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The Freethinker

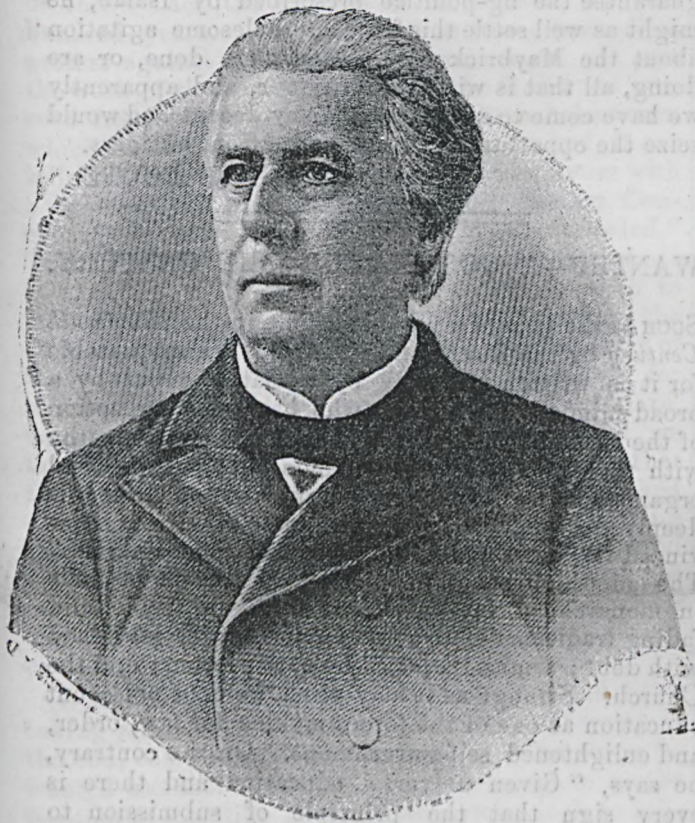
Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



R. B. Westbrook.

R. B. WESTBROOK.

A CONSIDERABLE proportion of the leading American Freethinkers have formerly been ministers of various denominations of the Christian Church. There are, for instance, Mr. Putman, one of the editors of *Freethought*, San Francisco; Mr. C. B. Reynolds, who was tried for blasphemy at New York; Mr. J. D. Shaw, editor of the *Independent Pulpit* of Texas; and Mr. L. K. Washburn, whose discourses frequently appear in the *Boston Investigator*. Among the number must be placed Mr. Richard Brodhead Westbrook, the present President of the American Secular Union. Of Anglo-Saxon descent, he was born in the State of Pennsylvania in 1820. He studied theology, and at the age of twenty was licensed as a Methodist minister. After ten years of popular service he was transferred to the Presbyterian Church by regular certificate and recommendation, and in this he remained yet nearly another ten years before his faith was completely loosened and he felt it his duty to resign. He then studied law, and became member of the bar in New York, Philadelphia, and in the Supreme Court at Washington. He has since retired and devoted himself to literary pursuits. A

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forthcoming work on the *Secrets and Suppressions of Sacerdotalism* has long engaged his attention. He has published *The Bible—When and What?* an exposure of the claims of inspiration and infallibility, and *Man—Whence and Whither?* dealing with the subject of evolution. For several years he has maintained a free lectureship in Philadelphia, and has stirred up that city in regard to the shameful perversion of the will of Stephen Girard, who left an immense sum for a college for orphans, on the condition that only secular instruction should be given, but in which the sky-pilots have contrived to gradually introduce prayers, hymns, and the whole paraphernalia of Calvinistic theology. He has published a full exposure of this nefarious transaction in a little book entitled *Girard's Will and Girard College Theology*. Mr. Westbrook has signalled his elevation to the Presidency of the American Secular Union, by offering a considerable money prize for the best manual of instruction in morality in entire independence of all theology. Several works of the kind are in use in France, and there is one, at least, in England, but if the prize offered succeeds in drawing out one in America better than all preceding ones, it will be worthily bestowed.

Mr. Westbrook is one of those who objects to the term "infidel," which is so generally bestowed and accepted in America. As a matter of etymology, there is no doubt he is right, and reluctance to accept a designation which one holds does not convey a proper meaning, is no impeachment on any man's courage. That of Mr. Westbrook is sufficiently displayed in his acceptance of the annual presidency of the American Secular Union.

RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE MAYBRICK CASE.

It is not our intention to deal with the Maybrick case from a legal standpoint. Thousands of persons are writing more or less sensible—oftener more or less foolish—letters to the papers on this engrossing topic. The "greater jury," as the public is politely called, is expressing all sorts of opinions, and screaming in all sorts of keys. Nor must we omit the anonymous "gentlemen of the press" who, as the poet says, "deliver brawling judgments unashamed on all things all day long." We make no pretension to being wiser or more impartial than the judge and jury who tried the case. But, on the other hand, we shrink from the idea of putting a rope round a woman's neck and squeezing out her life. It is brutal and disgusting. Capital punishment is in our opinion doomed. Apart from its hideousness, there is the fact that it is an irreparable punishment. If an innocent person is sentenced (and such cases have occurred), you cannot correct the mistake if you have killed its unhappy victim. For many reasons, therefore, we should be delighted to hear of Mrs. Maybrick's reprieve, although we should be sorry to see her set free in mere deference to popular clamor. All are agreed

that murder is not to be tolerated, so that there is no principle in dispute. The only question at issue is—Did Mrs. Maybrick poison her husband? and, one way or the other, that question is to be decided by cool judgment on the evidence. It is a dreadful thing to have to decide such a question, but those who have to decide it should have the courage to do their duty. It will never do to take the vote of the crowd in the street. Any sensible man would rather be tried by a judge and jury than by such a tribunal.

Having said so much, without attempting to discuss Mrs. Maybrick's guilt or innocence, we wish to offer a few remarks on an aspect of the case which is likely to be neglected.

The majority of the British public have a lurking belief in ghosts, and a positive belief in a future existence. According to this belief, Mr. Maybrick is not *dead* in the full sense of the word. He has simply abandoned, or been expelled from, his tenement of clay. He is in reality still *living*, and it need not be argued that he is the one person, besides Mrs. Maybrick herself, who perfectly knows whether she is innocent or guilty. Now it is a common notion that the souls of the departed look down upon us and take an interest in our fortunes. Why, then, does not Mr. Maybrick do something to vindicate his wife if she is laboring under a false accusation? Surely he must retain some sympathy with the woman he loved, and it is simply incredible that he could regard the fate of his children with indifference. We have outgrown the divine law of visiting the sins of the parents upon the children. Yet it will be impossible to keep the little ones, when they grow up, from the dreadful knowledge that their father was poisoned and their mother hung as a murderess. We are therefore entitled to ask why the spirit of Mr. Maybrick does not intervene. It may be answered that he has no knowledge of what is happening on earth. Very likely, but this is a heavy blow to the popular superstition. Or it may be said that he knows what is happening, but is unable to interfere. In that case the future life is certainly not one of perfect felicity even to those who are the right side of the fence. Finally, it may be argued that everything is in the hand of God; in other words, we are referred back to Providence.

That there is a Providence is almost universally admitted. It is taught professionally by the ministers of religion who are interesting themselves in Mrs. Maybrick's case. Yet, strange to say, no one thinks of appealing to that quarter for assistance. God knows whether Mrs. Maybrick did or did not murder her husband. If she is guilty, it is highly necessary that a deliberate, cruel, cold-blooded murderess should not be turned loose upon society. If she is innocent, it is an infamy that she should be hung, and a still greater infamy that her children's lives should be poisoned by such a ghastly memory. Never was there a clearer opportunity for Providence. Hundreds of trumpery miracles are recorded in the Bible, and thousands in ecclesiastical history. If they are all fictions, let the Church alter its doctrines; but if they were actual occurrences, let the clergy tell us why the Lord cannot work a worthy miracle to-day.

Suppose Mrs. Maybrick is innocent, and yet is hung. Suppose, as is probable, she prays to the very last, and her prayer is unanswered. What is the bearing of such a case on the doctrine of prayer? Will it be maintained that God hears and answers our supplications when he lets the hangman choke the last cries of a poor woman, who finds no justice on earth and no mercy from heaven?

