

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## NOTICE.

“Letters to the Clergy” will be resumed next week. The ninth will be addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

## PROVIDENCE.

LONDON awoke on New Year's morning to find that a frightful tragedy had happened during the night. A fire broke out at the Forest Gate Industrial Schools, and twenty-six boys were burnt or suffocated in their dormitories. Heroic exertions were made to rescue the little fellows; without them, indeed, the death-roll would have been far more appalling. Some of the boys showed more courage than soldiers on the battle-field. One who was himself rescued, went back to save a small comrade, and perished in the attempt.

The youngsters had gone to bed looking forward with pleasure to the morrow. They were to have had a whole day's enjoyment, but, according to an evening newspaper, “Providence designed it otherwise.” No doubt this shocking language made but little, if any, impression on the minds of ordinary readers. There is a stock phraseology of religion which is so hackneyed as to be almost meaningless. Otherwise it is difficult to conceive the state of mind of a man, in this humane and enlightened age, who could deliberately write such words. They imply that Providence resolved to frustrate the boys' hopes in the most cruel manner; that Providence arranged the fire, so that they might wake amidst flame and smoke, instead of in the dawn of a happy day; that Providence wilfully burnt or smothered twenty-six lads, just in order to show the power of the great designer, whose ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.

Such a God would be a colossal devil. The worst criminal that ever cursed the earth would look pure beside him. Human criminals are tempted by gain, and impelled by sudden passion. But God has nothing to gain, and is supposed to act deliberately, with perfect forethought and unerring aim. If he murdered those twenty-six poor little fellows—that is, if he “designed it otherwise”—the dictionary has no words strong enough to describe him.

Suppose a wise and merciful God ruled the world. Suppose he saw fit to terminate the earthly life of those lads and call them “home.” Could he not have called them in their sleep? Could he not have ordered the Angel of Death to fan them gently with his wings, so that in the morning their faces might lie pale upon the pillows, without a sign of terror or pain?

Why rouse them with the hoarse cry of “Fire?” Why choke them with the blinding smoke? Why lick their limbs and faces with tongues of flame? Why unveil the face of the King of Terrors to the gaze of shrieking children?

Would the worst man in London have been capable of such a deed? Jack the Ripper would probably have shrunk from the infamy. He has a mania for killing middle-aged unfortunates, and perhaps he has suffered from them. But who has suffered from youth and innocence? Who, maddened with wrong, would torture and kill a crowd of children? Who would turn a boys' bedroom into a slaughter-house, only to show that events may not happen according to expectation.

The victims of this tragedy were buried on Monday, and religion gave it another touch of irony. A hymn was sung by the surviving boys and girls of the schools, the first line of which was this:—

“There's a friend for little children.”

What a kind friend! And what sickening humbug to hymn and slaver the “kind friend” who slaughtered twenty-six objects of his attachment!

Right under the report of the funeral in the *Evening News* was the heading, “Prize Fight at Leeds,” and the next column was devoted to the “West End Scandals.” Surely the “designer” of the universe is in a dreadful muddle. He would be far better engaged in stopping prize fights, and reforming dirty aristocrats, than in burning innocent children in their beds. Cowper tells us that “God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.” If he exist the line is undoubtedly true. But what if God be a dream of ignorance? What if Providence be a fiction of theology? Are we not then relieved from the intolerable burden of belief in an Almighty Devil.

G. W. FOOTE.

## TYNDALL ON CARLYLE.\*

NEARLY nine years have rolled their course since the literary Colossus of the century passed away, yet the stream of Carlyle literature still flows on. Few men indeed are so well known, known not only, as even eminent men usually are, merely from the outside, but turned inside out, exposing the seamy side. Few have borne so fierce a light. If, as the upshot, Carlyle remains a very human man—with the keenest of eyes for the demerits of others and tragical blindness—until too late, for the merits of the one who should have been first and dearest, it is better that the truth should be known. Better a true man than a false God.

The cloud of detraction which followed the publication of Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, written in age, ill-health and grief at the loss of his wife, has lifted since the publication of the numerous letters exhibiting his tender great-heartedness in many varied

\* “Personal Recollections of Thomas Carlyle,” *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1890.

relations. They reveal him, to use his own fine comparison, as "a rock of unsubduable granite, piercing fast wide into the heavens, yet in the clefts of it beautiful green valleys with flowers." He has been judged as in the judgement hall of Osiris, where every little action is weighed; yet he takes his place among the lofty in character as well as among the great in intellect. Gold, though alloyed with bronze, is more valuable than silver and above comparison with tin.

Professor Tyndall's "Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle," though they do not throw any new light upon his character or opinions, are yet of interest, as exhibiting him in relation to modern science. It has been thought that Carlyle showed an ignorant impatience of science, or, at any rate, of its conclusions. Professor Tyndall does something to modify this judgment. Impatient, he undoubtedly was, of those who he fancied denied reality to all that could not be tested in a laboratory. As Prof. Tyndall remarks—"With such Carlyle had little sympathy. He was a Freethinker of wiser and nobler mould. The miracles of orthodoxy were to him, as to his friend Emerson, 'Monsters,' To both of them the blowing clover and the falling rain were the true miracles." Froude indeed, says in so many words, "the special miraculous occurrences of Sacred History were not credible to him."

The first meeting of Carlyle and Tyndall appears to have taken place at the Royal Institution when Tyndall was experimenting on the subject of the origin of life. The result of his researches, the conclusion that there is no spontaneous generation (a conclusion, we must remark in passing, which is after all only an inference founded on human failure) fell in with Carlyle's own notions. They appear often to have discussed, and the Professor remarks that "in matters of science, I was always able, in the long run, to make prejudice yield to reason." Carlyle's love of truth amounted to a passion, but although he had long made the "exodus from Houndsditch," "the peeling off of fetid Jewhood," "as he called his revolt from orthodox Bibliolatry†" and though he was well away from all metaphysics, the grim Calvinism of his youth, and the transcendentalism of his early manhood left their traces to the last. The doctrine of evolution came too late to find acceptance.

Professor Tyndall often expressed the wish that Carlyle and Darwin might meet—The wish was fulfilled—and he afterwards said to Tyndall: "Yes, I have been to see him, and a more charming man I have never met in my life." Could they both have known each other more intimately, Carlyle would scarcely have given utterance to some savage gibes which are apt to rankle in the minds of Evolutionists.

Carlyle, on one occasion, deplored the collapse of religious feeling in England, upon which Professor Tyndall remarked "As regards the most earnest and the most capable of the men of a generation younger than your own; if one writer more than another, has been influenced in loosing them from their theological moorings, thou art the man." And the observation was just. The writings of Carlyle, no less than those of Mill, were a powerful solvent of orthodoxy, not by direct attack, but by showing how wide a world existed outside. On the occasion we have mentioned—Tyndall said:—

"Despite all the losses you deplore, there is one great gain. We have extinguished that horrible spectre which darkened with its death-wings so many brave and pious lives. It is something to have abolished Hell-fire!" "Yes," he

† Carlyle, in a letter to Emerson states that he once thought of writing this, "Exodus from Houndsditch." The following passage from *Latter Day Pamphlets* may give some hint as to what the work would have been like. "The Jew, old clothes, having now grown fairly pestilential, a poisonous encumbrance in the path of man! burn them up with revolutionary fire as you like and can."

replied, "that is a distinct and an enormous gain. My own father was a brave man, and, though poor, unaccustomed to cower before the face of man; but the Almighty God was a different matter. You and I do not believe that Melchet Court exists, and that we shall return thither, more firmly than he believed that, after his death, he would have to face a judge who would lift him into everlasting bliss or doom him to eternal woe. I could notice that for three years before he died, this rugged, honest soul trembled to its depths at even the possible prospect of hell-fire. It surely is a great gain to have abolished this Terror."

The power of Carlyle, however, did not depend upon his opinions so much as upon his personality, the intense vigor and earnestness which he threw into an unwearying battle against cant and quackery of all kinds, and which he imparts to his readers. His power of enlarging the imagination and stimulating the emotions places him beside the highest poets, and for this reason those who sometimes fancy they have got beyond Carlyle may do well to turn again and yet again to one who always makes his readers feel the weight and importance of life and the vanity of systems of philosophy or religious institutions not in harmony with the fact of things.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### 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.

