

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MR. CONYBEARE WORSE.

MR. CONYBEARE has not yet replied to our letter. We sent him a copy, but perhaps he has not received it, or he may be too busy in Paris. Perhaps he thinks it inadvisable to entangle himself in a controversy with those he has traduced. Meanwhile we have the letter which he has written to one of his constituents, a class of persons whose votes are too important to be neglected. In justice to Mr. Conybeare we print the letter *in extenso* :—

“Grand Hôtel de l’Athénée, 15 Rue Scribe, Paris.

“22nd Oct., 1889.

“Dear Mr. Burridge,—Mr. Trevail has shown me your letter, from which I regret to learn that the *National Reformer* has misunderstood the expression “atheistical” which I used at Camborne in reference to Balfour’s policy, as if intended to be an insult to those who, as a party, call themselves Atheists. I hasten to assure you that nothing was further from my thoughts. I used the word in order to bring out as clearly and as strongly as I could the utter contradiction which (to my mind) exists between that policy and the principles which underlie the religion which my constituents generally profess; and I purposely took this line, in order to show the false character of the creature, who, when it suits his purpose, is ready enough to masquerade as a practical Christian before the assembled bishops and parsons of the English Church. I had certainly no intention of identifying so mean and dishonest an individual with a party whose honest convictions have led them to brave the utmost odium and unpopularity, nor had I the least idea that my words would be so interpreted. If you think right, please make what use you please of this letter.—Yours, very truly,
C. A. V. CONYBEARE.”

Now we say, and say deliberately, that Mr. Conybeare’s explanation is worse than his original offence. Had he frankly and unreservedly withdrawn the statement that Mr. Balfour was acting on Atheistic principles of tyranny and murder; had he said that he was carried away by a passionate resentment against injustice, and that his language was as tumultuous as his feelings; every Freethinker would have made a full allowance for the honorable gentleman’s indiscreet expressions, and pardoned him on account of his praiseworthy sentiments. But this is not what Mr. Conybeare does. He unsays not a single word of his silly as well as malignant libel. He stands by the foul words that “a policy which depends upon butchery and murder can be called nothing but *atheistical*,” yet at the same time he has the almost incredible stupidity to affirm that he does not mean any “insult to those who, as a party, call themselves Atheists.” Although Mr. Balfour is carrying out a policy which is “atheistic and devilish,” he does not wish to identify “so mean and dishonest an individual” with a party of “honest convictions.” Could there be a worse state of muddle-headedness, or a more hopeless inability to understand the common susceptibilities of human nature? If this is a fair sample of Mr. Conybeare’s logic and good feeling, his best friends must look upon his political future with despair.

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The member for Camborne talks of “the principles which underlie the religion” of his constituents, meaning, of course (only he is apt to get mixed), the religion which underlies their principles; and he is anxious to show that those principles are in “utter contradiction” to Mr. Balfour’s policy. Well, as a Christian he had a perfect right to do that. But he attempted nothing of the kind. He never for a moment endeavored to show that Mr. Balfour is acting in opposition to the teachings of the New Testament. Nor did he pause to consider that Mr. Balfour is a Christian, that the Irish magistrates are Christians, that the Irish judges are Christians, and that the Irish juries are Christians. No recollection flashed through his mind of the fact that the Tories voted *en masse* as Christian men against Mr. Bradlaugh’s bill to abolish the Blasphemy Laws, under which Atheists are insulted, outlawed, and occasionally imprisoned. The word “atheistic” sprang to his lips as a good abusive epithet, sure to be relished by a Methodist population. It is too serviceable to be neglected in Cornwall; but, on the other hand, Mr. Conybeare seeks to minimise the insult to Atheists by explaining that he used it in a Pickwickian sense. He will find, however, that Atheists take a more serious view of language than the members of the Pickwick Club.

We invited Mr. Conybeare to give us his authority for saying that the principles of Atheism are butchery and murder. We are in no hurry, however, and we serenely await his convenience. While he is consulting the works of Atheistic thinkers, and the actions of Atheistic statesmen, we venture to animadvert on his strange ignorance of his own creed. The one unquestionable political doctrine of the New Testament is obedience to the ruling powers. Men like Cromwell, who drew the sword against kings, had to justify themselves from the Jewish scriptures. Both Jesus and Paul taught the virtue of non-resistance. Boycotting may be sanctioned by many texts, but forcible resistance to evictors, armed with the power of the law, is, to use Mr. Conybeare’s superlative language, an “utter contradiction” to the plainest teachings of the New Testament. As a Christian, it appears to us, the member for Camborne had no right to be in Ireland, encouraging the peasantry in rebellion against the powers “ordained of God.” He was acting on other principles than those of the “religion” of his “constituents”; excellent principles, no doubt, but utterly opposed to the maxims, the genius, and the traditions of the Christian dispensation. Mr. Conybeare speaks of “Balfour” and calls him “a creature,” but Saint Paul would tell him that rulers are only a terror to evil doers. It appears to us that Mr. Balfour might quote the New Testament very trenchantly against Mr. Conybeare, and we dare say he would do it with considerable unction if he found an opportunity.

Mr. Conybeare describes Mr. Balfour, or “Balfour,” as “masquerading as a practical Christian.” Such mutual recrimination among the disciples of Jesus is amusing to the Atheist, who justly declines the

task of adjudicating between them. How many professed Christians are real Christians is a difficult and delicate problem which Christians had better settle among themselves. We object to their registering each other as Atheists when they quarrel; we deny their right to treat Atheism as a receptacle for their black, mangy, or rotten sheep. Such impertinence has been tolerated long enough; Atheists are now in a position to resent it; and although they are not so numerous as the *professed* Christians, those who deliberately insult them may find that they are not without their *sting*. G. W. FOOTE.

THE WARS OF THE LORD.

"Wherefore it is said in the book of the Wars of the Lord, What he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab."—Numb. xxi., 14, 15.

PROBABLY one of the most interesting of the lost books of the Bible is this of the Wars of the Lord. I allude not so much to any curiosity as to an explanation of the obscure passage about what the Lord did in the Red Sea and other places, as to the certainty that the book was an ancient one, probably throwing much light upon the early religion of the Jews. The title in itself is significant, and indicates the probable nature of the contents. The book may plausibly be conjectured to have been a collection of barbaric chants celebrating the victories achieved by the Israelites under the command of Jahveh.

It seems certain from the title that Jahveh was supposed to be engaged personally in the wars. This will comport either with Herbert Spencer's theory that Jahveh, like other gods, was originally a dead chieftain, or with the recognised fact that ancient deities were supposed both to animate their followers and personally assist them in battle.

The book of the Wars of the Lord is another of the many proofs that the Jews were originally in a barbarous state. Jahveh, like all the early deities, was ferociously cruel. He demanded bloody sacrifices and rejoiced in their sweet savor (Gen. vii., 21). He delighted in blood. His favorites were holy butchers. He was believed to enter into the bloody game of war with the zest and readiness of a human warrior. Moses sings "Jahveh is a man of war, Jahveh is his name. . . . Thy right hand, O Jahveh, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." He is celebrated as "the God of battles"—the Lord of Hosts. The pages of the Old Testament reek with blood. They are full of battles with their "confused noise and garments rolled in blood."

The book of the Wars of the Lord must have been a bulky volume if it chronicled all the marauding expeditions and sanguinary massacres perpetrated by the Lord's banditti. And these atrocities, according to the Bible, were perpetrated by the direct command of the Lord. He swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation (Exodus xvii., 16). He ordered that they should make war against the nations of Canaan, and "utterly destroy them" (Deut. xvi., 2). The Jews had no claim to the land of Canaan. The wars were simply wars of conquest; theft accomplished by murder. And Jahveh was not only virtual commander, he took an active share in the fighting, stopping the sun and casting down great stones from heaven to the confusion of the enemies of Israel.

