no "antagonism between the hypothesis of Evolution and the truth of Creation." Admitting the justice of your language, your position is impregnable. There cannot be antagonism between Evolution and any *truth*. But I deny the justice of your language. I say that you reverse the proper order of words. Evolution is the "truth" and Creation is the "hypothesis." Thus regarded they are not antagonistic, for there cannot be antagonism where there is no contact. You are, of course, free to assert, without even defining your terms, that a "spirit" works through the process of Evolution. You are likewise free to affirm that a "spirit" mixes the oxygen and nitrogen in the atmosphere, and the oxygen and hydrogen in water. Science is unable to contradict these statements, just as science is unable to dispute the meat-roasting power of the meat-jack. But, on the other hand, it does not trouble about what cannot be proved or refuted, and leaves metaphysical entities and quiddities to the irony of Swift or the raillery of Voltaire.

From Haeckel, my lord, you quote a strong passage against "purpose" in Nature; and you might have added that Darwin saw "no more design in Natural Selection than in the way in which the wind blows." Does it not occur to you that these lords of science, these satraps of magnificent provinces in her empire, know her more intimately than you do, and that what escapes their vigilant attention is in all probability rather fancy than fact? Your unpractised eye sees God everywhere; their practised eyes fail to detect his presence. Even other eyes than those of the great English and German biologists have been unable to perceive what to you is so



obvious. Sir William Hamilton, for instance, before Evolution challenged the public mind, declared "that the phenomena of matter, taken by themselves, so far from warranting any inference to the existence of God, would, on the contrary, ground even an argument to his negation." A very different writer, Cardinal Newman, confesses, "If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the same sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living busy world and see no reflection of its Creator." You, my lord, look through Nature up to Nature's God. I have your word for it, but I doubt if your vision is so telescopic.

That "volition originates," as you allege, is only true within certain limits. Volition does, indeed, originate fresh collocations of matter, but it originates nothing else. And when you say that volition "has no cause preceding itself," you are simply alleging that all volition is eternal, which is diametrically opposed to your own doctrine that the human will, the only one of which we have absolute knowledge, is a gift from God. You will find, my lord, an admirable discussion of this point in Mr. Mill's Essay on Theism. Volition, as he points out, only acts by means of pre-existing force, first within the body, and afterwards outside it. It does not answer, therefore, "to the idea of a First Cause, since Force must in every instance be assumed as prior to it; and there is not the slightest color, derived from experience, for supposing Force itself to have been created by a volition. As far as anything can be concluded from human experience, Force has all the attributes of a thing eternal and uncreated."

Your argument for a First Cause is completely answered in the same Essay. In reality, my lord, a First Cause is a contradiction in terms. Causes and effects only differ in their order of succession; both are phenomenal changes; every cause has been an effect, and every effect becomes a cause. Causation, indeed, only applies to the changes in Nature, without affecting its permanent substance. Your whole remarks on Causation betray an imperfect acquaintance with the subject or a dishonest trifling with your readers. Certainly "the idea of cause is in the mind itself," but how did it get there? You deny that it is generated by experience, and you add that "a moment's consideration will show that this cannot be so." Do you really suppose, my lord, that the Experiential philosophers, from Locke to Bain, have not given a moment's consideration to the question? Do you assert this of Herbert Spencer? Do you assert it of John Stuart Mill? Have you read the fifth and twenty-third chapters of the third book in Mill's *Logic*? If you have, I say you are taking advantage of your reader's ignorance; if you have not, you are unfitted for the task you have undertaken.

Thus far, my lord, you have not arrived at a Creator, since you have not proved Creation, nor even defined it in intelligible language. Were I, for the sake of argument, to grant that mind is an entity as well as matter, the presumption would be in favor of their eternal co-existence. Whatever Deity you affirm is shorn of the attributes of infinity; he cannot be infinite in power, at least, even if he be in wisdom and goodness, for he has an everlasting rival or an everlasting colleague. Nor are your difficulties ended here. The benevolence of your Deity is imperilled. It was the opinion of Plato that God is prevented from realising his beneficent designs by the inherent badness and intractable qualities of matter. But this view is easily confronted by an opposite dogma. Bentham was justified in saying, "I affirm that the Deity is perfectly and systematically malevolent, and that he was only prevented from realising these designs by the inherent goodness and incorruptible excellence of matter. I admit that there is not the smallest evidence for this, but it is

just as well supported, and just as probable as the preceding theory of Plato."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

### RITUALISM.

The trial of the Bishop of Lincoln has once more directed public attention to Ritualism. Nor is the attention undeserved. Considered simply as a matter of lighted candles or no candles on the altar, water or no water with the wine, rich vestments or plain nightgowns on the priests, it is an excellent theme for satire and might well furnish another chapter to Herr von Teufelsdröckh's *Philosophy of Clothes*.

But as Carlyle shows, this matter of clothes goes very deep. It lies at the basis of authority. The robes and wigs of the judge are an integral portion of the majesty of the law. Religion is largely made up of ritual. What calls out the devotion of the pious Catholic is not the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the Infallibility of the Pope. These command only assent. Devotion is fixed on the accustomed service of the church, the dimly lighted shrines, the solemn organ tones, the wafts of incense, the hymns of the surpliced choir, the fine building and the gorgeous vestments of the priests, separating them from beings of common clay. Such features lift worship out of the rut of every day common-place. Ritualism makes religion at once a spectacle and an entertainment. It is always found that as dogmas decline ritual advances; with the demand for less theology there has gone on in all the churches a demand for more attractive services. The more rottenness within, the more paint is needed on the outside.

It is noticeable that the Ritualistic movement has not only affected the Established Church, but the Nonconformist congregations also. Crosses over chapels, organs within them, rich architecture, with steeples, towers, stained glass windows, and other features which their Puritan forefathers would have considered dangerously approaching the confines of popery and idolatry, are now common among dissenters. Even that "mark of the beast," the clerical garb, is so frequently adopted by "ministers" who are not "clergymen," that one "cannot tell tother from which."

The Ritualistic movement has been aided from causes outside religion. The growing sense of beauty which has followed the decline of Puritanism has led to improvement in our homes as well as in our churches. The wealthy are found to demand a more costly article in religion as in other matters. The bare walls and barer service which sufficed for those filled with religious fervor will not content those with a higher standard of taste and less devotion.

But the chief interest of Ritualism lies not in its æstheticism, it lies in the connection between the outward form and the inner doctrine. The points for which Bishop King is being prosecuted are not simply matters of taste, but doctrinal. They are intended to express and enforce certain dogmas, such as the subordination of the laity to the priest and the radical difference between these two classes, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament and its consequent adoration. Ritualism, in short, is chiefly interesting as a revival of sacerdotalism and superstition, and as indicating a tendency to assimilate the Anglican to the Roman ceremonial and thus of introducing Romanism under the silent and insidious suasion of its ceremonial.

I am perfectly aware not only that the Ritualists repudiate this, but that some of the ablest opponents of Papal pretensions are found in the ranks of the High Church. But the fact remains that the numerous accessions to Romanism during the last half century have all come from that quarter. Those



who are on a mental path are not always the best judges of its destination. The ablest opponents of Atheism have been found in those who have virtually rejected supernaturalism. The desire for "Christian reunion" which occupies such a prominent position on the platform of the Ritualists, must, if it is realised at all, result in their subordination to the great Mother Church. That Church perceives this, and the progress of Ritualism and the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln are watched with the keenest interest from the Vatican.

The Roman Catholic Church has long understood the philosophy of Ritual. Society as Herbert Spencer shows is largely built upon ceremonial institutions. The statement of propositions only evokes questions and, that great adversary of blind belief, *reason*, but ceremonial holds by the sure bonds of habit, and pleasant associations clustered from childhood around the priest and the church, will oftentimes prove stronger than the whole force of reason can destroy. As Bassanio says "The world is still deceived by ornament." Most people love display. The dogmas? "Well never mind the dogmas, the music is capital and the curate looks just lovely." This is the disposition of many of the church attendants especially among the ladies, and it largely explains the growth of Ritualism. Let us confess it, Ritualism is an attraction and is a success. It must be met by the counter alterations of scientific and art education, and by intellectual culture. We doubt not it will then be seen that Ritualism only serves as a screen because the supposed objects of worship can no longer be revered, and that religion itself has no better foundation than that which lies in its superficial show.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### A CELESTIAL LAY.

