

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE is unable to write his *Freethinker* article this week. The influenza had been grappling with him for some days, and on Tuesday it overcame him. He hopes to be well enough to travel on Saturday, as it is very important that he should be in Liverpool on Sunday.

## EPIDEMICS.

THEOLOGIANs have given many most excellent reasons for the existence of diseases, plagues, and epidemics of all kinds. I must confess there is, just now, one little circumstance which may hinder my appreciation of their arguments. I am suffering from the so-called Russian influenza, after nursing my wife with the same disease. Eyes sore with watery flux may not be able to discern the beauty of the divine arrangement which makes disease contagious instead of health. Limbs racked with aches are apt to hinder the impartial study of a theological problem. But, freely using the pocket-handkerchief and clapping a warm poultice on my wheezing chest, let us look at the matter of epidemics as dispassionately as possible.

The old view that diseases and plagues were the work of evil spirits was a very natural one in superstitious times. Evident evils, dreaded and avoided by all, were logically ascribed to evil beings. But since theologians have felt the difficulty of there being two or more warring and independent beings, the doctrine of diseases being the work of evil spirits, though endorsed by Jesus Christ, has been given up. Satan is superannuated. Even those who keep a devil put him to no use.

Theologians now seek to evade the difficulty by representing evil as not really evil, but a special form of good, inasmuch as its issues are good. But is this so? Notoriously it is not. My present pain is just as real, while it lasts, even if I am better afterwards instead of being permanently injured. Is it the method of omnibenevolence to do evil that good may come? Is omnipotence under the necessity of acting thus? Such arguments sound strange from those who tell us of a land, reserved for them and their like, where there is no evil.

Then we are told of the moral and spiritual blessings of disease. It abates vain pride, shows how dependant we are, affords an opportunity for repentance, etc. In short, disease is often an excellent auxiliary to the priest. The moral benefit of ill-health is very dubious. The recognised historic effects of plagues have been a lowering of morals and a heightening of superstition. We do not go so far as the epigrammist who said a sick man is always a scoundrel, but there is no doubt ill-health generates selfishness and irritation, which fly away when normal health returns.

The Theist who adopts evolution now draws an argument for the divine use of disease from the survival of the fittest. But the fittest does not mean

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the best. It may be better for society that a feeble Blaise Pascal should live rather than one endowed with the strength of Milo of Crotona. But in the case of the present epidemic, we are told the danger is with the strong and spirited, who instead of taking to their bed and warm drinks, say, "Oh, we will fight it out." They stand a graver chance of being called to a sudden halt with inflammation of the lungs, than the more feeble spirited. Altogether the theistic arguments upon epidemics do not seem quite satisfactory.

Paley, who always made the best case possible for any cause he took in hand, seems to anticipate the modern germ view of disease. He says in his *Natural Theology*, (Chap. xxvi.) "What we call blights, are oftentimes, legions of animated beings, claiming their portions in the bounty of nature. What corrupts the produce of the earth to us, prepares it for them. And it is by means of their rapid multiplication, that they take possession of their pasture: a slow propagation would not meet the opportunity." So man, the boasted crown of creation, must perish, that myriads of microbes may claim "their portions in the bounty of nature," and take possession of their pasture. This is an admission that there is not room enough for all, but the theologian can still argue that disease is designed for *the greatest happiness of the greatest number*. If the Buddhist permits himself to be infested with vermin, since they are indeed, but more or less distant relations, should not the genuine believer in Providence have faith that not a single disease germ finds its way to the throat unobserved by our Heavenly Father? According to some authorities, the microbes which propagate the prevalent disorder are ever present in man, only waiting their chance to have a high old time and breed at our expense. Now without troubling ourselves with any subtleties as to whether man was designed for the microbes, or the microbes designed for man, it is evidently flying in the face of Providence to resort to drugs or any other form of interference with his handiwork. Those whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and our light affliction may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

As I said at the outset, I am too shaky to give these fine arguments the treatment they richly merit. I can only say that in sickness and suffering I find no benefit from the contemplation of nature, where I find every form of butchery perpetrated with the utmost callousness. In human care, human science, and human sympathy, there alone is hope, and one grain of these is worth a ton of theology.

J. M. WHEELER.

The *Northampton Reporter* heads its account of a lecture by one of the clerical secretaries of the Christian Evidence Society, "A Clergyman Condemns Persecution." Viewed historically this is no doubt important, but the fact that the clergy dare not now advocate persecution in no way erases the fact that their Church employed it just as long as it dared.

### THREATENED ATTACK ON FREETHOUGHT IN LIVERPOOL.

DURING the last session of Parliament an Act was passed for the borough of Liverpool ostensibly for the purpose of controlling, in the interests of public order, places used for music, singing, or dancing, and being open to the public, whether on licensed or unlicensed premises, and whether a charge was made for admission or not. Under the provisions of this Act the city magistrates sat for several days last week to hear applications for licenses, and with reference to an application for a license for the Gaiety Theatre and Music Hall, made by Mr. Quilliam on behalf of Mr. De Freece, the following is reported by the local press to have taken place:—Mr. Matheson asked "if literature of a very objectionable character was not distributed there? Mr. Quilliam: Not from our place. It is from a place underneath the hall. The people are not our tenants. A magistrate: What society uses the place? Mr. Quilliam: It is an Atheistical society. The place was formerly a temperance hall, and I have spoken in it many a time. It has fallen, perhaps, upon evil days. The literature Mr. Matheson has spoken about is circulated there, and we would stop it if we could because it is injurious to our place."

With reference to the above, it may be well to explain that Camden Hall, where the local Branch meets, is under the same roof as the Gaiety Theatre, but has a separate entrance, and there is no interior communication, the building being owned by the Liverpool Co-operative Society. The theatre is open on week-days and Camden Hall on Sundays. Mr. De Freece is of Hebrew extraction, and Mr. Quilliam president of the local Mohammedan Society—a small body, fortunately. Mr. De Freece's objection to the Secular Society dates from the time when they discontinued hiring his theatre for Mr. Bradlaugh's lectures. On January 16, 1885, £15, with £2 additional charges, were paid for the theatre for Mr. Bradlaugh's Sunday lectures, and a smaller rent was charged when Mrs. Besant lectured there. The offer of further reductions has not induced the Branch to engage the theatre of late. Mr. Matheson, who gave his opinion on hearsay on a matter not before him, takes a leading part in religious movements. Act two of this drama opened on Sunday morning, when the small audience assembled to hear Mr. J. W. Mahony's lecture were surprised by the appearance of a sergeant and two constables in the hall, and the information that several others were in the neighborhood, both in uniform and plain clothes. None were seen during the afternoon, but during both morning and evening lectures policemen entered and left, and were succeeded by others.

These proceedings upset the equilibrium, for a time, of some of our members, but the lectures were duly delivered. I took the chair, morning and afternoon, and for a short time took money; Mr. Newcomb took the chair in the evening. Mr. Mahony's lectures were really excellent and fluently delivered. It is due to Mr. Wise of the C. E. S., who opposed morning and evening, to say that he emphatically denounced the course taken by the authorities. What these proceedings may portend I know not, but I appeal for moral and financial support from those who should help the Branch in what promises to be a crisis.

CHAS. DOEG,

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Liverpool, N.

