

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

## THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES'S CONVERTED ATHEIST. A LIE IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

### II.

WE have now to qualify our praise of Mr. Hughes's cleverness by pointing out a very serious mistake. He has fallen into the error of being too precise. This is doubtless a merit in ordinary romances, to which it imparts a life-like air; but it is a glaring fault when you are palming off lies as truth. Mr. Hughes should have remembered that discretion is sometimes the better part of valor. He would have been better advised if he had made his converted Atheist older and less notorious, and had given fewer details of his character and personal appearance. As it is, he has drawn a picture which, whatever are its merits, has the signal disadvantage of being plainly apocryphal.

"John Herbert" was a shoemaker. He had a brother at Northampton (Bradlaugh's borough—how pat!), who has become a convert to Christianity through John's edifying death. He was a young man "about thirty years of age," with a young wife, and apparently no children. He was passionately fond of music. He had "delicate intellectual features, and deep, inquisitive, penetrating eyes." He was a "well-known London Atheist." He "possessed a large collection of Atheist literature. Everything ever written by Mr. Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and Colonel Ingersoll he had at his fingers' ends." He was an orator on Clerkenwell Green, and seemingly at the Hall of Science. The breadth of his fame may be seen from the following passage:—

Soon after the foregoing incidents had occurred I asked a journeyman shoemaker in Soho if he knew John Herbert.

"Know him!" said he, turning round suddenly, quite astonished that I should ask so foolish a question. "Why everybody knows Herbert."

Then, striking an eccentric attitude and drawing up his tall body to its full height, he said,

"I tell you what it is, sir. Herbert is a far-larn'd man; he will just suit a young gentleman like you. Why, when he used to speak in Victoria Park there was such continuous cheering that you could scarcely hear what he was saying. Again and again have some of our chaps tried to get up a discussion between him and Bradlaugh, but we could never manage it. They were always on the same side. Ah! it would have been a fine game if we could have made these two argue with one another. Many of us thought that Herbert would get the best of it.

There is some extraordinary nonsense in this paragraph. "Far larn'd" is a curious idiom for a Cockney shoemaker, and the idea of Freethinkers getting up a discussion between one of their own speakers and Mr. Bradlaugh—chiefly, it would appear, for the fun of the thing—is so ineffably preposterous that we fear our readers will go into a convulsion of laughter. We want them to do nothing of the kind, but to keep their attention fixed upon John Herbert.

The Atheist shoemaker lived at Islington, occupying a floor in an ordinary lodging-house. He was very happy with his wife. His Atheist companions

said he was under petticoat government. "Whenever he and his comrades arranged a day's excursion, he stubbornly refused to accompany them unless he was allowed to take his devoted little wife with him." This is one of the richest follies in the whole of the story. Mr. Hughes does not know that no distinction of sex is recognised in Secular Societies, that excursions are of rare occurrence, and that when they are "arranged" the male members are only too happy to have ladies in the company.

John Herbert finally went down with his wife to Devonshire, where it was hoped he would recover from his illness. But he died there (of course!) and his exit from this world to the better one promised by Methodists occurred some time in last Spring.

Here, then, is a sufficiently detailed picture, yet we are unable to identify the original. We know something of Freethought propagandists in London, but we cannot call to mind a single person who answers in the slightest degree to the description. Mr. Forder is positive against the existence of such a person. Not one Freethinker, among the scores who have spoken to us on the subject, is able to recognise this well-known London Atheist, this speaker on Clerkenwell Green, this wonderful orator of Victoria Park, this match for Bradlaugh.

Let us narrow the issue. When the Devil is carrying on a long conversation with John Herbert, he remarks, "What you used to say in the Hall of Science and on Clerkenwell Green is quite true." Who could help inferring that John Herbert was a speaker at the Hall of Science? But this is not all. While in Devonshire, he was prayed for—apparently with small success—by the Methodists in London. "It seemed to us," Mr. Hughes says, "of such immense importance that he should himself go to his old workshop, and to the Hall of Science, and to Clerkenwell Green, and to all his former haunts, and with his own lips tell the story of his conversion." Again he says "We had thought of accompanying him to Clerkenwell Green and the Hall of Science, and wherever he was known, that all his old friends might have an opportunity of sharing his immortal joy." Now if this does not mean that he was a speaker at the Hall of Science, articles and stories might as well be composed by pulling out words at hazard from a bag.

Who then are the lecturers at the Hall of Science? They can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. We know all the men and women who have lectured there during the last ten years—not to go back farther—and we declare that the list does not include any person like John Herbert, or any person resembling him in the remotest degree. We will give Mr. Hughes a complete list of all who have lectured there during that period, and we defy him to name one among them who was working as a shoemaker, or who was "about thirty years of age" last winter, or who died last spring.

Here is a clear challenge. What will Mr. Hughes do? Will he skulk behind his well-calculated opening paragraph? Will he sit silent and smile?



Will he flatter himself that the Methodists will believe his story though every Atheist in London should brand it as a lie? Or will he say that the Hall of Science portion is a mistake, and that he was misled, or that he wrote a little too much in the spirit of romance? Let him do what he will, we defy him to move without damning himself.

We will put Mr. Hughes another poser. John Herbert was an Atheist; he was popular; he had many Atheist comrades, with whom he took "excursions." He was as fierce an Atheist as ever when Sister Beatrice was brought to his bedside. Now how was it that none of his Atheist comrades came to his sick room? Why did he not send to tell them of his plight? What will Mr. Hughes reply? We have no hesitation in expressing our belief that they did not come because Mr. Hughes did not want them there. Their presence would have thwarted his purpose. He wanted the sick room clear for Sister Beatrice and her Methodist spells.

Atheism is as much a *terra incognita* to Mr. Hughes as equatorial Africa. His idea of Atheists is childish in the extreme. His prevailing notion seems to be that men become Atheists from watching the spectacle of Christian disunion and inconsistency. Now these phenomena are peculiar to Protestantism, which puts an open Bible into people's hands, and foolishly expects them all to deduce exactly the same doctrines from such a conglomerate volume. Catholicism follows a different plan. By means of the Church, which is the living voice of God, it has an infallible interpreter of Scripture, and disunion and inconsistency are thus reduced to a minimum. Rome boasts herself *semper eadem*, and the boast is not a vain one. Still, there are Atheists in Catholic countries; and this single fact explodes Mr. Hughes's theory of Atheism.

Were Mr. Hughes to rely more on knowledge than on imagination, he would soon discover that Atheism is a rational and not a sentimental belief. Were every Christian a good man—a most prodigious hypothesis!—honest, truthful, generous and compassionate; were there no serious differences of opinion amongst them; were they in the habit of consistently practising the doctrines they profess; the Atheist would probably change the tone of his criticism, but the philosophy of Atheism would remain unaltered.

The burden of John Herbert's diatribes against religion is that Christians hate and mistrust each other, and that he and his fellow workmen are sweated by a Christian employer. But he soon comes to think better of the Methodist circle of which Mr. Hughes is the centre, for the simple and sufficient reason that Mr. Hughes is the author of the story. "I admit," says John Herbert, "that your kind of Christianity is quite different. I know what you are doing for the poor. If all Christians were like you —" Thus Mr. Hughes lauds his own little ring at the expense of other Christian bodies, and snuffles like a first-rate Pharisee.

Sister Beatrice pays John Herbert a visit, talks the most unmistakable Hugh-Price-Hughesese, and storms all the Atheist's positions in a single interview. The orator of the Hall of Science, the match for Bradlaugh, gives in to a Methodist young lady, who boasts not a shred of argument, but asks him to "accept Christ, the Son of God," before the sick man is persuaded that *there is* a God to have a son, or a daughter. After firing off what reads like a long extract from one of Mr. Hughes's sermons, Sister Beatrice rises to leave; and the orator of the Hall of Science, the match for Bradlaugh, is so struck with the twaddle, that he is on the point of yielding. "If it were not such a cowardly business to do it on my death-bed," he says, "I feel almost inclined to give in."