And his method of war was of the most barbarous character. The conquered were treated mercilessly. The leaders were put to death (Josh. x., 26; Judges vii., 25); the bodies of the soldiers killed in action were plundered (1 Sam. xxxi., 8); the survivors were either slain in some savage manner (Judges ix., 45; 2 Sam. xii., 31; 2 Chron. xxv., 12), mutilated (Judges 1, 6; 1 Sam. xi., 2), or carried into captivity (Num.

xxxi., 26; Deut. xx., 14). Women and children were put to death with the greatest barbarity (Num. xxxi. 17; 2 Kings, 12, xv., 16; Is. viii., 16, 18; Hos. x. 14, xiii., 16; Am. i., 13), but the maidens were kept as concubines (Judges v., 30; 2 Kings, v., 2). When Moses heard that all the women of the Midianites were kept alive he was wroth and gave the order:

"Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves" (Num. xxxi., 17, 18).

Read how David treated the people of the cities of Ammon; how he brought them out and "cut them with saws, and harrows of iron and with axes" (1 Chron. xx., 3) for another nice specimen of the manner in which the Lord conducted his wars.

As with other wandering tribes of semi savages, the Jews carried their God about with them in a box, and took him to battle with them as a presage of victory. When the Philistines saw the ark they are represented as saying "God is come into the camp. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of their mighty God?" No doubt this exclamation was fictitious, for, as the event proved, they were able to make the Jews fly and capture their god into the bargain. Jahveh, however, proved his prowess by knocking over the statue of Dagon, the Philistine deity. A full, true, and particular account of this famous battle of the gods ought to have been, and possibly was, preserved in the book of the Wars of the Lord.

Some have conjectured that the book of the Wars of the Lord was one of the documents used in the composition of the Pentateuch, and perhaps it was, but as there is no record of wars until the time of Moses, the mention of this work is an item among the many pieces of evidence showing that the so-called books of Moses were not the work of that legendary legislator, but the product of a later period.

J. M. WHEELER.

HE NEVER KNEWED.

Old Billy B. was a pious man,
And heaven was his goal;
For, being a very saving man,
Of course he'd save his soul.
But even in this, he used to say,
"One can't too careful be;"
And he sang with a fervor unassumed,
"I'm glad salvation's free."
But the "means of grace," he had to own,
Required good, hard-earned gold;
And he took ten pews, as well became
The richest of his fold.
"He's a noble man!" the preacher cried,
"Our christian Brother B.,"
And Billy smiled as he sublet nine,
And got his own pew free!
In class meeting next old Billy told
How heaven had gracious been,
Yea, even back in the dark days when
He was a man of sin.
"I's buildin' a barn on my river farm—
All I then had," he said;
"I'd run out o' boards, an' was feedin' hands
On nothin' but corn bread.
"I tell ye, bretherin, that I felt blue,
Short o' timber and cash,
And thought I'd died when the banks then burst,
And flooded all my mash.
But the Lord was merciful to me,
And sent right through the rift
The tide had made in the river banks
A lumber raft adrift.
"Plenty o' boards was there for the barn,
And on top was a cheese
And a bar'l o' pork as sound and sweet
As anyone ever sees.

Then I had bread and meat for the men,
And they worked with a will,
While I thanked God, who'd been good to me,
And I'm a-doin' it still."

A shrill-voiced sister cried "Bless the Lord!"
The whole class cried "Amen!"

But a keen-eyed man looked at Billy B.
In a thoughtful way, and then

Asked, "Brother B., did you ever hear
Who lost that raft and load?"

And Billy wiped his eyes and said:—
"Bretherin, I never knowed!"

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—VII. ON "MIRACLES."

To the Rev. Brownlow Maitland, M.A.

(CONTINUED.)

It is not my purpose to follow your remarks on the peculiar solemnity and importance of the Christian miracles. The argument is sentimental, and its force depends on temperament and training. You are able to see some subtle moral lesson in the cursing of a barren fig-tree, and I dare say you would find it in the cursing of a barren woman. You are able to discern a lofty spiritual meaning in the trick of turning water into wine, or the production of half-crowns from the mouth of a fish. But such things impress me very differently. I regard them as childish stories, and marvel at their appearance in a pretended revelation from God.

You may draw convenient distinctions between Christian and other miracles, but I can see none. You smile at the prodigies of Paganism, and you allow that no possible testimony could make the miracles of Catholicism credible. I extend the same consideration to the miracles of your faith. The scientific mind places all miracles in the same category, and the historic mind views them as inevitable marks of inferior stages of culture.

There is no necessity, either, to expatiate on the existence of God and his moral governorship of the universe; or on the doctrine of free-will, which you curiously regard as indispensable to a belief in the miraculous, as though Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards had never lived or written. Whatever a miracle may be on its theoretical side, on its practical side it is a matter of fact. What is the use of an elaborate abstract argument to prove that a prisoner stole a watch? What would be thought of a prosecuting counsel whose whole discourse was a disquisition on human frailty? The question at issue is—Did the prisoner steal a particular watch at a particular time and place?—and this must be decided by *evidence*. So with regard to the alleged resurrection of a man from the dead, or his birth without the agency of a human father. If such an event occurred, it must have been at a particular time and place, and in particular circumstances; and the fact must be established before we are entitled to discuss the theories of its explanation. You admit, yourself, in one of your intervals of lucid common sense, that "The question whether it has ever occurred cannot be decided in the negative, any more than in the affirmative, by theoretical considerations, but must be solved by a patient sifting of evidence." Do you not see that this admission condemns the whole plan of your book? Have you not devoted five-sixths of your space to "theoretical considerations," and only one-sixth to the "patient sifting of evidence"?

All you have to say about the antecedent probability or improbability of miracles amounts to this, that no one is entitled to say that miracles *cannot* happen. But why such a painful demonstration of a truism? Neither Hume, Mill, nor Huxley, asserts the *impossibility* of miracles. They simply regard them as highly *improbable*, and you appear to be of

the same opinion. "Of course," you assert, "the general experience creates a presumption against the miraculous—a presumption so great as to necessitate a most rigorous scrutiny of the evidence, before an alleged miracle can make good its claim on our belief." With this statement I concur; my only complaint is that you do not appear to possess the slightest conception of what is involved in the "rigorous scrutiny of evidence."

Whoever admits that miracles are *possible*, does so on the ground that *anything* is possible. I am not prepared to deny the possible existence of a planet made of green cheese. I am ready to believe that a man is able to jump over the moon. All I require, before I believe in such prodigies, is the production of proof. And who will venture to dispute the justice of such a condition? Modesty forbids me to ask more, and common sense forbids me to ask less.

You will see, then, that I am quite insensible to the reproach that good men are the readiest to receive the Christian miracles. No doubt the Brahmin and the Buddhist would address you in the same vein. You will allow me to smile at your statement that "the real touchstone was the doctrine," and at your implication that the disciples of Jesus were the best men in all Palestine, while the rest of the population, who declined to follow him, were either "careless or worldly" or "thoroughly selfish and corrupt." The story of Gamaliel, in the fifth chapter of the Acts, should alone have caused you to hesitate at perpetrating a wholesale libel on the countrymen of your Master. It seems as though the Christian apologist were under the imperative necessity of balancing his exaggerated praise of Jesus with the most unscrupulous defamation of unbelievers.

I must also be permitted to smile at your reference to "the self-satisfied and sensuous sceptic." Jesus forbade his disciples to indulge in the moral attitude of "I am holier than thou," but it is a peculiarity of Christians to neglect all the sensible teachings of their Savior. Nor can I maintain a serious face on reading your description of Christianity as "standing before us with the unmistakable marks on its brow of supernatural energy, and filling the world with fruits which the natural stock of humanity could never by itself have borne." What are "unmistakable signs" of "supernatural energy," and why are they visible on "the brow"? I should also like to know whether you reckon among the supernatural "fruits" of Christianity such articles as racks, thumb-screws, wheels, and red-hot iron boots; and such phenomena as persecution, prescription, religious wars, and holy massacres.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

HUXLEY AND THE SPIRITS

I have always refused to have anything to do with spiritualistic experiments unless they were to be carried out in a house belonging to someone whom I could trust, and unless I knew enough of the persons who were to be present to be sure that they would not play the part of confederates of the medium, at any rate consciously. If I ever undertook such an inquiry again, I should, further, insist on the presence of a shorthand writer with a watch, whose business it should be to note down everything that was said and done, verbatim and in exact order. Anyone who has had experience of spiritualistic proceedings and of the extraordinary discrepancies of testimony between the cool heads and the hot heads as to the simplest matter of fact will I think, see the importance of this stipulation. I once sat at a table which was to be moved by the "spirits." There was a tall lamp in the middle of the table; and while the "spirits" were being invoked I noted that the globe of the lamp covered a particular pattern of the wall paper, so long as I kept my head in a certain position. Suddenly the medium said, "There! did you see the table move?" There was a general cry of wondering astonishment. But it was the old story of the Northumberland House lion in a new shape. As a matter of fact, the globe of the lamp had remained exactly on (as a sailor would say) with the pattern all the time.