We beg our Christian friends to think of these things. Meanwhile we may remind them how little they know their own Scriptures. Writing to her paramour Brierley, Mrs. Maybrick said that her husband was "sick unto death." It has been contended that this is a common phrase in America,

meaning nothing but very ill; but why did she underline the words? The phrase is of Scriptural origin. Our pious contemporary, the *Echo*, says the words are taken from the text "This sickness is not unto death." As a matter of fact the exact phrase occurs twice in the Old Testament (2 Kings, xx, 1; Isaiah xxxviii, 1). Curiously enough, both are omitted in Cruden's Concordance, and we dare say the omission accounts for our contemporary's ignorance. "In those days," say both Kings and Isaiah, "was Hezekiah sick unto death." This does not mean that he was ill, but that he was dying. He lived another fifteen years, but it was in answer to prayer, and the promise of his recovery was sealed with the miracle of the sun going back ten degrees.

This brings us to Providence again. Surely if the Lord could work such a stupendous miracle to guarantee the fig-poultice prescribed by Isaiah, he might as well settle this far from wholesome agitation about the Maybrick case. Men have done, or are doing, all that is within their power, and apparently we have come to an *impasse*. Any decent God would seize the opportunity, or else retire from business.

G. W. FOOTE.

WANTED—A GOSPEL FOR THE CENTURY.

SUCH is the title of a notable article in the *Nineteenth Century* by the Rev. Father Barry. We say notable for it is written not only by a Catholic but by a broad-minded one, a priest who has some perception of the issues of the times, and is not without sympathy with them. Father Barry holds that "The social organism as we have received it from our fathers is deeply decayed, and its spirit gone." He is convinced it "must undergo a transformation or perish." The chief hindrances to anarchy in Europe he finds in monarchical institutions resting on feeble and fading traditions of loyalty; municipalities burdened with debt; armies recruited by conscription; and the Church. Strange as it may seem, he does not count education as one of the forces making for law, order, and enlightened self-government. On the contrary, he says, "Given universal education and there is every sign that the principle of submission to authority, which has been received hitherto on custom, will lose rather than gain in power." Yes, but the principle of submission to fact will remain. "Education," says Father Barry, "will give weight and edge to the problem while redistributing the intellectual forces of the world on a plan by no means favorable to those in possession." We should surmise that for the intellectual forces of the world to be on the side of the many will at any rate be eminently favorable for the welfare of the many.

The Father sees that the millions as they come to think for themselves, will ask the Christian religion what view it takes of their interests. Well, they will find it written, "Love not the world nor the things of the world," "The poor ye have always with you," "Let every soul be subject to the powers that be for they are ordained of God." Does he think the many will be satisfied with these answers? Father Barry himself finds the position unsatisfactory. He says, "Religion, secluded the while in her cathedral stalls, may chant lovely anthems and wear copes of brodered gold. But where is the multitude that should throng nave and aisles? Outside, I say, brawling, drinking, tearing their bread from one another, working with despair in their hearts the while, as many hours of the day and night as they can toil and live." This after fifteen centuries of established Christianity. What an admission of failure on the part of a divine and infallible religion!

But, laments Father Barry, the Church lost its opportunity. The time was at the Renaissance when infant Science first strove to raise its head. Instead

of trying to strangle it the Church should have baptised it to the service of Christ. It would have been of no avail. The infant was of Pagan descent and would have thrown off its garb despite Christian baptism. The time, our author says, was unpropitious. "Sextus the Fourth and Leo the Tenth might sacrifice to a frivolous humanism the duties of their high office; but it cannot be supposed that they saw the ideal scope of the culture to which they paid tribute. They were unworthy Vicars of Christ [mark that ye believers in Papal infallibility], not the founders of a golden age."

The Protestants were also unequal. "Luther," says Dr. Barry, "trampling humanity under foot, condemned Aristotle in the same breath with Thomas Aquinas, looked on reason as Satan's handmaid, or something worse, and, as might be readily shown—from the pages of Prof. Janssen, for instance—retarded or threw back the civilisation of Germany for two hundred years. The Reformation was essentially a protest against science and human reason. It was the work of theological fanatics where it did not proceed from a reason of State, and the scholasticism which Luther imagined that he had scotched, if not killed outright, was revived among his followers with a virulence and obstinacy that neither Realist, Conceptualist, nor Nominalist could have exceeded." There is a strong note of Catholic exaggeration about this, but it nevertheless contains sufficient truth to make it sting. Leaving the Protestant to defend the Reformation with the remark that the squabbles of the Christian sects were probably fortunate for science, which, but for their internecine warfare, might never have been allowed to develop at all, we take Father Barry simply on his own admission that the Church lost its opportunity of controlling and directing science. Does he think that the rushing steed will be coaxed back to let the rider who failed to leap when it came by, now quietly jump upon and master it? Does he hope that the world's workers will once more revert to Christianity, which on his own showing has left them in a dreadful plight?

What should we think of a man who had been taking jalap for a year and, finding himself worse at the end, came to the conclusion that the one thing he wanted was more jalap? Yet this seems to us the position of men like Father Barry, who look to religion to cure us of our social ills. He asks in effect Socialists, Democrats, and lovers of progress and the amelioration of man on earth, to invite, or at any rate allow the Church to take the direction of their movements. Then all will be well. We answer, your day of trial has passed. History has given its verdict. The time, toil, riches, research, attention, and devotion, bestowed on religion have been worse than thrown away. It has positively been a hindrance to human progress. Nor can it be expected that priests, celibate priests above all, will ever be in a position even to adequately sympathise with the common wants of humanity.

The Church cannot come to terms with modern civilisation even though it would. It is hampered with the old God, the old devil, the old book, the old creeds, the old theory of life. As democracy progresses it feebly holds out its hand to democracy, but it is only in order that it may not be left in the ditch itself. It would fain inscribe the device of death on the cradle of the new life. We tell Father Barry that the century is finding its gospel. Leaf by leaf its pages are being deciphered. Some characters appear prominent to all who can read—Science, Self Help, Liberty, and Human Love. They are in blank antagonism to Religion, the Church, Authority, and Divine Worship. Between the old faith and the now there can be neither treaty nor truce. They know it at the Vatican. They know it too who assembled at the Campo dei Fiori to celebrate Bruno's martyrdom. Father Barry's well meant policy of

reconciliation will find few dupes either in the Catholic or in the Freethought camp.

J. M. WHEELER.

A TRIP TO THE NEW FOREST.

LAST Sunday, with my good friends Mr. and Mrs. Brumage and party, I joined the Portsmouth friends on an excursion to the New Forest by a steam-boat hired for the party. First running over to Cowes, Isle of Wight, we re-crossed the Solent, and started up the charming river Exe, landing at Buckler's Hard. Most of the party then made their way by road or river, and mid shine and shower, to Beaulieu. Beautifully situated, indeed, is this spot, where the monks of old founded a large abbey, now in ruins. Some remnants of feudalism seem to remain, judging by the tale of an old boatman, who said that, although he had been forty years in the employ of Lord Montague, the lord of the manor, he was suddenly dismissed for having had the audacity to erect a small wooden memorial of his dead wife without having first asked his lordship's permission. His lordship, too, it appears, prevents the fishermen exercising the right they have had from time immemorial of going up the river to fish. In this out-of-the-way and squire and priest-ridden portion of England, we found laborers whose weekly wage amounted to seven shillings all told. The need of Radical missionaries for our villages was forcibly impressed on our minds, especially when we found cottagers afraid to give a drink of water to strangers landing on a Sunday.

Some desperate missionaries seemed to be about. Wandering into an old fashioned church, evidently Ritualistic and, as is customary with the High Church, left wide open, some ladies noticed a round stone edifice in the centre, with a heavy carved modern lid. "Is that the copper?" asked a lady. I explained it was the font and that its original purpose was to cast out evil spirits by baptism. Raising the massive lid to see if water was in "the copper" we discovered—Oh horror sacrilege and blasphemy, a copy of the *Freethinker*. Alas for the frailty of poor human nature; laughter, loud and long greeted this most unexpected discovery. This was not all. We discovered that some Satan-instigated wretch had inserted copies of Mr Ball's "Because the Bible Tells Me So" and other tracts within the hymn-books, in the sacred volume and in the holy pulpit itself. Such wanton sacrilege, which in the good old days was punishable with death, is highly reprehensible and we expect the Portsmouth friends to offer a reward for any information concerning the perpetrator or perpetrators of the unholy deed.