In the long calm ere time or world had birth,  
The Eternal lay at ease in darkness drear;  
Chaos there was, but yet no sign of earth  
Appeared, or e'er seemed likely to appear.  
Of everything but God there was a dearth  
Complete, and he, as we are taught, a mere  
Existence, who, all passive and supine,  
Lay motionless, as overcome with wine.

The reader will observe I call him *he*,  
But must not therefore deem me heterodox.  
I am well aware he is reputed three,  
And in so spite of unbelievers' mocks;  
With two more Gods he forms a trinity,  
Most like the triple leaves of Pat's shamrocks;  
Like the three patriarchs revered by Jews,  
Or three men standing in a pair of shoes.

The last comparison is not my own,  
And God forbid that I should plagiarise;  
I take it from a priest—a well-fed drone  
Of the dark age—a man who could devise  
No better; one with drawing nasal tone,  
Doomed to set forth the wonders of the skies;  
He, with his pair of shoes—a shallow trick—  
Exemplified celestial arithmetic.

Enough of this: return we to our sheep.  
We left the Gods enjoying a long night,  
Wrapped, all the three, in the profoundest sleep;  
Yet e'en the sleep of Gods—a holy sight—  
Must have an end; so with a breath drawn deep,  
At length the Father rose. "Let's strike a light,"  
He cried; "surely we've grubbed in darkness long enough.  
Let's shake off sleep, for dreams are sorry stuff."

Thus roughly roused, the twain their eyelids ope,  
And gaze upon their confrère, with a sigh.  
"Ah, what a weary thing is life; what hope,  
O Father," in their agony they cry;  
"Are we, though Gods, doomed ages thus to mope?  
To perish of ennui we are very nigh,  
For songs of angels and poor devils' moan  
Together make our pasture round the throne."

"'Tis very true we suffer from ennui,"  
To them their mighty parent answer made;  
"The four strange beasts begin to pall on me,  
And Raphael is getting old and staid.

So that, in short, I really do not see  
How we can live aught longer as aforesaid,  
Unless amongst us we have got the wit  
On some new pleasure or delight to hit.

"O, Son and Ghost! devise some royal pleasure,  
Better than devils, beasts or shining stones—  
Some new delight that shall beguile our leisure,  
When we are weary of poor devil's groans,  
When we are palled with sight of glittering treasure,  
Of opals, jaspers, onyxes and zircons,  
When e'en the four beasts with their wondrous eyes  
Bore us to death with never-ceasing cries."

"Then list; 'twould be, I think, a royal sport,"  
Replied the Son, who now was wide awake.  
"And greatly aid the amusement of our court,  
Making us all with merry laughter shake  
(Assisted by our own celestial port),  
Should we the offer of a rainbow make  
To him who the dark mystery shall explore—  
How we are Three in One, and why not four?"

"And Ghost, pray, what think you of what's been said?"  
Inquired the Father, with a gracious smile.  
"I care no more about it than the dead,"  
Brusquely returned to him the rough old file.  
"The fates forbid that e'er we should be led,  
Our boredom to relieve or to beguile,  
By stirring up the lower ranks of heaven  
To explore the mysteries of number seven."

"But I will offer you another plan;  
We will create," continued Holy Ghost,  
"Another kind of being, and call it man,  
Inferior much to all the heavenly host.  
His wits he shall exert the most he can  
(And failing he eternally shall roast),  
His puny mind our mysteries to revolve,  
And our Celestial Puzzle to resolve."

This plan pleased all. The puny being they make,  
And to his feeble mind, with savage grin,  
Propound the problem and the fearful stake,  
Enough to make him drown himself in gin.  
And now the heavenly host enjoyed the din  
Of controversy, and their savage thirst did slake  
In human blood, and glut their eyes on fire,  
Kindled on earth for man, by man's unreasoning ire.

But in the end, the Father, Son and Ghost  
(Who'd meant to keep their mystery concealed)  
Found they had reckoned without their host;  
For to the human race the riddle was unsealed.  
And those who heard escaped the fiery coast  
And hellish torments of the infernal field!  
The wisdom of one man saved half the race,  
Who from the gods received a grudging grace.

Saint Athanasius, a learned priest,  
Explained the mystery of One in Three;  
But as my brain is feeble, I long ceased  
To try to comprehend his Trinity;  
So that I fear that I shall never see  
The Golden Throne, or e'er a single beast,  
But must expect a fiery brimstone pen,  
And the society of decent men.

JULIAN.

Five hundred Christians met at Anderton's Hotel, where there was no need of a preacher to turn water into wine, and resolved to found a sort of Robert Elmserean Church that should be free from dogma. Their object is to bring about a Christian millenium on earth—a good old jelly-fish millenium. We suggest that their watchword should be Mesopotamia or Abracadabra.

ONE Sunday morning Mr. Moody, the revivalist, entered a Chicago drug store, distributing tracts. At the back of the store sat an elderly and distinguished citizen reading a morning newspaper. Mr. Moody approached this gentleman and threw one of the temperance tracts on the paper before him. The old gentleman glanced at the tract, and then, looking up benignantly at Moody, asked: "Are you a reformed drunkard?" "No, sir, I am not!" cried Moody, drawing back, indignantly. "Then why in h— don't you reform?" quietly asked the old gentleman.

The land flowing with milk and honey now only supports a population of some 500,000, and of these only seven in 100 are Jews. Despite all the money spent on sending the Jews back, they refuse to fulfil the prophecies in that way. Moses knows a trick worth two of that.



## ACID DROPS.

That wintry-faced old bigot, whose piety is the piety of a £10,000 a year Lord Chancellor, has made another exhibition of his malignant zeal for the profitable God of his idolatry. Speaking as president of the Church of England Young Men's Society, at its recent annual meeting, Lord Halsbury said there was "a disposition abroad to believe that men could be very good without religious principles, but he did not believe anything of the sort." Well, now, let us see how "very good" this bigot can be himself *with* "religious principles."

When his lordship, as Sir Hardinge Giffard, was prosecuting Mr. Bradlaugh—a little game in which he happily failed—he obtained, or let his side obtain, an illegal order from the Lord Mayor to examine Mr. Bradlaugh's bank account at St. John's Wood. When the case came up for trial at the Court of Queen's Bench, Lord Coleridge was staggered, and could scarcely find words to reprobate this lawless audacity. And what was the object of the inspection? Had it anything to do with the case in hand? Nothing of the sort. These "very good" people, so full of "religious principles," simply wanted to see how Mr. Bradlaugh stood financially, in order to decide whether it would be possible to make him bankrupt by litigation!

So much for case number one. Now for case number two. When the holy Giffard found he could not get a jury to convict Mr. Foote in the Court of Queen's Bench while Lord Coleridge presided and held the scales of justice evenly, he tried the trick of getting the fresh trial fixed for a date when the Lord Chief justice would be elsewhere. But this pious attempt was frustrated by his lordship, who saw through it only too clearly. Then the holy Giffard, seeing he stood no chance of a conviction while Lord Coleridge lived, went off to the Attorney General and obtained his leave to abandon the prosecution by means of an affidavit which Lord Coleridge stigmatised in open court as a flagrant lie!

Lord Halsbury has since then shown such nepotism in his high position that Mr. Labouchere has branded him as the Lord High Jobber. And this is the man who prates about "religious principles," and ventures to doubt if "infidels" can share his lofty virtues. We are happy to think they cannot. His lordship does with ease what they would find extremely difficult.

We have not yet done with Lord Halsbury. His lordship took occasion to have a fling at Dr. Clifford for going to South Place Institute on a Sunday afternoon, and explaining the Baptist creed in "a place where Christ was associated with such men as Tom Paine and Voltaire." This may be very blasphemous to a poor creature like Lord Halsbury; but, after all, Jesus Christ is in very much better company in South Place Institute than he was ever in during his lifetime. His lordship has the ill-bred piety to speak of the author of the *Age of Reason* as "Tom Paine." What would be his indignation if Freethinkers spoke of "Jack the Baptist," or designated the mother of Jesus as "Moll." Yet this is the person who cries out for protection for his poor "feelings," and thinks twelve months' imprisonment a very inadequate punishment for wounding them!