The next interview settles the business. John Herbert is going to swallow the medicine, but the

interest of the story demands some reluctance. "I can't do it," he says "I've been awful, I've been a ringleader." But Sister Beatrice holds out the spoon coaxingly. She has a sweet voice and a fair hand; it is ten to one she will win. "The agony of the spiritual struggle" reaches its climax, and "great drops of perspiration started out of his white forehead." The Sister and the wife prayed, and presently John took the medicine at a gulp. Hallelujah! The two women were "strangely conscious" that God was in the room. They *knew* their prayer was answered, and felt no surprise when converted John said "It's all right now. I've given in."

Such is Mr. Hughes's idea of converting Atheists! No wonder he has achieved such magnificent success that he is obliged to conceal the identity of the only bird he has caught.

John seemed to get better. The medicine appeared to agree with him. He looked forward to his recantation at the Hall of Science. But it never came off. Oh dear no! Not for Hugh Price Hughes! That meant producing your bird, which couldn't be done without buying one at the poulterer's, and the bird was out of season. So the nameless converted Atheist, who lived in an unspecified street in Islington, died in a nameless village in Devonshire, and was buried in an undiscoverable grave; while his dear little wife vanishes into the infinite azure of the past, and the very memory of this popular Atheist, who died only last spring, is mysteriously blotted out from the minds of all the Atheists who knew him so well. Truly, the age of miracles is *not* past. Nor is it likely to be while Methodist preachers are able to manufacture them for a steady and profitable market.

Mr. Hughes says he called on John Herbert, some weeks after his conversion, to give him a dose of the body and blood of Christ; the precious articles being carried, to use the preacher's own words, in "the little Communion Service case which the ladies of Leeds gave to my sainted father-in-law, Alfred Barrett, forty-six years ago." Apparently the body and blood of Christ disagreed with him. Perhaps the body was too new, and the blood was only ten shillings a dozen. Anyhow we read that "John Herbert seldom sat up after that day. He grew worse and worse."

John took his large collection of Atheist literature from the shelves and put it under the sofa. "He inclined to burn them." Oh, Hugh Price Hughes, is your invention so barren? Could you think of nothing but this ancient "chestnut"? You might have had them put in a glass case, marked "Poison!" in one of your Sunday Schools. You might have taken them home and read them yourself. They would have given you a lesson in veracity; at any rate, they would have enabled you to write about Atheism with a little knowledge instead of the most contemptible ignorance.

What *did* become of the books we are not told. Mr. Hughes leaves them under the sofa. Were they sold after John's seraphic death to a second-hand dealer, and dispersed by him over the whole of Islington? If so, they are likely to make more Atheists than Mr. Hughes will ever convert.

Mr. Hughes went beyond himself in ignorance of Atheists, and in ignorance of High Churchwomen too, when he wrote the conversation between John Herbert and Sister Agatha at the Convalescent Home. Sister Agatha tries to show him the impossibility of approaching God except through a priest of the Church, and in doing so she plunges into "ancient ecclesiastical history" and quotes "a large number of Saints and Fathers." This is extraordinary on the part of a Sister in a Convalescent Home, but John Herbert's reply was more extraordinary still. "As I had been an Atheist," he says, "I had not



studied ancient Church history." Mr. Hughes actually imagines that Atheists are, as such, ignorant of ecclesiastical history; and that a casual Sister in a charitable institution could quote "a large number of Saints and Fathers" whose "names Herbert had never heard of before"—this Herbert being a Hall of Science orator and a match for Bradlaugh!

Mr. Hughes is also rather loose in his arithmetic. He introduces John Herbert as "about thirty years of age," and kills him off at "the early age of twenty-eight." Had the converted Atheist lived a little longer he would have been a boy again. His death occurred in the presence of his wife and "the gardener's wife." Mr. Hughes was not there, but he is able to tell us all that happened, and every word that was said; and of course we are treated to "the last words of John Herbert, the Atheist."

Poor Mr. Hughes was very much disappointed at losing the opportunity of assisting at his convert's recantation at the Hall of Science, but he yields to the will of the Lord, and hopes that "this short and simple biography" will be made "a blessing to Christian Atheists and to Atheist Christians in all parts of the world." That the biography is "simple" few intelligent readers will dispute; but as to its being a blessing, there is likely to be opposite opinions. No doubt it will bamboozle the readers of the *Methodist Times*, and bring in subscriptions for the West End Mission. But if we take a larger view, we shall hardly regard the deliberate dissemination of lies as a blessing to mankind. In the long run nothing serves us but Truth. But this is a goddess whom the Christians seldom worship. From the first century to the nineteenth, they have circulated pious frauds without a blush. Amidst all its rancid cant and maudlin sentiment, the story of Mr. Hughes's converted Atheist shows us that the good old trade of lying for the Church still flourishes; and we understand what Herder meant in saying that "Christian veracity" deserved to rank with "Punic faith." G. W. FOOTE.

### CHRISTIANITY AND MEDICINE.

DISEASES being by early man universally supposed to be caused by evil spirits, their cure formed a large department of early religion.

The use both of bells and incense was occasioned by this theory of warding off evil spirits. Repeated prayers, such as "Good Lord deliver us" of the Liturgy, were also at bottom a spell against evil. "The Assyrians and Babylonians" says the Rev. A. H. Sayce, "like the Jews of the Talmud, believed that the world was swarming with obnoxious spirits, who produced the various diseases to which man is liable."\* Herbert Spencer says (§ 589), "A satisfactory distinction between priests and medicine-men is difficult to find." In point of time the medicine-man takes precedence. The first duty of the early priests was to ward off evil. This duty is still conspicuous in the Book of Common Prayer with its forms of supplication in time of plague, drought and famine.

The man, who in any savage tribe has the repute of driving away evil spirits, becomes an important person. Herbert Spencer even finds evidence that the superior supernatural beings invoked to expel inferior supernatural beings had been themselves at one time medicine-men, and he cites one of the Babylonian tablets translated by Smith, who says:—

"It is supposed in it that a man was under a curse, and Merodach, one of the Gods, seeing him, went to the god Hea his father and inquired how to cure him. Hea, the god of Wisdom, in answer, related the ceremonies and incantations for effecting his recovery, and these are recorded in the tablet for the benefit of the faithful in after times."

Dr. Tylor says (*Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 119), another aspect of the negro doctrine of disease-spirits is displayed in the following description from Guinea by the Rev. J. L. Wilson, the missionary:—"Demonic possessions are common, and the feats performed by those who are supposed to be under such influence are certainly not unlike those described in the New Testament. Frantic gestures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, feats of supernatural strength, furious ravings, bodily lacerations, gnashing of teeth, and other things of a similar character, may be witnessed in most of the cases who are supposed to be under diabolical influence." The remark several times made by travellers is no doubt true, that the spiritualistic theory of disease has tended strongly to prevent progress in the medical art among the lower races. Thus among the Bodo and Dhiwal of North-east India, who ascribe all diseases to a deity tormenting the patient for some impiety or neglect, the exorcists divine the offended god, and appease him with the promised sacrifice of a hog; these exorcists are a class of priests, and the people have no other doctors.† Where the world wide doctrine of disease-demons has held sway, men's minds full of spells and ceremonies, have scarce had room for thoughts of drugs and regimen.

This was the case in the early days of Christianity. Considerable progress had been made in the art of healing both in Egypt and in Greece, where the temples were largely equivalent to hospitals. Clement of Alexandria says Moses was instructed in medicine by the Egyptians, and indeed Exodus xxx. 25, indicates that he possessed "the art of the apothecary."

The Greeks had a number of eminent physicians from Hippocrates to Celsus, but the Jews appear to have usually resorted to their medicine-men or prophets like Elijah and Elisha. In one case we read of Isaiah prescribing a fig-poultice for King Hezekiah's boils, but the cure was ascribed more to supernatural assistance than to the natural effects of the remedy. In the case of King Asa we are told, in few but significant terms, that though his disease was great "yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians," and as in the next verse we are told of his death it looks much as if the writer considered this the proper punishment for his impiety (2 Chron. xvi.). So King Ahaziah, when sick, was told by Elijah that he should surely die because he sent to inquire of a rival god instead of sending to Jahveh (2 Kings, i.).