### AT THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

St. Peter: Who comes here?—An editor from Chicago.  
How long did you work at your business?—About eleven-and-a-half years.  
Did you think you were the best man in your line?—No.  
Never lied about your circulation?—No.  
Did you ever act the hypocrite?—No.  
Never told an advertiser that he was doing more business than his neighbor?—No.  
Was fully satisfied the world would revolve if you should decide to die?—Yes.  
Did you ever try to "scoop" anybody?—No.  
Never circulated false reports about your contemporary's circulation?—No; I nev—  
Here, take my keys; you are a rare specimen of your race. Make yourself at home.

### THE LATE DR. DOLLINGER.

HAD Dr. Dollinger united to his great learning and thorough conscientiousness an untrammelled mind and a bold spirit of inquiry he would have been one of the first religious reformers of the century. As it is, his influence will, we believe, decline, and be represented rather in his books than in the Old Catholic Church, which, if it is to progress at all, will have to go much further in the course of reform than was contemplated by its founder. Dr. Dollinger was in truth a university professor rather than a leader of men. Even when he discovered that his opposition to the dogma of Papal infallibility, promulgated at the Vatican Council on April 24, 1870, led to his own excommunication, he was loth to set up a new organisation, and, although events compelled this, he always insisted that he and his followers held fast to the true Catholic faith and practice. He never saw the true issue of the question Rome v Reason, and his learned mind was largely stored with the lumber of the past. None the less he did bravely in making and adhering to his protest against Papal usurpations, and his reply to recent attempts to induce him to recant, "I will not sully my old age with a lie" entitles him to the respect which must ever be accorded to honest convictions.

### HOLY MEN OF GOD.

A correspondent sends us some statistics relative to crime and lunacy in professors of religion. He says that during the latter half of the past year, from notes made by him in his casual reading of newspapers, and without any special search, he discovered that thirty-seven ministers of religion have been dealt with by the law for various crimes. Classified, the delinquencies were as follows: 8 for robbery, 8 for sexual crimes, 6 elopements, 4 drunks, 3 assaults, 3 murders, 1 burglary and attempted murder, 1 cruelty, 1 bigamy, 1 threat to murder and adultery, 1 elopement and attempted murder. Of these 18 were foreign and the remainder British cases. Twenty pious lunatics were either dealt with in police courts or placed themselves out of reach of restraint by suicide. Of the latter 3 were clergymen. Our correspondent points out that these cases only represent those which have come under his notice in an indiscriminate way, and not as showing a complete picture of the relation of piety to crime and madness.

### "THE ANGELIC DOCTOR."

Such is the title accorded to Thomas Aquinas by the Catholic Church. We give here a brief specimen of his doctrines as quoted in the recent controversy, *Is Killing Heretics Murder?* "Heretics may not only be excommunicated, but justly killed: such the Church consigns to the secular arm to be exterminated from the world by death," are the words of Aquinas (Summa, 3 vol., page 48, and vol. iv, page 91). "Though the heretics who repent, must always be accepted to penance, as often as they have fallen; they must not in consequence of that, always be permitted to enjoy the benefits of this life . . . when they fall again they are permitted to repent . . . but the sentence of death must not be removed." The Church boasts itself ever the same, but deems it prudent to cover up a little these utterances of its greatest theologian.

### BRAIN FOOD.

A Stanhope quarryman received a pastoral visit the other evening, just as he came home, tired and hungry, from work. He was, to use a Weardale phrase, "warsh"—did not know what to eat; he wanted something relishable and tasty to whet his appetite, so he had a two-eyed steak in the shape of a bloater, or, in pure Saxon, a red herring. The pastor's wife put in an appearance just as he was having his savory dish. She scented the oderiferous aroma of the two-eyed steak, and snuffing up her nose said, "So you are having a herring for supper." "Yes," said the blue diamond smasher, "I'm having a tasty bite." "Well," said she, "a herring's very nice for a working man," "Yes," said he waggishly, "bloaters are very strengthening." "Well, they are very tasty," remarked the visitor. "Yes," said the wag, "they're just the thing for quarrymen, very nutritious." Said she, "They contain phosphorus, and that is brain-forming matter." "That's why we quarrymen eat them to become intelligent." "I don't often see you at our place of worship." "No," said the wag, "I don't think you will either." "Why?" inquired his fair interrogator. "Because your husband doesn't eat herring." She saw the point, and at once made tracks for home.—*Consett Guardian*.

## THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST,

*Delivered at New York, Sunday, December 15, 1889.*

WHEN I lived out West I used to see what was called the chain gang. It was a number of male human beings working at street cleaning, each of whom had a large iron ball attached to one of his ankles by about six feet of heavy chain. These persons were taken from the gaol every morning. They were prisoners for minor offences, such as drunkenness or small disturbances of the peace. The balls and chains were attached to them to prevent them from running away. They could move about and do their work, but, of course, the balls and chains were a heavy drag upon them.

The chain gang is a fine illustration of things as they are. The men represent the human race. The balls and the chains represent the Church and the State. The human race would move forward in thought and accomplishment. But upon one ankle is the ball and chain of superstition, and upon the other is the ball and chain of repressive government by force. The human race is moving forward. But it cannot move very rapidly because the priest pulls it backward by one leg and the politician pulls it backward by the other. It is an unequal contest, because the human mind is so restless, so disposed to ask questions and so determined to have answers to those questions—the force of evolution is so strong—that nothing can prevent it, not even the ghostly terrors of the hereafter, nor the clubs, handcuffs, prison cells and gallowses of this material world. The priest and the politician are doomed. The day is coming when there will be no Church with its supernatural terrors and no State with its gunpowder and gibbets. The mind will some day be free to think unfrightened by blackrobed sycophants of wealth and power. The body will some day be free to move about untouched by uniformed ruffians.

One indication of the dawning of that better day, in which even the menial priest and the self-loathing politician will rejoice when it comes, is the ferment that is now going on in the Presbyterian church. That church is the last stronghold of the most monstrous and revolting system of supernaturalism that ever cast its poisonous shadow upon an unfortunate world. I have studied, somewhat closely, the birth, growth and development of religions from the earliest days of human history until now. I have familiarized myself, somewhat fully, with the religious beliefs of the people whom we call savages and of those who represent whatever of civilization the world has yet known, and it is my deliberate opinion that the Westminster confession of faith embodies the most horrible theories of the character of God and the destiny of man ever devised or even remotely dreamed of in the human brain. The science of devilology and the philosophy of the infernal regions reached its climax in the Westminster catechism. If you do not own a copy of that document I advise you to buy one at once before it is suppressed as something of which the world is ashamed. And when you have bought it find one of the most repulsive idols that heathenism ever produced, place them side by side and observe how handsome the idol is by contrast.

But Presbyterians are becoming ashamed of Presbyterianism. Young candidates for the ministry are beginning to avoid the Presbyterian Church as an intellectual smallpox hospital. And many of the older clergy, who ceased to believe in Calvinism long ago, but were too dishonest, too cowardly to say so, are now coming together, timidly, and cautiously suggesting that perhaps the Presbyterian God is just a *little* disagreeable, and that, possibly, the Presbyterian hell is not the best place that might be thought of in which to place the tender infants whom a God, whose mouth foams with wrath, snatches from their devoted mothers' breasts.