ACID DROPS.

"General" Booth is going to Nottingham to make more lunatics, or at any rate to find them. According to the bills he is to give the town "Two Days with God." Heaps of the Nottingham folk would rather have two days' holiday. Still, we dare say Booth's show will be full, and if he introduces God on the platform it will be worth seeing.

There is a special providence. Who can doubt it after reading that the special train conveying the French pilgrims back from Rome came to grief at Savona, several pilgrims being badly wounded and some of the railway officials killed?

Spurgeon has uttered another wail over this degenerate age. "Deep sleep," has fallen upon many who are themselves sound in the faith, so that they dream that all is well when the enemy has already wrought grievous mischief in the churches." Ichabod! The glory is departed! Hell is cooling off, and the Devil is a candidate for Madame Tussaud's.

Spurgeon says he will not trouble himself about intellectual difficulties. They are like the mosquitoes at Mentone; if you kill one, twenty-four come to the funeral. Yes, the gouty preacher is right. The only safe plan for a Christian is not to think at all.

During Mr. Bradlaugh's illness a great many religious books have been sent to him. Perhaps the senders thought them a good remedy for congestion of the lungs and kidneys. Mr. Bradlaugh, however, prefers more scientific remedies, and the pious volumes will await his leisure. Some day or other we shall inquire about the titles of these volumes. We wonder if any good Christian thought of comforting the sick Atheist with a copy of John Bunyan's works, with the leaf turned down at "Sighs from Hell: or the Groans of a Damned Soul."

Frederick Albert Perrons, of Basford, was a young fellow of twenty-two, and ought to have courted a good girl with a view to a long, happy and honorable life. But he appears to have been too religious for such things. The poor fellow said he was not so near his Savior as he would like to be. This, combined with temporary ill-health, made him dizzy and he fell under a steam-roller and was crushed to death. The jury brought in a verdict of suicide while in a state of insanity.

Another suicide, Mr. Talmage, and still not an Atheist. William Johnson, a sexton, hung himself in the belfry tower of Peterborough Cathedral after the afternoon service. According to the old custom the cathedral, or at least the belfry, should be reconsecrated after a case of *felo de se*, but the clergy want to cry off.

One for Talmage at last! The *New Zealand Herald* of Sept. 9 reports the suicide of J. P. Balle, a retired mercantile captain, who shot himself with a revolver. He came to the conclusion, very deliberately, that he had better die than drag on a wretched life of loneliness and ill-health, and probable poverty. The property he had left to his brother, to whom he wrote a long letter "What little I have," he said, "will help you on your journey. You may be able to take in a reef and sail a little easier. You will find a will in a tin in the top drawer." This was no selfish suicide. Poor fellow, he was evidently thinking more about his brother than about himself.

The rest of this suicide's letter we give in extenso to the end. "I know your trouble will be that I shall go to hell. Well, if I believed in such nonsense I should prefer that place to the company of idiots, ranters, Salvation howlers, etc. Well, you and I never agree on that point, but you remember what I told you before, that the only difference between us is this. You try (as I did for years) to make yourself believe that you know all about the future, and I have come to the conclusion that I know nothing at all about it. I have tried to do what is right, and sometimes failed. I never posed for a saint. The future I dread not; and the eternal Sabbath, with psalm singing and harp

Playing, I have no wish for. Yet, if the Sabbaths were the same as when we were at home, with music, singing, and dancing, I would say 'yes' by all means; but the English Sabbath—no, thank you. No, that would be hell indeed, a purgatory. Well, you will please me by wearing no crape."

Pious cadging flourishes in every part of the Christian world. According to an article in *Church News*, an Australian paper, it appears that every believer is bound to pay a tenth of his income to God—that is to the Church. Even married women should pay a tithe on housekeeping money. Ten per cent is the minimum. The maximum is every cent that can be squeezed out of you. And who can doubt the first-rate character of the investment? Does not holy scripture say that whoso giveth unto the poor [parson] lendeth unto the Lord? And did not the Lord tell Peter that he paid ten thousand per cent. interest.

The King of the Belgians has sent a donation of £500 to the George Stephenson Engineering Department of the Durham College of Science. We have not heard of any such subscription from the pious old lady who rules Britannia.

A calamity has befallen one of the best and most ably conducted religious journals in Australia (says the *British Weekly*). Someone connected with it got hold of an engraving which seemed to be pretty well adapted as an illustration of a biblical scene, and it was accordingly inserted as a representation of "Jesus at Jacob's Well." It shows a number of men seated by the side of a well, while another stands in their midst with outstretched hand addressing them. The unhappy editor evidently did not observe that the man holds a long tobacco pipe in his other hand.

Fact. A little girl in a Camberwell Bible class was recently asked by her teacher to give a text in proof that a man should have only one wife. She immediately quoted "No man can serve two masters."

The Highlander's idea of a preacher was given to a gentleman not long ago, who said to him, "I have heard that your present minister is a superior man to your old crony, Mr. L. I am told he is both a better scholar, a deeper divine, a more ornate preacher—in fact, a person much superior in every respect but one—he does not roar so loudly." "Roar, sir! That's a' the difference in the world, sir. It may do weel eneuch wi' you and ither college-bred folk to hear fine-spun sermons and listen to polished flights of what ye ca' classic eloquence; but this will not do wi' a real Highlander, sir. Na, na, sir, we maun hae something mair than this, sir; we maun hae a man that can flyte, sir—a man that can shake his neive at ye, sir—a man, sir, that can ca' ye names—in fact, sir, a man that can fricht ye!"

Father Ignatius says a "prominent Atheist" recently wrote to him "I have come out of darkness into light." Name, please.

The Rev. J. Boyle, ex-Roman Catholic priest of North Carolina, has been sentenced to be hanged for a felonious assault upon a young girl. *The Western American* wonders how many priests would remain if all equally guilty were to be put out of existence.

The Rev. Carey Walters, Unitarian, has been talking a lot of nonsense about what Christianity has done for the world. He laid special stress upon the abolition of slavery. An obvious retort would be that it was a long time about it, since slavery has lasted till our own day. But a fact no less patent to inquirers is that it was supported by Christianity, and for years found its chief defence in the pages of the Bible. Mr. Walters attributes the abolition of slavery to Christ, yet cannot find that he ever said one word in reprobation of it.

In Scotland they are still exercised over the appointment of the Rev. Marcus Dods as theological lecturer, and his declaration that a man might be a Christian without belief in the Divinity of Christ or in the Atonement. The good old orthodox Presbyterians cannot recognise Dod's

gospel of treacle as consonant with either the Bible or the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The Rev. J. T. Clarke, of Whitechurch Vicarage, Cardiff, is a pretty sturdy beggar. He sends a letter all the way to Sandwich, in Kent, asking Mr. B. L. Coleman, seed merchant, who happens to be a Freethinker, for "a donation of a few of your surplus bulbs for planting in our new churchyard." Mr. Coleman has sent the reverend gentleman a price list and asked for his order.

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," says the Cardiff vicar at the top of his printed begging circular. Perhaps so, but the Lord didn't help him much when he suggested that letter to Sandwich. Perhaps it was only one of Jehovah's jokes.

The Rev. J. G. Medland, of St. Martin's vicarage, Haverstock Hill, is a speculating parson. He considers it is immoral to back horses—with cash, not with a saddle—but quite approves of Stock Exchange gambling. He tried it with £4,000 and lost. Some people and their money are soon parted.