J. M. W.

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 contents-sheets, 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.

OBITUARY.—On Saturday, Aug. 3rd, the funeral of Mr. Samuel Taylor took place at Finchley. His death occurred on the preceding Tuesday. He was all his life a consistent Freethinker and reformer, and had consequently surrounded himself by many friends of the advanced school of thought. He was twelve years the active secretary of the Upholsterers' Philanthropic Society, and was until his recent illness the treasurer of the Upholsterers' Club in the Euston Road. At the ceremony on Saturday were many well-known Freethinkers, including Mr. E. Truelove, Mr. W. Barralet, and Mr. Ranger. Mr. W. W. Bartlett, of the Fabian Society, made an impressive speech over the grave, followed by Mr. Truelove and Mr. Newton. Several handsome wreaths were laid upon the grave.—H. FREEMAN.

ACID DROPS.

According to the *British Weekly*, one of the cranks who haunt our national reading room in Bloomsbury solemnly asked for any extant autographs of Jesus Christ. He was a student of caligraphy, and he wished to examine J. C.'s up and down strokes. This leads our contemporary to remark, with Pope, that a little learning is a dangerous thing. But is not the editor of the *British Weekly* aware that although, according to Jerome, Jesus Christ was unable to write, the early Christians produced a letter he was said to have written to Abgarus, Prince of Edessa? Eusebius professed to have had it copied and translated from the archives of that city. This precious document was defended as genuine by scores of Christian apologists, including our own Cave. Even Addison, a prose classic and a man of very considerable learning, regarded the imposture as genuine. On the whole, therefore, this British Museum crank is no crankier than a great many eminent Christians of past ages.

The Scottish Spurgeon, the Rev. John McNeill, is reported to be "bringing many souls to Christ." How is that guaranteed? Does J. C. give receipts on delivery? We ask the question in all seriousness, for we should like to know.

Laurence Hickey, who was executed at Tralee last week for the murder of his brother in law exhibited a truly religious end. On the morning of the execution he engaged in prayer until the arrival of the prison chaplain, he then was present at mass and partook of the Holy Communion. Thus fortified "he forgave those that swore against him, and prayed that God would have mercy on his soul," and so went to join the saints in glory.

Jeannie Trainer is a pious Glasgow thief, who seems to have the old notion of finding sanctuary in church. Pursued by detectives for fraudulently obtaining goods, she took refuge in St. Andrew's Catholic Chapel, where she was found kneeling at the altar with the goods beside her.

The body of a young man who had evidently committed suicide by shooting himself with a revolver, was found at the village of Luss, Loch Lomond side. The man had been seen walking about the shore intently studying a Bible. Will Mr. Talmage kindly mention this in his next discourse on suicide.

Another bogus mission collector sentenced. It is apparently a paying, though a somewhat risky business.

A religious fanatic at Balouse City killed his wife and two children and then committed suicide last week. He left a note stating that he did not want to live in this sinful world and that he could not leave it without his family, so he thought he would kill them too. He said he and all his family were going to heaven, where Jesus was, and that he first gave them strychnine, but could not bear the sight of their agonies, so he killed them with a revolver.

Mr. Charles Sacre, for many years chief engineer of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincoln Railway, was a decent, good-hearted man, though rather fond of vehement objurgation. He took badly to religion, however, ran a little Salvation Army of his own, and was a prominent figure at dinner-hour meetings. All this seems to have overturned his mind. Anyhow, he has committed suicide. We are sorry for it, and we beg Talmage to explain this case.

The "Anti-Infidels Library" is considered such a striking and fitting designation by our opponents, that there is a serious quarrel between two of them as to who has the right to use it.

The *Christian Colonist* complains because the Ceylonese government have declared the birthday of the Buddha a public holiday. Well the Christians have the birthday too of Jesus as a public holiday, and the customs of the Buddhists in Ceylon have as much right to be respected as those of the Christians in England.

Freethinkers are sometimes ridiculously accused of wishing to burn the Bible. We have never come across any with such silly notions. They simply desire it to take its place among the rest of the so-called sacred literature of the world, and, on account of its barbarous and filthy stories, to be excluded from State-supported schools. As matters are, some might certainly like to see it expurgated before being put in the hands of children, and in this they are not alone, as Messrs. Cassell and Co. have published a child's Bible, in which the naughty passages may be discovered by their omission.

It has, however, been the policy in all ages of the Christian Church to suppress heretical works. The Catholic Church has done this to an enormous extent, and, as was recently shown in these columns, a considerable number of Freethought works have been publicly burned even in Protestant England. Moreover, the policy of expurgation has been resorted to. If any volume of Gibbon is missing from sets, it is sure to be vol. ii. containing chapters 15 and 16 on the rise of Christianity, and abridged editions omit these chapters entirely.

Some works, such as Southwell's *Apology for Atheism*, are so scarce as to suggest the possibility of their being bought up and destroyed. These reflections were suggested by seeing some dozens of *Macmillan's Magazine* for April, 1868, with an article torn out. The article was a trenchant one on "Ritualism," by Leslie Stephen. Of course, it is possible some admirer may have torn them out for better preservation. But possibly they were destroyed by some High Church bigot.

We should not be sorry if some Christian bigot would buy up and destroy our own stock of pamphlets, for we should immediately produce new and improved editions.

The London hoardings are placarded with notices of a paper called *The Catholic Fireside*—what a grim joke. The Catholic fireside of the past was supplied by human fuel! The Catholic fireside of the present would be supplied with ditto if the light of education had not illuminated the dark ages made by the priest. The Catholic fireside and the Protestant fireside have been kept blazing all because common sense men and women objected to worship the bloodthirsty and lewd "old Jew gentleman upstairs," or have anything to do with his flaccid son.

The following testimony to the efficacy of Christianity is extracted from the report of the Rev. T. B. Wood, LL.D., Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Missions in south-east South America:—"All over South America the priests are, as a rule, contemptibly ignorant and notoriously corrupt. Many of them are, moreover, vulgar, filthy, and generally vile, avaricious, haughty, oppressive, and hypocritical. . . ." "The innocence of pious girlhood has no defence possible against the ravenous propensities that lie in wait for it in the confessional. If the anxious mother wishes to save her daughter from this fiendish power, what can she do? Shall she warn them of their danger, and train them to beware! Many a mother has tried that. But that is like warning them that God is wicked, and they must beware of him, for the priest is to them in the place of God."

What awful crammers are stuffed into pious magazines! If the Devil is the father of lies, he supplies the clergy with a large quantity of his offspring. The *Sevenoaks Illustrated Monthly*, conducted in the interest of Vine Chapel, and edited by its minister, the Rev. C. Rudge, tells a wonderful story of a "clever and accomplished" infidel who was converted by a "little girl of scarcely five summers." Of course it happened a long time ago, in the days of stage coaches. And the yarn is so loosely spun that the time is "all over the shop." The infidel tries "for days" to drown the child's voice in his memory, and "one evening" he tells a lady of the "lovely child I saw yesterday."

Let brotherly love continue! For nine years there has been a dispute between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians of Tooting. It is now settled by Justice Kekewich.

Mr. Gretton in his *Reminiscences*, tells a good story of Dr. Ford, a former vicar of Melton. Once, on the occasion

of the Bishop's visitation, the appointed preacher failed to appear. His Lordship requested one of the assembled clergy to preach, but they all declined, as unprepared. At last the Bishop called upon Dr. Ford, the vicar of the Church, himself. The old gentleman accordingly went into the pulpit, and startled his brethren with the text of Isaiah, 56, 10: "They are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark."

At Kilburn the Salvation Army band frightened a pony driven by a man named Smythe, of Kilburn, with the result that it took fright and ran away. A boy was knocked down and injured, and the cart coming into collision with a lamp post the driver was thrown out and sustained severe injuries to his head. It was all in the service of the Lord.

A letter from Mr. John Stokes in *The Casleford Gazette* reports that "Captain" George Perfect, speaking in the Salvation Army barracks asked for six volunteers from the congregation to assist him to throw Charles Bradlaugh (then lecturing there) into the river. Four devout Salvationists lifted up their hands to show their willingness to break the law for their Savior's sake, but the attempt never came off.