#### GOD AS A STONE.

IN an interesting and important article on "Sacred Stones," in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*, Mr. Grant Allen notices the wide-spread practice of stoa-worship, and does not scruple to apply the argument to the religion of the Jews, since the early Semites were notoriously stone-worshippers. He notices how the Jewish God was carried in the ark, and how David "danced before Jahweh," and compares his place in the temple with the fetish stones in the holy of holies of the temples of Greece. Mr. Allen says, "That Jahweh himself in the most ancient traditions of the race, was similarly concealed within his chest or ark, in the holy of holies, is evident I think to any attentive reader." He points out that the later Jehovistic glosses of Exodus and Deuteronomy, do their best to darken the comprehension of the matter. Mr. Allen thus concludes:—

Not to push the argument too far, then, we may say this much is fairly certain. The children of Israel in early times carried about with them a tribal god, Jahweh, whose presence in their midst was intimately connected with a certain ark or chest, containing a stone object or objects. This chest was readily portable, and could be carried to the front in case of warfare. They did not know the origin of the object in the ark with certainty, but they regarded it emphatically as "Jahweh their god, which led them out of the land of Egypt." Even after its true nature had been spiritualised away into a great national deity, the most unlimited and incorporeal the world has ever known (as we get him in the best and purest work of the prophets), the imagery of later times constantly returns to the old idea of stone and menhir. In the embellished account of the exodus from Egypt, Jahweh

goes before the Israelites as a pillar or monolith of cloud by day, and fire by night. According to Levitical law his altar must be built of unhewn stone, "for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou has polluted it." It is as a Rock that the prophets often figuratively describe Jahweh, using the half-forgotten language of an earlier day to clothe their own sublimer and more purified conception. It is to the Rock of Israel—the sacred stone of the tribe—that they look for succour. Nay, even when Josiah accepted the forged roll of the law, and promised to abide by it "the king stood by a pillar (a menhir) and made a covenant before Jahweh." Even to the last we see in vague glimpses the real original nature of the worship of that jealous god, who caused Dagon to break in pieces before him, and would allow no other sacred stones to remain undemolished within his tribal boundaries.

I don't see, therefore, how we can easily avoid the obvious inference that Jahweh, the god of the Hebrews, the god of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob, the god who later became sublimated and etherialised into the God of Christianity, was in his origin nothing more nor less than the ancestral fetish-stone of the people of Israel, however sculptured, and perhaps in the very last resort of all, the monumental pillar of some early Semitic sheikh or chieftain.

#### IT WA-N'T ANGELS.

(The main incident of the verse is a fact).

'Twas midnight, and within the stately church  
The congregation prayed; a solemn hush  
Fell like an angel's pinions, who, in search  
Of Truth, did pause and blush

With pleasure there to find his heart's desire.  
Without the sleeping earth was wrapt in night,  
And bells in turrets grey and lofty spire  
Hung silent in the night.

The great church clock was pointing to the hour;  
The roseate lamps a glimmering radiance shed,  
As though an unseen hand did blessings shower  
On each bowed quiet head.

The worshippers were still: each bosom felt  
The awe-inspiring death-throes of the year,  
When on the night-wind rose, as low they knelt,  
A murmur faint but clear.

Was it an angel choir with joy aglow,  
Returned unto this world of pain and sin  
To tell to man their song of long ago  
And sing it o'er again?

The hush grew deeper, and that sound afar  
Drew near and nearer as the seconds sped;  
Expectant hearts beat 'gainst their prison bar  
To hear the seraphs' tread.

Then suddenly from every belfry-tower,  
With one glad burst, the midnight chimes rang out,  
As though to greet the New Year's dawning hour—  
The very stars did shout.

And as the night wind lulled, with wond'rous glee,  
Now near and loud, once more that sound awoke:  
"We're all gone drunk; oh, wot a jolly spree!"—  
The mystic spell was broke.

ALFRED LOVETT.

#### OBITUARY.

Percy Greg, who has recently died, never achieved the eminence of his father, Mr. William Rathbone Greg. It is not generally known that he was for several years a contributor to the *Reasoner*. Under the name of Lionel Holdreth he wrote "Why should an Atheist fear to die?" and many other verses of promise. He was, however, somewhat erratic, and after the Civil War in America became politically a Conservative. His *Devil's Advocate* and other works contain food for thought rather than well reasoned conclusions.

Miss Constance Naden, the author of two volumes of verse, and we believe also of the Agnostic pamphlet *What is Religion?* to which Dr. Lewins contributed a preface, died also last week at the age of thirty-one.

Died at Glasgow, on 3rd of January, Mr. John Fisher, aged 73. Mr. Fisher was a sturdy Freethinker, whose advanced views dated from the days of Robert Owen. He was one of the leading supporters of the old Glasgow Eclectic Institute, and was respected for his earnestness and thoroughness by all who knew him.

#### SHOCKING BLASPHEMY.

##### A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

AT the beginning of the present year a long hatchet-faced sky-pilot, whom we will call the Rev. Zephaniah I. Ena, felt it his duty to pay a ministerial visit to the house of a Freethinker, whom we will call Mr. Sturdy. Of course the dispenser of the gospel of brimstone and treacle came when Mrs. Sturdy's husband was out. Rapping briskly at the door, he stepped boldly in as soon as it was opened, saying, with his smirkiest of smiles, "A happy new year to you." "The same to you, and many of them, sir," said Mrs. Sturdy. Now Mrs. Sturdy, it must be premised, was the daughter of a Freethinker, who had felt it his duty to bring up his family in absolute ignorance of religion, and as while still young she married a Freethinking husband, her spiritual condition, at any rate as far as an intimate acquaintance with the dogmas of theology was concerned, was one of almost utter destitution. It was probably hearing something of this that induced the Rev. Mr. I. Ena to make his call.

"This is a happy season for those who love the Lord."

Mrs. Sturdy thought of the landlord, but said nothing.

"I fear you have never felt the sweet, comforting influence of the Holy Ghost."

"Oh yes I have, sir," said Mrs. Sturdy, blushing. "At least, sir, that's what my husband calls it."

The Rev. Mr. I. Ena looked shocked, and his ashy face turned purple when Mrs. Sturdy added: "Mr. Sturdy is very fond of the Holy Ghost, and I have to keep him in hot water."

Suddenly it flashed upon the mind of the reverend gentleman that Mrs. Sturdy must mean spirits; unholy spirits—gin, rum, or whisky.

"You mean he is addicted to the bottle."

"Well, sir, he is fond of it these cold nights. He always calls it the Holy Ghost."

"He ought to be ashamed of himself."

Mrs. Sturdy pulled herself up sudden.

"If you've got anything to say against my husband you'd better come when he is at home. And I know he doesn't care for gentlemen of your cloth coming when he is out; so as I am busy —," and here she looked significantly towards the door, to which Mr. Ena felt constrained to move.

"Well," said he, "I'll call and see him in a day or two, for your sake."

"Oh, you needn't come on my account," said she, "I am as fond of the Holy Ghost as he is," and she banged the door almost in the face of the man of God.

It soon was circulated throughout the neighborhood that Mr. Sturdy and his wife were given to drink, and although no one ever saw them intoxicated and their intimate friends declared they were strictly temperate, the story was credited because it was known they never attended church or chapel, and the tale came on the unimpeachable authority of the Rev. Z. I. Ena.

The matter remained on the mind of the minister. With the woman, poor ignorant creature, it might be as with the disciples of St. John mentioned in Acts xix., 2, who had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," but with the man it was a clear case of deliberate blasphemy. Blasphemy, too, of a kind for which there was never forgiveness, neither in this world nor the world to come. He felt he must call and warn, or, since warning was too late, at any rate, denounce the sinner.

"I feel it my duty to warn you of the wrath to come," said he as he entered the house one evening in response to Mr. Sturdy's invitation.

"Why, sir, do you think I have come to my time of life without thinking of religious matters for myself?"

"But you are a drunkard and a blasphemer."

"You may call me a blasphemer if you like, though I do not see how I can blaspheme a God I don't believe in. The title seems more appropriate to you who believe in the God of the Westminster Faith, who elects some to heaven and some to hell, all for his glory. But assuredly I am no drunkard, and have never been intoxicated since I was married."