Population is increasing in the diocese of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, but the right reverend father in God has to deplore the fact that the baptisms in Gloucester are a thousand less than eight years ago. The *Freethinker* ought to circulate in that district. There is a chance for an enterprising newsagent.

Our readers must not forget that a prisoner for blasphemy is confined in Sweden. Mr. Lennstrand, happily, has some privileges of which we were deprived. He can read and write, and, as he reads English, will be glad to receive English papers, which should be addressed Victor E. Lennstrand, Langholmens, Kronohakte, Stockholm, Sweden. We expect, after this intimation, the authorities will be surprised at the number of papers he receives.

Prof. George Patterson writes from Madras to the *Methodist Times* to contradict the statement so frequently made by Blavatskyites that Monsieur and Madame Coulomb were bribed. He states "The letters incriminating Madame Blavatsky came into my possession *unsought* and were put into my hands *unconditionally*. Madame Coulomb was never paid for them." When Madame Coulomb brought an action against Mr. Gordon, who accused her of forgery, Madame Blavatsky, says Professor Patterson, *secretly* fled from Madras.

Prof. Patterson denies altogether the alleged visit of Madame Blavatsky to Thibet. He writes, "We have in our possession a letter which gives in brief the history of her life from 1852 to 1875, and which proves her to have been living a very different life from that of a studious recluse." He further says "We have already accused Madame Blavatsky of forgery and fraud, and we now accuse her of building up a society on the credit obtained by a gigantic falsehood. In falsehood and fraud Madame Blavatsky began her career as a Theosophist, and in falsehood and fraud she seems determined to continue and end it." These are grave accusations. Will Madame Blavatsky attempt a reply? At present she has not yet done so to *The New Cagliostro*.

A new batch of bishops and suffragan bishops have just been consecrated by the Primate. We notice that they sang the anthem "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." This is a psalm that goes very well to the tune of £3,000 a year.

Altogether fifty-five priests have had their salaries suspended in France for disregarding the order to abstain from taking part in the recent elections.

The curate of St. Michael's, Shrewsbury, preaching from the text which relates how Jeroboam set up calves in Bethel and Dan, says that the Dissenters were as bad as idolators, for they set up their own opinions and established a rival worship to that instituted by the Lord. This gentleman goes so far, he ought in consistency to go a little farther, and urge that as the punishment of idolatry

was death, all Nonconformists should be put out of existence. This would be "a short method with the Dissenters."

The Lord above must have a decided objection to churches, judging by the statement that 192 of these houses of his own were burnt in the United States last year.

The last letter ever written by Nelson on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar implores "The God of Battles to crown my efforts with success," and goes on to say "May Almighty God give us success over those fellows." We wonder if those fellows also similarly addressed their God of battles.

The London Missionary Society publishes a book by the Rev. J. Macgowan, entitled *Christ or Confucius: Which?* Well, Christ said "Resist not evil." Confucius said "Recompense kindness with kindness and injury with justice." Christ said "Take no thought for the morrow." Confucius said "He who looks not forward misses what is near." Christ said "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Confucius said "The sword is not the weapon of the superior man." Christ said "Take no thought for your life." Confucius said "How can we know death when we do not know life? If we cannot serve men, how can we serve spirits?" On the whole we give the preference to Confucius.

The Portsmouth *Evening News* has been badly handled by Mr. George Scarrott, President of the N.S.S. Branch. The editor explained his giving no attention to the lectures of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant on the ground that he and his staff believed in Sunday rest, but Mr. Scarrott points out that plenty of attention is given to religious gatherings on the Lord's Day. This has so annoyed the editor that he devotes a leading article to the subject. He concludes by saying: "We will not help to slacken religion's grip upon the world, to rob the weak of a sap of strength or mankind of a hope to which great and humble cling with a confidence that stands the death-bed test, until our Secularist friends have something better with which to supplant them than the cold exercises of negation." Amen.

Now, what is this "hope"? The hope of keeping out of Hell, no matter how many millions of other people fall into it. And because Secularism destroys this hope by abolishing Hell altogether it is called "cold." The editor of the *Evening News* prefers Hell and heat to Secularism and a temperate climate.

Some enterprising idiot, writing in the *Alnwick Gazette*, as "Citizen," gives some pious advice to Mr. Charles Watts as though he were just lecturing in the district. Mr. Watts has been for some years in Canada, and "Citizen" is a perfect Rip Van Winkle.

"Citizen" opines that all Atheists are cowards, and declares that not one has the courage to visit a family vault by night. He forgets that cemeteries are only open in the day time. He also forgets that the body-snatchers who steal corpses were all believers. No doubt Christianity gave them the "courage" required in their profession, but the world at large has never been able to get up much admiration for it.

Some honest Sabbatarians showed up at the recent Presbyterian Conference in Newcastle, and spoke strongly against ministers riding in trains and public vehicles on Sunday.

The Grimsby cemetery has been "dedicated" by a squad of Nonconformist ministers. The Church ministers logically took no part in the performance. We suspect it will make little difference to the corpses either way.

The *Christian World* talks about the "conscientious folly" of the Peculiar People. Good! A true Christian is a conscientious fool. We thank our contemporary for the forcible definition.

The *Jewish Chronicle* does its chuckle over the Bishop of Peterborough's admission of the impracticable character of the Sermon on the Mount "We think," it

says, "we have reason to congratulate ourselves on being followers of a religion in which no such anomaly is possible, and by obeying whose laws we become good men and women, and at the same time good citizens."

This is good, perhaps, as against Bishop Magee, but in itself it is utter nonsense. The modern Jew can no more obey the Old Testament than the Christian can obey the New Testament. Jew and Christian have a good case against each other, and the Freethinker has a good case against both.

The Wesleyans of Hatfield have at length triumphed over Lord Salisbury, whose Church of England taste would not brook a Dissenting chapel on his estate. A site has now been obtained from a private owner, and a chapel and schools have been erected. Dr. Parker and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes took part in the opening ceremonies, but did not notice how Christians love one another after eighteen hundred years of the "gospel of charity."

The Wesleyans have held high jinks in Cleveland Hall at the close of their first year's Mission. Everybody congratulated everybody, and some half-dozen working-men converts were exhibited. "Ladies and gentlemen, please don't touch." These converts told "remarkable stories" (we dare say!) of the change in their lives. One of them seemed well-primed for the occasion, and his speech did credit to the luncheon. He declared that in his unregenerate days he used to cry "down with everything that's up," but now he shouts "Up with everything that's down." The Wesleyan Methodists were delighted at this, and if the speaker perseveres he is a made man.

The converts, it will be observed, were working-men. What a commentary on all the pious palaver about the Lord Jesus being no respecter of persons! Why were there no converted lords, stock-brokers, manufacturers, grocers, bakers and tailors? Because these are the folk who find the money, and the working man is the sinner on whom its recipients operate.

A correspondent of the *Tablet* gives an account of his visit to a gruesome exhibition which is run by the priests at Rome in the interest of their exchequer. Down under the Church of Santa Maria della Morte is a first-rate chamber of horrors. Skeletons stand about in all attitudes, and the very candelabras are made of bones. There is also a model of a cemetery, with skeletons coming out of their graves at the Resurrection, a woman and a child (in wax) being already clothed with flesh and blood. Two black-robed members of the Confraternity hold a bag for the contributions of the superstitious visitors; and perhaps, says the *Tablet* correspondent, it may be the means of "recalling the thoughtless sinner to a sense of the shortness of time."

That pious artist, Mr. J. C. Horsley, has been edifying the Edinburgh folk with his diatribes against painting from the nude. He seems dreadfully ashamed of himself and his fellows as their Maker turned them out. We expect to hear of him soon as the president of a Society for beseeching the Lord to let us all be born with clothes.

Mr. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette* has a new hobby. He has been to Rome to see for himself—in a day or two—whether the Papacy cannot be "a great moral force" in the new political and social development of Europe. Some of us, who perhaps know more of history than Mr. Stead, are not to be cheated by the trickery of Cardinal Manning and his satellites. Whenever the Church of Rome is not persecuting, or not opposing the current of liberalism, it is simply playing a waiting game. Its end is always the same, to lay the dead hand of the past on the living present. Recent utterances on the Bruno ceremony show that the Papacy hates freedom as bitterly as ever, and would oppress, torture and kill again if it had the power. Men like Mr. Stead are playing with fire, but happily their influence is not great enough to set the world in flames.