The *Ensign*, a monthly organ of the Young Men's Christian Association at Nottingham, publishes a portrait of the Rev. George Bishop, with a flattering biography. The portrait is admirable. Mr. Bishop wears his old conceited smirk, and with his spectacles and side whiskers he looks the *beau ideal* of a five-o'clock-tea curate. According to the biography, Mr. Bishop is a Goliath, and "a terror to Infidels and Agnostics, for they have no chance of holding their own against him." Why, then, did Mr. Bishop throw such obstacles in the way of a debate with Mr. Foote? Surely a Goliath would be less anxious about the conditions. Mr. Foote agreed to go to Nottingham, leaving his other work in London. He agreed to let the profits of the debate go to a local charity. But Mr. Bishop insisted that Mr. Foote should also pay his hotel expenses at Nottingham. The Branch offered to bear these expenses, but Mr. Foote would not hear of it. He declined to sanction a flagrant injustice, even for the luxury of bringing Goliath into the arena.

Dr. Parker has a big mop of hair, under it a regular preacher's skull, and inside that a busy though not a miraculous brain. He is always breaching some novelty, his latest being a proposal to form a new universal Church, a Church of "love, sympathy, and hopefulness." God is to be kept, but points of difference are to be sunk. These, however, are the very things on which religionists feel most keenly. If Dr. Parker has a sensible scheme he will make a big reputation. It will certainly be surprising if the Union of Christendom is brought about by the oracle of the City temple; but we shall believe it, of course—when we see it.

The Newcastle Town Council have been discussing the question of permitting bands in the parks on Sundays. Reason was all on one side, and prejudice on the other. The religious bodies, however, brought all possible pressure, and twenty-five voted against the bands to twenty-two in favor. There is evidently a big field for Freethought still on the Tyne-side.

The Government has carried its Tithing Bill through by a reduced majority. It is a most unjust measure, but there is one compensation—it will make the Church still more odious, and help on the work of disestablishment and disendowment.

The Eastbourne Town Council has decided to stop religious services on the sands. Visitors complain of the annoyance of being "preached at" when they take a stroll. Eastbourne is said to have many places of worship, and the people who want religion can go indoors for it. All very well in its way, gentlemen of the Town Council; but don't you remember that Jesus Christ was an open-air preacher. You appear to be a great deal more respectable than your blessed Savior.

The Southport *Guardian* reports an interview with Mr. C. A. Hall, who keeps a sort of religious boarding house, which he calls Berachah or House of Blessing, to

cure diseases by the faith process. According to Mr Hall's account, the renowned faith-healer of Palestine isn't in it. With faith they are ready to cure anything at Berachah, from a witlow to a wooden leg. He tells how, by "striving with the Lord," he cured d'arrhœa, lumbago, and all the ills that flesh is heir to. Only the Lord sometimes needs a mighty deal of striving with.

Somebody observed to Mr. Hall that there were six missionaries leaving Africa via steamer, and they themselves prayed a safe passage, and their brethren on the shore prayed for them also. But that steamer went down and all the missionaries were drowned. Did this nonplus the man of faith? Not in the slightest. His answer was "If there had been a Paul on board the steamer would not have gone down."—Judging by his yarns about the faith cures Mr. Hall seems to imply that he himself would find waves and winds a small matter.

The people of the Free State of South Africa, must be very sinful or very silly. The President of the state has appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, on account of the plague of diphtheria now raging there. Of course the ministers of all denominations approve of this method of averting the wrath of an angry providence, and would probably be ready to pump on a Secularist who suggested they had better look to their sanitary arrangements and their water supply. Yet these same people deplore the vile superstitions of the African savages.

We do not expect the *Star* to write like an "infidel" journal, but why does it gush so rancidly over the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the house of Mr. Sebag Montefiore? Is there anything miraculous in an Archbishop's dining with a rich Jew? There might be in his dining with a poor one.

The *Liverpool Mercury* is doing the round of the churches. At one of the largest and finest, St Michael's, it reports "Not more than 50 adults were in the entire place, and amongst them a large proportion of feeble old men and women and a few young women; but the mariner and the strong young man were absent." The amount charged to the rates for the expenses of this church is £736 14s. 6d.

Mrs. Besant's conversion to Theosophy is exciting attention in America. There are two columns on the subject in the New York *Truthseeker*. Theosophy is called Mrs. Besant's "new fad." The editor believes, however, that Mrs. Besant will "remain the same earnest champion of human rights that she has been during the years she has been England's foremost female Freethinker."

The *Truthseeker* starts by calling Mrs. Besant "the ablest woman in England." This is a large order. No one recognises Mrs. Besant's ability more than we do, but she has met with a woman cleverer than herself in Madame Blavatsky. Hence these tears.

No less than 234,000 persons visited the Paris Exhibition on Sunday. It is doubtful if a quarter of that number visited the Paris churches.

There are said to be 294 millionaires in New York, and we dare say nine out of every ten of them, at least, are ready to swear it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mrs. Swayne, of Hoo, near Rochester, is carrying on an action against the Rev. Mr. Benson who will not give her the communion because she has attended a Wesleyan chapel. The lady is resolved to get her legal share of the body and blood of Christ, and the case will be settled in the Court of Arches. As the Irishman said, when the duellists' friends were suggesting a settlement, "It's a very pretty quarrel as it stands, and it's a pity to spoil it."

It is increasingly the fashion in Ritualistic churches to divide the women from the men. Lucianus says this gives a material guarantee for public morality, and affords a fine opportunity to the priests and choir for holy sacerdotal contemplation. It, however, puts him in mind of the day

of judgment, when the angels will all go one way and he another.

In an article on "Catholicism in England," Feb. 5 last year, we gave the figures of Roman Catholics in England and Wales as 1,354,000, and in Scotland 326,000. According to computations in the *Catholic Directory* for this year, the figures now are—England and Wales 1,360,000, Scotland 327,000, a slight increase, which may perhaps be accounted for entirely by immigration and excess of births over deaths. At any rate, it does not look as if the oft-talked-of conversion of England is going to happen just yet.

It is, however, a serious item in the great question, Rome v. Reason, that the Catholics impress upon their people the command to "increase and multiply," while the Free-thinking population is remarkable for its self-restraint in this particular. It seems to portend a long struggle between nous and numbers.

Passing down Great Titchfield Street, Portland Road, W., the other day, we noticed a provision store with some curious announcements. "Try Jezreel's Fresh Butter 1s. 6d. per pound. *The Flying Roll*. God's Last Message to Man. Jezreel's Tea 2s." Looking up we observed it was Jezreel's stores and the meeting place of "the new and later house of Israel." "In the name of the Prophet, Figs!"

The original "Jezreel" was a sun-struck soldier named James White, who believed he was inspired to interpret the Bible, which so many others have made such a mess of, and to gather in the new and later house of Israel. A crack-brained woman of wealth threw money into the concern, and a large building was commenced near Chatham to accommodate the 144,000 virgins, whose gathering in seems to have taxed all the efforts of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, since the days when cranky John saw the beast rise out of the sea at Patmos.

"Jezreel" gave out that he was immortal, or at any rate that he meant to stay until the 144,000 were ready for the New Jerusalem, and meantime he established stores to make the community self-supporting. Pale death, however, seized James White, like all the other prophets, and when he departed his wife "Queen Esther" took the profits of the provision business. It was thought that, at any rate, she would hold out until the 144,000 were gathered in, but she too departed. Enterprising tradesmen were, however, found to carry on the concern, and in London at least the Jezreelites seem more numerous than ever.

For faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
To fond delusions, hugs them to the last.

The late Laurence Oliphant, a man of genius, whose study of Theosophy left him as cranky as any Jezreelite, says in his work on *Scientific Religion*, p. 59, 1888: "I may mention that no less than four individuals have come under my own observation who were informed inspirationally that they were immortal, and would never see death in this world. Of these the two most notable were "Jezreel," the author of the *Flying Roll*, and T. L. Harris, the author of the *Arcana of Christianity*. Of these four, Mr. Harris alone survives." We do not know who the other two are, alluded to by Mr. Oliphant, but we distinctly recollect the claim being made in a publication by Mrs. Girling, the Shakeress of the New Forest; and in a curious book of revelations called *The Mother the Woman Clothed with the Sun*, the same claim is made. We have noticed several other cases in America, all probably arising from the assertion of Jesus that "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John vi., 47), and "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John viii., 51).