In the time of Jesus the belief in demons as the cause of disease was rife among the Jews. The first three gospels are full of stories of casting out devils from those possessed with them. Some of these devils caused dumbness, others blindness and lameness, while others exhibit various features of epilepsy and insanity. The woman, too, with a spirit of infirmity, who was bowed together and could not lift herself up, is described as "bound by Satan," although the case was not one of demoniacal possession. All sorts of charms and incantations were resorted to in order to drive away the evil spirits. Jesus alludes to the common practice of exorcism in asking "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" His method appears to have been to rebuke the devils, when they appear to have scampered off, and in one case we are told he rebuked a fever, and it too slunk off, ashamed of itself. Of one bad case at least, he said "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." In the early ages of Christianity it was currently believed that the power of curing disease was transmitted from Jesus to his disciples, and indeed similar miracles were recorded of them.

James, the Lord's brother, who makes no mention of any such powers, nevertheless gave instructions

\* Records of the Past, vol. i., p. 131.

† Hodgson's Aborigines of India, pp. 163-170.



that if any one was sick "let him call the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick" (James v., 14—15). With such views and practices it was little likely that attention would be paid to studying the human body or the conditions of disease, and this we shall see was the historical effect of Christianity.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

## ACID DROPS.

Stanley is a Christian, and Emin Pasha is by birth a Jew. Considering the Jew-Hunt in which Christians have indulged ever since the days of Constantine, it looks as though the lion and the lamb were going to lie down together at last, without the one being inside the other.

Stanley has been babbling about Providence again. "Here we are," he says, "all safe and sound; it is wonderful; God has watched over us." Thereupon poor Emin falls out of a window and nearly cracks his skull. Providence must have taken its eye (Providence has only *one* eye) off the Pasha just then. Jove nods, and Jehovah winks.

Although Cardinal Manning grinned and howled at Mr. Bradlaugh during his parliamentary struggle, he has persuaded a lot of people like Mr. Stead that Catholicism will not persecute if it gets the upper hand in England. Well now, just look at Bohemia. Protestants are allowed private worship there, but if they have any guests in the house they must refrain, this being regarded as a public insult to the Holy Catholic religion. Depend upon it, the same thing would happen here if the Holy Catholic Church had the same power.

The bigots have triumphed again in the drunken and godly city of Liverpool. By a majority of 27 to 23 votes the City Council has refused to let the autumn exhibition of pictures be open to the public on the last four Sundays of the year.

Here is an extract from *The Christianity of Jesus Christ*, by the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, published by T. Woolmer, Wesleyan Conference Office, City Road, London: "Yet who of us are content with the progress of the Gospel? Is this England of ours a model of what Christianity can make a nation? Think of its lust, its hideous squalor, its drunkenness, its gambling, its cant in the church, rigid and haughty as any Hindoo distinction; its pride, its love for money, its haste and eagerness to get rich at any cost and by any means. If this is all that Christianity can do for us, is it really worth while to go to the trouble and expense of training and sending men to the ends of the earth? If it is the divine plan of salvation of the world, why does it seem to fail in its purpose?" "Seem to fail," says the cautious minister. It seems to us this word might well be omitted.

According to an advertisement in a Spiritist paper, Jehovah does not seem to have quite given up his profession of author. The latest work he has out is called "Oahspe, a New Bible in the Words of Jehovah." We have had a look at "Oahspe," and our opinion is that, with all his brutality and obscenity, Jehovah in the old days was far more vigorous. He has now, judging by his latest production, dropped into mere senile drivel and inanity. No doubt Jehovah's Last Will and Testament in our Christmas Number is genuine. "Oahspe" confirms it.

A widower of fifty-four advertises for a wife about forty-five. She must have £120 a year, be good-looking and good-tempered, and "above all a Christian at heart; one that is not ashamed to acknowledge it before a sin-blighted world." The advertiser himself has "a warm Christian heart," and is "a Baptist." What a chance for a godly spinster with the requisite cash!

Despite the Salvation Army, the Church Army, and all the other such bodies that are occupied in fighting "sin,"

London is to have a thousand more policemen. This should be an eye-opener to the metropolitan ratepayers, and show them what a splendid investment they make by subscribing to the religious purification societies.

Mr. Samuel Montagu, M.P., has addressed a letter to the Federation of Synagogues in the East End of London. He begins by saying that "the influence of a few Atheists over Jewish working men can no longer be ignored," and suggests that "this most serious evil" should be combated by the appointment of a special preacher at a salary of £300 a year. Mr. Montagu offers to provide the first three years' salary himself, so it may be taken as certain that the preacher will be appointed. No doubt he will convert a good many Atheists—on paper—and keep all the Jewish working men in East London well satisfied with being sweated in the name of Jahveh.

Mr. Montagu says he has learnt of "this most serious evil" through his "experience gained during the recent strike." For our part, we hope he is correct. The sweated East End tailor needed friends, and it is pleasant to hear that he has found them among Atheists.

A Roman Catholic priest in Moscow has been caught living there in a convent with the nuns, who, by the by, are said to be renowned for their good looks. The priest, when arrested, declared that nothing immoral had taken place between him and the nuns: but on closer examination three of the prettiest among them were found *enceinte!* Who is the father of these youngsters—the priest or the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost, to be sure.

"The stranger," says the correspondent of a Madrid newspaper, "on his arrival in Buenos Ayres is astonished at the huge progress that republic has made in civilisation. The towns are built on the European system, and the people live according to the European style as well. Not only is more business transacted there than in any part of South America, but colleges, newspapers, and libraries abound. Convents are no longer tolerated; the churches are isolated and falling into decay. The Buenos Ayrians are the cleanest and smartest folk on that continent; are better educated, more active, more intelligent, free and industrious than their brothers of the neighboring republics. Why is this the case? It is because the people of La Plata have kicked out long ago the Jesuits out of their country, and have learnt to put aside clericalism."

A service "for men only" in the parish church at Herne Bay attracted sixty of the sterner sex. Some of them, who expected something spicy, are said to be disappointed. The vicar did not even read the smutty parts of the Bible, but merely lectured them on "Denying Christ."

A scurrilous fellow, one E. W. Bailey, described as "The Great London Orator," has been holding forth at Long Eaton on "Bradlaugh the Atheist." Despite the peculiar character of his speech, or perhaps because of it, he was supported by a Christian minister on the platform. In the course of his remarks he said that he had sat and listened to "Foote pouring out vile filth by the hour." Mr. Plackett, a Secularist who was present, asked the noble Bailey to explain, but of course he evaded the question. It would be a waste of money to prosecute this infamous liar, for in all probability he is not worth powder and shot, so we leave him to the contempt of honest men, and the admiration of his like among his fellow Christians. The only proper reply to such a scurrilous knave is a thrashing, but that is too expensive a luxury for a Freethinker to think of indulging in at the expense of the thickest-skinned believer.

Mr. Shaw, of Waco, Texas, who lately had his Secular Hall burnt down, had some good instances of Christian kindness upon the occasion. One person exclaimed, "I am glad of it! In all probability some Christian father burnt it to save his children; and if it could be proved upon him no Christian jury would punish him for it." The *Truth-seeker* says that in Texas a few years ago the only infidel in one town was taken out in the woods in the night and flogged because of his belief. Evidently the Gospel of Freethought is much needed there, and we earnestly trust that Mr. Shaw will be well supported in his determination



to uphold Secularism more firmly than ever, despite his late disaster.

The Rev. J. T. Briscoe, Baptist minister, of Peckham, remarked last Sunday night—"I am not ashamed to say that I have no moral force apart from Jesus." Well, we should be sorry to dispute it. The reverend gentleman must be allowed to know himself.