Great Thoughts, despite its fine title and aims, is a goody-goody journal, with a clerical editor. It interlards its columns with pious extracts, but has often to resort for its attraction to the portraits and writing of heretics. The number for Nov. 9th gives a portrait of that sturdy

unbeliever Algernon Charles Swinburne, who is damned with faint praise by the Rev. W. J. Dawson.

Rabbi Schiller-Szinessy writes to the *Jewish World*, complaining of their criticism of Bishop Lightfoot in his controversy with the author of *Supernatural Religion* on the ground that the Bishop wrote in favor of the Jews when the blood-accusation was revived against them in Hungary. The Rabbi well reflects a cowardly section of the Jews who studiously avoid all controversy with Christians from fear of a revival of old persecutions.

The Peculiar People, whose peculiarity consists in acting up to the professions of trust in God made by the orthodox who scout them, have about twenty meeting places in the east end of London, mostly in Essex. Their most westerly chapel is in Bath Street, London Road. Round about West Square, at the back of the Bethlehem Hospital there is a colony of them. They are described as respectable working men, earnest Bible readers and believers.

A pressman who visited them came to the conclusion that their peculiarity was the earnestness of their religious convictions. "Isn't it a beautiful thing to think that though we are poor and oppressed and trodden under foot, there is one who will put all things right in the end," said an elder. And so these simple fanatics go on in their trust much like the early Christians, and if their children die pray to God to give them more.

The Peculiar People justify themselves by argument as well as by faith. "When the Prince of Wales was ill," they say, "and the doctors had given him up, what did they do? They called for prayers in all the churches and chapels. And was not that prayer answered? It was, and there was appointed a day of thanksgiving to God for answering it." And they ask, does not God care for them as much as for the Prince of Wales?

The Archbishop of Cant—erbury makes a lame excuse for his share in the brewery shareholding business. He says—or somebody says it for him, so he may repudiate it if convenient—that his connection with the Clergy Mutual Insurance Society is "purely official." His Grace does not see that this, in the eyes of his critics, is the very gravamen of his offence.

The Church and State Guild intend to have a conversation and dance instead of their ordinary meeting this year. The proceedings, which we commend to the attention of the Natural Living Society, are to begin at nine at night and terminate at four the next morning, until which hour the parsons and ballet girls will caper together.

A scandal of no common character has led to much discussion in Hungary, when it was discovered that at the palace of the Bishop of Grau, the body of a girl, whose death had occurred within the building, was laid out in state attired in the habiliments of a nun. She was, it is stated, not in any way entitled to wear such a dress, as the deceased, a beautiful Jewess, was the Bishop's housekeeper. The strange episode has called for some action on the part of Archbishop Haynald, the Primate of Hungary.

Mr. Hurlbert, who writes in the *Fortnightly Review*, on France as "A Republic in extremis" is an American Roman Catholic. This fact may account for his prophesying evil to the Republic. The wish is father to the thought.

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

DEVOTELY we bowed at the table of God,
But oh, how those zealots did squeeze us!
Their haste to kneel down was ludicrously odd—
And all for a mouthful of Jesus!

The priest came to each with a small piece of bread,
Which he said was a part of Jehovah;
And altho' I for one do not love meat long dead,
I obediently turned mine well over.

But when he came round with his tankard of blood,
And declared it was tapped from our Savior,
I wrathfully spat in the fabulous flood,
And was damned for such impious behaviour.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, November 10, Camberwell Secular Hall, New Church Road, at 7.30, "The Follies of Theosophy."

Nov. 17, Hall of Science, London; 24, Huddersfield.
Dec. 1, Camberwell; 8, Nottingham; 15, Portsmouth;
22, Milton Hall, London; 29, Hall of Science, London.
Jan. 5 and 12, 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.

C. HEATON.—Received with thanks. Glad to hear you find it possible to circulate the *Freethinker* among your friends. If a thousand of our readers would take an extra copy every week the editor would get journeyman's wages for his work. At present he gets nothing, and on every illustrated number less than nothing.

J. BRUMAGE.—Sorry to hear you are still unwell. Is there nobody in Portsmouth to pray for you? By the way, if anybody does you the favor, ask him to pray that you may get worse. Mr. Bradlaugh was doing better before the Christians began praying for his recovery. You go by opposites in this matter.

EDWARD CURTICE.—You have quite misread our paragraph. No doubt the Natural Living Society is doing good work in helping to lessen gross feeding and the consumption of foul air. Still, as you fancy we meant what never occurred to us, we have pleasure in giving the address of your Society—359 Strand, W.C.; and we certainly shall not feel aggrieved if our readers besiege the office for prospectuses.

H. COURTNEY.—Pleased to hear you think the *Freethinker* improves, and that you are pushing our circulation.

MR. SHORT, newsagent, 4^o Queen's Road, Notting Hill, supplies the *Freethinker* and displays a contents-sheet.

J. KNIGHT.—Thanks See "Acid Drops."

D. PROVAN.—Mr. Foote hopes to visit Scotland in the spring. It is such a great distance from London, and the journey is so expensive. Glad to know you liked our letter to Mr. Conybeare.

UNKNOWN.—Thanks for the cuttings. Mr. Foote has no present desire for a seat in Parliament. He believes he is doing better work outside.

C. CUNLIFFE.—Papers and cuttings always welcome.

CONSTANT READER.—We said nothing derogatory to the Natural Living Society. Dr. Allinson, the president, we believe, is a very good Freethinker. Our remarks were directed against Archdeacon Farrar. We have also no particular love of drugs, but the Peculiar People trust to prayer and neglect hygiene.

W. CABELL.—John viii., 31, says "Then said Jesus to those which believed on him"; v., 44, "Ye are of your father, the devil."

G. BATES.—The *Star* was clearly referring to itself in "a certain pestilent print published in Stonecutter Street." You have taken seriously what was written jocosely. Perhaps you overlooked the fact that the *Star* office is next door to ours.

F. A.—Thanks. It will be useful for our Christmas Number.

W. SIMONS.—Thanks for the cuttings.

A. GUEST.—The hint shall be borne in mind when an opportunity presents itself.

A. PATER.—See "Sugar Plums."

EDWARD COX.—Our "Letters to the Clergy" are open letters. Whether those they are addressed to reply or not, they are interesting to the readers for whom they are intended. We don't expect to convert the clergy. We wish to convert their dupes. The gentleman you mention has received as much attention as his criticisms deserve. We are ready at any time to meet him in a public debate, but we decline—at least for the present—any other method of controversy with him.

ALPHA.—You are mistaken. Spontaneous generation is not established. You overlooked the atmosphere, which abounds with living germs.

J. C. SEAR.—It is difficult to determine the actual cost of the Established Church, as the clergy have always resisted any searching inquiry into their revenues. The amount is variously estimated from five to ten millions.

J. SLYFIELD.—We decline to give publicity to Christian lectures on Secularism or any other subject "for men only." It is a wretched dodge, which should be sternly discountenanced.

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.—Church Reformer—Open Court—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Light of the World—Freethought—Echo—Ironclad Age—Fritankaren—Freidenker—Alnwick and County Gazette—Menschentum—Liverpool Journal of Commerce—Sporting Chronicle—Bulletin des Sommaires—Secular Thought—Womens' Suffrage Journal—Evening Standard—Portsmouth Evening News—Neues Freireligioses Sonntagsblatt—Twentieth Century—Kensington News—Kensington Churchwarden—Church News.

MR. BRADLAUGH.

MR. BRADLAUGH is happily on the road to recovery. He sleeps better, and his condition is in every way improved. This news will be welcome to our readers in all parts of the world.

SUGAR PLUMS.

BY special request of the Committee a lecture on "The Follies of Theosophy" will be delivered by Mr. Foote this evening (Nov. 10) in the Camberwell Secular Hall. Mrs. Besant has given a strong dose there of her imported mixture from the Wise Men of the East, and Mr. Foote will endeavor to supply the antidote.