"But your wife declared you are addicted to the bottle, and blasphemously call it the Holy Ghost."

"Oh, that is it, is it?" said Mr. Sturdy smiling. "Well, I confess I do like to take the article to bed with me these cold winter nights."

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Here, wife, show the gentleman our Holy Ghost. You see, sir," continued he, as his wife held up an earthenware foot-warmer, "that is what we call it, because it is the Comforter."

LUCIANUS.

### "GENTLE JESUS, MEEK AND MILD."

At this season of the year, when the celebration of the birthday of the above-named individual is made the excuse for so much drunkenness, waste, and excess, is it too much for one to ask—Who was this Jesus, whom, in order to be orthodox and accounted "respectable," he must profess to believe in and worship? All history, even modern, is to a certain extent unreliable; but the Bible, the Christians tell us, is "inspired," and of course must be truthful and infallible. Let us, therefore, go to the Bible for the information we require.

Jesus was, we find, the illegitimate son of Mary, the affianced wife of one Joseph, a carpenter by trade. From his birth and circumcision to his thirtieth year, one, and only one, incident in his life is recorded (Luke ii., 41-51). And what was this solitary, wonderful episode that his friend Luke thought worth preserving? A very homely tale. It is the custom of Jesus and Mary to go to Jerusalem every year, there to attend the Jewish feast of Passover; and when Jesus comes to be twelve years old they give him a treat and take him with them. The ceremonies over, they return home with their friends and neighbors, but Jesus gives them the slip and "tarries behind." When they have gone a day's journey they, to use a Hibernianism, find the boy missing, and anxiously retrace their steps. Right back to Jerusalem they go, and at last find this precocious youth in the Temple, slyly chaffing the senile wiseacres there assembled. Considering the trouble and anxiety he has caused, his mother decidedly errs on the side of leniency in the matter of admonishing him; but what is his reply? Does he say, "I am very sorry, mother, I have given you so much trouble, but will come home now and try to make amends"? Nothing of the sort. "Why have ye sought me?" he cries. "Don't you know I have other things to see after than dance attendance on you?" A bright pattern for our sons of twelve to follow. It was enough to make Mary regret she had not exercised a little more of old Solomon's philosophy in regard to the rearing of children. However, it is natural to suppose that his stepfather had something to say in the matter, for we are told in the same chapter that he "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was there subject to them," which was all very satisfactory.

For the eighteen years subsequent to the above exhibition of filial tenderness, we know literally nothing of Jesus' life and adventures, but at the age of thirty, finding perhaps his father's honest calling irksome or distasteful, the idea evidently struck him to take upon himself the character of the "Messiah" long before prophesied. With this end in view he engages the services of an eccentric hermit-like individual named John (who "was clothed in camel's hair, with a girdle of skin about his loins, and who did eat locusts and wild honey," Mark i., 6) to perform the rite of Baptism. On the various supernatural phenomena and atmospheric disturbances said to have taken place at this ceremony it is useless to comment further than mentioning the fact that the said Jesus and John were the sole witnesses thereof, between whom there was evidently a friendly understanding, both before and after this event. (Luke iii., 16; Matt. iii., 11 12; xi., 11; Mark i., 7). And here, by way of parenthesis, and let us pause to inquire why these strange things are said to have taken place at all? "Truth is great and will prevail" without any supernatural corroboration. But mystery is the sheet anchor of the charlatan. When we find a man habitually trying to mystify us, we should beware of him, and mystery was throughout the prevailing characteristic of Jesus' utterances, e.g., "In my father's house are many mansions," "I will destroy this temple, and in three days raise it up again," and other innumerable instances.

Well, after having been baptised to the aforesaid phenomenal accompaniments, Jesus retires into seclusion for about six weeks, during which period the story of the wonderful baptism becomes public property, in a manner which would no doubt puzzle Mr. Vincent Crummies, and lo! at the end of six weeks Jesus emerges from his retirement to find himself famous (Luke iv, 14), and forthwith proceeds to

collect a dozen lieutenants to enable him to carry on the war, as General Booth would express it.

With such a send off as this, one would think any man of even ordinary intelligence and capacity, would at least earn a reputation for gentle, saintly and upright living, but was this the case with Jesus? The Christians with their usual absence of argument say "Yes;" but let us go to the Bible, and we will find him of the earth earthy.

Almost his first public appearance was at a fashionable wedding, at Cana, in Galilee. To this festive occasion was invited his mother and disciples (John ii. 1-4). During the banquet, his mother looking forward to her son performing a preconcerted piece of legerdemain, sought to hurry him up: but how she must have repented her impatience, when this Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild, retorted "Woman! what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." And this in no whisper, or how could it afterwards be related? We can picture to ourselves this little family jar; the old lady naturally impatient to see her favorite son distinguish himself, offering a gentle reminder, and for her pains getting a brutal snub in presence of all. This was not only a fracture of the fifth commandment, but a sad breach of manners into the bargain.

(To be concluded.)

### CHRIST SAVE ME.

How sad and solemn to witness a funeral on a new-year's day, and the chief centre of sympathy, an old friend. As the mournful cortege passed by and the coffin shone through the glass panels of the hearse, I pictured my friend in all his health and strength on Saturday evening going to meet a most horrible death at his work. I also wondered as I looked at the many faces around, if there was one in that crowd who gave a thought to the hollowness of the talk about the Christian God. Poor John Moorhead of Flint, was a man in his prime. Full of health and vigor, he posted a letter to his wife and family on Saturday evening to tell them he would be with them on New Year's day. He went to his work and at five o'clock on Sunday morning—one hour before he would finish work—he fell into a large pot of boiling caustic up to his neck. He got out, and in stripping off his clothes, his flesh came off also, while buckets of water were thrown on his raw and bleeding body. But to no purpose; his flesh kept dropping off, and in four hours he was dead. John Moorhead was a total abstainer, never cursed or swore, and attended his chapel regularly; loved his wife and children, with whom he promised to spend a few days, two hundred miles away from the scene of his death. What had poor John done to bring the thunders of the Christian God down on him? Was it because he was so anxious to go home, or was it ill will to his poor wife, who was making preparations for the return of the absent one? or was it towards the children, who were looking for a sight of their father coming along the road, that they might run in and say, "Mother, he's coming"? Truly, the ways of J— C— are wonderful.

Flint.

W. GIBSON.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE BLOOD, THE LIFE AND THE SOUL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

MR. WHEELER in his notice of Professor Robertson Smith's new book, points out that the blood was considered by the ancient Jews as being identical with the life itself. He might have gone further and have said that it was identified with the soul, for it is the very same word, *nephesh*, which is usually translated soul, is rendered as life in Gen. ix., 4, Lev. xvii., 14, Deut. xii., 23, and other passages which speak of the blood as being the life. I think it is clear that the blood was considered of the very essence of life, and no doubt this view throws light upon the nature of bloody sacrifices.

DETHABAR.

*Twentieth Century*, of New York, is evidently succeeding under the editorship of ex-Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost. It begins the new year by enlarging its pages, in which is given a story by Miss Helen H. Gardener, the talented young American Freethought lecturer. *Twentieth Century* is a capital paper and well deserves its success.

## ACID DROPS.

Archdeacon Farrar is preaching at Westminster Abbey on "Missions." He admits that we have decimated, degraded, and exterminated, by the vices of our character and the diseases of our civilisation, whole races of the heathen. Well then, why not leave the poor devils alone? Oh, says the Archdeacon, we owe them an act of reparation, and having sent them the curses of our scepticism, we must now send them the blessings of our Christianity. Indeed! Are rum, rifles and gunpowder the "curses of scepticism"? Are they not manufactured and supplied by Christians? It is a cunning stroke to make "scepticism" a present of all your own rottenness, but the gift is declined without thanks. Shoot the rubbish in your own dustbin.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach says it is "the duty of Conservative clubs" to show "the Socialists and Secularists" that "in hereditary rank or hereditary legislation there is a kind of necessity for noble thoughts and noble deeds." The Conservative clubs have a tough job before them, and a long one too. Few Secularists are likely to believe in hereditary legislation before the day of judgment. What a pity it is that Sir Michael did not get off his little joke near Cleveland Street instead of at Leamington.