Another instance of the beneficence of religion occurred last week at Newcastle. Three sisters, Emily Sands, aged 22; Alice Blanche Sands, 25; and Eliza Jane Sands, 36, of the Salvation Army, were brought before the magistrates and committed to a lunatic asylum. It appeared that the sisters were agreed that Christ's kingdom had come. One of them said in court that she was the angel of the seven churches, and asked Alderman Hamond, "Have you any authority for saying I am not?" Evidently the poor girls' minds have been crazed by Bible superstition and religious excitement.

Signor Pecci, otherwise known as his Holiness the Pope, has come in for a bequest of £680,000 from the late Baron Lilienthal, who made a lot of money on the Union Générale speculation, a clerical scheme which enriched a few and ruined thousands. His bequest ought to render the Pope personally independent of Peter's pence. It is believed that the will will be disputed on the ground of undue influence. If all moneys made over to pious objects through undue influence were returned, the pious game would not be very lucrative.

The Rev. C. L. Engstrom, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, has been down to Plymouth to preach two sermons on behalf of his organisation. He seems to have talked the usual cant, which flows from him as naturally as water from a fountain. His hearers were exhorted not to be "unkind" to infidels, but, at the same time, they were told that ever so many infidels became so from vanity, self-conceit and other vices, "not to speak of immorality." Mr. Engstrom was also good enough to say, with his usual accuracy, that the Christian Evidence agent had destroyed Secularism in the three towns.

Now comes the climax of the comedy. According to the report in the local press, Mr. Engstrom "pleaded for the funds of the Society," which he is very much interested in sustaining. The result was a collection of £3 9s. 4d. in the morning and £4 in the evening. After deducting Mr. Engstrom's expenses, there remains a most magnificent balance to prove how earnestly the Plymouthians are bent on supporting the Christian Evidence Society.

At an important investigation held before Judge Anderson at Salt Lake City, testimony was given to show that Mormons took oaths, binding them to avenge the blood of the prophets, placing the Mormon priesthood above all other governments and the saints above the law. The proceedings are leading to great excitement against the Mormons among Americans who forget that the same theocratic pretensions lie at the base of every religion. All insist that God must be obeyed rather than man, and God simply means his alleged ministers. Let any other Church have the same unchallenged power as the Mormon Church has had, and the outcome will be the same.

Archbishop Cleary, of Montreal, has excommunicated a divorced woman who married again. In denouncing her from the pulpit he said: "She has offered as a pretext of justification a bill of divorce from her husband, procured in some court of the United States. There is no such thing as divorce under the Christian law. God has peremptorily laid it down that Christian marriage can exist only between 'one man and one woman,' and he excludes all right and power of any state or any government on this earth to dissolve the matrimonial bond on any pretence. It follows that not all the judges and juries in the United States, nor all the senates and courts, parliaments and governments, or crowned monarchs, were they all to combine together, have the power to sever the bond of wedlock between this woman and her husband any more than they had the power to pull down the sun, moon, and stars from the firmament."

The *New York Mail and Express* recently published a list of public appropriations to Roman Catholic institutions amounting to close on twenty million dollars. Unless the Republic makes up its mind to tax ecclesiastical property, it will find that these catterpillars of the commonwealth will eat up all its best cabbages.

The "pious Christ" is getting played out. At any rate the *Christian World* is recommending a "social Christ"—one, we suppose, who smokes a briar pipe and sings a good comic song. That isn't exactly our ideal, but it is an improvement on cursing and damning people who differ from you.

We like to see a man thorough, even as an orthodox stick-in-the-mud. He is really worth looking at when he gets fixed in about two or three feet of good thick stuff, and cries out like poor old MacMahon, *J'y suis, j'y reste*. Consequently we feel a certain sympathy with the Rev. Robert Thompson, who urged the Glasgow Presbytery to put down sacred concerts in churches on Sunday evenings. He declared that at such assemblies the people worshipped the god of music instead of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Nay, he said, if the churches advertised a good ballet, and that the prettiest girls of the congregation would perform in tights, the sacred edifice would be crammed; and if they did so, they would hardly be doing worse than at present.

Mr. Thompson is perhaps ignorant that dancing was a common feature of religious worship among the early and mediæval Christians. There is some curious information on this subject in Mr. Foote's life of David in *Bible Heroes*.

Better is it that no infidel work be done if done only for the purpose of raising doubts that are still too feeble to dispel men's superstitious reverence for the gods and the priests. We want no perhapses, no ifs. The monsters that have marched across the world with fire and sword, filling it with shrieks and groans, with fears and tears, with terrors and tortures, need the arguments of bludgeons and blows that kill. They fatten under a fusillade of feathers. Milk and water opposition only swells them out.—*Ironclad Age*.

Owing to the fire at the Salvation Army Headquarters, these have been temporarily removed to Clerkenwell. The S.A. are thus our near neighbors, their premises being just at the back of our own. Should our Heavenly Father take it into his Godhead to launch a thunderbolt at us, the S.A. premises would be in imminent danger. Our H.F. is notoriously a bad marksman.

Canon Liddon preached last Sunday on Inspiration. He was good and condescending enough to admit the greatness of Shakespeare, but what a gulf, he said, there was between Shakespeare and the Hebrew Scriptures! We agree with him. There is a gulf. The same gulf that there is between the Pyramids and the Parthenon or the Sphinx and the Venus of Milo. All the Bible writers together would have been incapable of producing one of Shakespeare's masterpieces. Yet, curiously enough, the fellow who wrote Jonah was inspired, while the poet who wrote "Hamlet" had nothing but carnal wisdom. Ten to one, then, on the poet.

Once upon a time Christians fought like devils—literally—for the possession of the "Holy Land." Now they prefer to hear about it. Miss Von Finkelstein has netted £5,000 by her lectures in Australia. She has lived in Palestine, and she tells the Gentiles all about it, so that they are able to understand Jacob's courtship, and how King David came to see Madame Bathsheba washing, and all the other interesting, but oriental, features of the Bible narrative.

The late Pasteur Bersier, of Paris, was "simply adored by all the young girls round Neuilly and Passy." Why? Perhaps this is the explanation—"He was an exceedingly handsome man, and his teaching was one of love."

The Report for 1889 of the missionary employed by the Civil Engineers' Association to visit the poor residing near their offices in Westminster lies before us. The missionary



laments that "there is a Socialist and Working Men's Club at the corner of Chapter Street and Regency Street which is a very hotbed of infidelity, and a large portion of the men are infected with their teaching, although at present I have met very few, and those I have met do not seem to have the courage of their convictions." He also might be accused of not having the courage of his convictions, for he goes on to say: "I find it very necessary to avoid argument, which seldom leads to profit, always remembering the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit, unless they are revealed to him by the same Spirit."

But the missionary has to report, not a conversion but—he puts it in large type—"A Sceptic Purchasing a Bible," to which he devotes a page, showing how he wheedled the wife of one of the members of the club into purchasing a Bible—"a two shilling one." She came, too, to the meetings, but "since Christmas she has not attended the meetings. She is evidently experiencing all the powers of darkness against her." By powers of darkness the missionary apparently means the influence of her husband. Such canters should be sternly warned off the premises.

The attitude of the press towards Secularism is a noteworthy sign of the humbug of "free and impartial journalism." The leaders of Freethought in England may lecture to thousands of people, and organise societies, and hold important conferences, but the press is practically mum. Mr. Bradlaugh is treated as an eminent politician, but as a Secular leader he is simply regarded as non-existent. Yet if Mrs. Besant turns Theosophist the papers that were silent about her Atheism will give her paragraphs and articles; and if a half-demented person like George Chainey visits England, as a convert from Freethought to moonshine, a paper like the *Pall Mall Gazette* will give him half a column of small type, as though his eccentric wanderings made him an important personage.