MR. FOOTE'S visit to Birmingham on Sunday was somewhat marred by the rain. It poured down so in the morning that it was surprising to find any audience at all. By the afternoon the rain had slackened a little, and the audience was improved. The lecture was on the Follies of Theosophy. Most of those present, at any rate, appeared to be satisfied that Mr. Foote was exercising a legitimate right in his unsparing criticism of the Blavatsky-Olcott nonsense which has somehow gained the adhesion of Mrs. Besant. In the evening the rain had ceased and the hall was crammed with an appreciative and enthusiastic audience. There was a large sale of literature, every copy of the *Freethinker* being cleared off the bookstall.

THE veteran Mr. Daniel Baker presided at the morning and evening lectures. He gave an amusing account of his adventures in search of a pair of spectacles. Leaving home without his own pair, he nearly lost his way, and tried to purchase a pair at two or three shops, but not one would serve him. At last he tried a Jew pawnbroker, but even this worthy said he would rather not sell on Sunday! None of the pious crew would do an act of charity on the Lord's Day. Sooner than break the Sabbath they would let any number of old gentlemen wander about Birmingham in want of their usual aids to sight.

ON Monday evening Mr. Foote visited Raunds, and delivered the first indoor Freethought lecture ever given there. There was only a moderate audience in the Temperance Hall, but it was as large as could well be expected. Wellingborough contributed a brake-load of sturdy "saints." The subject was Miracles, and it was hoped there would be some discussion, but not a single critic rose upon his feet or a single fanatic on his hind legs. A Wesleyan schoolmaster, however, Mr. Lee, got into conversation with the lecturer on the floor, and a number of persons gathered round to hear what was said.

RAUNDS is some miles from anywhere, and Mr. Foote was glad to accept the hospitality of Mr. Haseldine. The next morning at seven o'clock one of the "saints" drove him nearly four miles to the railway station. The air was cold and sharp, but oh so sweet and bracing! and the young morning sunshine was like a benediction.

THE Rev. Stewart Headlam is "a caution." As a member of the London School Board he has asked the Chairman of the School Management Committee whether he is aware "that in the prizes given for efficiency in Bible knowledge, it is stated that the world was created in the year 4,000 B.C.; whether he is prepared to defend this statement, and if not, whether he thinks it conducive to healthy morality

for the children to be taught as a fact, what, when they grow up, they will find to be an absurd fiction."

DR. CHAUTEUPS, who received the International Free-thought Congress at the Hotel de Ville, resigns his presidency of the Municipal Council of Paris. He has been elected to the Chamber of Deputies, and intends to devote his time to parliamentary work. Dr. Chautemps has lately been in England, and has been received with the utmost cordiality both by the London County Council and the City Corporation.

M. JOFFRIN, the vice-president of the Paris Municipal Council, and also a staunch Freethinker, defeated General Boulanger at the polls. This was excellent news; but, alas, it appears that M. Joffrin was suffering from cancer in the cheek, and the exhausting labors of his candidature have so aggravated the malady that his life is in immediate danger.

THE following note from Mr. Soddy, of Camberwell, may induce some of our readers to go and do likewise: "Last week I asked a newsagent, M. F. Ferron, 162 Camberwell Road, if he would take half a dozen *Freethinkers* on condition that I took all he did not sell. When I called this evening I found he had sold out. All Mr. Ferron did was to put a copy in the window." This bears out our opinion that if newsagents treated the *Freethinker* with common justice its circulation would soon double.

OUR Christmas Number is in active preparation and we hope to have it ready by the end of the month. It will contain plenty of good illustrations and a capital supply of humorous reading. We think this special number will be "all there," and we expect a large sale. Judge North must have a copy to help him digest his Christmas dinner.

OWING to a pressure of other work, Mr. Foote has been obliged to delay the last two numbers of *Bible Heroes*. They are now in the press, however, and will be on sale next week. One is devoted to Peter and the other to Paul.

THE *Boston Investigator*, referring to "Secularism and Theosophy," says that "Mr. Foote evidently has the best of the controversy."

Secular Thought gives long extracts from Mr. Foote's two pamphlets on Mrs. Besant's new views, and winds up by saying: "We sincerely congratulate Mr. Foote upon the bold and consistent stand that he has taken upon the matter, and for the complete vindication of the Secular position contained in his pamphlets. He has performed a very unpleasant duty in a graceful, dignified, and gentlemanly manner."

The annual Congress of the American Secular Union was held at Philadelphia on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, October 25, 26, 27. We hope to give a brief account of the proceedings in our next.

A FUND is being raised for a memorial of Horace Seaver, the late editor of the *Boston Investigator*. The first list of subscriptions amounts to 250 dollars, or about £50.

"BRUNO" writes a pithy letter to *The Chester-le Street and District Advertiser* on the question "Is Christianity the true religion?" Such letters are of great service to the cause.

AFTER many misfortunes the Battersea Branch is reviving. A hall has been opened directly opposite the open-air station, and we hope the enterprise will be well supported. Mr. Forder opens to-night (Nov. 10) with a lecture on "The Jews in Egypt," and will be followed by Mr. Robertson on "Christianity and Paganism."

MR. S. STANDRING reports a successful opening of the new hall at Edmonton. Despite the unfavorable weather and meagre advertising there was a very fair audience on Sunday evening, and the expenses were covered by the collection.

SOME of the clergy are growing ashamed of their

coward's castle. Sunday afternoon (three o'clock) discourses are being given at Christ's Church, New North Road, and discussion is invited. One of our readers dropped in last Sunday and offered a few remarks. The subject to-day (Nov. 10) is "Modern Objections to Christianity." Some of our readers may attend and give the preacher a few.

WE have read through with the greatest pleasure the volume of Edward Fitzgerald's letters, edited by Mr. Aldis Wright. There is very little to show what were Fitzgerald's convictions on religion—that is, very little of a definite character; but the *tone* in many places satisfies us that he was by no means a Christian, in any proper sense of the word. We suspect that the "large infidel," Omar Khayyam, whom Fitzgerald rendered into English so splendidly, had more than a poetic fascination for him. Anyhow, Fitzgerald was not a church-goer. Mr. Groome, who writes the capital article in *Blackwood*, relates how the vicar of Woodbridge once called on him and expressed regret at never seeing him in church. "Sir," said Fitzgerald, "you might have conceived that a man has not come to my years of life without thinking much of these things. I believe I may say that I have reflected on them fully as much as yourself. You need not repeat this visit."

OUR smart contemporary, the *Western Figaro*, calls attention to our "slashing attack" on Mr. Conybeare, and predicts "ructions" when "next Foote and Conybeare meet—say at the Reformer's Tree in Hyde Park." There will certainly be no "ructions" as far as we are concerned. We think we have fairly paid Mr. Conybeare back.

WONDERS will never cease. Sir Henry Isaacs, the new Lord Mayor of London, who is reported to be a full-blooded Tory, called at Mr. Bradlaugh's house and inquired how he was progressing. Perhaps the Bishop of London will call too.

PROF. ROBERTSON SMITH'S new book, *The Religion of the Semites*, will be published shortly by Messrs. Adam and Charles Black, of Edinburgh. Prof. Smith will point out the similarities between the religion of Israel and those of the Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabs, and Mesopotamians.

Le Danton, of Paris, has merged into a new journal, *La Vérité—Truth*, to which, as an organ of Freethought, we wish all success. *La Vérité* is under the able management of our friend C. Cilwa, 28 Rue du Mont Thabor, Paris.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, known in Fleet Street as the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and to the rest of the world as author of *The Light of Asia*, when out in California, got artfully interviewed by the *San Francisco Examiner* man as to his views on religion. He appears to hold a mild kind of Universalism. In regard to the dogma of eternal punishment he is reported as saying that hell was "the idea of morose and dyspeptic men," that he did not believe in it at all and could not too emphatically condemn it. Very good, but we cannot help wondering if Sir Edwin classes Jesus Christ among morose and dyspeptic men.