The "week of prayer" has been in full blast, yet the epidemic of influenza is more widely spread and malignant than ever. For the first time since its foundation the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, Paris, has been broken up, its infirmary being overcrowded and the healthy students being in danger of falling victims to the plague. This is the greatest school of Catholic Theology in France, or perhaps in the world, and Father Hyacinthe and M. Renan were educated there.

Negrophobia in the United States is getting serious. Collisions between the whites and blacks are becoming frequent, and a recent telegram announcing that the Rev. T. M. Joiner, an English clergyman of North Carolina, who had been mobbed and badly beaten for preaching to the negroes unable to obtain redress from the State, has appealed to the British Government.

The London cat's-meat men are going in for Sunday rest. We are glad to hear it. Perhaps a few of them will go to church in the morning and cry "Meat." If well executed it would excite a sleepy congregation. But how about poor pussie? Will she get her double supply unflinchingly on Saturday, or will her miowwing render the Sabbath calm more hideous than a whole chorus of cat's-meat men?

The Rev. John McNeill has been preaching a special sermon to his brither Scots in London. Dealing with the temptations that beset them, he spoke especially on the decline in church-going. The church-going belle keeps at it, but the sterner metal stays at home. N.B.—This is *our* little joke, not the Scotch Spurgeon's.

"Preachers," said Mr. McNeill, "deserve all that has been said about them, but, nevertheless, to refuse to hear the gospel is a dangerous game." Bravo! You must patronise the gospel-shop whether the pious doctor is skilful or stupid, or whether his medicine gives you relief or the stomach-ache. An excellent doctrine for quacks!

The following item is from an American paper. The comment is our own:—"Living a short distance from Perkinsville is a lady almost forty years of age, who has been a widow for some ten or fifteen years. A few days ago she was placed in a somewhat embarrassing position by giving birth to a boy baby. Since her husband's death she has become a great believer in spiritualism, and she now stoutly maintains that the father of her child is her spirit husband, who returned one night to her something less than a year ago. She refuses to give any information other than that given above, and there are some people who believe it." A somewhat similar story is said to have happened in Palestine almost nineteen hundred years ago, and is credited by millions who would scout the story of the widow lady near Perkinsville.

Captain Dawson wants to save the souls of the Bourne-mouth cabbies. He tempts them to sing hymns and listen

to amateur sermons with a supper and a pair of socks. He appeals to their stomach and feet instead of their heads. It is the best move for his creed.

A Catholic Priest supplies the *Colne and Nelson Times* with tables to prove that the percentage of illegitimate births is greatest in countries without priestly confession. His tables, however, only show that this is, so taking the countries he enumerates on the whole, for confession prevails both in the country which stands highest on the list, Austria, as well as in that which stands lowest, Ireland. This fact must induce the suspicion that it is something else than religion which influences the number of illegitimate births. Besides, we must dissent from measuring the total morality of a country or a district by this one item.

The Catholic Priest says, for instance, "Banffshire, where they have no confession, is sixteen times more immoral than Mayo, where everyone goes to confession." The statement is itself sufficient to show the misuse of the term immoral. Banffshire is one of the counties of Scotland where the fashion of courting by night still prevails, and this has far more to do with the returns of illegitimacy than any item in the religious creed or practice of the inhabitants.

We do not deny that the influence of the priest may count to some extent in Ireland and other places in getting uncaste girls married. But whether that result is well purchased by their spiritual debauchery, and whether the moral status of a nation is to be judged by this one particular, are quite different questions.

The Rev. H. B. Chapman, of St. Luke's, Camberwell, has given his clerical blessing to the new Theatre of Varieties at Leicester. Mr. Lovejoy, the proprietor, sent the reverend gentleman a box of cigars at Christmas. Mr. Chapman had the best of the bargain.

Two Theosophists write to the Portsmouth *Evening News* on the subject of Mr. Foote's recent lecture on "The Follies of Theosophy." But as one hails from London and the other from Great Malvern, we venture to think they never heard the lecture they criticise. The Great Malvern gentleman thinks that it is impossible for a gross Materialist like Mr. Foote to appreciate the great truths of Theosophy. We quite agree with him. Blavatsky, Sinnett and Olcott are too lofty for Mr. Foote. He prefers such poor creatures as Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Bain, Spencer and Darwin.

The Rev. C. A. Davis, of Reading, has just made the discovery that the military system of Christendom is a scandal and a crime. Freethinkers have been saying this for a long time. Mr. Davis has just found it out. However, better late than never.

Judging from Mr. Davis's figures and quotations, he might have based his sermon on Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*. There is enough in that pamphlet to keep the clergy going for fifty years.

The movement for marrying gratis, begun at Derby, is advocated in some of the Church journals, and is likely to spread. This is a device to give apparent strength to the Church of England by citing how large a proportion of the population resort to it for consecration of unions. Of course such returns have little value, and will have less if the parsons agree to the proposal.

The Rev. Mr. Gunter, of Abberton, Essex, is bankrupt. Although his stipend is only £250, he incurred debts last year to the tune of over £700, and his only assets are £180 worth of furniture unpaid for. The man of God should ponder the text which enjoins, owe no man anything.

The *Record* makes much of the reported discovery of a MS. of the New Testament, said to have been made in some Turkish library at Damascus by Bishop Byrennius, the discoverer of the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. The *Record* surmises that the event will prove as important as the unearthing of the Sinaitic MS., which it is said to resemble, at any rate in including the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, which is a pretty sure sign those documents were also considered "Scripture" at the

time when the manuscript was written. Of course, we must wait and see what light the alleged discovery throws on Christian evidences.

As the Shepherd of Hermas after the fourth century fell from the high repute in which it was doubtless held in the previous century, there is no doubt its inclusion would indicate that the MS. is an early one. On the other hand, a forger who wished to give his manuscript an appearance of antiquity would be likely to adopt some such device as this. It is little likely that any new MS. will throw very much light on the process by which the Christian books got compiled. Tischendorf himself made the noteworthy statement in his Introduction to the Tauchnitz New Testament, "I have no doubt that very shortly after the books of the New Testament were written, and before they were protected by the authority of the Church, many arbitrary alterations and additions were made in them."

God doesn't seem to have been very careful of the manuscripts of his divine revelation. If he really wanted to do a turn for the Christian Evidence people, he ought to unearth the originals of the Gospels, with the autographs of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the sworn attestations of unimpeachable witnesses.

The Rev. J. T. Owens, of Grimsby, objects to any rival entertainment to his own. He stigmatised the "waits" as "cadgers," "midnight brawlers," and declared their carols were little short of profanity. As it happens that some of the "waits" at Grimsby devote the proceeds of the "cadging" to the hospital, Mr. Owen's utterance has met some strong criticism. If ministers were not sheltered behind their coward's castle, how meek and mild they would become; but whenever the fear of the daily press is not before their eyes, the old Adam, the sense of being God's elect, is apt to break out.

Yet another murderer gone to join St. David and all the rest of Jehovah's favorites in Heaven. Close on the heels of Will Dukes, Thomas Hood was jerked to Jesus at Maidstone for murdering his wife at Gravesend. Shortly before his pious exit he expressed a hope that the Lord had forgiven her and himself also. His two little boys visited him in prison and repeated the Lord's Prayer. The last letter of this saved sinner expressed a hope that "We shall all meet again in heaven." Oh what must it be to be there!

Dukes and Hood have been joined in glory by Charles Higginbottom, the Birmingham murderer of his paramour, who was swung from Warwick gaol straight into Abraham's bosom on Tuesday morning. Since his committal Higginbottom had been most penitent, and paid great attention to the ministrations of the prison chaplain.

Another sudden death in church. Mr. John Harris, a well-known citizen of Chester, falling down dead in Christ Church just after having, as sidesman, taken up a collection.

The Rev. Francis Holland Adams, a retired clergyman, formerly of Salisbury, committed suicide by blowing his brains out. He had of late shown signs of weakness of intellect, though there was nothing in his manner to suggest that he contemplated suicide. He was put in Digby's Asylum, Exeter, but was only there a week, the authorities certifying that there was nothing the matter with him. If Talmage would only collect the cases of clerical suicides it might modify his opinion of its being the result of scepticism.