The last published of the "Theistic Sermons" by Rev. C. Voysey is entitled "St. Peter's Perversion of the xvi Psalm." Mr. Voysey has no difficulty in showing that the citation of that psalm in the Acts ii, is both a misrendering of the Hebrew and a perversion of the meaning of the Psalmist, and he is fully warranted in saying that "this book called *The Acts of the Apostles* is "among the most untrustworthy of all the books in the New Testament, only second in unveracity to the fourth Gospel."

But Mr. Voysey appears to think this is an exceptionally glaring case. We do not think so. The New Testament is full of such perversions of the Old Testament. The very first chapter of Matthew perverts the Old Testament genealogies in order to make fourteen generations each from Abraham to David, from David to the captivity, and from the captivity to Christ.

Still more serious are the misquotations of prophecy. Jesus is born without a father in order to fulfil a sign given by Isaiah to Ahaz. Hosea's statement that "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called my son out of Israel," is perverted into a prophecy of Jesus going to Egypt, and he is removed to Nazareth "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene," though not one of the prophets says anything of the sort.

Jesus himself cites as "scripture" (John, vii., 38): "He that believeth me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," the nearest approach to which is Prov. xviii., 4. "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters." Satan could not have misquoted Scripture more vilely.

Christians in America never seem to tire of their lies against Ingersoll. At a Methodist Conference at Taunton, the Rev. J. O. Peck, D.D., referred with emphasis to the alleged fact that little had been heard from the doughty Colonel for the past two years, since one of his daughters joined the Church and his wife had begged him to desist from following up his tirades against the Christian religion. An admirer of Ingersoll informed him of Dr. Peck's argument, and received the following reply from Ingersoll:—"You need not trouble yourself to deny the lies of orthodox ministers about me, but for your own information I will say that neither of my two daughters has 'been converted' or joined the Church, or ever dreamed of it. As to my silence against religion for two years, Rev. Dr. Peck has probably not seen the discussion between Field and Gladstone and others in the *North American Review*."

The Lady Captain of the Salvation Army at Belfast told a pious story on the authority of Mr. Bramwell Booth. At a meeting of the Salvation Army in London a man got up and asked, "Will you tell me the nearest way to hell?" "Through that door," said W. B. The man went out, and before he had gone ten yards he fell down a corpse. That he went to Hades follows as a matter of course.

One of our readers heard the Lady Captain tell this yarn. He wrote to Mr. Bramwell Booth asking where and when the incident occurred. No answer. He wrote again. No answer. Q.E.D. That is, the story is a pious lie. It goes with the rest. The number is now 2,999,999. For the love of God, one more, to make it a round number.

It is said that the Vatican will again ask the European powers to take into consideration the demonstrations of Catholic opinion in favor of the re-establishment of the temporal power. The suggestion of this forlorn hope is accredited to Signor Pecci's chief adviser Cardinal Monaco, who is president of the Holy Inquisition, and is said to regret that that Holy office no longer has the power it once had.

The Rev. Canon Moore vicar of Spalding, who some time ago sent a young girl to gaol for stealing a flower, has according to Christian belief been called before the Grand Assizes. He leaves behind a living worth £1,000 a year.

The wife of an evangelist went to the Thames court and said her husband, who had taken to drink, had threatened to blow her brains out and cut her head off. When he pulled out a razor she became so alarmed that she ran away from home, taking her children with her. The magistrate granted her a warrant.—*Stur.*

One of the leading members of the Salvation Army at Hucknall Torkard, near Sheffield, has studied his Bible to some purpose. Convinced that the man is the head of the woman even as Christ is head of the Church, he disposed of his wife for the sum of one shilling, putting a halter round her neck, and so leading her to the house of her purchaser like any other cattle.

The wife of the Rev. William Mules, a Wesleyan minister who eloped to America with a young woman of his choir, with whom he now lives at Philadelphia as Mr. and Mrs. Vernon, has obtained a divorce with costs and custody of the children. In a letter to a mutual friend the reverend rascal wrote:—"Devil a cent will they get out



of me.—Sincerely yours, Mules, alias Vernon, alias Marshall, and, in the opinion of many, the very devil himself.”

According to the *Star* the following items appear in the Marylebone vestry accounts:—

Total of minister's salaries	£2,750	0s.	0d.
Charity bread	-	-	£2 12s. 0d.

This is how the Church interprets the text “Feed my sheep.”

A “Mr. Smith,” who has been conducting an “Evangelical Mission” at Beeston, is, like the Lord’s anointed David, somewhat susceptible to the tender passion. The temptress, Bathsheba, appeared in the person of Mrs. Pollendine, the wife of a collier. The result was an elopement, and evangelical services conducted at Whittington Moor by “Mr. and Mrs. Smith.” Pollendine’s brother happened to attend one of the meetings, and asked “Mrs. Smith” if she was not his brother’s wife. This she denied, and Mr. Smith threatened to give the man in charge for defamation of character. A strict watch was, however, set upon the evangelical couple until Pollendine’s brother appeared upon the scene, when the lady owned up, and Mr. Smith denied that Mrs. Smith was his wife, and sought to remove his evangelising business to fresh quarters.

The Rev. Mr. Dobbin, of Caledon East, Orangeville, has been deposed from the ministry. The charges brought against him are characterised as “disgusting.”

A horrible case of murder for supposed witchcraft is reported from the Deccan. At a village in Cheenar, Jaluhoo, certain shepherds were suspected by the villagers, and these suspicions were accentuated in consequence of a severe epidemic of cholera. Two of the suspected men were seized, solemnly tried and condemned for witchcraft by the village commission, and sentenced to be tortured to death. There, in presence of all the villagers, their teeth were extracted with pincers, and their heads were shaved. Subsequently they were buried up to their necks, wood was piled round their heads, a fire was kindled, and the skulls were roasted into powder. Some thirty persons have been convicted and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for having in this fashion obeyed the Bible law “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

Another case of murder for supposed witchcraft was recently tried at Bombay. The accused imputed the death of his father and mother, and the illness of certain members of his family, to the arts of an old woman, and beat her to death with a thick, heavy stick. These cases are common, but are rarely brought to the notice of the British authorities. Just fancy sending out Bibles to these people, to give them divine warranty for their own superstition!

Belief in witchcraft still has a hold on the people living in the Erzgebirge districts. In the Walpurgis night may be seen even now, on lonely crossways, flaming s’raw to drive off the witches who are supposed to be on their way to the Blocksburg. Crosses of chalk were visible on the 1st of May on the doors of stables, and guns were fired and whips cracked to keep the witches from harming the young plants.

The Rev. Mr. Duncan of Duninchen, Scotland, is of opinion that newspapers which sneer at orthodoxy are “vile things which ought to be cast from every member of the Christian church.” Quite so. “Do I not hate them O Lord which hate thee? Yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred.”

We don’t often agree with Mr. Spurgeon, but we endorse one of his recent utterances. “Jesus Christ,” he said, “was not an original thinker; nor was the Holy Ghost.” We say ditto, and throw in the Father to the bargain.

“I believe,” says Spurgeon, “in all written in the Bible, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation.” Evidently he has a large mouth and a good swallow. Balaam’s ass goes down, legs and all; and Jonah’s whale doesn’t stick in his gullet. After swallowing the lot, Spurgeon looks round and says, “Any more?”

Spurgeon wishes we had back “some of the prayerful and earnest religion of thirty years ago.” Very likely, though it isn’t likely to come. But does Spurgeon wish he had back his salary of thirty years ago? We guess not.

Spurgeon’s Tabernacle was very much in request on Sunday morning, a large number of provincial sky-pilots, up for the May meetings, wending thither to gain a few wrinkles in the art of preaching. A gentleman called Froude—no connection with James Anthony—was spotted by Spurgeon for the second prayer, and he begged the Almighty to save the Prince of Wales before he comes to the throne. This loyal prayer was greeted with a perfect chorus of “Amen,” although “Wales” keeps a chaplain to look after his spiritual interests.

Here is a hint for the missionary societies. Why all those wild efforts to convert the heathen when the Prince of Wales is unsaved? Why not concentrate on this leviathan instead of chasing sprats? Prayer—especially when the praying-machine is well greased—works wonders; and in the course of time, say at the age of seventy, the Prince may become a Puritan, or even a hard-shell Baptist.

A baker at Greenwich has been acting up to the Bible in very literal fashion. He loaded his cart with new bread and drove down to the river, where he proceeded to empty the contents of the vehicle into the water, saying to the amazed bystanders that he had cast his bread upon the waters, and that it “would be returned to him after many days.”