It does not appear that these concessions are making because the ministerial mind is shrinking from the logic of Calvinism. That is no doubt true in many cases. But as long as Calvinism could be profitably worked nothing was said about modifying the creed. But it is now being observed that the number of students in theological seminaries is falling off, and that there is a disposition among the people to leave Presbyterian churches for others less logical but more amiable. And as there is nothing that the average minister dislikes so much as to play a losing game, to be on the unpopular side of any question, there comes about this timid effort to get a new photograph of God and to slow down the fires of hell. Every other Church

has yielded to the popular clamor, and now quite a large and growing number of the Presbyterian clergy are coming to see that their Church will have to fall into the line of surrender, or be left a wreck upon the beach of conservatism.

The delay of Presbyterianism in submitting to the inevitable has no doubt arisen from the more or less conscious recognition by her ministers that, unlike other Churches, Presbyterianism has a perfectly logical creed which cannot be tinkered with. The Westminster Confession of Faith begins with a premise, and goes fearlessly on to a conclusion that logically grows out of that premise. Each part of the creed dovetails into every other part, and you cannot alter it in any part without ultimately destroying the whole. The Presbyterians cannot revise their creed. They must either write a new one, beginning with other premises, or they must keep the one they have. And this constitutes their dilemma. They *must* change their creed, or enlightened public will pass them by and leave them, as an organization, to crumble into the dust of death. But if they begin to alter their creed there is no logical stopping place for them but in the abandonment of the idea of a personal God with a purposive will.

Very few see it, but there is, in fact, no logical stopping place between Calvinism and Agnosticism. If you believe in a personal God, you must, logically, become a Calvinist. If you are not a Calvinist you must, logically, become an Agnostic. The only reason why all persons, in the present religious situation, are not either Calvinists or Agnostics is simply because all persons are not logical. Calvinists and Agnostics are the only persons who can answer all your questions upon the subject of religion? If you ask an Agnostic any questions about God or the supernatural he will tell you that he knows nothing about either. That answer is perfectly truthful, and it puts an end to the subject. If you ask a Calvinist a question about religion he will tell you that you must assume the existence of a personal God. Why? There is no reason. You must just assume it. Having assumed the existence of a personal God all else is easy. If you are one of his elect to heaven you go, no matter how wicked you are. If you are one of the non-elect to hell you go, no matter how good you are.

All other Christians except Calvinists hem and haw and evade you, because their sentiments destroy their logic. But a Calvinist has a perfect system.

I am an admirer of the Westminster confession as a system of thought. It is horrible, but it is honest. It is cruel, but it is brave. It cannot stand the light of to-day, but it is consistent. And when the Church gives up Calvinism she confesses herself beaten in the battle of opinions, because with Calvinism goes the Bible as an authority, and with the Bible goes the Church, and with the Church goes the ball and chain that now drags upon the human mind. When the Presbyterian Church takes one brick out of the structure of Calvinism the beginning of the end has come.

Let us see, now, what Calvinism is.

The basis of Calvinism is the idea of a personal God. Given that idea and it follows, of necessity, that he must exist for himself alone—for his own glory. There can be nothing outside of God. He can have no objects outside of himself. Having assumed the existence of a personal God all goes merrily or horribly on. He creates the world out of nothing. It is absurd and impossible, of course, but it goes. God can do anything and, therefore, he can do impossibilities. He creates man for the purpose of having him sin. He creates hell in which to punish man, in soul and body, throughout eternity for doing what he, God, meant that he should do, and therefore, which he, man, could not help doing. He creates himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who is entirely God, himself, and is yet somebody else at the same time, for the purpose of receiving upon his devoted head all the phials of divine anger against sin which he, God, brought into the world, and thus become the savior of enough persons, previously foreordained to be saved, to make manifest his glory. But as his glory shines more brightly in the light of the flames of hell than anywhere else the redeemed are to have the exquisite joy of looking over the railings of heaven at the ceaseless agonies of their own parents and children, who were created for the purpose of being damned.

There is a lot more to it in detail to which I need not refer. You know the whole story of foreknowledge and foreordination; of election and non-election; of the shameful hell and the far more shameful heaven—a heaven in which no

decent person could possibly consent to live. You know the story of Calvinism, based squarely as it is upon the Bible, and some of you will agree with me that the never ending wonder is that the Christian world was not turned into a madhouse by it. How could people who believe it ever dare to have children; How could anyone ever smile when he knew there was no means of knowing but what he and his friends were foreordained by this unspeakable God to spend all eternity in the unphraseable horrors of hell, or in the base meanness of heaven? The only reasonable answer to these questions is that nobody ever could have believed the horrible doctrines except those who *did* go crazy, or succeeded in mentally dehumanising themselves, as did John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards.

(To be concluded.)

#### MR. SYMES ON MRS. BESANT'S CONVERSION.

I HAVE said (in my first note on this pamphlet of Mrs. Besant's) that that lady had brought a scandal upon our movement. The scandal consists in two things. 1st. It is a sort of breach of discipline. 2nd. It is a gross insult to tell our people that Theosophy or Pantheism is part and parcel of Secularism.

As to the first. I admit at once that we have no rigid discipline. But Secularism is an organised movement; whoever enters it as a worker and undertakes to battle in company with others for right and liberty must, in the nature of the case, be expected to give up some measure of his individual right and liberty. Without this no organisation can exist. No person in a voluntary united movement can have all his own way. If everyone claims the right, and practically exercises it, to push or preach his own private fads, anarchy at once ensues, the organisation is dissolved.

I have met with many people who claim to be Freethinkers; but they believe in Spiritualism, in Theism, in popery, in monarchy, etc. Now let us suppose lecturers and leaders of each of those types meeting to spread Freethought, uniting in a crusade against priests, parsons, and all pretended revelation, divine government, etc. Could anything be more absurd? They may be all good men, earnest, sincere, able. But they cannot unite except upon neutral matters. This needs no illustration for it is patent to all.

And if people unite and agree at first, and afterwards develop different beliefs, the dissolution of the union must follow. Let Mr. Bradlaugh accept and preach, as part of Secularism, the immortality of the soul; let Mr. Foote adopt and teach the doctrine of Purgatory and the efficacy of prayers and masses for the dead; let Mrs. Besant do as she is doing; let me adopt Spiritualism and pit it against Theosophy—Is it possible for us henceforth to work together for what we have all along considered to be Secularism? Let Mrs. Besant answer.

Not by any vows we have taken or promises or pledges given are we bound to be true to Secularism; but by the position we have taken up and held so long, a position in which we have been trusted and honored for so many years—and no one more than Mrs. Besant—we are bound by the most sacred obligations to be true to our people and our movement.

If Mrs. Besant has lost faith in Secularism, her course is clear, to leave it openly. To still cling to it and retain her position in it, after adopting a superstition as gross as can be found, and which, on the face of it, is plainly *not* Secularism, is a scandal.

Far be it from me to limit the range of freedom of thought. I know no subject that ought to be forbidden to a Freethinker or a Secularist! I am not aware that any subject exists, any creed, philosophy or doctrine that a Freethinker ought not to follow if his convictions bid him do so. That is the only course open to him. But I do not see how a Freethinker can be bound to swallow contradictory systems or doctrines. Secularism repudiates miracles; Mrs. Besant adopts them. It is idle to say it is not a miracle to send letters by disembodied brothers, to project your soul from the body and travel with the speed of thought to the most distant lands, often transporting material things with you. To believe this is not Secularism, unless some remarkably good evidence be forthcoming to support it. Mrs. Besant gives no evidence yet that might not support the resurrection or the miraculous birth of Jesus. And henceforth she can no more denounce miracles, whether those of Jerusalem, Rome or Knock, while holding to the gospel by Blavatsky.