According to the *P. M. G.*, "Professor Chainey [what is he professor of?] at one time was one of the leading Secularist lecturers in the United States, and has spent the most active years of his life in combating all revealed religion and demonstrating the absurdity of the religious creeds accepted by mankind." The *P. M. G.* adds that his "lecturing at South Place Institute upon 'Revelation Revealed' is the transatlantic sequel of the remarkable development through which Mrs. Besant has passed in this country."

We do not envy Mrs. Besant's feelings on reading this sentence. It must be galling to find herself classed with a man regarded as a crank by the American Freethinkers who still remember him. The *P. M. G.* does not appear to know that George Chainey's "version"—the reader can add *con* or *per* at discretion—is so far from being the "sequel" of Mrs. Besant's that it preceded her's by several years. He was only a short time a Secularist lecturer. The work was hard and the remuneration slender, and he was naturally flighty, so he fell into Spiritualism, and went off to Australia, where he did not achieve a great success. Some incidents of his migration we prefer to pass over in silence. Our opinion is that George Chainey is hardly a responsible being. The *P. M. G.* gravely reports that "the interior of his head becomes red-hot," and in this condition he "sees visions." Very likely. There are many such cases in Colney Hatch.

Some time ago George Chainey was seeking enough money to take him to Palestine, where he was to be the recipient of a new revelation. It is a pity the philanthropic editor of the *P. M. G.* does not write a cheque for the amount, and pack this "remarkable man" off to Jerusalem or Jericho.

Sir Morell Mackenzie says leprosy is spreading. This is bad news. What a pity it was the Lord spent such a lot of time in telling Moses how to diagnose leprosy without giving him a single hint how to cure it.

Another fact for Talmage! James Henthorn, of Cross Street, Middleton, committed suicide, and the usual verdict has been returned. He was a member of the Blue Ribbon Mission.

Yet another suicide last week left a pathetic letter imploring a lady to pray for him, and full of such pious exclamations as "May the great God have mercy on me," "God bless your daughter Lizzie" etc.

A correspondence on *Is Killing Heretics Murder?* between Mr. Mark Knowles and the Rev. Father Brown, of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Camberwell, has recently been published. Mr. Knowles cites passages from the canons of the Church declaring that "Heretics may not only be excommunicated but justly killed." His clerical opponent's answer amounts to little better than "we don't do it now." But the motto of the Church is *Semper eadem*. Rome does not persecute where she cannot, but she does if she can.

Sequah, the medicine man, who hails from the adventurous United States, has been selling his medicine in the south of England, and exciting the enthusiasm of the multitude. His astonishing success throws a light upon many things, including the origin of Christianity, which started off with some wonderful cures. Sequah is a master of *reclame*, and he finds going to church is good business. Down at Dover a daughter of one of his travelling agents got married. There was a big procession, headed by a brass band, and St. James's Church was crowded with the admirers of Sequah, who afterwards threw money among the mob. Altogether, an intelligent foreigner, passing through Dover on that day, might have gathered some curious ideas of the progress of sense among the English people.

Another of God's houses, the parish church at Penton, near Andover, has been nearly burnt down. The chancel was saved by the fire brigade from Andover, but the entire roof was destroyed, and all the church furniture damaged.

Mr. Moss's lectures at Hanley excited the attention of the *Staffordshire Knot*, but the Christian editor, instead of reporting what Mr. Moss did say, set himself the easier task of replying to what he did not say and heading his diatribe "Secularism."

The Rev. C. H. Hill, vicar of All Saints, Rhodes, Middleton, does not believe in the text "Owe no man anything." For nine or ten years he has been living beyond his income and borrowing from many money-lenders at extravagant interest. He is now in the Bankruptcy Court, where, alas, many a better man has been before him.

The influenza epidemic has spread from Russia to Poland, Austria, Germany and Denmark. Although only fatal in the case of consumptive and weakly persons, it is sufficiently distressing to induce doubts as to whether all things are indeed arranged for the best. It seems that, from its contagious character, influenza was formerly looked on as a sacred disease, and the widespread custom of saying "God bless us!" or equivalent words whenever sneezing was heard confirms this.

The Rev. R. F. Horton says the Catholic Church shouldn't be treated ungenerously, but he "could not lose sight of the fact that after all Catholicism was not Christianity." Well now, considering that at one time there was no Christianity worth speaking of but Catholicism, and that Catholics still outnumber the Protestants, Mr. Horton must be said to possess a considerable amount of "cheek." We believe the real fact is, that to the historical student Christianity is Catholicism, and nothing else. It is highly probable, too, that Catholicism will outlast all the Protestant sects. The final fight will be between Rome and Reason. Protestantism just skirmishes about until the great gladiators enter the arena to engage in a life-and-death struggle.

Talmage isn't going to get much cash from England to rebuild his cremated Tabernacle. A correspondent of the *Christian World* says his congregation is the meanest in America. They support Talmage and nothing else. But then, you know, Talmage takes a good deal of supporting, and after paying for his daily bread, with extras, there isn't much left in the exchequer.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, December 15, at 11, "Follies of Theosophy"; at 3, "Is There a God?"; at 7, "Is the Bible fit for Children?"

Dec. 22, Milton Hall, London; 29, Hall of Science, London.  
Jan. 5 and 12, Hall of Science, London; 19, Liverpool;  
26, Camberwell.

Feb. 2, Hall of Science, London; 9, Blackburn; 16, Milton Hall, London; 23, Hall of Science, London.

March 2, Manchester; 9, Camberwell; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

M. BALL.—Our publisher must have over-looked it. We will see it is sent.

DAYLIGHT.—Thanks for the cuttings.

STUPID AWE writes: "I have taken six copies of your Christmas Number to send to friends in various parts of the world."

INCOG.—It certainly is funny arithmetic.

E. SIMS.—True, Freethought does and long must suffer from want of money; but there are some who could help a great deal more than they do. Meanwhile it is a hard fight for those who carry on the war with superstition.

G. S.—Mr. Wheeler will keep the Carlyle anecdote for future use.

TRUTHSEKER (Hull) writes: "Allow me to congratulate you on your Christmas Number. I have got orders for fully a dozen copies myself." This correspondent is informed that we did not issue a Summer Number. *Bible Romances* will be republished in a new edition in the new year.

J. ORME.—You will alter your opinion, perhaps, after reading the second part of our review of the Rev. H. P. Hughes's story. The little conversation you refer to was overheard by our sub-editor in a car. We merely printed the conversation, without vouching for the statements of the interlocutors.

W. HARDWICK.—Glad to hear from you after your illness. Will not the Archbishop's address be stale by the time Mr. Foote visits Liverpool?

J. HILLIER.—Glad to hear you are keeping the cause warm at Old Southgate. The fury of the local bigots is a compliment to your success. The man Williams is a nuisance to all decent people on his own side. Ask him to have the courage to write down in the presence of two witnesses, the statement he made about Mr. Foote. Of course he won't have the courage to do so, but his refusal will show him in his true colors. It is difficult to prove spoken words in a court, especially in a criminal prosecution. We are pleased to find you have so many orders for the Christmas Number.

NEMO.—Those who no longer believe the Bible is a divine revelation, but regard it merely as historical records, can scarcely be called Christians, since every authoritative standard and Church has regarded it in the former light. "Nemo" congratulates us upon the Christmas Number, of which he has taken two copies.

H. G. S.—Many thanks. Always glad of cuttings, etc.

J. KEAST.—Eusebius wrote in the fourth century. The clergyman who relies on this dishonest writer as a final authority on the dates of the four Gospels, is an ignoramus or a charlatan. The Buddhist scriptures are very extensive, and the English translations are expensive.

QUIZ.—The Josephus passage is dealt with in *Crimes of Christianity*. See the chapter on Pious Forgeries. *Bible Romances* is out of print. A new edition will be issued in 1890. Hardly any of the old "Evidences of Christianity" is worth the paper it is printed on. You would do well to read Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, and if possible *Supernatural Religion*. We thank you for taking six copies of our Christmas Number for your friends.