Sons do not always turn out to the credit of their sires. Thus the son of General Sherman has become a Catholic priest. The religion of the general is much like that of Thomas Paine. Being asked what he believed he answered, "I believe in God Almighty. That is as far as I have got."—*Freethought*.

The Rev. C. A. Berry was little known until he was invited (and declined) to succeed Ward Beecher at Plymouth Church. Since then he has been a popular preacher, draw-

ing large congregations wherever he goes. We are not well read in his sermons, but the few specimens we have seen give us the notion of proficiency in magical moonshine. According to a report of his recent discourse at Lowestoft, he is spreading the glad tidings that "above and around this death-smitten world stretches a kingdom, strong, bright, peaceful; whose King is master of all worlds and powers." Well, supposing this to be all true; of what value is it to mankind? What consolation is it to a tempest-tost sailor to be told that a fine calm prevails at that moment in another part of the ocean? What solace is it to a man groaning in agony to be told that no sound reaches "the lucid interspace of world and world?" As well try to heal wounds with imaginary plasters. Whether there is a great King out in the "bright peaceful kingdom" or not is a trifling matter to those in the storm and stress of life.

Photographer.—"My dear sir, can't you assume a more smiling countenance, and throw off that jaded look?" Rev. V. V. Heighton: "Take me as I am. I need a holiday this summer, and these pictures are for distribution among my parishioners."

The sky-pilots hate ridicule when employed against themselves, but they do not scruple to employ it against their opponents. Here is the Rev. Dr. Laing—no relation to Samuel Laing—who, in a book on *The Two Evolutions: the Real and the Mock*, violently attacks Darwin and Darwinism, which he first caricatures and then mocks. The poor fool don't know he is trying to mop out the sea.

There are 260 "right reverends," "very reverends," and "reverends" in the Church of England who draw between them £466,000 a year. Yet the public are constantly being asked to do something for "the poor clergy."

Our pious and cock-sure contemporary, the *Christian World*, talks of Rénan's "crude theory" that the myths of Genesis and Exodus were derived from Assyria. We venture to think that Rénan knows a great deal more about this subject than the anonymous scribes of 13 Fleet Street.

Mr. Andrew Lang rejects Rénan's theory because such myths as the Fall, the finding of Moses, and the opening of the Red Sea, are almost if not quite universal. Still, it was easier for the Jews to borrow than to create. As a matter of fact, the Jews have always been appropriators, and never inventors.

With regard to the "wonderful story of the plagues"—which is at once comic and tragic, infinitely absurd and infinitely cruel—the *Christian World* asks who invented that? Yet, after all, it does not hold the story an invention, but real history. The fact that no trace of it is to be found on the Egyptian monuments, we are told, must go for nothing, as "the Egyptians did not care to record failure and defeat." This kind of logic would prove anything.

There was a characteristic conflict between religion and science at the recent trial of a Roman Catholic priest for lunacy. The chief evidence against him was that he was always seeing the Devil. This was held by the doctors to be a clear proof of insanity, but the jury thought otherwise, and as Christians they were quite right, for taking the Devil out of Christianity is like boring a hole in the bottom of a cask.

One of Mr. Foote's auditors on Sunday evening said that if man was able to perform a moral act it was a proof of his spiritual origin. What does this gentleman make of the story of a dog's heroism at Greathead? His master's little daughter got too near the edge of the cliff, and the noble St. Bernard stepped between it and danger at the risk of his own life. The child was saved, but the heroic dog fell over the cliff, alighting on the beach 120 feet below, happily without serious injury. Was not that a moral action? And does it prove the spiritual origin of the dog?

Caller at minister's studio (to clergyman): "You seem to be busy?" Clergyman: "Yes." Caller: "What are you writing about?" Clergyman: "Don't know; I am writing a sermon."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 18, at 11.30, Clerkenwell Green (open-air), "The Devil"; at 7.30, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., "FREETHOUGHT AND THEOSOPHY: A REPLY TO MRS. BESANT."

Aug. 25, London Hall of Science.
Sept. 1, Manchester; 8, Liverpool; 15 and 22, London Hall of Science; 29, Newcastle.
Oct. 6 South Shields; 13 and 20, London Hall of Science; 27, Milton Hall, London.
Dec. 8, Nottingham.

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.

S. HATTEN (New York).—The *Dictionary of Freethinkers* will be sold as a bound volume as soon as it is completed. We hope to have it ready in September. The price will be 7s. 6d.

A. J. B.—The great objection to Swedenborgian "explanations" is that such stories as the Fall and the Flood are found in other mythologies, and are supposed to have been actual occurrences. It seems to us absurd to read the "deep spiritual meanings" of highly-civilised people out of the mythology of barbarians and savages. Thanks for your efforts to circulate this journal.

J. H. WHITHAM.—We cannot publish illustrations often, for the simple reason that we lose heavily on every one. We have one or two good ones in preparation. Sorry to hear of your misfortune.

CONSTANT READER.—Dialect writing is tedious unless it is extra witty.

MEDICUS.—Ingersoll's statement about Adami and Heva was probably made on the authority of Jacolliot, whose *Bible in India* is a very untrustworthy book. Ingersoll is a thinker and an orator, but he has no claim—and he makes none—to exact scholarship.

HENRY ARTHUR.—Thanks for the cuttings. When Freethought is endowed, and its current expenses are lowered, the poor people you refer to may be admitted free to our lecture halls. At present it is impossible. Landlords, printers, and advertisers have to be paid, and too often the lecturer's remuneration is a miserable pittance.

J. BROWN.—Your letter arrived on Wednesday, too late for last week's number. We are glad to know that your excursion to Durham was such a success.

B. STEVENS.—You are probably right. An open-air discussion, in the circumstances would be worse than useless. We advise Mr. Moss, if he discusses with the gentleman in question, to discuss indoors, where something like order could be maintained.

G. CRUDGE.—Sorry to hear there is a hitch at Bristol. We understood a meeting of the Branch and the open-air workers was to arrange matters. Those who frustrate a policy of harmony and hard work—if there are such—deserve the deepest reprobation. Thanks for your interesting letter.

G. NAEWIGER.—We congratulate you. It was neatly done. We hope Mr. Heaford will stir up the waters.

J. P. SILKSTONE.—Glad to hear you find *Infidel Death Beds* so useful. Facts speak for themselves. That little volume has silenced thousands of Christians. It continues to have a large sale.

FREETHINKER.—We do not think we have treated Mrs. Besant with more politeness than she deserves, but the fact that you think so shows that we have not been discourteous. We have not done with the matter yet.

ATHEIST.—See Psalms xxxiv., 15.

INCOG calculates that 50,000 sky-pilots mount 50,000 pulpits and tell 50 lies each 100 times a year for Christ's sake, making a grand total of 250,000,000 lies per annum. "Inco" is hopeless.

H. ROWDEN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." Contents-sheet shall be sent. Will you let us know if it is displayed?

J. BROWN, hon. secretary North-Eastern Secular Federation, 86 Durham Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, acknowledges the following subscriptions:—Mr. Bell, 6s; Newcastle Branch (excursion profit), 19s. 8d.; A Friend, per Mr. Peacock, 3s; Another Friend, 1s. Further subscriptions are solicited.

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.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Bulletin des Sommaires—Le Petit Parisien—L'Estafette—Freethought—Secular Thought—Der Arme Teufel—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Menschentum—Church Reformer—The Ensign—Castleford Gazette—Radical—Twentieth Century—Truthseeker—Newcastle Daily Leader—Secular Thought—Western Figaro—Liberty—Fritankaren—Dagens Nyheter—Boston Investigator—Cambria Daily Leader—Birmingham Gazette—Auckland Chronicle—Auckland Times and Herald.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THIS evening (Aug. 18) Mr. Foote replies to Mrs. Besant at the London Hall of Science. Mrs. Besant has attacked his pamphlet from that platform, and he will defend it, while criticising her Theosophy. Our London friends should make this lecture extensively known. Any supporter of Mrs. Besant will find an opportunity for discussion.

THIS morning (Aug. 18) Mr. Foote delivers an open-air lecture on Clerkenwell Green. Time, 11.30. Subject, "The Devil." Freethinkers in the neighborhood should bring their orthodox friends.