I maintain then that Mrs. Besant, by accepting Theosophy, reverses the whole of her life for the last fourteen or fifteen

years. She may be right or wrong in doing this. All I say is that it is a scandal to Secularism to say that her new departure is no departure, to pretend that she still acts as a consistent Secularist, while professing her faith in miracles.

I cannot believe that she herself would admit that I was doing justice to myself or Secularism if I re-embraced Wesleyanism, and preached the old evangelical doctrines from our platform, as a genuine part of Secularism, legitimately and logically within the purview of Freethought.

To accept a god, though he be pantheistic, and miracles, though we are assured they are not superhuman, are not the acts of an unbeliever, a Freethinker, a Secularist, however deeply Mrs. Besant may be convinced of their truth. It is plain to everyone else that when she became a Theosophist she became a believer. And really, it would have grieved me less to see her joining the Roman Catholic communion than to see her bow her intellect to the transparent imposture of Mrs. Blavatsky.

I have written strongly. I hope Mrs. Besant won't rush away to the conclusion that I feel any personal enmity towards her. I am sure I do not. But I am profoundly grieved to think that so able and earnest an advocate of Secularism, and so fearless a defender, should have turned her back upon it and gone over to the enemy. She must pardon me if I can see it in no other light. I am absolutely sure that Pantheism and Theosophy are no part of Secularism, and never will be until recommended by better evidence than has ever yet been offered for either.

One painful fact is apparent in reading Mrs. Besant's pamphlet, and that is, that not her intellect has led her into theosophy, but its negation. Mrs. Besant is one of the most intellectual persons of the day; and yet her reasons for adopting Theosophy are just on a par with those persons immeasurably her inferiors have given for removing from Freethought to Christianity. Many years ago I read the recantation of John Henry Gordon, who left the Secularists and became "pastor" Gordon, Baptist. Well, and I say it with pain, Mrs. Besant's pamphlet, though far better written, is equally flimsy, inconsequential and disappointing with that! It is simply provoking to find an intellectual person so absolutely wrong-headed. She has published her pamphlet to show her reasons for adopting theosophy; the reasons have been omitted, and paltry excuses take their place—that is, she has evidently adopted theosophy first and then looked about for something to excuse her conduct. And no more flimsy excuses were ever yet offered for a change of front.—*Liberator*.

#### "COME OFF THE FENCE."

LEND us a hand! We are weary of striving;  
Straining each nerve to win popular sense;  
Why do you, when we need your assistance,  
Placidly neutral, still sit on the fence.

Inwardly sure of the right of our pleading,  
Secretly hoping success to our fight,  
Step from your outlook, your neutral position,  
Bravely and openly join us outright.

Deep in your hearts you approve of our wishes,  
'Tis but a question of time, as you know.  
Openly come to us, say you are with us,  
Now is the time to encourage us so.

Are we not pleading for right and for justice?  
Dare not deny it; it is no pretence,  
Come with your influence, eloquence, wisdom,  
Come down and help us! "Come down off the  
fence!"

THE Rev. Mr. Roach, editor of the *Windsor Weekly Waterspout*, went fishing a few Sundays ago and broke his leg. The Rev. Mr. Dace heard of the accident, and in his Sunday evening sermon said: "Here we have a striking example of the retribution following the violation of the Sabbath. If Mr. Roach had been at church he would not have broken his leg." The following Sunday, as the Rev. Mr. Dace was ascending the steps of the pulpit, he trod on a piece of orange peel (dropped by a child of the Sunday-school), slipped, fell, and broke his leg. The next issue of the *Waterspout* contained the following: "Here we have a striking instance of the retribution that waits on self-appointed censorship. If the Rev. Mr. Dace had been fishing he would not have broken his leg."

## ACID DROPS.

We congratulate the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It has made a discovery, like the blind man who found the haystack with his stick. In one of its tracts, "Earnest Words to Working Men," it chirrup as follows:—"It is said that some heathen think that their women have no souls, but it seems in Christian England as if it were rather the *men* who doubt their own immortality; for whilst many of them think it right that their wives and children should attend to the outward ordinances of religion and go to church or chapel, how do they themselves spend the Lord's Day? How few of them are ever seen in the house of God!" Amen.

That mysterious individual Providence seems very remiss in looking after God's own houses. Compared to churches and chapels, public-houses and gambling clubs have a perfect immunity from fires and lightning. No doubt the steeples of churches are tempting to electricity, but lightning, controlled by omnipotence, ought to be able to strike a coal mine as readily as a church spire. Fires, too, may be occasionally looked for in stove-heated buildings, but it should be a little thing for God Almighty to show the sacredness of his edifices by making them as incombustible as heaven itself.

Last Sunday morning when the parishioners of Lewannich, six miles from Launceston, went to their church, they found it a mass of flames. The minister will have to preach from the text "Our God is a consuming fire."

Lives of Christ are as common as the influenza. The latest announcement is that Joaquin Miller, the American author of *The Ship in the Desert*, etc., has been for some time engaged on a versified account of the Judean gentleman, upon which he pins his hopes of fame. Here again it seems to be a case of Buddha before Christ, for it is whispered that Mr. Miller has been instigated by the success of Sir E. Arnold's *Light of Asia*.

A Hungarian shoemaker named Szaknay, living at Limehouse, was taken ill and went to see his minister at St. John's-wood. This did not improve him, and his landlady, seeing he was almost too ill to speak, asked him if she should call in a doctor. He got into a rage, and said he did not believe in doctors, but in anointing. Praying and oiling, however, did not effect a cure. Poor Szaknay died under the faith-healing treatment, and a coroner's inquest had to be held over his remains. If he leaves any friends to erect a tombstone upon his grave, they should not fail to record his devotion to St. James. Speaking ill of the dead is of course to be avoided, and his epitaph might be therefore, not "A Pious Fool," but "A True Christian."

"A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another." Bosh! says Parson Wilson, of Rochdale, who, having quarrelled with the master of the Birtle National Schools, has locked up the premises and excluded the children.

"Suffer little children to come unto me," said Jesus in one of his amiable moods. Parson Wilson endorses this with a reservation. "Let them come," he says, "if I like the schoolmaster; if I don't, let them go to ——" well, a good many miles from Rochdale.

The *Ensign*, Y.M.C.A. Nottingham organ, states that the Melbourne Y.M.C.A. has secured the Secularists' "Hall of Science" as their headquarters at a cost of £30,500, and have made it a centre of Gospel effort. We do not know what truth there is in this, but we know that the Melbourne Secularists have a New Hall of Science, 456 Bourke Street, where Mr. Symes has large audiences.

All the sky-pilots in the neighborhood of Uxbridge have signed a memorial to the Petty Sessions complaining of the growing practice of Sunday trading as exhibited in a few cigar and sweetstuff shops, and calling on the magistrates to suppress it. Their motto evidently is "No competition. Our shop or none."

The *New York Press* of Dec. 31st, announces the death of an old lady while kneeling in prayer. Apoplexy has no regard for piety.

It was the London lounge out for his holiday, and, as he tucked himself into his little bed at the New Inn at Sidesford, his eye fell on a beautifully luminated text, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Not while the money holds out," murmured the L.L., as he sank into slumber, and the landlord, who was listening at the keyhole, rushed downstairs and made his bill out "to be sent up with his shirts."