HARRY ROSE.—James Marchant never was recognised in any official way by the N.S.S. He lectured for some of the London Branches, which allow all sorts of persons to occupy their free platforms besides the recognised lecturers of the Society. He only lectured for a short time out of doors, and he never was an Atheist; in fact the Hyde Park Branch

refused to let him lecture on the Folly of Atheism. Surely the C. E. S. is thankful for every small mercies. It gets hold of an erratic young man, who never knew his own mind, and parades him as though he were a Bradlaugh. The C. E. S. dupes forget that nearly every Freethinker is a convert from Christianity.

MUSICIAN.—Thanks. Always glad to hear from you. Paine's *Age of Reason* is in print. Mr. Forder supplies it at 1s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Secular Thought—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Ironclad Age—Freidenker—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Echo—Evening Standard—Salt Lake Tribune—Glasgow Weekly Mail—Newcastle Daily Leader—Nottingham Daily Express—Reading Observer—Western Figaro—Open Court—Freethought—Long Eaton Advertiser—Twentieth Century—Lucifer—Indian Methodist Times—Middlesex Independent—Middleton Guardian—Newcastle Chronicle—Reading Observer.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish our attention directed.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had a hearty reception at Nottingham on Sunday. His exposure of the "Follies of Theosophy" in the morning was relished by the audience, which, unfortunately, did not include the Spiritualists who heard Mrs. Besant's lecture a few weeks ago, and flocked round her so effusively when she descended from the platform. The afternoon and evening lectures were well attended, the audiences were enthusiastic, and there was some discussion besides several questions. Friends came over sixteen miles from Derby, and from other places still more distant. Tea was provided before the evening meeting, and a large and genial gathering of "saints" gave the day a touch of festivity. Messrs. Atkey, Anderson, Snell and Hooper were to the front, with other members of the Committee, and many ladies graced the hall with their presence. The Nottingham Branch is fortunate in having the support of so many "weaker vessels" as St. Peter foolishly called them, although he had a wife and a mother-in-law. The Branch differs so greatly from St. Peter that it has elected a lady as president, and she is none the less useful for being charming as well as intelligent. Altogether the Nottingham Branch is to be congratulated. It has nearly cleared off a bad load of debt, and the harmony which prevails is a good prognostic of future success.

THE celebration of Richard Carlyle's birthday last Sunday at Camberwell Secular Hall was one of the most successful gatherings we have seen. Over two hundred and fifty persons must have been present. There was a double relay of tea and of dances, and the directors deserve great praise for the way in which they provided for the comfort and entertainment of so large a party. Some thirty members from Milton Hall came in brakes, and the Milton Amateur Dramatic Society performed an amusing sketch entitled "Is Marriage a Failure?" in capital style, provoking hearty bursts of laughter. Madame Burgwitz, Mr. B. Hyatt, Mr. W. Roberts, and others contributed to the harmony of the evening, and Mr. Standing gave a few brief words on the services of Richard Carlyle, some portraits of whom, with other relics, were on exhibition.

THE Camberwell Society will, as usual, provide one hundred of the aged poor of their district with a substantial dinner at Christmas. Donations may be sent to Mr. Ruse, at 60 New Church Road.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION FUND.—We have received the following subscriptions:—G. Payne (Manchester), £1 1s.; E. Sims (Stockport), £1.

RECEIVED by Mr. G. Standing, secretary, for the same Fund:—J. H. Ellis, 10s.; J. Umpleby, 10s. Received by Mr. R. O. Smith, treasurer:—H. C. B., 10s.; Bethnal Green Branch (collection), 4s. 7d.

THE run is beginning on the tickets for the London Secular Federation's annual dinner on January 7. About 250 is the utmost that can be provided for, and we advise



those who wish to join the party to lose no time in securing a place.

"LETTERS TO THE CLERGY" will be resumed next week with a letter on Prayer addressed to the Rev. T. Teignmouth Shore, chaplain-in-ordinary to the Queen. The pressure of other matter on our space is responsible for the delay.

OUR printer was too slow in delivering the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*, and the shop was turned into a bear-garden by the trade collectors. Happily the supply is all right now, and the sale is so brisk that we are printing again for the demand. Those who can afford it should buy a few extra copies to lend or give away during the new year. They will have to wait twelve months for another such "budget of blasphemy."

MESSRS. PUTMAN AND MACDONALD, of *Freethought*, San Francisco, have put out the prospectus of a Free-thought Publishing Company in that city, and from the support already given to it the scheme promises to be a success.

*Notes and Queries* for Dec. 7 contains a lengthy account by Mr. R. C. Christie of the famous early Freethought work *De Tribus Impostoribus*, the three Impostors (Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed), which was ascribed to so many heretics of the past. There is also an announcement that the work will be published in several languages early in the ensuing year.

THE official report of the proceedings in connection with this year's International Conference of Freethinkers at Paris will shortly be published in a volume of some 360 pages.

MR. W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN'S fourth lecture on Semitic Religions was on the subject of Monotheism. He pointed out that only late in their history did the Jews become Monotheists. In early times they were like their neighbors polytheistic and when Yahveh was regarded as the national god, his existence did not preclude that of the gods of other nations. The same pillars of stone, anointed with oil, or smeared with grease, were identified with the presence of Yahveh as with Baal and Chemosh. Yahveh was only the god of the Beni-Israel wandering from place to place, and the synagogue was the direct copy of the Babylonian temple.

WE have received from Holland a Calendar for 1899 issued by our Freethought contemporary *De Dageraad*. The illustrated card contains portraits of L. Büchner, J. Moleschott, and C. Bradlaugh. The daily leaflets give the names of Freethinkers of all nations who were born or died on the various dates. The compiler, J. Van der Ende, has largely availed himself of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, and the result is that the *De Dageraad* Calendar, in respect to the number of names of Freethinkers and the accuracy of dates, is the best Freethought Calendar we have yet seen.

THE Board School contest at Nottingham has given rise to considerable discussion on dogmatic and secular education. A number of letters have appeared in the *Nottingham Daily Express*, and discussion is the one thing necessary to advance the secular cause.

MR. EDGAR SALTUS, the popular American novelist, is at present in England. Here he is best known by his philosophical works *The Philosophy of Disenchantment* and *The Anatomy of Negation*. Mr. Saltus is a follower of Schopenhauer, and like his master a decided pessimist and atheist. He is a young man of about two and thirty, being born at New York in 1858. He studied on the Continent, where he acquired his liking for Schopenhauer and Balzac. He is about medium height, rather stoutly built, pale complexioned, and with the dark brown almond-shaped eyes which give him his French, or rather his southern look.

THE interest in Shelley, the great poet of Atheism, does not diminish. At a public sale in London recently sixteen of his letters fetched £300.

THERE is some likelihood that the Jesuits will now be expelled from Brazil, where they have, as usual, accumulated vast wealth and own vast tracts of the best situated and most fertile land in the Republic.

THE question, "Can bees talk?" has been debated for a long time, and a German naturalist says that he is able at last to say that if they cannot talk, at least they possess some other means of communicating news to each other. A bee having flown into his room, he gave it some drops of honey. The bee breakfasted and flew off, but in half an hour returned with a companion, who was also entertained. Presently the first bee came back with six friends, and after they had feasted a whole swarm surrounded the window.

THE *Evening Standard* in a recent article on "Irish Folk Lore" gave many instances of Pagan superstitions still existing in Ireland. The writer says that star worship, sun worship, and the worship of animals have survivals there. Another survival is the belief that moths and butterflies embody the souls of the departed. The wake is referred to the fear that some evil spirit should carry off the dead body.

WE remind our readers who may have books and other literature to spare that they can if so minded address them to Mr. Viktor E. Lennstrand, Långholmens Kronohäkte, Stockholm, Sweden, to relieve the tedium of his imprisonment. The very lecture for delivering which Mr. Lennstrand is imprisoned is on constant sale, and the authorities are afraid to prosecute lest a jury should give an acquittal. The lecture has moreover been publicly read at the meetings of the *Utilistiska Sanfundet* to see if further prosecution will follow, in which case it will be read again by fresh members. But it is evident that it is Mr. Lennstrand's advocacy that is objected to more than the lecture.