THERE was a big crowd at the Midland Arches on Sunday morning to hear Mr. Foote's open-air lecture, and, considering the audience is drawn from what is called a poor neighborhood, there was a good collection for the London Secular Federation. No opposition was offered though it was earnestly invited. Mr. Foote made a personal statement, drawing attention to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's vaunts, and repeating that the reverend gentleman could have a public debate at any time, provided the arrangements were made and carried out by a joint committee.

IN the evening Mr. Foote concluded his course of three lectures at Camberwell. It is a pity the Christians could not offer some decent opposition to these lectures. They covered a wide field, and there was a fine opportunity for a competent critic.

MR. S. STANDRING reports that he had an audience of about 200 in Finsbury Park on Sunday. A Holloway Branch of the N. S. S. is being formed, and the work of this new station will be carried on regularly.

MR. G. STANDRING, hon. secretary of the London Secular Federation, is compiling a list of Freethought lecturers' names and addresses for the convenience of Branch secretaries. He will be glad to receive the necessary facts from the speakers themselves. Address 7 Finsbury Street, E.C.

A STURDY American Freethinker, Mr. W. Macdonnell, the author of *Exeter Hall*, paid us a welcome visit on Tuesday. He lives about seventy miles from Toronto—that is, when he is at home. At present he is going to and fro in the world, like a certain personage in the Book of Job. He has been to the Paris Exhibition, visited Ireland where he was born, and "done" London as only Americans do it. It is an awfully big place, and he wouldn't like to live in it. On Sunday night he would have heard Mr. Foote lecture, but he couldn't find out the place, so he went to the Hall of Science and heard Mrs. Besant. He thinks her a wonderfully clever woman, but is sorry to find her preaching Theosophy.

LIKE a good American Mr. Macdonnell was going to Stratford-on-Avon. He had been to Westminster Abbey and was surprised to find Shakespeare taking a back seat there. Kings, dukes, and earls took the shine out of the mighty poet. "Well," we laughed, "what does it matter? they want monuments, and he doesn't." "I reckon you're right," said Mr. Macdonnell; but he added, "still, it's queer." It evidently weighed on his mind. He wished us good-bye, hoping to see us in America, and promising us a good reception.

MRS. DARWIN, the widow of the great naturalist, divides her time between Down and Cambridge. Darwin's study

is religiously kept as he left it. The house will no doubt become an object of pilgrimage.

DR. PRESSENSE, the well known French Protestant, and a contributor to the *Christian World*, has just written in that journal on the French system of education. He is quite satisfied with the exclusion of Catholic teaching from the schools, but he thinks that religion ought to be admitted if it does not go beyond the Protestant standards. Meanwhile, however, he is apprehensive that all may soon be lost. "It is idle," he declares, "to say that the idea of God is recognised in the programme. At any moment this may cease to be so, under the Atheistic influences which dominate our municipal councils." This is good news indeed. When religion is no longer forced on children it will have to live or die on its merits.

THE Americans are not quite satisfied at being swamped by immigrant Catholics, and have established an American League "to maintain and promote the interests of Americans and shield them from the depression of foreign competition." They propose a tax on emigrants. With this part of their programme we have little concern, but we note that they go in for the protection of the public schools. Their organ, the *Western American*, puts on its programme the taxation of all property, the educated franchise, and the state above the church in politics.

THERE is a first-rate sale of the *Freethinker* at the London open-air stations this summer. Mr. Foote is giving most of the Branches a gratuitous lecture, and it is pleasant to see the Branches returning the compliment by pushing the sale of this journal.

FUND for sending Messrs. Foote and Wheeler to the International Freethought Congress:—Dr. Mortimer, 5s.; C. H., £1; G. Payne, £2 2s.; J. Umbleby, 10s.; O. Dawson, 5s.

DURING the trial of Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp, Lord Coleridge told the jury that he and they were doubtless Christians, as they probably would have been if they had not been born in a Christian country. His lordship seems, however, to have approached Mr. Foote's view on this question. In his article on Matthew Arnold, he says that religion with every man is more or less a matter of prejudice. Few men, he says, think out their religion, and in proportion to the strength of the prejudice is the annoyance when it is assailed, or even when it is shown to be what it is. Instead of meeting the argument, the usual course is to assail the arguer, and with official or paid defenders of a creed, the too common method is to assume a tone of moral superiority, often ludicrously inappropriate, to impute motive, to vilify character.

FREETHINKERS will welcome these words from such a quarter; but, on the other hand, we dare say the bigots will snarl at Lord Coleridge's impartiality. They are the saints, and their opponents the villains. A simple theory, worthy of simpletons!

TICKETS for the brakes accompanying the Children's Excursion to Epping Forest can only be obtained up till Wednesday 21st. Members of the N. S. S. wishing for children's tickets will please state the name of their Branch. Mr. Cookney, hon. sec., 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., acknowledges the following further subscriptions:—George Anderson, Esq., £2 2s.; S. Enderby, 6d.; Miss Phipps, 10s.; Friend (Woolwich), 3d. Per J. Cole: 6d.; Cole, sen., 2d.; C. Smith, 3d.; Graves, 6d.; Neate, 6d.; Doughty, 2s. 6d.; North, 6d.; J. C., 1d.; Dundas, 2s. Per Davey: 2s.; Burt, 1s.; Wright, 6d.; Burge, 1s.; Rogers, 6d.; Beadle, 6d.; Baxter, 6d.; W. Baxter, 6d.; Bickett, 1s.; Leekey, 1s. 6d.; Bennett, 1s.; Pyatt, 6d.; Sheldrake, 2d. Per Mrs. Peters: Hodell, 3d.; Neale, 3d.; Curline, 3d.; Goodwin, 3d.; Spence, 3d.; Mrs. Colball, 6d.; E. Smith, 6d.; F. Williams, 6d.; Barber, 3d.; Mrs. Wilson, 6d.; Marshall, 3d.; A. N. Hennessy, 6d. Per Toleman Garner: "Get," 6d.; An Eccleat, 6d. Per Cookney: W. C. Stratham, 5s.

MR. A. B. MOSS is at Ramsgate, where the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale is also seeking that physical relief which prayer is powerless to afford. Mr. Moss desires us to say that he

has not "retreated." He is willing to debate with Mr. Woffendale or any other Christian minister on rational conditions. Of course he is. Who doubts it? Not even Mr. Woffendale.

THE new Organisation Committee of the N. S. S., appointed by the Executive, in accordance with the vote of the Conference, consists of Messrs. Foote, Standing, Smith, Reynolds, and Warren. At the first meeting Mr. Foote was elected permanent chairman, Mr. Forder attended as general secretary. A good beginning was made, and we shall report the details presently.

AMONG the delegates expected at the Paris Conference are Signor Bovio, who presided at the inauguration of the Bruno monument at Rome, and Signor Contreras, from Naples, who gave us a specimen of his eloquence at London in 1887. The eminent scientists, Letourneau, Hovelacque, Regnard and Bourneville have also promised to assist at the proceedings.

MRS. SOWDEN is doing a week's lecturing at the end of this month under the auspices of the North-Eastern Secular Federation. We hear that the Jarrow Branch is being reformed. The Federation is putting new life in the movement in the North.

THE August number of the *Radical* gives a portrait of "Orator Hunt," a conspicuous figure in the Radical world during the first quarter of the century. That wonderful old veteran Mr. E. T. Craig, who was a young man in the days of the Peterloo massacre, contributes an article on "The Empire and the Republic," and Mr. Harvey supplies a poem. There is also a good report of the London Secular Federation's Excursion to Epping Forest.

MR. W. W. COLLINS has had another debate with the Rev. G. Sutherland, of Sydney, New South Wales. This time the subject was "Can Secularism supply a moral code for the Guidance of Society?" The Rev. Geo. Walters, Unitarian, formerly of Aberdeen, presided.

THE West Ham Branch is going forward. It has a full list of morning and evening lectures for August, and we hear good reports of the success of its activity. There are some hard workers in this Branch.

MR. GAGNEUR, deputy for the Jura, was cremated on Monday at Père Lachaise. He was the first to be incinerated in the new crematory. The process lasted an hour, and while it was going on speeches were made. No doubt this method of disposing of the dead will soon become popular. We notice that the Cremation Society of England has received a legacy of £200 from Mr. C. J. Ely, whose remains were cremated at Woking.