According to the *Methodist Times*—Hugh Price Hughes's paper—"There are two wings of the Liberal party—one agnostic, positivist, atheist, and somewhat apt to take lax views of social morality. This wing is preternaturally blatant in London, especially in journalistic circles. But in the provinces it is absolutely insignificant. The leaders, the organisers, and all the most valuable members of the rank and file of provincial Liberalism are hearty believers in Christian morality, are very often pronounced Christians, and as a rule evangelical Nonconformists."

We are glad to see Mr. Hughes recognising a fact, if only once in a way. The Freethinking side of London Radicalism can no longer be ignored. As to its being "preternaturally blatant," that is only Mr. Hughes's way of saying that it will not truckle to the Christians.

Mr. Hughes is very much mistaken, however, about provincial Radicalism. If he looks a little closer and deeper he will find Freethinkers on political committees here, there, and everywhere. In season and out of season they are hard workers for all kinds of progress. No doubt there is a greater leaven of Freethought in London, but it is far from absent in the provinces.

Mr. Hugh Price Hughes took the *Pull Mall* tip and devoted last Sunday afternoon to Mr. Gladstone's praise of confession. The reverend gentleman now finds that "Mr. Gladstone, although great, wise, and good, has not taken the trouble to inquire what are the real sentiments of a far larger section of the Christian Church than his own, and practically he is ignorant of the religious opinions of the great masses of the people." Poor G. O. M.! He had better go to St. James's Hall and get converted.

At the same meeting Mr. Hughes said that 500 people had been converted at St. James's Hall since the opening of the Mission. We wonder how many of them are as sound as the Atheist Shoemaker.

After praying to vacuity for every possible blessing during the "universal week of prayer" the Evangelicals wound up with a thanksgiving for the privilege of being permitted to lay our requests before God during this week of prayer. Our modern Pharisees are almost as humble as the man who continually thanked space for giving him elbow room.

God's method of settling the love affairs of animals was illustrated by the deadly battle between two fine bucks, who were recently found in a dry ditch in Bushey Park, dead, and firmly locked together in a most remarkable manner. The right horn of the uppermost animal was firmly fixed in the mouth of the lower; the left horn of the lower one was as firmly fixed in the mouth of the upper, while the other horns were tightly clasped together. The battle that ended so fatally had evidently been a long and stubborn one, both animals having sustained severe bodily wounds. They had evidently died in great agony, and the jaw of the undermost animal was broken to splinters.

Major Evered Poole is asking for subscriptions to send Mr. H. L. Hastings' lecture on the Inspiration of the Bible and other productions of the Anti-Infidel Library throughout the army. He hopes to circulate over 150,000 copies before the end of February. We wish some of our wealthy friends would give Tommy Atkins a chance of seeing the other side.

A trashy orthodox pamphlet, entitled *Theosophy the New Religion*, has been sent to us. It appears to emanate from a party who trades upon other people's names, and one of its most significant sentences is the following: "Surely

the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale cannot know what Theosophy really is if he imagines that, in embracing the same, Mrs. Besant has taken a step in the right direction."

The agent of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners attempted a sale at Amlwch, Anglesey, of stock distrained upon at several farms for arrears of tithe. The attitude of the persons assembled became so threatening that the sale had to be adjourned.

Whatever is Mr. Yates thinking about to publish that silly story of Browning in the *World*? "One Sunday afternoon," runs the yarn, "about twelve years ago, he was crossing Hyde Park, walking homewards, and he stood a few minutes listening to the address of one of the pestilent atheistic lecturers in those parts. He waited till the fellow had finished, and then sprang on to the vacated chair, saying, 'now my friends, you have heard *him*; listen to me!' He held the attention of his strange audience for some ten minutes, the 'rapt oration flowing free' with such extraordinary effect that the 'populace' turned upon orator No. 1, and literally chased him from the neighbourhood of his exploits."

About twelve years ago! Very precise and a long way off! The *World* forgets to tell us how the story has slumbered all the while. It forgets, too, that it is a poor compliment to Robert Browning to say that he excited a mob to violence against a lecturer who invited discussion. Browning, it appears, like many other men, might have cried "save me from my friends."

Curiously enough, in the very preceding paragraph, the *World* describes George Meredith's as "the finest head and face" in the Westminster Abbey crowd at Browning's funeral. If the writer of the paragraph will read Mr. Meredith's poems—supposing him equal to the task—he will find the possessor of "the finest head and face" a pronounced Freethinker.

There is consternation in the ranks of the clergy, more general and more sincere even than that caused by the inroads of infidelity. There is a still further decline in the value of livings for 1890. Every £100 will have to be estimated as only £78 1s. 3<sup>d</sup>. Within the past six years there has been a fall of twenty per cent., and the parsons are all swearing that their business is going to the dogs.

All through Italy there are pictures in which the Deity is depicted throwing wreaths upon the heads of the Medici, Farnese, and other aristocratic families. Again, at Versailles, on a canvas representing one of Napoleon's victories, the Supreme Being is limned in the skies ordering the destruction of the enemy!

The Rev. J. McNeill says that "David was a [splendid fellow—an all round man." Yes, especially when he lived as a thief. He requisitioned east, west, north and south, and cut the throats of those who thought they had any right to their own. He was the Jack the Ripper of the desert, and as an "all round man" at the business it would be hard to find his rival.

A wolf burst into a Russian hut and attacked a boy in the absence of his parents. The house-dog defended the child, and was nearly torn to pieces before relief came. That dog had no soul. The Christian men who, a few years ago, were afraid to help a little girl struggling in three feet of water in Kensington Gardens, had souls. Let us pray.

Mr. Voysey seems to have set himself to the task of answering an objection as to what can be known of God apart from his inspired manifestations, and this he does by asserting that the inspired manifestation cannot tell us anything more than we already know. We beg pardon. They can tell a great deal, as that he exposed his back parts to Moses, had a son by a virgin, and much other curious information not to be gathered by unassisted reason.

It is rather curious to find, centuries after the statue to the Unknown God at Athens has tumbled into oblivion, the Rev. Christopher J. Street saying at the Theistic Church that God must ever be the Unknown God. It is a curious proceeding to talk Sunday after Sunday on a subject that

must ever be unknown. We should think the time might be more profitably occupied.

Mr. Stead gives us his Trinity in his new Review. It is—God, England, and Humanity. In other words, Religion, Jingoism, and Imperialism. Cock-a-doodle-do!

The *Tablet* bestows some mild banter on that good man Mr. W. T. Stead for offering to set up a kind of journalistic confessional in the *Review of Reviews*. It wishes him to know that good Catholics go to confession not to find a confidant but to obtain forgiveness of sins. It does not think Mr. Stead will undertake to dispense this. Give him time.

The sorrowful and heavy laden were long exhorted to cast their burdens on the Lord. Mr. Stead, who evidently deems it one of the missions of the new journalism to take the place of the old Methodist pulpit and class-room, offers to play the rôle of Jesus Christ himself. He asks all who want the consolation of pouring out their soul's grief, to communicate with him. He has an unfailing supply of the true balm of Gilead to be disposed of on reasonable terms.

Do you seek for comfort?

Turn your thoughts to Stead.

Does your husband come home late?

Refuge find in Stead.

Are you weary of your sins?

Confide them all to Stead.

But please enclose remittance

Should you write to Stead.