“The street preacher must sometimes have a hard struggle financially. On Sunday afternoon I listened for half an hour to a seedy individual, who was ‘expounding’ in a rather irreverent way a portion of the Apocalypse, and he only took three halfpence, ‘just the price o’ a glass o’ beer,’ he said, although the ancient and greasy ‘tile’ went round thrice within the time mentioned.”—*Glasgow Weekly Herald*.

The Ritualists are much disappointed at the Archbishop of Canterbury having decided, after prayer, that he has jurisdiction to try the Bishop of Lincoln. They hoped the matter would be quietly shelved.

The Dean of Windsor having asked the Ritualists to state what Courts they will recognise, and whether they prefer Disestablishment to submission to such Courts as they are likely to get, the *Church Times* answers that the question is one “which it is highly impolitic to raise at the present juncture.”

Canon Lucas, one of the Proctors in Convocation for the diocese of Winchester, has tabulated the rulings of the Privy Council on Ritualism. They have ruled:—Twice that the Ornaments of 1549 may be used; twice that they may *not*; once that “standing before the Table” applies to what follows; twice that it does *not*; once that wheaten breads may be made round; once that they may *not*; once that the Injunctions of Elizabeth are inconsistent with her Prayer-book; once that they are *not*; once that a cross may be placed over the holy table; once that it may *not*; once that the priest when consecrating may stand in front of the table; once that he may *not*. Most law is an “eye-opener,” but ecclesiastical law is a “caution.”

A Mid-Devon correspondent of the *Star* tells of a curate whose purity does not permit him to touch the offspring of an illegitimate union. Being called upon to baptise the child, he demanded a spoon in order not to defile his fingers. With it he dipped the water from the basin, and sprinkled the infant. The ceremony being completed, he took the basin and threw it on the stones with the intention of breaking it. Not having completed his purpose, he asked for a broom, with which he finished the job. The parent of the child, not willing to lose the price of “the font,” asked for payment, and his reverence replied by tendering twopence.

God’s goodness has been exemplified in Stafford County, Kansas, where a violent cyclone demolished everything in its course. Buildings were levelled and trees uprooted. One person is known to have been killed and forty injured,



of whom some are not expected to survive. The cyclone also caused great havoc among live stock, many cattle having been killed or crippled. But then, you know, cyclones are excellent things. They cause people to build cyclone pits to get out of their way!

There has been a nice little debate in the Workington Town Council. Councillor Yeowart's soul was deeply distressed by the sight of "barbarous" posters on the public hoardings, and he moved that something be done to abate the nuisance. Councillor Wilson, in moving an amendment, said "the evil was not so serious as that which arose from illustrated books of a serious character, where the most revolting scenes were depicted." He declared that the Bible was "full of horrible things," such as Cain killing Abel, Moses slaying the Egyptian, and John the Baptist's head on a charger, an object which he had seen at a Sunday-School magic lantern. Then there was Abraham offering up Isaac, and a lot of indecent pictures in family Bibles, of which he had two or three dozen in his possession, and if any of his colleagues wished to see them, he would show them. Councillor Smith harped upon the same string, and said they "often found more sound morality in a good play than in a downright bad sermon." This remark was greeted with laughter, a profane manifestation which was resented by Councillor Bradbury, who urged that in common decency theatrical posters ought not to be displayed near places of worship. Councillor Yeowart, in replying, said the Bible taught him that humanity was corrupt, and he wanted their children preserved from evil. "Amen," said Councillor Wilson, and there was more laughter. The motion was lost.

Piety and arithmetic don't always go together. It is asserted that the Rev. Mr. Mattheson, of Patterdale, Westmoreland, who recently died at the age of ninety, was a model of thrift. In the early part of his life the benefice was worth only £12 a year, but it was afterwards increased to £18. On this pittance he married, brought up four children, educated a son at the University, and saved £1,600. How wonderful! The age of miracles is *not* past. Were the godly folk who are agape at the parson's frugality to do a simple multiplication sum, they would find that averaging £12 and £18 you get £15, and supposing he enjoyed this income for seventy years, the worthy parson would only have received £1,050 altogether.

Two months' imprisonment with hard labor is what Harriet Hilton, a gipsy, gets at Croydon for pretending to tell the fortune to a stupid servant girl who asked her to do so. A good house and salary is the reward of those who with no more information than the poor gipsy pretend to explain the mysteries of life after death.

Some wisacre has been circulating a paragraph on the "strange fact" that the name of God is spelt in four letters in almost every known language. England, however, which reckons itself the most pious nation on the face of the earth, spells the deity's name with three letters, perhaps out of compliment to the Trinity; though some of the Cockney tribe add a fourth letter, and call the Almighty "Gord."

"For this relief much thanks."—*Shakespeare*. The bell-ringers at St. Bees are out on strike. Would that the whole profession followed suit! When Mr. Foote was lecturing at Rochdale the other evening, a chapel bell began its dolorous monotone, and half drowned the lecturer's voice. The subject was "After Death—What?" and the infernal bell seemed to be saying, "Hell, hell—Hell, hell."

A late warder at Chelmsford Prison swears he will never do a good turn to a sky-pilot again. One of the gentry under his charge was a parson, who had to pass a season of temporary retirement for the good old Bible practice of bigamy. His second wife took lodgings at the house of the warder, and he was induced to become a means of communication between the judicially separated pair. The clergyman on his release reported this fact to the prison chaplain, with the result that the warder has lost his situation.

Principal Dykes has made a discovery and fired it off at the English Presbyterian Synod. "It is not the writings of

the Bible," he said, "that are inspired but the writers." We have had a deadly wrestle with this conundrum. Wet towels were necessary to prevent inflammation of the brain. And after all we give it up. Paul was inspired, but not the epistle to the Romans. Then what the d— (we mean the *deuce*) was the good of Paul's inspiration if it didn't get into the Epistle? And if it didn't get into the Epistle how does anybody know it was in Paul?

Dr. Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, has returned home from a holiday on the Continent, and, preaching to young people from his own pulpit, he made a funny comment on the passage in Revelation which says, "And the four beasts said, Amen." He pictured all the lower animals in Paradise—bugs and fleas included, we suppose—and remarked that "while little children will sing long and beautiful songs, the beasts will be able to only utter Amen." After this it is somewhat astonishing to learn that Dr. Whyte has "returned from his change evidently refreshed in body and mind."

The success of the screaming sensationalism of the Salvation Army, which boasts that it doubles its forces every third year, has started a new rival, to be called The Savior's Missionary Army. One of the essentials is that all its officials shall be members of the Church of England.

The "Protestant Reformation Society" has been holding a meeting, and boasts the circulation of 69 288 tracts. We did not gather whether the society was intended to reform Protestants or not. But no doubt they need it.

A new view of the Irish question was broached at a Wesleyan missionary meeting in Exeter Hall. The Rev. W. Crawford, from Dublin, likened Ireland to "a gentle wooed and won maiden, nestling to the manly bosom of Christian England, while he whispered in her ear the story of the love of Jesus." This would make a good cartoon for *United Ireland*; England's manly bosom planted with spikes, and Ireland leaning upon it, and hearing the beat of—Balfour's battering-ram.

The problem of evil is solved at last. The Rev. J. B. McClellan, Principal of the Agricultural College, Cirencester, has found out that not only do the six days in Genesis mean six periods, but the seventh period is not ended yet; the Creator having rested ever since he made man. This accounts for the Devil having it all his own way. Eureka!

Things have altered since Jacob married two sisters together. God "loved" him, so that little affair was all right. Nowadays, however, two sisters must not be married together; they must not even be married in succession. According to the law of England, a man may not marry his deceased wife's sister. The High Church party even go to the length of stigmatising such unions as "incest."

This law is detested by the majority of the people, but it is still maintained in deference to orthodox prejudices. During the late discussion in the House of Lords on the Duke of St. Albans' bill to legitimate marriage with a deceased wife's sister, nearly all its opponents appealed to the Canon Law, which, as Sir Henry Maine observed, has been the barbarous element in our modern jurisprudence.

The *Archives Judaiques* of Paris gives the total number of Jews in the world at 6,300,000. In Palestine there are only 25,000. The shrewd Hebrews know a thing or two better than going to "the land flowing with milk and honey."