The *New York Herald* gives an account of a new spiritist work which has just been issued, and which professes to have been written at the dictation of the Bible heroes and writers. All the old patriarchs, from Adam onwards, give their views on affairs. Noah tells how he was thirty years building the ark, and there is a host of similar drivel.

Sir Edward Clarke has been telling his constituents at Plymouth that Church and State must stand up for each other; in other words, the parson and the squire must back each other up. Sir Edward is in some fear as to the result, however; for he prophesies evil days if the nobility go on prize-fighting and Cleveland-streeting, and the bishops

cling with tremulous hands to their posts long after they are incapable. Altogether the prospect is mixed, and we fancy that men like Sir Edward Clarke are hoping against hope—and know it!

The Bishop of Ripon protests in the *Contemporary Review* against the projects of forming Brotherhoods in the Church. He apparently thinks that the Brothers would be dangerous rivals to the priests. But the bishop is fighting a shadow. The Occult Brothers of Thibet are about as forthcoming as those of the Church of England.

"A Lay Preacher" writes to the *Portsmouth Chat* declaring that "Dancing is the Devil's loadstone," and that "We shall soon have dancing on a Sunday like they indulge in at the Secular Hall in Wellington Place." "Next," says this libellous preacher, "We shall have this party's representative on the School Board [our good friend Mr. John Brumage] proposing that our schools be turned into Sunday dancing saloons." Now they do not have dancing on Sunday at the Secular Hall in Wellington Street, thinking, very properly, that the work of Free-thought propaganda is more needed than amusement. A Lay Preacher is evidently full of the charity and loving-kindness of his tribe.

Five local preachers, over whom the Lord had momentarily forgotten to cast an eye, were pitched out of a waggonette on the journey from Dunstable to Luton, and one of them seriously injured.

The Dean of Manchester (Dr. Oakley) preached last Sunday evening in the cathedral on Positivism. He besought his hearers not to worship an ideal, posthumous humanity, but a present living humanity. If they believed in the future of the race, then let them have up in every room a picture of Mary and her child, and let there be the dear and blessed crucifix on every wall.

Very pretty, no doubt, in a church. But not so very pretty outside. The Virgin Mother and her holy child are a standing—or sitting—insult to mothers that are not virgins and children that have fathers. As for the crucifix, it is not an elegant object, especially with a naked man upon it, with blood running down his head and side. We prefer a portrait of Paine, Voltaire, or Ingersoll, or even the Grand Old Man.

The discovery of the earliest known will shows that in Egypt, 2550 B.C., women possessed the right of inheriting property—a right which there is no hint of her possessing according to the divine law of Jehovah.

POOR old Thomas Crofts, of Winsover Road, Spalding, got troubled about his soul, and the ministrations of his pious visitors only made him worse. He often remarked that he was bound to go to hell, but if "they" had left him alone on his "old cow pad" he might have been all right. Unable to stand it any longer he tried to hang himself, but the rope broke, and poor old Thomas Crofts is now in the County Lunatic Asylum.

The clergy are falling more and more into contempt. In a recent number of *The Hawk* we noticed the term "sky-pilot." True, it was printed in inverted commas, but by and bye the quotation marks will be dropped.

*The Hawk* finds the following explanation of how Theosophy captures an Atheist and a clergyman in the same net:—"It contains some germs of every faith, and restless souls seize upon this portion or that as suitable to themselves, and the absence of dogma produces a comfortable state of things, under which each devotee gives his own definition of his belief."

"There is the money somewhere," says the Bishop of Rochester. So they are trying to get it, to the tune of £5,300, to repair Christ Church, Southwark. The population is stated on the begging circular to be "twelve thousand, chiefly of the poorest class." Very likely the "poorest class" would take it as a favor if the £5,300 were spent on their bodies instead of their souls.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 12, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 7, "Christ and Humanity: a Reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury."

Monday, January 13, Assembly Rooms, Friar Street, Reading, at 8, "Christianity and Secularism: a False Creed and a True One."

Jan. 19, Liverpool; 23, West Ham; 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.

F. MORRIS.—The date is booked for you.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—A Friend, £5; J. Crabtree, £1; Student, 2s.

F. PELHAM.—Thanks for your good wishes.

YOUNG N. S. S.—Glad to hear from you, as one of our converts and a recent recruit to the N. S. S. Your letter to the parson ought to receive an answer, but we doubt if you will get one.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Mr. Foote's dates are all booked up to June. It is impossible to visit any place frequently. The Freethought party is in want of a dozen good lecturers.

J. G. B.—Your parody is good, but not good enough. There is said to have been an old canal from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, but how on earth could a whale go through such a channel? It is a deep sea traveller, and soon gets stranded in shallows.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

P. WRIGHT.—That the Bible wines were intoxicating is evident from the example of Noah and Lot. Paul also refers to the Corinthians as being drunken at the Lord's Supper, (1 Cor. xi 21.) Though strong drink is called "raging" (Prov. xx, 1).—Prov. xxxi, 6, says: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Deut. xiv, 26, permits the purchase of wine, strong drink or "whatsoever thy soul desireth." See the *Freethinker* tract on The Bible and Teetotalism.

LEP (Dundee)—Part XI finishes the *Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

E. CLARKE.—We are preparing some such advertisements, but they take time.

STUDENT.—Thanks. The verse shall appear.

INQUIRER.—(1.) Mr. Foote spoke of "advanced Unitarians."

There is only a sheet of tissue between some of these and more pronounced Freethinkers. You must remember that there are Unitarians and Unitarians. (2.) We did not know that Tylor's *Primitive Culture* was out of print. It is in the publisher's recent lists. Perhaps your bookseller is mistaken. Clodd's *Myths and Dreams* is a good book and much cheaper, but get Tylor if you can.

A. DUNKLEY.—Your letter interested us. We are always glad to hear from converts.

BONES.—Doctors will cant about religion while it pays.

E. GOTTHILF.—Thanks.

J. C.—All right. Our office boy adds "keep your hair on."

J. KING.—You continue in the fallacy, and you will not understand the argument until you get clear of it. Read the first volume of Buckle's *Civilization*.

J. BRUMAGE.—Delighted to hear of the continued improvement in your health.

F. C., (Bournemouth), in sending Mr. Forder a subscription to the *Freethinker*, says:—"I have only recently commenced taking in this paper, and it has awakened a deep interest in me. I have been a sceptic since I was 17 or 18, but never felt so sure of my ground as I do now, after reading only a few weeks' numbers of the *Freethinker*, which ought to have a large circulation."

SALFORD.—We can't explain it. Ask the tradesman.

J. CRABTREE.—Your good wishes are reciprocated. You will see that we are reprinting the Articles on Hugh Price Hughes, with additions.

H. BARRATT reports that, after a long struggle, the friends of the *Freethinker* have succeeded in getting it placed in the reading room of the Kilburn Liberal Club. The chief obstructionist has since been seen devouring the Christmas Number

MUSICIAN—Thanks, but the subject will need to be dealt with more completely before very long.

JOSEPH BROWN, sec. N. E. Secular Federation, acknowledges the following subscriptions:—J. Brown, 2s.; Selkirk, 4s. 6d.; Tullin, 2s. 6d.; Bell, 8s.; W. Reed, 2s.; J. Bowend, 2s.; J. H. Creswell, 2s. 6d.; F. Cresswell, 2s. 6d.; A Friend, 2s. 6d.; P. Weston, 7s.; Storer, 6s.; Merry, 1s.; Greenwell, 2s. 6d.; Oxhill Branch, 6s.; Saunderson, 2s. 6d.; Glennie 1s. 3d.

Correspondents are requested, begged, implored, etc., not to send orders for literature to Mr. Foote, but to Mr. Forder. Disregard of this rule always causes delay and sometimes loss.

PAPERS RECEIVED—Reading Observer—Menschentum—Colne and Nelson Times—Echo—County of Middlesex Independent—Women's Suffrage Journal—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—Ironclad Age—Western Figaro—Open Court—Evening Standard—Star—Consett Guardian—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Church Reformer—Western American—Grimsby News—Chat—Freethought—Liberator—Ironclad Age—Blackburn Times—Boston Investigator.

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.