MR. LENNSTRAND informs us that the Sunday School which he established the day before his incarceration is now attended by sixty or seventy children to whom a Christmas feast is being organised. Captain Thomson is removing to Stockholm to take charge of *Fritänkaren*, the organ of the movement, which we hope will be well supported during Mr. Lennstrand's compulsory absence from the editorial chair.

#### 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.—Died, on the 9th inst., at Connegree Road, Tipton, Thomas Davis, aged 69. Deceased had been from his youth upwards a Republican in politics and an Atheist in theology, and remained true to his principles to the last. The writer of this notice has been associated with him in many forward movements, and always found him a zealous and reliable coadjutor. A minister of the gospel gained access to him just before his decease, but failed to shake by so much as a jot the well-grounded convictions of my old friend. His end was peace.—H. V. MAYER.



## BEFORE A CRUCIFIX.

LATE one evening after an idle ramble I entered on my way home a little church (for I was then a fervent and devout Catholic), and after dipping my fingers in the holy water at the entrance, knelt down before a large and beautiful crucifix. My prayer finished, I was about to rise, when suddenly I heard a voice that seemed to come from the crucifix. Startled, I turned my eyes to the effigy to assure myself I was laboring under no delusion, when for a second time I heard the voice say in reassuring tones: "Be not startled, young man. Dismiss all fear, I mean you no harm. In the name of Reason I beckon you to remain and listen to a confession, a secret my lips will reveal, Be not astonished at my words. What I will state are words of truth—truth, which all of you men are seeking and who among you can boast of having found? You are young: your mind can be turned still. The world is before you; listen to my words and they will always prove a trustworthy guide to you in life." My knees seemed like nailed to the ground, I tried in vain to move: in the next instant I laid overpowered on my face. "Do you believe," resumed the voice, "that an idol like me can be the image of a God? Do you believe that a wooden effigy can work miracles? No, it would be madness. I was made to represent the effigy of that poor insane Jesus Christ, who believed himself the son of God. The unfortunate man, although crazy, was hung for it. As a sane man he would have deserved the severest condemnation, as a maniac he inspires only pity.

"All creeds young man, are false. All prophets liars and impostors. Ignorance and fear created the first gods, priests invented the flames of hell, Religion is the hideous nightmare that troubles the human mind. Priests are base cowards, hypocrites, selfish dogs, foes of liberty and progress. Their lasciviousness knows no bounds. In yonder dark confessional many a time has a lustful priest seduced some honest woman. Cursed be the priests, thrice cursed! Woe unto those wretches, who make this world with their intrigues a den of vipers and toads!

After a short pause the voice continued, "This world was never created. It evolved itself out of the chaos when the last revolution of matter was effected, and has since been changing and renewing itself. Life only appeared when the favorable conditions of the globe permitted it to do so. What is life? Eternity? Infinity? Death? I will not tell you; you would not seize what I mean. When man shall have become a more perfected being, he will be able to find out for himself and understand all these things which are now only mysteries. Man has no soul. The word soul conveys no idea to the mind. The soul is not a spirit, for spirits exist not. Sooner or later philosophers will all have to agree in declaring that the so-called 'immortal spirit' is merely a bodily function, more or less complicated. The idea of annihilation may frighten you: would you prefer to be burnt for ever in the tormenting flames of hell? Not to exist is not to suffer. Immortality is a beautiful word, a precious gem, that has no value because it is a false one! Immortality was born of human affection; it originated in the heart of a mother, in that of a son. A lover-poet quenched his tears with the hope of meeting the adored one again after death in some dreamy and ideal fairyland of his own fancy.

"Man's existence may be a curse, but since he lives, let him live and struggle against Fate. He is free to die or to live. He is his own master and Mother Nature cares little. Happy the dead, still happier those that never were born! What is man? A perfected ape with more brains than his head can hold. He believes himself a demi-god because Nature accidentally placed himself at the head of the animal kingdom. He thinks himself free as the clouds, when he is simply imprisoned like a bird in a cage. Theologians allow him free-will, but is he not continually the sport of circumstances?

"Believe not that a man is wicked because he has no creed. The love of humanity is better than the love of God. Religious nations have been the most immoral. The majority of criminals, forgers and swindlers are pious.

"All men are equal. A wise man seeks not to govern, and wishes not to be governed. Kings have no right to rule. Kings have helped to spread superstition and immorality. They caused many a long and bloody war. Kings are tyrants. Away with kings! No man is obliged to feed another. Lazy men are parasites, that corrupt and demolish the pillars of society.

"Do your duty, be honest, unselfish, charitable, and help your fellow men whenever you can. Be not discouraged at their egotism and iniquities. Pity those who possess not a clear conscience; a bad conscience is a pillow of stone; a bad deed may go unpunished for a while, but sooner or later it will betray the perpetrator. And when the hour of death shall approach, if your life has been one of toil, patience, and righteousness, death will not appear as a ghastly phantom, but as a herald of peace and relief. Even if a supreme being existed, you would not dread to appear before him. Would he punish an honest man for doing his duty and following his own conscience? No; for if omnipotent, he would be pitiful."

Here the voice became faint, and whispered:

"Go your way now, I have spoken. May nature protect you and keep you always in the path of righteousness and felicity."

I arose with difficulty, almost dazzled and confused, and after a moment's reflection, hastily left the building. Although many years have elapsed since this occurrence I have never set again my foot inside a church. I am an unbeliever now, and in my heart of hearts a wiser and happier man.

F. MALIBRAN.

## SPURGEON BLOWS A BLAST.

"The Free Church of Scotland must, happily, be for the moment regarded as rushing to the front with its new theology, which is no theology, but an opposition to the Word of the Lord. That church in which we all gloried, as sound in the faith, and full of the martyrs' spirit, has entrusted the training of its future ministers to two professors who hold other doctrines than those of its Confession. This is the most suicidal act that a church can commit. It is strange that two gentlemen who are seeking for something newer and better than the old faith, should condescend to accept a position which implies their agreement with the ancient doctrines of the church; but delicacy of feeling is not a common article nowadays, and the action of creeds is not automatic, as it would be if consciences were tender. In the Free Church there is a Confession, and there are means for carrying out discipline; but these will be worth nothing without the personal action of all the faithful in the community. Every man who keeps aloof from the struggle for the sake of peace, will have the blood of souls upon his head. The question in debate at the Disruption was secondary compared with that which is now at issue. It is *Bible or no Bible, Atonement or no Atonement*, which we have now to settle."

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## THEOSOPHY AGAIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Your issue of Oct. 20 contained an editorial allusion to me which is founded on a misapprehension, and is likely to cause an impression in the minds of your readers detrimental to the reputation of another person. I feel sure, therefore, that you will have the courtesy to permit me to disavow in your columns the sentiments therein attributed to me.

I need only refer to that paragraph in which my name occurs. You say: "As Dr. Coues keeps up a Theosophical Society, and challenges the authority of Madame Blavatsky, and Mr. Harte, the acting editor of the *Theosophist* in India, seems disposed to do the same, it seems, etc., etc." Allow me to say that this supposition—that I question the authority of Madame Blavatsky, as Corresponding Secretary of the Theosophical Society and its inspirer—is absolutely untrue.

Did I "question her authority" in my own mind I should keep it to myself until I had, at least, resigned the acting editorship of the magazine she herself founded and for years edited, and of which she is still in part the proprietor.

Yours respectfully,

RICHARD HAETE,

Acting Editor of the *Theosophist*.

The bigot and the Freethinker in two sentences: "Come my way, or be damned." "Go your way, and be damned."



## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

BY COL. INGERSOLL.

(From the "North American Review.")