Canon Wilberforce, speaking in favor of cremation, said that he did not regard the resurrection of the body as a return to flesh life. What in the name of wonder does it mean then? J. C., at any rate partook of broiled fish and honey-comb after his resurrection. We fancy the early Christians would have been very much disgusted if they had been told that their bodies would be raised but without flesh. They expected to drink of the new wine in Kingdom come, and would not have relished Canon Wilberforce's Pagan notions of cremation.



**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

May 19, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, N.W., at 7.30: "God Help Us."  
 May 26, Camberwell.  
 June 8, N. 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.

W. ROSSITER.—We have no time for further correspondence. We can only repeat that, as before, we leave the matter absolutely in the hands of the Camberwell Branch. We do not arrange discussions personally. You met us in an open debate of your own seeking, and if we made "misleading statements" it was your business to refute them then and there. If you are dying for another chance of "exposing" us, why not take our pamphlet on *Christianity and Progress*, which does "go into detail," and confute it. Our columns are open to any able attack on our views.

ADAM.—Some of your lines are good, and some are very bad.

J. COLLINSON.—(1) Mr. Wheeler has had to follow his own rule in including living Freethinkers in his *Dictionary*. He only includes those who have written noticeably, or done something decisive for Freethought, and of course he has had to act on his own judgment. (2) All the stock of *Comic Bible Sketches* was consumed in the fire on our premises in 1885. We think of issuing a fresh lot in the same form shortly. (3) Some first-rate portraits, as well as other sketches, are in preparation for the *Freethinker*. (4) Mr. Holyoake publishes the *Universal Republic* himself at his residence in Brighton.

A NEW CONVERT.—Cuttings received with thanks. Glad to hear you "derive great pleasure from reading the *Freethinker*."

P.C.—Always pleased to receive jokes and cuttings.

JOSEPH BROWN, secretary of the Newcastle Branch, writes:—"Let me congratulate you on the improved condition of the *Freethinker*. It is now worth double the money. Your first article on Creation is pronounced by the whole of our members the best bit of writing that has appeared over your signature."

J. FOWLER.—Thanks for your trouble, but the clown's allegory is not lively enough for the space it would occupy.

G. WRIGHT.—Robert Taylor died at Jersey in 1844. He is said to have left manuscripts which his widow destroyed—not on account of their piety, you may be sure.

CORRESPONDENTS who send us papers would increase the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to direct our attention.

D. PROVAN.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. JACKSON.—Orders should be sent to Mr. Forder direct. The paragraph is hardly pointed enough.

R. E. HOLDING writes:—"I have just arranged with a local news-agent (Mr. Wilson, Harrow Road) to take 12 copies of the *Freethinker* weekly. What is unsold I take and distribute. He sells five or six now."

DAYLIGHT.—The subject is hardly worth another paragraph.

E. MARTIN.—You did well. There is nothing like running these foxes to earth. See "Acid Drops."

A. F. WALDEN.—Distributing Freethought tracts is an excellent means of propaganda. Mr. Forder will give you a parcel as desired if you call for them. Your letter could not be dealt with earlier owing to our absence from town.

S. G. GRANT.—The following astronomers were Atheists—Laplace, Lalande, and Delambre, three great Frenchmen. Halley and Arago were also unbelievers in Christianity. You should take Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary*, which will give you full information on such matters.

T. STEDMAN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. HULL thanks the friends who sent him parcels of literature for distribution.

JOHN BARTON.—We dealt with the Archbishop of Montgomery last week.

W. T. LEEKEY.—It is false that Mr. Foote had to exhort Freethinkers to speak the truth on the occasion referred to, or on any other occasion. The man Williams, a Christian Evidence lecturer, did get hold of a ticket and attend the London Secular Federation dinner. He was warned of the ill-taste of his conduct, but we did not care to have him turned out. We thought it

might be a lesson in courtesy to him, but it has not proved so. He has returned to his vomit.

ANTI-TRINITARIAN.—Glad to hear you are circulating our publications. (1) The title of a blank-verse poem by Bryant. (2) Mr. Forder published it at a halfpenny. Write to him direct.

RECEIVED.—Freidenker—Western Figaro—Star—Der Arme Teufel—Fair Play—Sussex Evening Times—Liberator—Neue Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Bulletin des Sommaires—Detroit Free Press—Menschentum—Freethought—West Cumberland Times—Freethinkers' Magazine—Southend Standard—Derbyshire Courier—Hunslet and Holbeck Express—Edinburgh Evening News—Open Court—Polytechnic Magazine—Secular Thought.

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.**

THERE was a capital audience at Milton Hall on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Pit and the Upper Circles." This evening (May 19) Mr. Foote lectures again in the same hall on "God Help Us." This is a lively lecture and should bring a hall-full.

"DOWN with Blasphemy," is the title of a fine cartoon which will appear in our next number. We shall print an extra supply of the *Freethinker*, to meet what we are sure will be an increased demand. Still, those who wish to secure additional copies would do well to order in advance.

WE are happy to say that the improvement in our circulation continues. Ever since the enlargement our sale has gone up steadily week by week. The little advertising we have done has had a good effect, and we should like to do more. The following fresh subscriptions to our Circulation Fund will enable us to do something in that way: A Friend 10s; J. Franklin 2s 6d; S. Ford 2s; A. Jackson 1s 6d.

FOR many months we have issued no weekly contents-sheet. We intend, however, to resume the issue in a smaller form, not too large to go in the window, nor too small to post on a shopboard. Mr. Forder will make an entirely fresh list, so that all who wish to receive a copy weekly should communicate with him direct. Our means are limited and we cannot afford to waste. We begin the issue next week.

MANY of our readers will remember plucky Mrs. Sykes, an elderly Southend lady, who defied all the bigots, and persisted, in the face of repeated fines, in the abominable crime of selling sweetstuff on Sunday. Her son, Mr. J. K. Sykes, has recently been prayed for by a salvationist stockbroker, and in answer to these supplications the Lord has moved him to begin selling the *Freethinker*. Hitherto he (Mr. Sykes, of course, not the Lord) has taken two copies, one to read and one to lend round. But now he takes a great many more. Last week he sold thirteen copies, which is a capital beginning in Southend.

THE fact is, if newsagents would do the *Freethinker* justice our circulation would treble in six months. Wherever it is exposed like other journals it finds a sale. People hear of it and want it, but cannot spend their lives in seeking it. They go to half a dozen shops, meet with frowns or feigned ignorance, and give it up. For this reason we beg our friends to press this journal on the attention of newsvendors.

THE London Secular Federation has decided to have a summer excursion. The date fixed on is July 21. Prayers are being offered up for fine weather. The sub-committee appointed to make arrangements inclines to a trip to the seaside, but before a definite conclusion is come to it would be well to hear the opinion of the London Branches. Those who have an opinion on the matter should write to Mr. R. S. Seago, 209 Hill Street, Walworth, S.E.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary secretary of the London Secular Federation, 142, Old Street, E.C., acknowledges the following subscriptions:—J. Tomkins, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Rush, 2s. 6d.; C. S., 1s.; Daylight, 2s. 6d. London Freethinkers, please note that the Federation wants money



badly. Shillings are received gladly, and five-pound notes are not declined.

OUR London readers are invited to the Concert and Ball which take place at Milton Hall, on Friday, May 31. Tickets are 1s. each, and the profits will go to the London Secular Federation. We hope the gathering will be a thorough success. Mr. Foote has promised to attend.

THE Malthusian League held its annual meeting on Monday night at South Place Institute. There was an unusually large attendance. Dr. Drysdale delivered a presidential address, and among the speakers were Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Mr. G. Standing, Dr. Alice Vickery, and Mr. E. Truelove. The press gave the meeting no attention, simply because it assembled for principle, and not for the noble object of bagging votes.

THE North-Eastern Secular Federation is now an accomplished fact. Mr. Peacock, of South Shields, is elected President; Mr. Joseph Brown, of Newcastle, Secretary; and Mr. James Tullen, of Newcastle, Treasurer. The Council includes Mr. Leslie Johnson, Mr. Martin Weatherburn, Mr. Glennie, and Captain Thompson. This new Federation means business and will require support. Donations can be sent to Mr. Tullen, 137 Burt Street, Gateshead. Parcels of literature for distribution to Mr. Brown, in care of Mr. Peter Weston, Newsagent, 77 Newgate Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE has elected its delegate, Mr. Joseph Brown, to the N.S.S. Conference. This fact should stimulate other distant Branches. It is highly necessary that the Conference should be well attended, as very important business has to be transacted. We appeal to the Branches, north, south, east, and west, to make a special effort this year.