## TO ALL WHOM IT CONCERNS.

A GENTLEMAN asked us at Nottingham if the invitation we printed early in the year was still open. We replied that it was. Our resources are not adequate to carry on our Freethought business properly, and they are diminished from time to time by investors requiring to withdraw their money. We have indeed to repay a good deal of money during the new year, and we shall be glad to hear from any friends who have spare cash to entrust us with. Every investment bears five per cent. interest, and the investor receives a legal document entitling him to recall his amount by six months' notice. We intend, if possible, to be very active in publishing during the next year or two. There is a certain market for all we produce, and a reasonable, if not handsome, profit on sales. It will be borne in mind that the *Freethinker* brings us no direct return for our labor, at least for the present, though the prospect is slowly improving. We have, therefore, to rely upon what is yielded by the publishing business, which, besides lecturing work, is our only source of income. Our stock of publications is a large one, and some idea of the resources needed may be gathered from the fact that the *Dictionary of Freethinkers* alone has cost £150 to produce, exclusive of the binding, the expense of which is incurred gradually as the work sells. Those who cannot afford to invest are not desired to inconvenience themselves; we only appeal to those who can; and they who respond quickly will be doing us the greatest service.

G. W. FOOTE.

P.S.—Five friends have now responded to this appeal. We shall be glad to hear from others forthwith. Any sums from £5 upwards will be acceptable on the foregoing conditions.

## SPECIAL.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has reprinted his lying story of the Converted Atheist from the *Methodist Times*, and is selling it at the modest price of eighteen-pence. We feel it necessary, therefore, to reprint our exposure of this infamous concoction, with some additions, and a postscript dealing with the reverend gentleman's absolute silence on being challenged to produce a single scrap of proof. It will make a sixteen-paged pamphlet, and will be issued at the lowest possible price of one penny, and this without using inferior paper. Our object is to get the exposure widely circulated. Every Freethinker who despises pious liars should aid us in the task by purchasing and circulating copies. Mr. Forder will supply parcels of two dozen and upwards at trade price—that is, ninepence per dozen of thirteen copies. The pamphlet will be ready next Tuesday.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

*The Impossible Creed* is the title of Mr. Foote's open letter to the Bishop of Peterborough on his remarkable article in the *Fortnightly Review*. The pamphlet is now on sale. Of course a copy has been forwarded (under cover) to the Bishop.

*Christ and His Times* is the title of a new volume of addresses by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Mr. Foote will lecture upon it this evening (Jan. 12) at the London Hall of Science. The volume has caused a good deal of pleasant excitement in religious circles.

ON Monday evening Mr. Foote lectures at Reading, and the chair will be taken by Mr. R. Forder. After the lecture a Branch of the N. S. S. will be started. Reading has been stirred up of late by Christian lecturers under the auspices of a local clergyman.

ON Thursday, Jan. 23, Mr. Foote lectures in aid of the funds of the West Ham Branch. The subject is "How to Get Saved." The tickets are sixpence each, and the Branch hopes to crowd the hall.

THE quarterly meeting of the Camberwell Branch was held last Sunday. About one hundred sat down to tea and a most pleasant evening was spent by the company. The chief feature was the farewell to the energetic secretary, Mr. R. S. Seago, who was presented with a handsomely framed testimonial and bound copy of the *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. The few words spoken on the occasion were applauded to the echo, all present wishing Mr. Seago prosperity.

THE Post Laureate (of the Branch!) wrote as follows:—  
SUCCESS TO SEAGO.

"The best of friends must part" we're told,  
Though tried and trusted, true as gold,  
But since our friend will o'er the *Sea-go*,  
We wish he'd leave with us his Ego;  
We also wish, with much sincerity,  
Success to him and all prosperity.

Mr. Seago promised to advance the cause of Freethought as far as possible in his new home. His place as secretary will be undertaken by Mr. Leppage, who will we trust prove the *alter ego* of his predecessor.

THE North Eastern Secular Federation held its first annual social party at Newcastle on Monday evening. The attendance exceeded the most sanguine expectations. Members came as far as from Middlesborough. The tea was sumptuous, dancing was kept up till a late hour, and several friends contributed to the amusement of the party. Everybody pronounced the evening to have been a most delightful one.

THE South Shields Branch held its third annual tea and concert on New Year's Day. The tea was admirably served by ladies—Mrs. Moir, Mrs. Chapman, Miss Foley, and Miss Moir. Mr. S. M. Peacock, the president, was obliged to be absent, but his place was filled by Mr. Thompson, of North Shields. The event of the evening was the presentation of a silver teapot, cruet, and jelly-dish to the secretary (R. Chapman) and his newly wedded wife. Mrs. S. Black supervised a Dramatic Sketch, which was followed by dancing. In point of numbers, and otherwise, the gathering was most successful.

*Freethought*, of San Francisco, inserts an interesting letter from Captain Otto Thomson, describing the position of affairs in Sweden. There are a large number of Swedes in the United States, and as many as possible should be induced to subscribe to *Fritänkaren*.

SWEDISH PRISONER'S FUND.—J. Brumage, 2s. 6d.; G. W. Foote, 10s. There should be a large list next week. Every N. S. S. Branch ought to make a collection immediately.

THE annual dinner of the Oxhill Branch of the N. S. S. is reported in the *Consett Guardian*. Mr. J. White, the president, occupied the chair, and the gathering seems to have afforded satisfaction to all present.

The *Jewish Times*, commenting on Bishop Magee's article in the *Fortnightly*, says, "It shows that an appreciation of the radical weakness of Christianity, which Jews have indicated for centuries, is beginning to dawn on the thinking Christian World."

*Secular Thought* is going to begin the new year and its seventh volume by reprinting the discussion on "Christianity and Secularism, Which is True?" between Mr. Foote and Dr. Mc Cann. This debate is still in print, and is useful to put before those who like to see both sides of a question.

MR. SYMES gives long extracts in the *Liberator* from *The New Cagliostro*, Mr. Foote's open letter to Madame Blavatsky. We expect there will be a good demand for the pamphlet among the Australian Freethinkers.

THE Society of Freethinkers of Liège, Belgium, send us their Almanac for 1890. The publication is in its ninth year. The price is only 15 centimes or three half-pence, and among the contents are choice extracts from numerous foreign Freethought writers.

We notice that the Rationalist Federation of Charleroi has issued a new edition of the complete works of Jean Meslier, the priest who died a Freethinker and left a will declaring his disbelief in all supernaturalism.

THE *Bulletin des Sommaires* notices *Le Calendrier Républicain et de la Libre Pensée*, compiled by M. C. Cilwa, which, we are glad to see, has reached a second edition.

### THE LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION DINNER.

THE second annual dinner of this Federation, held on Tuesday at the Bridge House Hotel under the presidency of Mr. G. W. Foote, was an even greater success than the first. The diners exceeded two hundred, and, thanks to the straightforward appeal for the sinews of war from the president in his address, about twenty-five pounds were donated to the funds of the Federation. The toast of "Success to the London Secular Federation" was proposed by Mr. J. Clarke, M.A., who dwelt on the service of the Federation in upholding the lecturers, and was responded to by Mr. Standing, the secretary, who looked with pride on what the infant of two years old had already done, mentioning the withdrawal of the Christian Evidence lecturers at the Hall of Science as one result of their organised opposition. The toast of "The National Secular Society," proposed by Mr. Moast, was fittingly responded to by Mr. Forder. Our "Speakers and Writers," gracefully proposed by Mr. J. H. Ellis, who congratulated the Freethought party upon having speakers and writers of whom any cause might be proud, was responded to by Mr. J. M. Robertson, who expressed his sense of the goodwill invariably shown by the party for its workers. The retirement of Mr. Bradlaugh should only cement the bonds of union, and induce those, without his strength, to each do their best for the cause he would still have at heart. The toast of "Our Comrades in Other Lands," was proposed by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, who rapidly ran over the position of Freethought in other countries, ending with asking sympathy for the Swedish hero who was suffering in Stockholm for propagating our opinions. The toast, which like the rest, was drunk with enthusiasm, was responded to by the chairman, Mr. Foote, who, having in his opening address, alluded to the loss of the Camberwell Branch by the departure of Mr. Seago for South Africa, now referred to the fact that Mr. Bradlaugh might be classed among our comrades in other lands. His name must always be held in honor in the Freethought ranks. No doubt his large experience, sound judgment, and wise counsel, would long be at the service of those who led the Freethought party on his official retirement. Mr. Foote finished by a glowing tribute to the sturdy character of Mr. Victor Lennstrand, now in prison perhaps for two years, and to Captain Otto Thompson, who had taken his place on the Freethought paper. English Freethinkers should see to it that the prisoner should not have his constitution wrecked by coarse prison fare, and that the paper should be sustained.