ASKED if he believed that a man must be converted in order to be saved, Sir Edwin is reported to have answered: "By no means. That idea is perfectly preposterous. There are a thousand ways to heaven." He said further that the universe forgives nothing. Men merely suffer consequences, which idea he illustrated thus: "If I stop at the Palace Hotel, as I do, I must pay my bill. My conscience tells me I must, and when that is done I am free. We suffer here for the wrong we do." The artful interviewer then went to the leading San Francisco sky-pilots to ask them what they thought of it. A few were inclined to endorse his mild heresy, but most of them held up their hands in holy horror and indignation.

AN anti-tobacconist parson says that nothing is more certain than that people will continue to do in another life what they enjoy in this. Those who smoke here will smoke hereafter, where the fire is never quenched.

IDIOTIC SOULS.

FOR some years I have been asking in my lecture on "Brain and Soul," if all men are immortal, whether idiots will live again, and if they live whether they will be idiots in any other world in which they live, because if they are not it will not be they who are living again but somebody else.

Colonel Olcott's lecture, a few weeks ago at the Hatcham Liberal Club, on "Theosophy" was the first serious attempt I have heard to answer the questions. The lecture itself was full of interest to me by the answers Col. Olcott gave to interrogations on "God and Soul," the most peculiar and in some cases the funniest I have ever heard. One of the things that struck me most was when, in reply to the lecturer, I urged what appeared to me obvious objections to his theories, he answered as though such objections had never occurred to him, and seriously assured the audience—for he was too earnest to poke fun at any of his opponents—that "if I went on thinking as profoundly as I had that night I would certainly be a Socrates in the next life."

One of the questions put to the President of the Theosophical Society had reference to the souls of idiots. Col. Olcott, in reply, said that the soul of an idiot was sane enough, only it had the misfortune to get into a "rotten house." Fancy that! Even the soul has no free choice. There are so many billions of souls in the universe waiting to occupy tenements, that they are glad enough to take possession of "rotten houses" rather than remain out in the cold, cold world of boundless space through all eternity. Such souls are in the position of the very poor, who in winter slink away into any hole or corner or tumble-down dwelling for shelter. But think for a moment what this means. A rational soul gets into the head or body of an idiot. No greater tragedy is conceivable.

The soul is thinking out a great problem—the "rotten tenement" only grins hideously. The "ego" resolves to do a noble deed; the idiot body takes up a book and flings it at the head of its keeper. And here it may be well to inquire, What is the cause of idiocy? It is easily explained. The idiot is deficient of brain matter; he has probably only 20ozs. instead of 49½ozs. of brain. He has enough brain to be as intelligent as some apes, but no more: in some cases he is even lower than the ape. But if a rational soul takes possession of an idiot's body and finds it not worth occupying, why does it not give a week's notice and seek a more eligible dwelling? It cannot be said that it has not the power, for that would be equivalent to the declaration that the body is the master of the soul, and destructive of all arguments in favor of the independent existence of the soul.

Col. Olcott's great argument in favor of re-incarnation was this. Life is all too short for the development of the soul's best qualities; consequently the ego, having advanced one body a stage, finds it necessary to take possession of another a little later on to advance a stage further and go on *ad infinitum*; or, at all events, until the highest degree of development is reached in any particular soul, when we may suppose that the soul becomes satisfied, and, though it cannot die, is doomed like Claudian to live on right through the ages. But if this is true what moral right has a "rational soul" to take possession of an idiot's body, unless it be to commence the work of destruction or demoralisation. But as all Col. Olcott's souls advance and none retrogress—not even Jack the Ripper's—this supposition is fatal to his argument.

I was much amused at another answer of the lecturer. Throughout his discourse he spoke a good deal about man's responsibility, and though he explained that he had no belief in a personal God, he

led his listeners to imagine that we were all in some way or other responsible to an impersonal Being lurking somewhere behind or between or within the phenomena of the universe. On this I asked, in my reply, to whom the person was responsible (in addition to his fellow-man) who was born of criminal parents, surrounded by vicious associations, trained in vice and crime, and who, on account of this, found his way to gaol? The lecturer replied that such an unfortunate individual "was responsible to himself." And Col. Olcott followed this sage utterance by the following illustration. If a man, through ignorance, burnt his fingers he was responsible to himself, and if, for the same reason, he committed crime he was responsible to himself, and would have to suffer for his folly.

And so the souls of criminals have got to suffer because they were fools enough to get into the bodies of children born in the Seven Dials, instead of those born in Kensington or Mayfair. Yes, but what about the bodies and brains? The brain is the seat and centre of all feeling. Why should the brain of the criminal suffer for the folly of the soul? The truth is, there is no evidence of the existence of any soul apart from the body.

Experience demonstrates that the ego of man, like that of the lower animals, perishes with the body. With the decay and dissolution of the material organisation, through which alone life can manifest itself, what is called the soul perishes also; and thus we are driven to the conclusion expressed by Pliny that "the body and the soul have from the moment of death as little sensation as before birth."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

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.

WHEN THE POPE HAD POWER.

Castelar, the famous Spanish orator and literateur, gives a graphical account of the summary way in which he was driven out of Rome in the good old days of papal rule. He was sojourning there merely as a traveller, with no hostile intent toward the papacy. The landlord of the hotel at which he was stopping received a domiciliary visit from the papal police, and asked his guest in a terrified manner, "Why did you conceal your rank from me?" "My rank! I have none to conceal!" "Your importance." "I am not of any consequence." "You are a distinguished person." "I celebrated! Bah! Are you mocking me?" Castelar demanded. "I have kept the police from coming to your chamber by saying that I would communicate to you their orders." "What orders?" "The orders to leave Rome immediately." By way of explanation Castelar was told that he had written books that were condemned by the "Index Expurgatorius"; that he was a friend of Garibaldi and of Mazzini; that he was a Liberal, a democrat, and a revolutionist, and that if he did not leave Rome by the first train, he would be imprisoned and might even be hanged. It was then half past 9 o'clock in the morning. The next train for the south left at 10 o'clock and Castelar departed by it.

OUR EXCHANGES.

THE *Truthseeker* of New York may claim to be the largest and most influential of American Freethought organs. Established by the late D. M. Bennett in 1876, his persecution gave an impetus to its sale, and his *Letters from Albany Penitentiary*, and after his liberation his *Voyage Round the World*, put it in the front rank. Mr. Bennett had the good fortune to be assisted by the brothers Macdonald, Eugene and George; the former the present editor of the paper, and the latter editor of *Freethought* of San Francisco. Both brothers are men of decided journalistic talent. The former has a ready pen, and hits straight and hard at religious shams; the latter has a quaint, frolicsome humor which places him beside Dod Grile and Artemus Ward. As "The Man with the Badge Pin," George Macdonald's reports of the proceedings of the New York Liberal Club made that body followed with interest on both sides of the Atlantic. The *Truthseeker*, it should be said, was the first journal to follow in the wake of the *Freethinker* in introducing religious cartoons and comic Bible sketches. Mr. Watson Heston is the artist, and his productions are always quaint in their humor and pointed in conception, and in their execution he has steadily improved.

Freethought of San Francisco, may in some sense be termed a western offshoot from the *Truthseeker*, Mr. George Macdonald and Mr. Putnam migrating to the Pacific coast to meet the call for a Freethought organ in that quarter. It was started in 1888. A prominent feature is Mr. Putnam's "News and Notes" of his journeys to and fro through the Western States. Mr. Macdonald compiles a "Brief History of the Week," and takes care that due prominence is given to the humorous element. *Freethought* is a vigorous little paper, and once over its early trials will we predict have a thriving career.

Open Court of Chicago, is a high-class philosophical weekly, established in 1886, with Mr. B. F. Underwood as editor. For the past year that position has been taken by Dr. Paul Carus. Among the contributors are Moncure D. Conway, Alfred Binet, T. Ribot, and other well-known names. The *Open Court* declares itself "Devoted to the work of conciliating Religion with Science," which it apparently thinks will be done by politely offering the first named to take a back seat. We doubt if the publication pays its proprietor, but it is certainly a credit not only to Chicago but to the whole continent.