THE next question is as to the right of society in this matter. It must be admitted that the peace of society will be promoted by the separation of such people. Certainly society cannot insist upon a wife remaining with a husband who bruises and mangles her flesh. Even married women have a right to personal security. They do not lose, either by contract, or sacrament, the right of self-preservation; this they share in common, to say the least of it, with the lowest living creatures.

This will probably be admitted by most of the enemies of divorce; but they will insist that while the wife has the right to flee from her husband's roof and seek protection of kindred or friends, the marriage—the sacrament must remain unbroken. Is it to the interest of society that those who despise each other should live together? Ought the world to be peopled by the children of hatred or disgust, the children of lust and loathing, or by the welcome babes of mutual love? Is it possible that an infinitely wise and compassionate God insists that a helpless woman shall remain the wife of a cruel wretch? Can this add to the joy of paradise, or tend to keep one harp in tune? Can anything be more infamous than for a government to compel a woman to remain the wife of a man she hates—of one whom she justly holds in abhorrence? Does any decent man wish the assistance of a constable, a sheriff, a judge, or a church, to keep his wife in his house? Is it possible to conceive of a more contemptible human being than a man who would appeal to force in such a case? It may be said that the woman is free to go, and that the courts will protect her from the brutality of the man who promised to be her protector; but where shall the woman go? She may have no friends; or they may be poor; her kindred may be dead. Has she no right to build another home? Must this woman, full of kindness, affection, health, be tied and chained to this living corpse? Is there no future for her? Must she be an outcast for ever—deceived and betrayed for her whole life? Can she never sit by her own hearth with the arms of her children about her neck, and with a husband who loves and protects her? Is she to become a social pariah, and is this for the benefit of society? or is it for the sake of the wretch who destroyed her life?

The ground has been taken that woman would lose her dignity if marriage could be annulled. Is it necessary to lose your liberty in order to retain your moral character—in order to be pure and womanly? Must a woman, in order to retain her virtue, become a slave, a serf, with a beast for a master, or with society for a master, or with a phantom for a master?

If an infinite being is one of the parties to the contract, is it not the duty of this being to see to it that the contract is carried out? What consideration does the infinite being give? What consideration does he receive? If a wife owes no duty to her husband because the husband has violated the contract, and has even assaulted her life, is it possible for her to feel toward him any real thrill of affection? If she does not, what is there left of marriage? What part of this contract or sacrament remains in living force? She cannot sustain the relation of wife, because she abhors him: she cannot remain under the same roof, for fear that she may be killed. They sustain, then, only the relations of hunter and hunted—of tyrant and victim. Is it desirable that this relation should last through life, and that it should be rendered sacred by the ceremony of a church?

Again I ask, is it desirable to have families raised under such circumstances? Are we in need of children born of such parents? Can the virtue of others be preserved only by this destruction of happiness, by this perpetual imprisonment?

A marriage without love is bad enough, and a marriage for wealth or position is low enough; but what shall we say of a marriage where the parties actually abhor each other? Is there any morality in this? any virtue in this? Is there virtue in retaining the name of wife, or husband, without the real and true relation? Will any good man say, will any good woman declare, that a true, loving woman should be compelled to be the mother of children whose father she detests? Is there a good woman in the world who would not shrink from this herself? and is there a woman so heartless and so immoral that she would force another to bear that from which she would shudderingly and shriekingly shrink?

Marriages are made by men and women; not by society; not by the State; not by the church; not by supernatural beings. By this time we should know that nothing is moral that does not tend to the well-being of sentient beings; that nothing is virtuous the result of which is not good. We know now, if we know anything, that all the reasons for doing right, and all the reasons against doing wrong, are here in this world. We should have imagination enough to put ourselves in the place of another. Let a man suppose himself a helpless woman beaten by a brutal husband—would he advocate divorces then?

Few people have an adequate idea of the sufferings of women and children, of the number of wives who tremble when they hear the footsteps of a returning husband, of the number of children who hide when they hear the voice of a father. Few people know the number of blows that fall on the flesh of the helpless every day, and few know the nights of terror passed by mothers who hold babes to their breasts. Compared with these, all the hardships of poverty borne by those who love each other are as nothing. Men and women truly married bear the sufferings and misfortunes of poverty together. They console each other. In the darkest night they see the radiance of a star, and their affection gives to the heart of each perpetual sunshine.

The good home is the unit of the good government. The hearthstone is the corner-stone of civilisation. Society is not interested in the preservation of hateful homes, of homes where husbands and wives are selfish, cold, and cruel. It is not to the interest of society that good women should be enslaved, that they should live in fear, or that they should become mothers by husbands whom they hate. Homes should be filled with kind and generous fathers; with true and loving mothers; and when they are so filled, the world will be civilised. Intelligence will rock the cradle; justice will sit in the courts; wisdom in the legislative halls; and above all and over all, like the dome of heaven, will be the spirit of liberty.

Although marriage is the most important and the most sacred contract that human beings can make, still when that contract has been violated, courts should have the power to declare it null and void upon such conditions as may be just.

As a rule, the woman dowers the husband with her youth, her beauty, her love—with all she has; and from this contract certainly the husband should never be released, unless the wife has broken the conditions of that contract. Divorces should be granted publicly precisely as the marriage should be solemnised. Every marriage should be known, and there should be witnesses, to the end that the character of the contract entered into should be understood; the record should be open and public. And the same is true of divorces. The conditions should be determined, the property should be divided by a court of equity, and the custody of the children given under regulations prescribed.

Men and women are not virtuous by law. Law does not of itself create virtue, nor is it the foundation or fountain of love. Law should protect virtue, and law should protect the wife, if she has kept her contract, and the husband if he has fulfilled his. But the death of love is the end of marriage. Love is natural. Back of all ceremony burns and will forever burn the sacred flame. There has been no time in the world's history when that torch was extinguished. In all ages, in all climes, among all people, there has been true, pure, and unselfish love. Long before a ceremony was thought of, long before a priest existed, there were true and perfect marriages. Back of public opinion is natural modesty, the affection of the heart; and in spite of all law, there is, and forever will be the realm of choice. Wherever love is, it is pure; and everywhere, and at all times, the ceremony of marriages testifies to that which has happened within the temple of the human heart.

(To be concluded.)

## PURGATORY OR MATRIMONY?

No one will deny that a genuine Irishman or Irishwoman, at home, carries off the palm for ready wit, smart repartee, and racy humor. But, to get him in perfection, your Irishman must be a country parish priest. Father O'Flynn was quite genuine.

"What is the sacrament of matrimony?" asked a young priest of a confirmation class.

"Tis a state of torment into which souls enter to prepare them for another and a better world."

"That is the answer to purgatory," said the priest; "go down to the bottom of the class."

"Ah, be aisy," said an old priest standing by, "let her be. For anything you or I know she may be perfectly right."—*Scraps.*



REVIEW.

*The State.* By Albert Tarn. Stocker, Birmingham. (2d.)—Mr. Tarn writes as an Anarchist. His ideas seem to us sensible and otherwise. We are for minimising the power of the State, but its abolition seems chimerical, at any rate at present. Mr. Tarn's readers, however, will be able to judge for themselves.

PROFANE JOKES.

Is it true that Pope Leo is afraid to sit alone at dinner because he is superstitious about XIII. at table?

Nowadays, when a man is particularly fortunate, we speak of him as being in clover. It was different in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Mohammedans have ninety-nine names for God; but no good Mohammedan uses them all at once till he smashes his finger nailing down a carpet.

An awful question that's agitating the infantile mind of little Tommy Trotaway. How the angels get their night-shirts on over their wings.

A well known Hatton Garden Jew recently demanded half railway-tickets for himself and his wife to Brighton and back, on the ground that they were "children"——of Israel!

"Can you tell me how old the devil is?" said an irreverent fellow to a clergyman. "My friend, you must keep your own family record," was the reply.

The prettiest proposal and reply we ever came across is the following. They were Quakers. "Rachel, the Lord hath sent me to marry thee." "Dearest Josiah, the Lord's will be done."

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