The speeches were interspersed by songs and recitals ably rendered Madame Burgwitz, Miss Williams, Mr. Moss and Mr. Barnes. Mrs. Wheeler presided at the piano, and the gathering broke up after singing "Auld Lang Syne," all expressing satisfaction that the dinner has now become an institution. Great credit is due to the sub-committee, especially Mr. Angus Thomas and Miss Vance, for the arrangement of the programme.

### THE CORROBORATION OF PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

BY JOHN BURROUGHS.  
From the "North American Review."

[CONCLUDED.]

DR. ABBOTT says he feels but a languid interest in the critical discussion as to the authorship of the four Gospels. This may well be. It may be because Dr. Abbott is not primarily interested in questions of evidence, or in logical and reasoning processes. He is a moralist and preacher, and seeks the springs of conduct, not the sources of logical conviction. I believe he accepts the doctrine of demoniacal possession: it seems to suit his emotional and imaginative type of mind. But a man of science, as such could no more accept such an explanation of any form of insanity than he could attribute crystallization to the work of fairies, or the wind and the storm to furies. The authorship of the four Gospels may not be a vital question to the religious mind, but, as a question, it is a matter of evidence, and not at all of personal impression.

If Christianity really rested upon evidence, if its vitality was solely dependent upon verifiable facts and considerations, like a work of science, it would have perished from the earth long ago. But it does not live by its so-called evidences. Christianity is largely a matter of the heart, of the feelings and the emotions. It has not rested upon logical evidences; its main hold in the first instance has not been upon men's scientific faculties, but upon their hopes, fears, aspirations, and spiritual cravings. Paul says: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Neither can he. To talk about the reasonableness of Christianity is like talking about the reasonableness of magic or witchcraft. The human faculties are utterly powerless before its main tenets. Christianity has the vitality of literature, of poetry and art. The Gospel records have wonderful, even magical, power as literature. They are true, not as history, but as poetry.

The myth of the resurrection will be kept alive for ages to come notwithstanding all that has or can be urged against it, because mankind have such a profound interest in believing it.

Christianity does not offer a system of philosophy, but a religious incentive. When it attempts to play the rôle of interpreter of the visible order of the universe, or to satisfy our rational faculties, its failure is pathetic; its proofs are childish; its science is essentially pagan; its story of the fall as an explanation of the origin of evil, and its "plan of salvation" as a means of escape from that evil, as science, do not rise above any of the delusions of the pagan world. The story of the Chaldee god, Bel, who cut off his own head, moistened the clay with his blood, and then made man out of it, is just as rational an explanation of the origin of man as the one the Christian Church has always adhered to. In fact, the whole basis of our theology, the conception of Jesus, as a supernatural person who had no earthly father, and who rose from the dead and ascended bodily up into heaven, etc., is essentially pagan, and belongs to an order of things that has long since passed away. The power of Christianity has long since passed away. The power of Christianity is a spiritual power; it is in its appeals to the ideal of the gentle, the merciful, the meek, the forgiving, the pure in heart—an ideal which has such an attraction for the European nations; and also to the love of reward and fear of punishment which materialistic ages foster. In one is its charm for fine natures; in the other its power over the multitude.

Theological writers are in general prone to magnify subjective certitude at the expense of objective proof; to place faith above reason, in the domain of reason. They sneer at science and logic as if in their sphere they could be dispensed with and something else be substituted in their place. Thus Professor Blackie, in that vituperative book of his, "The Natural History of Atheism,"—a book the style of which is like a man going through a house and banging the doors behind him,—says, as a finishing stroke to the "drivel" of our "boastful science" that the "highest cognitions are never

reached by the mere exercise of the knowing faculties, on whatever subject exercised." Not even, I suppose, when exercised upon the multiplication table! "Instinct and aspiration," he goes on to say, "are higher than knowledge; and the pretensions of the merely scientific man to assume the dictatorship of things that are not founded on nature. Many things can be known only by being felt; all vital forces are fundamentally unknowable; but they exist not the less because would-be philosopher B or would-be philosopher C has no machinery with which to measure or control them." Are instinct and aspiration "cognitions"? Do they belong to the sphere of knowledge? Do they even point to any certain and demonstrable conclusions? They may or they may not be higher than knowledge; it is certain that they cannot take the place of knowledge. Instinct and aspiration enlightened by knowledge is the desirable order, is it not? The only thing the scientific man assumes is that the scientific method is the only proper one with which to deal with the objective world of fact and experience. If the professor meant to say that some things are to be felt and not known, he is near the truth. The facts of science are to be known; we may know Kepler's laws; we can hardly feel them, since they are not personal. But truths of art, of poetry, of religion are to be felt whether we know them or not. They come to us by a synthetical, not by an analytical process.

I have no disposition to overrate our mere knowing faculties; I only want to say that what we *know* we know through them. What we feel, or fancy, or hope, forms no part of our true knowledge, and may come through other avenues. The perception of the beautiful is not a part of our knowledge; neither is the perception of the moral or the spiritual. These things are from within; they are subjective and not objective, and not within the range of the scientific faculties. They are real, just as pleasure and pain are real; they are experiences of the mind. The whole sphere of religion lies here; the kingdom of heaven is within you, not in some outward relation or condition.

Neither do I not wish to imply that there is any feud between science and true religion, between that part of man's nature which thirsts for exact knowledge—The red rays of the spectrum, so to speak—and that part of his nature which we call the spiritual, and which fades off in the vast unknown—the violet rays, at the other extreme; nor between either of these and his æsthetic nature, his love of beautiful forms, though in different individuals these different parts will not be equally developed, nor will they be equally active in different races and times. The feud is between true science and false science; between the conception of an order that is rational, and one that is irrational, between modern pathology and Indian "medicine."

Exact science deals with, and can only deal with the objective, the rigid, inexorable world of law. With the subjective, the world within us, the world of personality, whence comes all we call literature, art, religion, philosophy, etc., it cannot deal. Here exact demonstration is not possible; all is plastic, growing, conflicting, aspiring, intermediate. The personal element modifies everything. The laws by which insensate bodies act and re-act upon each other may be determined, but the laws by which persons act and re-act upon each other are quite another matter. In the subjective world truth is relative, but in the world of science truth is absolute. Chemical elements always combine in the same proportions; moisture is always precipitated from the air under the same conditions, and the same results always follow. Doubtless the same results always follow the same conditions in the world of mind and personality also, but here the conditions are more obscure and more fluctuating, and science cannot grasp them.

Every original mind may have, and usually does have, a philosophy of its own, a religion of its own, a political creed of its own, literary preferences of its own; but every mind cannot have a science of its own. The personal element is alien to science. How many systems of philosophies have there been from Aristotle down to Spencer? How many times have the old problems been explained? But one man's science must be another man's science; all science is a whole—a pushing farther and farther of the lines of knowledge into nature.

The hostility between the scientific and the spiritual, or the truly religious, may well cease, if, indeed, there ever has been, or ever can be, real hostility. We are bound to give the reason and the understanding full sway in their own proper fields. In subduing and in utilizing this world, or adjusting ourselves to it, we have no guide but science. Yet science is

not the main part of life, notwithstanding all the noise it is making in the world. Science is making a great noise in the world because it is doing a great work. Literature, art, religion, speculation, have had their day; that is, the highest achievements of which they are capable are undoubtedly of the past. But science is young; it is now probably only in the heat of its forenoon work. It is a little curious that man's knowing faculties, the first to be appealed to, should be the latest in maturing; that he should worship so profoundly, admire so justly, act so wisely and heroically, while he yet knew so little of the world in which he was placed. Does not this fact point to the conclusion that science is the main part of life? It is probably the main part of our material civilization, of that by which we are clothed and fed and warmed and transported, defended in war and housed in peace; but of an intrinsic civilization it forms a less part. The old Greek had little or no material civilisation in the modern sense; his civilization was personal and mental. What distinguishes the modern man is not his personal superiority, but the enormous engines and deft appliances with which he is fended and armed, and the greatness of his material triumphs.