The Established Church of Scotland is making an effort to form a Defence Fund for the Church. The sum modestly asked for is £10,000 but ten times that amount would prove woefully insufficient for the purpose.

A full and searching inquiry into the management of the Church Missionary Society has often been talked about, even Canon Taylor was unable to bring it about. The income of the Church Missionary Society last year was nearly £222,000. It is stated that of this enormous sum nearly a fourth—that is to say, close upon £50,000—is spent before any of the money is paid out for mission work.

The millenium is coming. According to the Rev. W. Webb-Peploe, all the world is to be converted to Christ, and then war and strife will cease. And when will that be? Ah, as the song says, wait a little longer.

Mr. George Harwood, M.A., has been telling an audience in the Bolton Co-operative Hall that the Bible is the best book in the world to "teach manners." Well, let us take a case. David, the man after God's own heart, had an interview with a lady called Abigail. In the course of conversation he told her that he had meant to kill all the males of her husband's house. But did he say *males*? Oh dear no. What did he say, then? Well, we dare not repeat it. It may be read in 1 Samuel xxv., 34. Read it with a pair of blue spectacles on, and then swear that the Bible is a text-book of manners.

Can it be true? We hear that the new Secular hall at Edmonton is next door to the residence of Sir Henry Tyler, the pious guinea pig who first prosecuted the *Freethinker*. The Christians of that neighborhood should take precautions against earthquakes.

The newspapers report a shocking case of cruelty by the nuns at the Franciscan convent at Schönbrunn. They beat and starved a poor half-witted girl in their charge till she was a skeleton covered with a mass of sores. "In consideration of their calling," the magistrate inflicted slight fines, but the public showed by hooting that a heavier sentence was demanded.

Sarah Hannah Calender, who is charged with cutting the throat of her grand niece and child aged one year, and with setting fire to the house, seems to have been very pious. She asked for the Bible a little before committing the atrocity, and perhaps derived inspiration from the volume.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 19, Camden Hall, Camden-street, Liverpool, at 11, 3 and 7 o'clock.

Thursday, Jan. 23, Secular Hall, 131 Broadway, Plaistow, at 8 "How to get Saved." For the Branch funds.

Jan. 26, Camberwell.

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

March 2, Manchester; 9, Camberwell; 16, Cardiff; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.

April 6, Milton Hall; 13, Portsmouth; 20, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.

May 4, Newcastle; 11, South Shields.

## 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.

G. JACOB.—(1) It doesn't pretend to be a literal quotation, being obviously a paraphrase. (2) We had no special information, and there was no use in repeating what every one had seen in the newspapers.

ANTI-HUMBUG.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. B.—Renan's *Vie de Jesus* is a sentimental work, we had almost written romance, but it serves as an introduction to rational criticism of the gospels.

"AMANA."—Papers and cuttings always welcome.

F. GILES.—Yes, Viktor Lennstrand must and will be supported.

F. COULTHARD.—Will say when we see them.

DOUBTER.—You have our sympathy. It goes out to every struggling, earnest mind. For our part, we regard it as a duty to be true to oneself, never to countenance a falsehood for the sake of peace, or to imagine that the human race can be elevated by it, however, it may have been inevitable in man's upward march. Truth is after all the highest thing, and every virtue ultimately rests upon it. If you are not a Christian, in any fairly understood sense of the word, you had better come out. It may be hard at first, but you will find the road soften and the sky clear, if you keep facing the dawn.

A. GUEST.—Thanks. Glad to hear you tackled Prophet Baxter at Darlington.

A. FRIEND.—Mr. Foote was forty on January, 11th. At the present he is carrying about a bad cold, which was exasperated by Monday evenings rush to Reading. Mr. Wheeler is also affected. Editor and "sub" both hope the chill hasn't got into the paper.

F. HAMPTON.—See "Acid Drops." Sorry the Bolton press is so little fond of fair play.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—We think of publishing some more good portraits shortly. Glad to have your opinion that *Letters to Jesus Christ*, which "every one who wants to know the leading specialities of the Jesus of the Gospels would do well to obtain."

W. OWEN says that "heart-felt" sympathy with our gallant Swedish comrades must mean "pocket-felt." True.

F. H. M. CHASE.—Under consideration.

E. SIMS.—No doubt a good subscription will be raised for the Swedish martyr.

H. CALASCA.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—W. J. Birch, £1.

A. HINDLEY.—Thanks. May be useful.

J. BRUMAGE.—Such letters in *Chat* or any local paper do the cause good. Hope to see you hale again next month.

E. T. GARNER.—Your lecture list is the first sent in. It shows you are wide awake, anyhow; and that is at least one merit.

JNO. DEAN.—Suit your convenience.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberty—Fair Play—Freidenker—Open Court—Freedom—Der Arme Teufel—Consett Guardian—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Uxbridge Gazette—Bournemouth Guardian—Western American—Progressive Thinker—New York Press—Evening Standard—Health Resorts—Bulletin des Sommaires—Western Figaro—Anti-Infidel—Weekly News and Chronicle—New York Herald—Menschenthum—Liberator—The Ensign Irish Y.M.C.A's Bulletin—Northampton Daily Reporter.

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.—Eight 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. This is the last week the invitation will appear.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was an improved audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury. To-day (Jan. 19) Mr. Foote lectures at Liverpool, where he will be glad to see any friends from South Lancashire who are anxious to see a better organisation of Freethought in that district. The letter we publish elsewhere from the Branch secretary should bring every Liverpool Freethinker to the hall. The bigots must be faced, fought, and beaten.

SINCE the preceding paragraph was in print we have heard from Mr. Doeg that he and Mr. Newcomb are to be summoned. Lectures are, if possible, to be treated as entertainments. Mr. Doeg says "I will fight it out." Surely there will be a big rally to-day (Jan. 19). Whoever holds back in a crisis is a traitor to the cause.

MR. BRADLAUGH is on his way home, very much improved in health and spirits. He will meet the members of the National Secular Society at the Hall of Science, London, on Sunday, February 16, and give a full statement of his reasons for resigning the presidency. No person will be admitted to the meeting who is not a member. Those who have not yet joined, but wish to be present, should enrol themselves at once. The meeting will elect Mr. Bradlaugh's successor.

MESSRS FOOTE AND FORDER made a descent on Reading on Monday evening. Mr. Butler and a few other "saints" had resolved to form a Branch of the N. S. S. in this thriving town, and as a local clergyman had been stirring up the public mind on the subject, Mr. Foote undertook to lecture on "Christianity and Secularism: a False System and a True One," and Mr. Forder to officiate as chairman on behalf of the Organisation Committee. A small hall had been engaged, capable of seating about two

hundred persons; but somehow the hallkeeper let it afterwards for the same night to a dancing party. The only way out of the difficulty was for the Secularists to have the large hall in the same block at the same price. Now the mistake was a slice of good fortune, for a large audience assembled that could not have been squeezed by a hydraulic press into the smaller room.

NOT only was the audience large, but very courteous and intelligent, and there was a good sprinkling of ladies. Another noteworthy feature was the presence of two local reporters taking notes industriously. Mr Forder had a capital reception and made a neat little speech from the chair. Mr. Foote was greeted with several rounds of applause, and throughout the lecture there could be little doubt that he commanded the sympathies of more than half the audience. This augurs well for the prosperity of the new Branch. Reading has more than enough Freethinkers to make it a first-rate success.