One of our most recent American exchanges is the *Twentieth Century* of New York. It purports to be "Devoted to Secular Religion and Social Regeneration." Its editor, the ex-Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost, is a most interesting personality. He has advanced from Presbyterianism through Congregationalism to Universalism and Agnosticism. One of his leading ideas of social regeneration is the proprietorship of land solely by those who use it. The *Twentieth Century* is given to the discussion of various social topics, but does not avoid the religious question. Indeed, Mr. Pentecost speaks out about as boldly as any, and gives us the impression of an earnest, straightforward man, bound to make his mark and have influence on his contemporaries.

Another recent exchange is the *Western American* of Chicago, which is devoted to combatting the great danger to American liberties in the shape of the Roman Catholic Church. It advocates the taxation of all property, the educated franchise, and the State above the Church in politics. It is well conducted, and although we do not entirely agree with its policy, we think it is doing a useful and much-needed work.

Among other American exchanges *Liberty* of Boston is a well edited and well-printed organ of Anarchism, full of ideas ably expressed. *Lucifer*, of Valley Falls, Kansas, edited by M. Harman, and *Fair Play*, of the same place, edited by Mr. E. C. Walker, are also both devoted to the ideas known as Anarchistic, whereby they have drawn down upon themselves much wrath from the "Unco guid."

We also receive from the States two well conducted monthlies, the *Freethinker's Magazine*, edited by Mr. H. L. Green of Buffalo, and the *Independent Pulpit*, a Freethought organ established by Mr. J. D. Shaw, an ex-minister at Waco, Texas. Both are periodicals of merit, and have usually among their list of contents articles of sterling and permanent value.

Secular Thought, of Toronto, is now in its fourth year. It is edited by Mr. Charles Watts, assisted by Alastor, M. C. O'Byrne, and others. A special feature is the reports of

debates between Christians and Secularists which it reprints in its columns. It calls itself "A Journal of Liberal Opinion and Progress," and takes as its motto the words of Sir William Hamilton, "To interfere with the Liberty of Thought is the Greatest and Highest Wrong." *Secular Thought* is evidently doing a good work in Canada.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTIANITY IN TEXAS.

Hev ye hearn about the duel in Cow-Lick Holler, Josh?
They say 'twar quite excitin' like—ther shootin' fine, b'gosh!
Ther fracas war a "stand-up" atween them Dutch galoots;
An' all the boys war slick on hand, ye bet yer yaller boots.

The challenge it war given o' Sunday in the shed
Whar Parson Bucks war preachin' an' bobbin' his bald head.
Hans Zweitzerkase gev Pretzel some name like Sauerkraut;
An' Pretzel says, "Gott! himmel!" an' calls his rival out.

At five o' Monday morning the boys wur on the ground,
An' fust row seats wuz sellin' at prices fat 'en round;
The audience war a-waitin' for the circus to begin,
An' bets wuz tuck and offered, 'ith odds on who 'ud win.

Ole Boggs an' Colonel Principle wuz slingin' all the style,
An' pacin' off the distance with a weird don't-touch-me smile;
They wuz handlin' the shooters, and a-rammin' down the wads,
An' a-lookin' high an' mighty like a pair of heathen gods.

An' Parson Binks war standin' with a sermon in his hand,
All ready fer to preach it when the victim bit the sand.
Josh, he hed the look o' angels in the corner o' his eye,
An' wuz doin' holy horror with an amen sort o' sigh.

At last Jim Gleason hollers, "The dewelists is come!"
We looked, an' cuss my peepers ef we wuzn't all struck dumb!
Fer the costume thet they sported war the durn'dest lookin'
thing,

This bloomin' yairth hez witnessed since fig-leaf suits fer
spring.

Both men wur fixed with breast-plates like mattresses o' hair,
An' ther neck war round with paddin' so's jest ther chin wuz
bare;

Ther arms wuz out, but covered with a quilted chammy skin,
An' dark-green iron goggles shut both ther eye-lids in.

"The hell!" sez Boggs, "is this yer thing a Prussian dress
parade?"

Is Dutchmen at a premium? Does Texas choose the blade?
Yer won't take shootin' irons? Ye're skeered? Ye both say
No?

What, boys? Then let 'em carve 'emselves! I give up this
yer show!"

Then the faces of that audience showed solemn with disgust;
Some sot sarcastic silent, an' some got up an' cussed;
An' Binks, our bald-head parson, he paced a narrow path,
A-quotin' bits o' scriptur ter smother down his wrath.

At last he stopped, an' pointin' with his papers in his hand
To them two German chromos, he sez in accents grand;
"I kem to see a shootin', an' ter order up the hearse,
Ter preach the fun'l sermon, an' ter sing a solemn verse.

"An', by the great sombrero of the Mexican Saint Ann!
I'm goin' ter do this business if I hav ter shoot ther man!
Do ye hear me? I'm a buzzard, and my plumes are iled with
paint;

I'm a carmine hue dispenser, ef I am a Christian saint."

Then Ferguson jump suddin' to his feet and sez: "My
friend,
You'll remember I'm a-shoutin', and I'm heeled from end to
end,

I hev hearn thet once the licker here wuz stopped by your
durned talk;

You wuz preachin' high o' temperance, an' drawin' lines o'
chalk.

"An' ever since thet cussedness I've laid ter get yer cold,
An' now's the time, my fightin' saint, when you'll jest loose
yer hold;

Fer I'll help ye on yer journey ter the land o' holy writ,
Whar I hopes ye'll find a parish and a halo that'll fit."

They say ther sight wur splendid; that both war full o' sand;
Thet Principle said "Fire" in a voice o' deep command;
Thet the boys war quite excited thar, admirin' old Binks,
An' thet when the thing war ended he ordered up the drinks.

An' Ferguson wur honored with ten candles at his head,
An' the parson preached his sermon an' eulogized the dead;
An' he said this wur a case, Josh, o' lickier an' profanity,
Which had struck a sort o' snag in muscular Christianity.
—A. F. UNDERHILL, in *Galveston News*.

LORD DERBY ON READING.

"If a lad has any turn for reading—and I do not mean by that only reading of a severe and difficult kind, but reading which is good of its kind in any line—he has within him a source of pleasure, and pleasure of the sort which it is a pity and a shame not to utilise. Books ought not to be the whole of any man's life, and the taste for them is in great part a matter of personal temperament, but I am sure that the man is happiest in whose life they fill an important place, both for what he gains and what he escapes. He gains by assimilating theories higher than he is probably capable of producing, and by the wider outlook over life which he commands. He escapes to a great extent the inevitable temptations of those whose leisure is mere idleness. The danger, perhaps the ruin of these temptations, is not yielded to by the sense of weariness and vacancy when they are resisted, but when there is nothing else to substitute for undesirable forms of pleasure. That is a fertile theme; I do not dwell upon it, but I do emphatically express dissent from that dictum of ancient wisdom which we must somehow or other have misconstrued—that increase of knowledge means increase of sorrow. I do not think it is so. Increased knowledge may shatter some illusions, and may show us that life is not so rose-colored as we are apt to think it in youth. But it brings ample compensation, and the proof is that no one who has it will ever wish to be without it. Increased care, increased anxiety it may bring, but even so, trouble is better than apathy, as waking is better than sleeping and life better than death."

At a certain pit in Darton, near Barnsley, they were working shifts, and one of the colliers who had been working all night, (it was Thursday night, before Good Friday) on coming home in the morning had to pass the church, and the door being open and he being tired he went in and got under the seat in the pulpit and fell asleep. By and bye, the congregation assembled together, and the parson having given out the hymn, the organ and singing together awoke the collier, who got up and stood behind the parson, and when the people saw him they looked at one another, as much as to say—Who is it? Then they began going out and looking behind them all the way. The parson was mystified; he couldn't tell what they were going out for, but on looking round he found it out, and he jumped clean over the pulpit and ran out, helter-skelter, nearly knocking over an old woman who was lame, and the collier seeing all the people going thought it high time for him to go also. He caught up to the old woman before she got out, and he was about to ask her what this sudden flight meant when she put up her hands and said, "Oh gooid devil, do'ant tak me; I do'ant cum here reg'lar!"

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