THE following, extracted from a letter from an "Indian Civilian" is inserted in *Public Opinion* for May 10:—"The English missionary in India does a great deal of harm and no good. I quite approve of sending missionaries to people and races who are either absolute heathen, or whose religion is accompanied by immoral or debasing customs, but the Hindu is not a heathen and certainly the Mohammedan and Buddhist is not. Also their scriptures in their original purity do not in any way countenance the abuses (child marriage, perpetual widowhood, female infanticide, &c.) which have been introduced by the Brahmins. Reform in these matters will come far better from within than from without; in fact it is fast doing so. As to endeavoring to make natives change their religion it is a crime. There is no other word for it. This proselytising is the one thing which makes the educated native look upon with distrust and suspicion." After referring to the Mutiny as being due to the report that the Sepoys were to be compelled to give up their religion, the writer says "Moreover the so-called native Christians are notoriously the worst, most rascally and unhappiest community in the whole of India."

WE see from *Secular Thought* that Mr. Watts has been going about lecturing and debating. At Grand Rapids a wealthy gentleman, Mr. D. A. Blodgett, takes the opera house for him and throws it open free, bearing all expenses. At Hagerstown, Indiana, he has had a debate with the Rev. William Dillon, of Dayton, Ohio, but as that gentleman discussed Christianity v. Secularism without any knowledge of the latter system, it is doubtful if he even satisfied his own side.

"MR. G. W. FOOTE'S bright little paper, the *Freethinker*, has been enlarged from eight to twelve pages. It is most ably edited by Mr. Foote and his valuable associate, Mr. J. M. Wheeler. These two gentlemen produce a weekly paper full of information, as varied as it is instructive. Besides solid articles by the Editors and others, each number contains several pages of smartly written paragraphs upon passing events. *The Freethinker* is one of the best exchanges we have upon our list."—*Secular Thought*.

WHILE the Conservative press have been disparaging as far as possible the French Revolution, the Jews of France, at any rate, have not forgotten that they were first made citizens by that event, and that in the words of the Grand Rabbi, M. Zadoc Kahn, "It was this example which hastened the triumph of religious freedom in Europe."

MR. LENNSTRAND, despite the numerous prosecutions hanging over his head, continues to uphold the banner of Freethought and free speech in Sweden. Cowardly Christians resort as far as possible to the boycotting system. When, as is usual, the police authorities interdict his meetings, Mr. Lennstrand has not scrupled to deliver his lectures in lofts and outhouses. In Linköping Mr. Lennstrand established a new branch of 65 members. At Eskilstuna the authorities, in order to curry favor with the dean and Landshafding, induced, by menaces, the proprietors of a hall let to the Utilitarian Society to break their engagement and the meeting had to be held, as before, in the summer garden of Mrs. Freese. The result was 116 new members.

MR. SYMES did not get into the Victorian Parliament at the elections on the 28th of March last. He, however, received sufficient votes to assure him that his defeat signifies future victory, and he intends to embrace the first favorable opportunity of standing again for election.

ON Sunday, March 31st, Mr. Symes laid the Memorial Stone of the New Hall of Science, Victoria Parade, Melbourne, in the presence of a numerous gathering of friends. The current numbers of the *Liberator* and *Freedom* were placed under the stone, and a goodly shower of cheques, notes, gold, silver and bronze were laid on the top. We hope the work will now be speedily prosecuted to its termination.

MR. J. GREEVZ FISHER, of Leeds, puts his ever ready pen to good service in the cause of Freethought. In the *Hunslet and Holbeck News* he ably replies to a Mr. Grinstead, who has been attacking the Unitarians. Mr. Fisher shows that there is not only a difficulty as to what the Bible teaches, but as to the worth of such a so-called revelation.

AT a large gathering in the Queen's Park, Edinburgh, resolutions were passed in favor of the costs of education being defrayed from the rates and taxes, and in order that this may be done without increasing the education rate, demands that Scotland's share of the probate duty be applied to this purpose. It has also been pointed out that three half-pence on the income tax would meet both the deficiency created by the non-payment of school pence in Great Britain, and the disappearance of all voluntary subscriptions. But there is a better source than either of these in the swollen funds of the Established Churches, a small portion of which would defray the whole cost of education.

THE visitors to the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens last Sunday numbered 11,209. The exhortations of the sky-pilots against this Sabbath profanity have only proved that the Scotch are emerging from their clergy-cowed condition into one of independence.

THE *Freethinker's Magazine* for May has a long address on "Thomas Paine," by A. Schell; "A Defence of the Devil," by Nellie Booth Simmons; and a lively essay on "Mental Panics," by Helen Gardener. It reprints Mr. Foote's article in reply to the Rev. Mr. Black, entitled "Ingersoll Demolished," from the *Freethinker*, and says, "No man on this planet wields an abler or more pungent pen than the editor of this little sheet. We are glad to learn that it is to be enlarged. It should have a large circulation in this country."

WE see by a letter from Thaddeus B. Wakeman in the New York *Truthseeker*, that Colonel Ingersoll, who has been urged to go to Rome to represent American Freethought at the inauguration of the statue to Bruno on June 9th, has taken the matter into consideration and may go. We earnestly trust he will, and that he may also find time for a visit to England on his way home.



DURING the present year some notable articles have been written by M. Maurice Vernes in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* upon the question "When was the Bible composed?" M. Vernes regards the Old Testament as the product of post exilian times—roughly speaking from B.C. 400 down to B.C. 200. He does not dispute the use of more ancient sources, but the books in the form they now are, he contends were *all* composed after the return from Babylon and in the following order: The proto-Pentateuch, the Historic books, the Prophets, the Hexateuch as it now is, the Hagiographa. M. Vernes intends to fully justify his contention in a forthcoming volume.

DR. PAOLO MANTEGAZZA, the famous Italian anthropologist and Freethinker, has issued an onslaught upon his pious critics with the title *The Second Tartuffe*.

MR. JOSEPH JACOBS a distinguished Hebrew antiquarian writer in the May number of the *Archæological Review*, on "Totem Clans in the Old Testament." He finds many signs of totemism among the Edomite clan names. It has been conjectured that the prohibition of certain animals in Leviticus may have been due to those animals having been originally sacred totems.

THE Camberwell Branch has a Cricket Club in connexion with it (The Bruno). With the self-confidence which is characteristic of Cockneys, the Bruno Club offers to play any Club formed from any other Branch of the N.S.S. Those who dare to accept the challenge should communicate with Mr. Harry Rose, 19 Gowlett Road, East Dulwich.

#### 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.

#### OBITUARY.

The painful duty has devolved upon me of informing you of the death, on Sunday, 5th May, at the ripe age of 80 years, of Mr. James Ditchburn, of Wheat Bottom, Crook (Co. Durham). The interment took place on Wednesday, 8th May, at Crook cemetery. By his death, Secularism has lost one of its most consistent advocates. He had been a Secularist from his youth up to the day of his death, and died in the full conviction that all religious systems are based upon error. His life was spent in an unassuming and temperate manner. Unfortunately his latter years have been tinged with poverty, but to their honor some of his old friends have stood nobly by him in his hour of need, notably, in this respect, may be mentioned Mr. Hume, of Willington, and Mr. Stitt, of Crook. Such acts of personal kindness are among the most encouraging features of life. Application had been made on his behalf to the Benevolent Fund, but owing to his not being a member of the N.S.S., there was some unavoidable delay in the grant that the committee very generously allowed, and the cheque did not arrive until after his death: as it is, it will do a great deal of good in helping to defray his funeral expenses. At his request, Mr. Hume read in a most able and impressive manner Mr. Austin Holyoake's service at the grave. Every word seemed to strike a true chord, and no more real description of his aims and aspirations through life can be given than the perusal of that service conveys.—  
JOHN ROBINSON.

#### MISSIONING IN SOUTH LANCASHIRE.

My Manchester lectures on Sunday, May 5, brought six new members to the Branch. For this we have partly to thank Mr. Wise of the Christian Evidence Society. As I said before, he is doing good work for Freethought.