Yet knowledge is not discredited, reason is not supplanted. We can no more dispense with them than we can dispense with the bones in our bodies. They furnish the framework by which our lives are upheld. All the certainty we have of the order of the objective world comes through our rational faculties.

The Agnostic does not merely say that all knowledge is imperfect and fragmentary, nor that all certainty is based on the logical faculty; but simply that the understanding goes upon evidence; that in this world we have no guide to objective truth but our rational faculties. He finds no room for what our religious brethren call faith, because faith, as commonly understood, is a fatal undertow that swamps and drowns reason. He finds many things and enjoys many things which he cannot understand; he is not a stranger to the thrill of awe and reverence in the presence of the great mystery of the universe; but all propositions relative to the plans, ways, and nature of that mystery that are not verifiable, he fights shy of.

JOHN BURBOUGHS.

#### A MIDNIGHT SCENE.

How proud was Philistia! How festive her day,  
With clash of the cymbals and trumpets' loud bray,  
And revelling wild and hilarious!  
For Dagon's proud temple was Jove's resting-place,  
And he with his rival now stood face to face;  
But the two eyed each other with such a bad grace,  
That 'tis certain no gods are gregarious.

Now the sexton has snuffed out the last altar light,  
And the temple is wrapped in the darkness of night,  
When there comes a loud roar from the basement,  
And up springs the lid of the "Lord's" sacred box,  
And in such vulgar language the fish-god he mocks  
That his ichthyic optic on Jahveh he "cocks,"  
Expressive of utter amazement.

While ever more insolent, stinging and strong,  
The stream of invective comes rolling along,  
Till Dagon his wrath cannot smother:  
"His Joss-house invaded by that Jewish guy!  
"Be flouted and 'cheeked,' and then given the lie!  
"And stand it all meekly? He'd like to know why!—"  
Here the deities went for each other.

Oh! would that poor I, with a Homeric pen,  
This "Mill" of the gods could describe unto men  
In the "Ring's" own sublime terminology!  
But no human eye saw this beautiful sight;  
So who "got well home" with his left or his right,  
Or "tapped claret" first in this heavenly fight,  
Is debateable ground for theology.

But 'tis said when the priests of the fish-god came round,  
That Philistine's champion lay prone on the ground,  
Defeated, yet covered with glory.  
But I'd not like to swear that this version was true  
Unless both the "sloggers" were open to view,  
Or, at least, till I heard what the Philistines, too,  
Had to say on this wonderful story.

And I think you may find, if his conduct you test,  
That Jehovah, perhaps, had come off second best,  
And took vengeance a deity befitting;  
For the "sacred" account its inquirers will tell  
How to Ashdod's brave habitants strangely it fell,  
That, although for some days they by no means felt well,  
They preferred any posture to sitting.

SPHINX.

## REVIEWS.

"*A Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays.*" By the author of *Supernatural Religion*. London: Longmans and Co.—This is a volume for scholars, and will be *caviare* to the general. Dr. Lightfoot has made up a volume of his old attacks on *Supernatural Religion*, and the author of that work follows with a volume containing his replies. Dr. Lightfoot is learned but so is his adversary, and no whit inferior to him as a controversialist. The victory undoubtedly lies with the champion of rationalism. All the Bishop's criticisms merely affect the fringe of the subject. Here and there, among thousands of references, he finds an inaccuracy, but he never approaches the real point in dispute. As our author remarks, "The eagerness with which Dr. Lightfoot and others rush up all the side issues and turn their backs upon the more important central proposition is in the highest degree remarkable." The volume concludes with a powerful chapter, entitled "Conclusions," dealing with miracles and the supernatural, and level to the intelligence and information of the ordinary reader. Answering the absurd old question of "What will you give us in its place?" he writes: "To discover that a former belief is unfounded is to change nothing of the realities of existence. The sun will descend as it passes the meridian whether we believe it to be noon or not. It is idle and foolish, if human, to repine because the truth is not precisely what we thought it, and at least we shall not change reality by childish clinging to a dream." Thus the author's tone is as manly as his arguments are powerful, and his learning solid and comprehensive. The volume should be procured by every reader who has *Supernatural Religion* on his library shelves.

"*The Theology of the Bible.*" *The Claims of Inspiration Examined by the Light of Reason.* By Charles Theodore Perry. London: Printed for the author by William Reeves, 185 Fleet Street, E.C. Price 4d.—Mr. Perry is sceptical of orthodox theology, but says, "I believe in the religion of the Bible." As much of his pamphlet is devoted to showing that the Bible God is barbarous and that the Old Testament contains a good deal of bad morality, it is possible he draws some subtle distinction between the contents of the Bible and its religion, or it is possible his desire not to be irreverent has led him to use orthodox phrases with heterodox meanings.

"*The Faith, Facts, and Frauds of Religious History.*" By Emma Hardinge Britten. John Heywood, London, 1889.—This work represents the views of a talented Spiritist lecturer on the religions of the past. And certainly heterodox they are. Mrs. Britten holds that the Christian story is mythical, and that in substance it was borrowed from India, where she finds the origin of all religions. The value of her production is greatly lessened by the weight she places on such works as Kersey Graves's *Sixteen Crucified Saviors*. There are, however, many good points in the volume, but they will probably be familiar to our readers. Certainly such Spiritists as Mrs. Britten are doing something to break down the exclusive claims of Christianity, though we question the worth of that which they would substitute in its place.

"*Parsimony.*" Belfast, 1889.—This is not, as some rash speculator might hastily suppose, an exhortation against niggardliness at Christmas or any other time. It is a truly philosophic little brochure, and a very able one, on the law of parsimony in logic—the rule that neither more, nor more onerous causes are to be assumed than are necessary to account for phenomena. It is this simple rule which entirely puts out of court all supernaturalism, and which sets aside the idea of design as an anthropomorphism. The able author says, "to introduce any cause of the universe that is superior to Nature is to act contrary to the law of Parsimony by introducing a cause that is unknown, and disordering all accurate reasonings. Therefore the doctrine which teaches that all or any species of plants or animals existing on this earth were or was produced through an act of creation, performed by a supernatural Power of any kind, is a doctrine which must be relegated to the mythical limbo supposed to contain the paradise of fools, and all other miracles."

Science ascribes to natural causes, what theology ascribes to supernatural ones.—*Buckle's History of Civilization.*

Every religion has for its foundation a misconception of the cause of phenomena.—*Ingersoll.*

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Christ and Humanity: a Reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury."

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "Can Man by Searching Find Out God?" Recitals.

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mrs. Besant, "The Inspiration of the Bible: What Does it Mean?"

Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 11.15, Debate; 7.15, Mr. S. Soddy, "The Testimony of the Rocks." Jan 17, 7.30, Discussion.

Edmonton—7, S. Standring, "The Fight for Freethought, from Luther to Bradlaugh."

Old Southgate—3.30, Annual Conference (important); 5, Tea in Hall, 6d. each; 7, Public Meeting, Mr. J. M. Robertson and other speakers.

Wood Green—11, Mr. S. Standring, "Our Past Year's Work in North Middlesex."

East London—Swaby Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, E., 7.45, Mr. E. T. Garner, "The Dying Creed." Free.

West Ham—131 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, Mr. Watts, a Lecture; 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Creation Stories."

COUNTRY.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, 11, Mr. J. W. Mahoney, "Are Preachers Failures?"; 3, "What is Man, and can he Survive Physical Death?"; 7, "Will Suicide become General?"

Cardiff—Small Hall, Queen Street Arcade, 6.30, Mr. Parr, "Land Nationalisation."

Huddersfield—Littlewood Bridges, Upperhead Row, 3 and 6.30, Dramatic Recitals.

Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a Reading.

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 11, Mr. H. Bland, "The Philosophic Revolt against Individualism; 7 "Where the Old Radicalism Failed."

Glasgow—Ramsbottom Hall, 122 Ingram Street, 6.30, J. S. Maxwell, "Ethics of Co-operation."

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