"A MODERATE DRINKER" writes to the *Sunday Chronicle*, of Manchester, on "The Bible and Teetotalism," showing that the old Jew books give no countenance to the teetotal reformers. The pretences of the gospel temperance party are pretty well shown to be mere humbug and hypocrisy in one of the "Freethinker Tracts" on this subject.

THE long famous Sorbonne, of Paris, which since 1253 was the great school of French theology, has been reconstructed and re-opened by President Carnot. Literature and Science will now come to the front, and theology will take a back seat.

WHAT a rumpus there was when Newman was thought to be settling up a "brotherhood" at Littlemore. But times have changed since then, and so has the Church of England. Here is Archdeacon Farrar professing the very same thing. Other clergymen have taken the matter up. They suggest the formation of a Christian Brotherhood to work amongst "the people." Its members are to take vows of poverty and celibacy. So far it has been all talk. The very professors don't propose to make a beginning themselves.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—V.

ON "INSPIRATION."

To the Rev. Robert F. Horton, M.A.

SIR,—Sundry press notices drew my attention to your work on *Inspiration and the Bible*. The *Pall Mall Gazette* praised your "able and courageous treatment of the subject." The *Scotsman* spoke of its "perfect candor and fairness." The *Scottish Leader* "could not but commend the book." Canon Cheyne himself, in addressing the last Church Congress, described your volume as "freshly-written and stimulating." These are good testimonials, as testimonials go, and I turned to your book with curiosity and expectation.

What you have to say is addressed to believers, and I am not a believer. Why then, you may ask, do I meddle with what does not concern me. I do so, first, because the subject is interesting to every citizen of a country in which the Bible is legally declared to be the Word of God. I do so, secondly, because I have suffered imprisonment for "bringing the Holy Scriptures into disbelief and contempt," and I have a personal interest in the question. I do so, thirdly, because every man who publishes a book submits it to public criticism. I do so, lastly, because you have not scrupled to give your opinion of the "modern infidel" and the "poor Secularist."

Pardon me for saying that you quite misunderstand the "modern infidel" and the "poor Secularist." Dealing with what you are pleased to call the "cast-iron theory of inspiration," you say:

"We have multitudes among us who have thrown their Bibles away, or are using them only as *corpus vile* to flog and to deride. We have only to glance at the literature which issues from the infidel press to see that to our working men at least, the part of the community for whom Christ's religion is peculiarly adapted, the cast-iron theory has rendered no very signal service. From it and it alone in almost every case comes the first difficulty to the young mechanic, who is just beginning to think for himself. To it is due first the sceptical suspicion and last the utter rejection of the Book; and when the poor Secularist after years of vainly beating the air is brought back again to truth and reality, it is by the living Christ, whom he might have known and loved from the first."

How many "poor Secularists" have you brought back to "the living Christ?" How many have you seen brought back by other preachers? I suspect you drew on your imagination for the facts, and so long as they "point a moral or adorn a tale" there is nothing to shock a mind accustomed to the time-honored methods of Christian apology. From the earliest ages, when fraud and forgery were rampant, down to the present, when the silliest fictions are circulated in religious tracts and periodicals, your Church has conserved the precious art of hoodwinking its devotees. I say *your* Church, because the spirit and policy of every sect has been essentially the same.

I observe in your preface that you "hardly know an argument waged at the present day on the Secularist platforms which does not derive all its cogency from the false impression which we have ourselves given about the nature and claims of the Bible." If you honestly believe this, you are basking in a fool's paradise. It is true that Secularists point out the self-contradictions, the absurdities, the immoralities, the indecencies, and the scientific and historical blunders of the Bible. But if you could purge the Bible of all these, if you could abolish the peccant parts from human memory, so that no one could ever know that they existed, you would find the Secularist, or the "infidel," ready with strong and plentiful arguments against the inspiration of the rest. You cannot cheat us by flinging overboard what you consider contraband. We object to your ship, your flag, your figure-head, and your cargo. We shall never be satisfied

until the Bible ranks with other books, and is judged by human standards. We shall wage our battle against Christianity until it ceases to exist. We are pledged to oppose every species of supernaturalism, whether it assumes the lordly air of infallible authority or the humbler attitude of defence and apology.

You admit that Biblical criticism is very largely the work of rationalists, though you "do not refuse to build a church because the masons employed are Freethinkers." The illustration is an unfortunate one. Do you suppose the Freethinking masons are building for you? Will the clergy play the part of architects, while the materials are supplied and wrought by their superiors? You deceive yourself if you think so. Scientific criticism has not finished its work on your creed. Its solvent influence cannot be arrested. You admit that much has been destroyed, and the fate of the rest is equally certain. You are like a Russian traveller chased by wolves. What you fling to your pursuers only whets their appetite for more. There is no shelter in sight, the snowy steppe stretches out illimitably, and the age of miracles is past. You will be surrounded, and every bone will be neatly picked.

You waste your time in telling Agnostics and Rationalists that there is a "middle course" between the old doctrine of inspiration and the theory that the Bible "is not different from the Sacred Literatures of other Religions." Were your Scriptures a greater monument of genius and power than its rivals, it would still be open to the fundamental objections which apply to all revelations. The rationalist rejects miracles in literature as well as in physics. All the books in existence were written by men, and all of them, including the Bible, bear the unmistakable marks of their human origin.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

GIORDANO BRUNO'S MARTYRDOM.

AS the Pope has carefully removed the records of the Inquisition from the Holy Office to the Vatican, probably with the view that they shall never be used save in the Papal interest, and as some Protestant papers here have fallen into the Jesuit trap of saying it is not quite certain that Bruno was burnt to death, it may be well to preserve the following summary of evidence given by Mr. C. E. Plumtre in the *Antiquary* for April. He points out that the evidences for the execution are the following:—

1. A letter from Scioppius, giving a full and detailed account of the execution of Bruno which took place on Thursday, February 17, 1600, in the presence of Scioppius himself. This letter having been conclusively proved to be genuine from internal evidence by Mr. R. C. Christie.
2. Mersenne's mention of Bruno as *un athée brûlé en Italie* in a work printed in 1624.
3. The Imperial Ambassador, Wacker, residing at Rome in 1600, informing Kepler of the event.
4. The full detail of the trial and sentence contained in the Archives of the Inquisition.
5. *The Avvisi di Roma* (contained in the manuscripts of the Vatican, a sort of newspaper in those days) of February 19, 1600, records the execution of Bruno as having taken place on the previous Thursday, the 17th.
6. The Archives of *San Giovanni Decollato*, containing a notice of the execution of Bruno, given in all its details. The day of the week is said to be Thursday; the day of the month February 16; the year 1600.

Against this there is only the fact that the last mentioned archives gives the date as the 16th, instead of the 17th, of February, a mistake that might easily have occurred through a misprint, or from careless writing or copying. Yet, on so slight a foundation as this, the apologists of Rome endeavor to explain away this instance of her infamy.

THE MERCY OF PRIESTS.

A STORY OF "THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

From "L'Homme Tout Nu," by Catulle Mendès.

CONTINUED—III.

"When I went out in the morning, with my hands bitten and full of torn-out hair, I noticed that the swallows had not returned to their nests under my roof.

"I went, with bent head, knocking against the trees, and stumbling on the paths; I closed my eyes in the hope of falling into some gulf.

"A man was begging on the road. He was a most ancient person, whom the oldest inhabitants had always seen with white hair, and I knew him well, for I used to give him alms by the hand of my little Jacquet. He stopped me with a gesture saying:

"Strange things have happened to-night. I am almost blind, yet I saw them through my half-closed eyelids. They were very many, the devils who sacked your house. One carried off your wife, another took the child, and the others broke your image with mallets.

"Where are they gone?" I cried.

"Where should devils return but to hell?"

"But whence came they?"

"Sure they came out of the image of Dianom, for all hell burns in the belly of every idol.

"I ran away. Not that I was in haste to go here or there, but only to be somewhere else than I was; yet I knew that, wherever I was, I should not be less sad or desperate. The day passed, night came, then another day, and other days and nights. I do not recollect if I slept or ate. Perhaps, in passing through towns and villages, I was pointed at and chased with cries, like an escaped beast. But I heeded nothing, and did not notice whether I wandered in the streets of cities or in the paths of the forests.