The Monday lecture at Oldham was also opposed by Mr. Wise, and one gentleman was so struck by it that he handed over a sovereign for the *Freethinker*. After the lecture I had a chat with the members of the Oldham Branch as described last week.

On Tuesday I lectured on the Blasphemy Debate in the hall of the Central Liberal Club, Stalybridge. Mr. Addison, the member for the borough of Ashton, was the gentleman who moved the rejection of Mr. Bradlaugh's bill, and I devoted a good deal of my lecture to his speech. An excellent account, occupying nearly a column of small type, appeared in the *Evening Reporter*. The *Tory Herald* also sent a reporter to hear what I had to say about the following paragraph advertisement which it had inserted, "free, gratis, for nothing."

"Gladstonianism and infidelity, in Stalybridge at all events, mean one and the same thing. We notice that a Mr. Foote, one of the leading members of the Secularist fraternity, is announced to give a lecture on Blasphemy in the Liberal Club next week. We wonder what the Rev. G. E. Cheeseman, the Rev. Adam Morton, Councillor Hopwood, and one or two other very religious members of the Liberal party have to say about the matter. Surely they don't agree with their principal political temple at Stalybridge being used for the purpose of entertaining a man who is a member of that body which denies the existence of the Supreme Being! The late Joseph Barker, on leaving the Infidel ranks, wrote to the *National Reformer* as follows:—"If it is only for the sake of cleanliness I feel bound to return to the religious body in preference to remaining with the Secularists, as the meetings of the latter are attended by the unwashed and unshaved!"

Of course I expressed myself pretty plainly in reply, and some of my remarks were given in the *Reporter*. I doubt if the *Herald* has the courage to follow suit.

Chatting with a few members of the Branch, I found that very little Secular propaganda had been carried on for a long while. I hope there will be an improvement in this respect. No branch can flourish, or long exist, without regular meetings, frequent lectures, social gatherings, and occasional dashes into politics and social affairs on questions especially affecting Freethinkers. Secularists should never sink themselves in political societies. They should rather use their Secular organisations for all purposes of progress, not as mere party politicians, but as fighters for advanced principles.

At Rochdale, on the Wednesday evening, I lectured in the Secular Hall on "After Death—What?" Some recondite questions were put to me by a local Spiritist, who lives in this world but has a large circle of acquaintance in the next. Afterwards I spent an hour with a goodly number of the members. I found that Secular propaganda had been badly neglected, and there was much dissatisfaction with this state of things. Before I left it was resolved to hold a special meeting in the Secular Hall, on Sunday afternoon, May 19, to see what can be done to improve the condition of the Branch, and whether arrangements cannot be made to send up a delegate to the N.S.S. Conference, in London, on Whit-Sunday.

On Thursday evening I lectured at Liverpool. After the lecture I spent over an hour with the Branch members. There was a lively discussion, and I gave what advice I could. The Branch has suffered from the Sunday Society, and from the loss of some good old workers; but Liverpool is a big city, and there is a capital field of operation for the workers who remain. There is energy enough if it were wisely directed. With a little more business tact the Liverpool Branch will tide over its difficulties and flourish like—well, like it used to. During the



summer I trust it will make an attempt at outdoor propaganda, though what with rabid Catholics and more rabid Orangemen, the attempt would have to be discreetly managed. Anyhow, I hope the N.S.S. will during June, July, and August, be able to send an open-air lecturer or two through South Lancashire and Tyneside, and elsewhere, if possible.

G. W. FOOTE.

### HUMBUG IN CHURCH SCHOOLS. I. ON PUNISHMENT.

THE two great national parties never tire of lauding our "beautiful system of education of the young" to the skies. Well, it may be beautiful, but the writer of this article is one of those dense persons who fail to see the beauty of it. Seven years in the profession allows one to see behind the scenes, a thing which ordinary mortals have not the felicity of doing. Be it known to the uninitiated that there is infinitely less humbug in the Board than the Church Schools, although both are under government supervision and examined by the same inspectors in each district. First as to fees: thanks to our comrades, Annie Besant and Stewart Headlam, free education, as far as concerns Board Schools, is, to those unable to pay, practically attained; but how different is it in Church Schools; in several of these latter, fees vary even in the same classes. As an instance, in one school that I know of, the charges for new scholars is 6d per week, for old scholars 4d, and when several children belonging to the same family attend, a reduction per child is made. Encouraging to the Malthusians this! Board Schools are invariably well-built and furnished, Church Schools very badly so. At this moment I recollect a school of the latter kind, the playground of which is closed to the schoolboys three days out of the five. And why? Simply this, forsooth! In the first place the schoolmaster's wife coolly appropriates the *whole* playground when washing-day comes round, and the various articles are hung out to the embraces of rough Boreas. For the second reason, the head master says "when he has done work he wants rest, so the boys being so noisy must not come to school till five minutes to nine and five minutes to two."

Oh the gloriously free England! But look a little further and note the result of this barring out of the boys. In the first place boys *must* and *will* play somewhere, and so, being refused their playground, they play in the roadway. What is the consequence? At two o'clock Mrs. Grundy walks over to the schoolmaster with "Your boys, sir, have broken my window whilst playing at ball, and so you must punish them." So he does, readily enough, being a Christian and obeying his Bible—"Spare the rod and spoil the child." Sometimes Mrs. G. threatens the schoolmaster, as, "Your boys, sir, have broken my garden plants, whilst running in my front garden to fetch their tops, and if you do not punish them, I will complain to the vicar." At this threat the master trots out his cane, and the boys taste the sweets thereof, and yet the ungrateful little villains go the same night and dance the devil's delight outside the house of poor Mrs. Grundy.

Of course all this caning for offences committed *outside* school hours is utterly illegal, and this point every father and mother should note. In fact, by punishing a boy for an outdoor offence the master renders himself liable to an action for assault. Furthermore, when a boy is caned, *his name must be recorded in a punishment book* kept for that purpose. This rule in Church schools is openly disregarded, and yet on prize-giving day, when all the Church saints and old-fashioned, but rich vestal virgins come to see the prizes distributed, they are told, to their great astonishment, and amidst whispers of "What lies" from the boys, that the vicar is happy "to see that this school manages admirably without having recourse to corporal punishment." There it is plain enough, no names are in the book, *ergo*, no boys are punished. One day, just before an examination, I counted in a boys school (Church) at which I was engaged, no less than *ninety-two* boys caned, not one of which was recorded as it should have been. This may seem strange to my readers, but it is a fact—ask your own children should they go to Church schools, and you will soon see how these pious Christians love the little children whom you leave to their care.

Sometimes, when a child has been particularly stupid, and would probably have failed in the approaching examination, he has by master and teacher been led such a life, by being constantly caned and kept in, that he has prayed his parents

to take him away from the school, and this being done, the object of the master has been attained.

Parents, have you ever wondered why your child has feared to go to school? If not, carefully watch your young one's actions, and you will soon discover that often and often its little life becomes a burden to it, and only by the outrageous tyranny of its teachers. Remember, this is a matter that you yourself can and must alter. Each time your child has been punished by caning, or by being struck on the head by a cowardly lout of a pupil-teacher, often a boy of 14 or 15, make it your bounden duty to attend the school *directly*, insist on seeing the schoolmaster, and have a proper understanding. Were all to do this, this cowardly system would soon die out. But already its victims are too many, for more deaths than one have been caused by caning and striking; and who knows, except you mind your own children's liberties, that the next death may not be in your own family?

A CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER.

### SCRIPTURE IN SCHOOLS.

Sir,—I was delighted when I read the article in the *Freethinker* for May 12th dealing with religion in schools. The "Church School Teacher" who has brought the matter before the public has, in my opinion, acted wisely, bravely, and well.

As I have had a little experience in the business he writes about, I beg to support and bear my testimony to the truth of his statements. In order that Faith, Fear, and Fraud may be crammed into the tender intellects of the young, overtime is indulged in to a most grievous extent. The extra time mentioned in the letter of "Church School Teacher" is not an exaggeration.

The cases are anything but few. What he says about the whole business is truth. All this is done as my fellow-teacher states, that the Head-Teacher may please the parson. Whether the Head-Teachers who do this dastard work enjoy it, I know not and care less. The Assistants and Pupil-Teachers are disgusted with it, while the children themselves testify their hatred of such treatment by using anything but sweet words about the Scripture and Teachers as soon as they get outside the bounds of the school. Fancy children being made to hate their teachers and detest school all through the abominable Diocesan Examination! The thing is ridiculous, shameful!