AFTER the lecture many questions were asked, and answered. Three gentlemen made set speeches. One was a Reading curate; another an old business man, who does a little evangelising. This amiable old Christian told how he was converted fifty-four years ago; he thumped the lecturer on the back as a man and a brother; and left the platform with a fervent prayer for the Atheist's conversion. Mr. Foote laughed and the audience laughed. Everybody laughed but the aged Christian. He was in deadly earnest.

AMONG the audience was the great Barber of Northampton. This person has been very quiet since Mr. Bradlaugh threatened to answer his scurrility with a thrashing. Now he is on the war-path again. Barber mounted the platform, holding in his hand the regulation book of extracts. Mr. Forder offered him a seat, kept him sitting and waiting for his turn, and finally told him there was no time for more speeches, as the occupancy of the hall was terminating, and the keeper was going to turn out the gas. It was cleverly done, and Barber was wild, especially as he wanted a good advertisement for his own lecture the next evening. Most of the audience were evidently glad that Reading men had taken up the time, instead of an imported stranger. But there was a considerable knot of Barber's lambs at the back, and they baa'd most lustily. That was an old stager's opportunity. Rising to answer the curate, Mr. Foote was baa'd and baa'd; but he fairly shouted them down in two minutes, and the meeting finally broke up in perfect order.

ALTOGETHER the visit to Reading was a great success, and the Organisation Committee will no doubt organise descents on other towns within easy reach of London.

MR. R. FORDER acknowledges the following subscriptions to the Swedish Prisoners' Fund:—Grant from Funds of N. S. S., £2 10s.; Miss Vance, 2s. 6d.; R. Forder, 2s. 6d.; J. Chamberlain, 1s.; G. R., per E. Truelove, £1; E. Truelove, £1; J. Sterry, 4½d.; W. Langley, 5s.; Jupiter Ammon, 5s.; J. Moffat, 1s.; H. Seymour, 1s.; J. Hemingway, 10s.; J. H. Ellis, 5s.; Mrs. Palmer, 6d.; Daylight, 2s. 6d.; K. Hunt, 5s.; J. Robinson, 1s.; Alpha Rho, 10s.; B. Millichamp, 1s.—R. Forder, secretary.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—We have received the following:—F. Giles, 2s.; R. Ross, 1s.; W. Owen, 2s. 6d.; E. Sims, 10s.; W. J. Birch, £1; J. M. Wheeler, 5s.; F. B., 2s. 6d.

THE Rev. A. E. Clark, curate of St. Mark's Preston, finds himself unable to agree with the Prayer Book, and announces his intention of quitting the Church.

WALT WHITMAN thinks the Brazil Republic "More shining than the Cross."

*Freedom* says the *New Cagliostro* is "severely caustic," and hopes it "will have an extensive sale." It is having it.

THE Bradlaugh-Gibson debate still echoes along Tyneside. The Rev. Mr. Walsh has engaged the Nelson Street Lecture Hall for four Sunday afternoons. He intends to deal with

the difficulties of Christianity, and has courteously invited the members of the Newcastle Branch, who have accepted the invitation on condition of free discussion, being allowed. Mr. Joseph Brown, the Branch secretary, has arranged to preside at one of the meetings. Mr. Walsh writes like a gentleman, and the proceedings will no doubt be marked by good feeling. The first lecture is fixed for to-day (Jan. 19).

CANON TALBOT is carrying on a series of Monday evening lectures in the Central Hall, Newcastle. In a printed circular to working-men, he says "I know what Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote have to say about the Bible." Well, if he answers what they say he will do wonders, for a clergyman.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary treasurer of the London Secular Federation, asks us to print the following list as the result of the chairman's appeal at the recent dinner:—Subscriptions Received—G. Burton, 10s.; Captain Cross, £1 10s.; W. Hunt, £1 1s.; James Rowney, 10s.; Jules Magny, 2s. 6d.; H. A. Taylor, 5s.; J. Taylor, 10s.; Miss Emily Johnson, 2s. 6d.; C. H. Culliford, 2s. 6d.; W. Wheeler, 2s. 6d.; R. Malster, 2s. 6d.; C. Kingston, 5s.; Mr. Hillier, 10s.; T. V. Pearce, 10s.; Daylight, 5s.; H. L. Strong, 2s. 6d.; J. Tomkins, 5s.; J. Umpleby, £5; Mrs. Foote, 10s. 6d. Subscriptions Promised—R. Forder, 10s.; Mr. Trummel, 2s. 6d.; A. Reichert, 2s. 6d.; G. Lodge, 5s.; D. Colville, £2; R. McKirdy, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. McMillen, 10s.; G. A. Henning, 10s.; R. Bell, 5s.; G. Rutland, 10s. 6d.; J. Robertson, £1 1s.; Miss M. A. Robin, 5s.; R. Miller, 5s.; G. Ward, £1; A. Moss, 2s. 6d.; J. F. Henley, 5s.; S. Hartman, 5s.

THE headquarters of the American Secular Union are now at Philadelphia, where an office has been taken at 930 N. 17th Street. Miss Ira C. Craddock is the secretary.

A MISS VIRGINIA E. VANCE is among the writers in *Freethought* of San Francisco. No relative we presume to the lady who is so actively known in connection with Milton Hall.

THE Sunday visitors for a year at the People's Palace including the library are estimated at 92 927. Only twelve or fourteen attendants are paid, and there are no policemen kept on the premises. Of course the pious are wild that any should work on Sunday, but the men who are engaged are those who have not been working during the week. Hypocritical Sabbatarians prefer to overwork attendants on Saturday rather than have a fresh relay for Sunday.

WE see that Mr. B. F. Underwood was elected an honorary member of the Nineteenth Century Club of New York, in recognition of his ability as a thinker and of his work as a liberal advocate.

*Freedom*, of Sydney, Australia, presents its readers with a view of the design which has been accepted for the New Sydney Freethought Hall. It suggests a handsome structure, and one reflecting great credit on the Freethinkers of Sydney. It will be situated in Campbell Street, a fine road some 66 feet wide.

WE are pleased to notice that over 650 dollars have been already subscribed for a monument to the late Horace Seaver, who for above fifty years conducted the *Boston Investigator*.

THE *South London Press* and *Southwark Recorder* both gave good notices of the London Secular Federation dinner.

IT must have been some shrewd sceptic who sent the following [queries to the *Bournemouth Guardian*]:—"How is it that the Gospels are translated from the original Greek, whereas the founder of Christianity and his apostles must have spoken Hebrew?" "Are the originals of the Gospels in existence?" The answers given are not very satisfactory. All the early fathers spoke of Matthew as being written in Hebrew, yet our version has little evidence of being a translation. The last question is answered by a reference to the alleged recent

discovery of M.S. of about the middle of the fourth century, or something over three hundred years after the time of the originals. Such evidence of a human testament would not satisfy a pettifogging attorney in search of a case.

DR. J. L. YORK, American Freethought lecturer, whose health recently broke down, after the strain of twelve years' hard work, has now recovered and hopes soon to take to the platform again. He says that what the movement wants in America is more speakers and papers.

*God and the State* is the title of a new pamphlet by Colonel Ingersoll. It should be in the hands of all political reformers, and circulated broadcast by those who desire to see a complete severance between politics and religion. It is one of the Colonel's best efforts, and written under a grave sense of responsibility, for the churches in America are trying hard to subvert the grand old Declaration of Independence.