"Was not the desert everywhere without my boy and my Bertrande?"

"However, I remember that I fell—the sky was at that moment all dark—on a stone, before a very high door. Before me were black masses having the forms of walls, of houses, and of towers. I regarded this group of habitations, not seeing what use they could be, since they did not shelter my wife and child. However, I kept looking at them, and here and there obscure holes, which were windows, gazed at me like blind eyes.

"Why should I stay there? Had I any business in that place rather than another? I knew not, yet I sat still, as though I were before the hell where the devils that came out of Dianom had carried my Jacquet and my Bertrande.

"Holy Virgin! How the goddess had deceived me! Hideous, with horns and claws, they swarmed out of her, the demon ravishers! Ah! in the pretty little rosy neck of my child, their claws were fiercer than the talons of a goshawk seizing a lark.

"A cry!—you know how terrible it is, for just now you heard it—no, not a cry, but a rising and ever redoubling clamor, rent the black silence; and I recognised the voice of my Bertrande!

"Where did it come from? From one of those towers; yes, alas, from the highest!

"Certainly a man's skull is harder than the stones of a wall, for like a maddened bull I charged with my forehead, as in the hope of making an entrance for my body. I fell, bleeding at the mouth.

"When I awoke, from a sleep like death, it was in a vast paved court, surrounded with high buildings; and a circle of furious monks, pointing at me, cried:

"The devil's worshipper! There he is! His house was the abode of evil spirits, he adored a pagan image, he has carved an imperial image of the enemy of Jesus! the image of Dianom!"

"Another with a white beard, added:

"He should be burnt at the stake, and I would willingly set fire to the faggots."

"I cried:

"Where is my wife?"

"I sobbed:

"Where is my child?"

"And those men, all speaking at once, disclosed to me that they, and not the devils, had carried off Bertrande and Jacquet. Yes, listening to them, I learnt that they had brought into their abbey the weeping mother and the astonished boy. Ah! if I had been there when it all hap-

pened! They dragged Bertrande, and tried to tear away her child. 'March, pagan! Come to the stake, and taste the eternal fire!' She cried, moaned and called on me! And when, in spite of her resistance, they had dragged her to their abominable abbey, they decided that the child she had given birth to should be cleansed in holy water of his diabolical baptism, and afterwards, far from her, be nourished and taught in the convent. Then, furious, and devouring the child with kisses, she cried: 'You shall not have him! It is from the trees, and not from mothers, that they pluck the fruit! I, living, tell you, you shall not have him alive!' And as a terrible spirit of wrath dwells in the possessed, she had, in her strange passion, looked for some place to hide her son. She had seen the hole, the hole where we are, and, cruelly joyous, she flung in the child, hiding him, alas, in death!

"There, it was there, in this pit, in this gloom, among these stones, that he fell, Jacquet!"

"I said to the monks:

"You are the possessed! and your God is a devil!"

"And running through the crowd of monks, I leaned half over, and tried to fathom the well in which my boy had disappeared.

"I would join him!"

"Well, you shall!" was the laughing answer.

"I felt lifted by the legs. I was a coward, for I resisted. What is it that forbids us to die? What a god is instinct! I clutched the pavement with my nails, I clung to the side of the cistern, and for all their number they could not lift me. Then on my arms and on my legs fell blows as hard as those of an iron bar. My limbs broken, I succumbed. Head downwards, heavily, I fell in the darkness; my face was buried in mud, which filled my mouth, and ears, and eyes.

"I tried to rise. My limbs would not support me. But do not imagine, at that moment, I thought of my broken bones. Another misery, a thousand times more horrible than the bodily torture, ravaged my soul. In the bottom of the pit I had found the dear little corpse of my child, and as my arms were powerless, and I could neither lift nor embrace him, I kissed him, and cleansed him with my tongue of all the mud that defiled him.

"Thus the night began, the night that will never finish; and thus through so many years, in solitude, darkness, and cold, I press to my living flesh the skeleton, alas! of my sweet Jacquet."

Peter listened, seeing through the obscurity of the narrative the horrid light of the truth. He placed his hand on the man's head, and looked at him, full of compassion. Then ensued a long silence.

"Suddenly the face, which had already shown itself in the narrow circle of the opening, reappeared.

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

"What," said Peter, "you will obey them?"

"Ah," said the other, "I shall be famished to-night."

All the bells ringing, under a sky like a festal canopy, between walls clothed with clear sunlight, it was an edifying spectacle, in the abbey court of Saint-Gorgon, when the venerable Benignus Spagnuolo advanced towards the Miraculous Well, leaning on the shoulder of his minion, and followed by a hundred monks in four-deep procession, their hands crossed on their frocks, and oscillating their heads under their pointed hoods.

Beholding these fine monks, in whom dwelt the Holy Spirit—and, in truth, it could not have found a worthier lodging—the tradespeople, the artisans, the farmers, men, women and children, gathered in a crowd from the towns and fields, dropped upon their knees so quickly and simultaneously that you would have thought an invisible scythe had cut off all their legs with a single sweep; and moving with little leaps, like cripples on their stumps, they hastened towards the holy personages, repeating paternosters, beating their breasts penitentially, kissing or touching as they went the hem of a clerical frock. Those who could not get hold of the stuff had to satisfy themselves with sniffing its odor, more salutary to the soul than delectable to the nose.

The abbot stopped, with his hundred monks, on arriving near the Well; and his hood having fallen, he would have looked with his fine beard like the God the Father one sees in the church windows, but for his big red face, strangely knotted and rufescent, ill becoming an ecclesiastic. The faithful, as they knelt, thought that to color it like that he must have said many a mass, without leaving anything in the

bottom of the chalice; in which they were not mistaken, for no monk was more conscientious in the discharge of his sacred duties; he was scrupulous to drain the last drop of the sacramental wine, especially when it was saint-pourgain or claret from Auxerre.

He raised his arms, standing upright among the kneeling throng:

"Brethren, it is true that the Evil One has always prowled around men's souls, speaking lies to seduce and abuse them. But never was he so cunning and eager to ruin men as in these days; so that the best can hardly resist him, and abandon themselves to wicked thoughts or wicked actions, at which there is rejoicing in hell. So true is this, that some of you who owe the Abbey, in exchange for our prayers, the twelfth loaf of every batch, six measures of his rye, a hundred and sixty-one measures of his oats, eight capons from his farm-yard, and seventeen birds from his pigeon-house, only give us grudgingly four or five lean pigeons, two or three hens no plumper than a well-picked bone, a handful of oats or rye, and half a loaf in the hundred! If things continue long in his fashion, the monks, who are the true exemplars of virtue and piety, will have to go and beg on the road like thieves and vagabonds, and cry with hunger like the beasts of the forest. This will be a great scandal to Christianity! And all the evil comes from the demon of heresy who deplorably infests men's souls."

The vassals of the abbey domain bent their heads under these just remonstrances; more than one who, instead of eight capons had only brought two or three fleshless hens, felt a warmth running up his legs, as though the fire of hell,

issuing from the ground, had begun to burn him at the extremities.

"Yet, in his mercy," continued the venerable abbot, "the Savior has allowed you to be warned of your sins, before they are past forgiveness. On certain blessed days, a voice which is from heaven, though it rises from the bowels of the earth, advises men to obey the laws of the Church, and particularly enjoins on them to pay, without fraud or abatement, their debts to the abbey of Saint-Gorgon."

Benignus Spagnuolo had taken a step nearer the Miraculous Well, and in expectation of the approaching prodigy the spectators bent their heads and backs, something in the attitude of persons who are to receive a castigation.

"Speak, divine voice!" cried the abbot, agitated with a holy fervor: "Counsel these pitiable sinners! Speak! in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! What sayest thou of the way of the world, and the miserable state in which, through the decline of faith, the servants of God are languishing?"

Then a voice came from the depths:

"I say that all of you—you, the abbot, and you, the monks—are traitors, liars, and cowardly assassins."*

(To be concluded.)

* The reader must understand that the voice which should have come from the Well was that of the poor wretch imprisoned there. Under threats of withdrawing his scanty food, the monks had made him an instrument of deception on these occasions. This explains his remark to Peter, "Ah, I shall be famished to-night."

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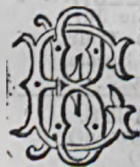
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