Besides this overtime preceding the Scripture examination, much that is scandalous also lurks behind the scene, preparatory to it. The time-table of the school is spurned, and Bible and other religious lessons are given in the place of reading, geography, &c., &c. Of course books and other apparatus are always at hand to begin secular instruction instantly in case H.M. Inspector chances to give an unexpected call. All this comes within the category of what the renowned bishop's, "Us Christians," call Religious Instruction. There are other evils that skulk behind the choking smoke of theology in schools, but those that are not of minor importance have already been placed before many of the parents of the children in our elementary schools.

To some I may seem to have made assumptions that are shallow and unfounded. Let those who think so, bear in mind that I was once a boy in the standards of an English Church School.

AN EX-CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER.

### REVIEW.

*Die Religion als Pathologisches Phänomen.* Von Dr. Romeo Manzioni. Autorisirte Uebersetzung von Friedrich Zündt. Geneva, 1889.—Religion, from its earliest manifestations in the ignorance and fear of primitive man to its latest developments, in which it clings to old formulas and faiths which have long since lost their meaning, partakes of the nature of a disease, and perhaps the best that can be said for it is that, like measles and some other of the ailments of childhood, it seems to have been almost an indispensable adjunct in the history of the infancy of the race. Dr. Manzioni's little book is by no means an abstruse diagnosis of all the phases of the disease. It is written in a popular style, and chiefly illustrates the malign influence which priestcraft has had in its treatment of superstition. The prescriptions offered by the doctor are doubt and free inquiry. These are like fresh air and good food in ordinary ailments, the best antidotes to the disease, and, if persisted in, are pretty sure to result in a cure.



“INFIDEL CONVERSIONS.”

A copy of the following circular was picked up by a member of the *Freethinker* staff at one of the May meetings in Exeter Hall. It had doubtless been inadvertently dropped by some pious old lady who takes an interest in such things. The address of the society has alone been omitted.—

ANTI-INFIDEL ASSOCIATION.

April 1st, 1889.

Dear Sir (or Madam),

The above association has for some years made a special feature of its widely circulated tracts, specially designed to counteract the teachings of Infidel lecturers. Series A 1 has been found of enormous use—by the blessing of God—in opening the eyes of the people to the pernicious character of so-called Freethought doctrines. We beg to call your attention to this work, in the hope that you may be moved by the Holy Spirit to help us by your prayers and also by the more substantial aid of your purse. We give details of Tracts No. 4 and 5, which the Lord has abundantly blessed, as samples of our labor.

No. 4 is intended for general distribution. It records the conversion of W—— A——, residing at M——, near F——. It relates how he was led away from Christ by the evil teachings of an infidel companion, and, after two fits of *delirium tremens*, was brought back to the fold by the efforts of the Rev. Mr. E——. The tract is deeply pious in tone, but, as the case will not bear investigation, names of persons and places have been judiciously omitted. The tract, however, contains numerous references to the Blood of Christ, with fervid exhortations to the reader to COME TO HIM while HE is yet to be found; and the skeleton-like nature of the personal references will therefore be lost sight of to a large extent. Copies of this tract can be supplied at 2s. 6d. per 1,000.

Our Great Novel Speciality is Tract No. 5 (registered). It records the conversion of a man who can be proved to have bought copies of the *Freethinker* on three distinct occasions, and we have two credible witnesses who are prepared to swear that they heard him shout “Hooray” one Sunday evening when Mr. Bradlaugh passed from the Hall of Science to his cab. This Tract is entitled “Conversion of an Infidel Leader,” and, as names and dates are given, every precaution has been taken to make the case sound. The man has been carefully coached; *he is to be found at the address given* (this is an entirely new feature, for which we have secured the copyright), and is prepared to answer any questions—provided they are not *too* searching. He has frequently spoken at the Hall of Science, but, unfortunately, never succeeded in enabling the audiences to understand what he meant. There is nothing about the Blood of Christ in this Tract, as we humbly venture to think (under Providence) that it is quite able to stand upon its own merits.

Trusting that the Holy Spirit may put it into your heart to put money into our pockets,

We are, yours clinging to the Cross,

THE SECRETARIES.

To Mrs. Faithful, Hydrocephalus House, Colney Hatch.

A BRAVE PRIEST.

A DEVOTED servant of humanity was the late Father Damien, who gave up his life to minister to the leper settlement of Molokai and who has now fallen a victim to the fell scourge amid the ravages of which he cast his lot. He appears to have been animated less by any religious desire to make his own salvation sure than by a true regard for the most suffering of his fellows, and Freethinkers, even those who deem it nothing but a pity that a noble life should be so lost, need not be one whit behind Roman Catholics in admiration for his enthusiasm of humanity.

God is always losing his opportunities for beneficence. What a case for a miracle was here? A priest had dedicated himself to serve the most woe-stricken of the race. To have preserved their friend and benefactor was the least any God could do who had so afflicted them. Yet as described by Edward Clifford, to whom Father Damien said he would not be cured, if the price of it was to leave his work, this man of a million was woefully disfigured by leprosy, and has now lost his life, far more truly dying for others than his fancied Savior.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S STORY.

“I'll tell you a story, boys,” said Colonel Ingersoll, while waiting for the Kerr jury to come in on Friday afternoon.

Colonel Fellows, Lawyer Bird, Mr. Kerr, and the reporters leaned forward expectantly.

“During the gold days in California,” continued the colonel, “it was the law that the holder of a claim should be liable to lose it if he let it remain idle ten days in succession. Well, there was one fellow who had been working faithfully, when he fell sick and had to take to his tent. Another fellow came along and jumped his claim. The first man pleaded and argued, but the other was not to be moved. So when the first man recovered he sued the interloper.

“The case came up before the justice. He was very sorry, he told the plaintiff, but the law was absolute on the question, and the defendant could not be ousted. No sooner had he finished than the plaintiff jumped up and hit the defendant a stinging blow behind the ear. The defendant fell over and the plaintiff jumped on him and began to pummel him soundly. The constable ran up and was trying to part the fighters when the judge arose, and, pounding on the desk, yelled to the constable:

“‘—— you, sir, leave them alone! The law is the law, but if the gentlemen want to compromise they must not be interfered with.’”

The colonel's way of telling it was as good as the story.—*New York Sun.*

A SCRIPTURAL CIRCUS.

It was in an out-of-the-way village of Connecticut, where the people were all so good and pure that they would not openly do anything that had the semblance of being frivolous or naughty for ever so much. They would cheat, and lie, and steal, when they could gain something by it; but they would not go to a theatre or a circus on any consideration. One day, however, there came into the New England village, for Connecticut may be said to be New England in a certain sense, a bill-sticker, who put up a bill, which ran somewhat as follows:—

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See the Egyptian Chariots before the Wheels came off.

See the Jewish Captive Dance on the Tight Rope before Darius the Persian.

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Of course, everybody went, and, as may be surmised, it was—barring the Scriptural accessories—as much like a circus as anything ever seen before in the world. But the Methodist Episcopal minister was there, and he had a front seat. Presently the “Jewish Captive” slipped while performing before Darius (represented by the clown of the establishment), and, although he grabbed the ropes in his descent, came with his feet so heavily on the top of the minister's stove-pipe hat that he broke it all to pieces, and nearly dislocated the good man's neck.

PROFANE JOKES.

Subject—“Can I communicate with my wife in the other world?” Medium—“Do you want to see her spirit?” Subject—“Great Heavens, no! I saw enough of it while she was alive.”

Minister (from the pulpit)—“As the air of the church seems chilly, I would ask the sexton if he will kindly close the front doors and windows of the building. The collection will now be taken up.”

The touching sentiment, “Our first in Heaven,” appeared after an obituary notice in a Philadelphia paper, and the father of the child came into the office raging mad. It was the third death in the family, and he desired to know of the clerk where he supposed the other two had gone.

A country clergyman, who is more indebted to his manuscript than to his memory, called unceremoniously at a cottage while its possessor was perusing the writings of an inspired prophet. “Weel, John, what's this you are about?” “I am prophesying,” answered the rustic. “Propheesying?” exclaimed the astonished clergyman, “I doubt you are only reading a prophecy?” “Weel,” argued the cottager, “gin reading a preach be preachin', is no reading a prophecy prophesying.”



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