*The Converted Altheist*—Mr. Foote's exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's story—is now on sale. The price is one penny. Parcels of fifty copies and upwards can be had at trade price. Freethinkers should circulate the pamphlet widely.

WE understand that a set debate between Mr. Joseph Symes and a clergyman has been arranged. We hope to give fuller particulars shortly.

THE "Humboldt" Freethought Union at Leipsic appears to have a number of capable members. *Menschenhum*, the organ of the German Freethought Union, reports a capital discourse delivered by Walther May.

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

(CONCLUDED.)

After giving his disciples the self-same advice which in later years Uriah Heep received from his father, namely, to be 'umble, we find Jesus going up again to the Jewish Passover at Jerusalem, though why does not seem very clear, seeing he had renounced his faith by his baptism, and struck out a new religion of his own. On his way, an unforeseen difficulty occurs; it has come to Jesus' knowledge that a certain celebrity of the name of Zechariah, in days of old prophesied that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass (*Zech. ix. 9*), though how this feat was to be accomplished is a mystery. Well, here is Jesus nearing Jerusalem with no ass, no colt, nor the wherewithal to purchase these indispensables. But Jesus was a man of resource, he had been that way before, and knew that in the adjacent village of Bethphage there were both these necessaries. Ha! a happy thought! said Jesus to his disciples. "Go into yonder village, and straight ahead you will find an ass tied and a colt, the foal of an ass with her, loose them and bring them to me." But, supposing they are caught in the act! What then? In this extremity, observe the delisiously ambiguous message which they are to deliver. "The Lord hath need of them" (*Mark xi, 13*); not "Jesus requires them," or Jesus would be obliged if you would lend them for a short time," but "The Lord hath need of them!" perhaps the poor man thought it was the landlord, to whom perchance, he owed a quarter's rent, perhaps, and what is more likely when he saw twelve great hungry fellows making off with his asinine property, he discreetly gave way to superior force, and inwardly rejoiced that they left him his ox and his wife, his man-servant and his maid-servant and everything else that was his. Any way they captured the ass, and very lucky they were to do so. I fancy one of our London costers would be very loth to part with his moke under such circumstances.

Well, we are told that Jesus, with the aid of the confiscated donkey, made his entry into Jerusalem with great *ecolat*, but presently we are treated to a piece of ruffianism the reverse of godly. At these periodical festivals it was customary for the courtyards of the Temple to be thronged with money changers, purveyors of objects for the purpose of sacrifice, and others on the look out for the chance of turning an honest shekel. Jesus falls foul of these gentry, he does not like to see them there, but instead of reproving them gently and shewing them they were com-

mitting a trespass, Jesus, not having heard the famous dictum of John Bright, that "force is not remedy," proceeds to make a "scourge of small cords," (*John ii., 15.*) and execute a pantomime rally, upsetting the tables of the money changers and driving the others out with their sheep, oxen, doves, &c. Very strange conduct this, for "Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild"! and what a dignified part to play for the founder of Christianity! Engaging with his disciples in a general scrimmage with a crowd of spiritless hawkers!

Now with just one more incident I will close the list, for after this the evangelists speak not so much of the acts of Jesus as his words and teachings, to the mystifying character of which I have already alluded, and shall presently refer to the deplorable effects of his doctrines.

The morning after his little brawl in the Temple, Jesus was returning to Jerusalem with his disciples from Bethany, where they had passed the night, when the cravings of the inner man reminded him he had come out without his breakfast, so he very naturally looked about for the wherewithal to appease his hunger, and soon he espied, afar off, a fig tree. Jesus, was, the Christians tell us, perfect God, and perfect Man: *i.e.*—in his capacity as God, he could accurately foretell the future, of which as Man he must at the same time be entirely ignorant! Now were he God, he must have known there were no figs on this tree. Were he as a man cognisant of even the rudiments of arboriculture, he must have known it; but he did not, for Luke tells us (*xi., 13*) that he went up to it "if haply he might find anything thereon;" but finds himself sold instead. "Blast the fig tree" cries "Gentle Jesus meek and mild." I do not profess to be able to judge if this was god-like, but it certainly showed a great deal of human nature.

Now these episodes in Jesus' life are not the unimportant incidents of his career, but those very acts which are so glorified by the Christians. What a false faith must that be which converts such a career of bunkum, brag and bullying into "a godly, righteous and sober life"! Is it not time we cast off this tyrannical yoke which prompts a man to say "I am a Christian" when asked his religion, knowing in his own heart that Christianity, as taught and preached by Christ, is a most hellish creed. Truly he was right when he prophesied the effect of his teaching upon generations to come—here are a few of them—think of them ye recipients of Xmas cards, with "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men" printed thereon.

*Matt. x., 34, 35*:—"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

*Luke xii., 51-53*:—"Suppose ye that I come to give peace on earth? I tell ye Nay, but rather division. The father shall be divided against his son, and the son against the father. The mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. The mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law."

*Luke xiv., 25*:—"If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple."

Truly these terrible prophecies have been fulfilled to the letter, and well may Shakespeare tell us that "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." Is it not time that we dethroned this Jesus Christ as an object of faith and worship, as Wodin, Thor, Friga, and Saturn have been dethroned? I do not advocate abolishing the feast of Christmas which comes at the proper time at the end of the year for rest and recreation after twelve months labors, but hope for the time when Christmas shall have no more connection with Christ or Christianity than Saturday has now with that other heathen God, Saturn, who devoured his own children. F. P.

The close alliance of religion and insanity is illustrated in the letter of a suicide read at his inquest at Chester on Jan. 9:—"My time is at hand. I have finished my course. My life is hid with Christ in God. It is better to fall into the hands of God than the hands of men. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and lay not this sin to my charge. Lord Jesus open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. God will certainly visit England with a sword because of her Sabbath breaking. The sword is God's peacemaker—the Bible follows. Adieu." The jury brought in the usual verdict, making no mention of the fact that religion was evidently largely responsible for the calamity,

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### OUR DIFFICULTIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have persuaded one of our local newsagents to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window and also to display the contents-sheet outside. He is willing to do so every week providing he can obtain a supply, but his wholesale agent refuses to supply it. He had one dozen sent him for two or three weeks direct from Stonecutter Street, but the postage swallows all the profit. I have promised to take all copies that may remain unsold, but he naturally does not like the idea of pushing the sale of a paper without having any remuneration for it. That the paper will sell in time I have not the slightest doubt as everyone in town knows something of Freethought now. Can you suggest a remedy? Ever since I have been a Freethinker (and that is since you uttered the memorable words, "Thank you, my lord, it is worthy of your creed") I have done my best for the good old cause. I should like to see your little "blasphemer" selling like wildfire and yourself with as large an income as the Archbishop of Canterbury. I have had the great pleasure of listening to three lectures by you—twice in Cardiff and once in London. They were the only Freethought lectures I ever heard and I enjoyed them immensely. Hoping you will be able to suggest some way out of this difficulty, I remain yours faithfully,

THOS. WILLIAMS.

### A JOSEPH COME TO JUDGMENT.

The lecture which our clever countryman Joseph Thomson, the explorer, delivered in Edinburgh last night, is intellectually worth a whole decade of Spurgeon's sermons, and of more suggestive value than all the Sunday sensationalism of all the John Robertsons that have ever shocked Scottish propriety. But the truths he tells us of European influences in Africa are not palatable. Our intercourse with the natives is, he says, an unmitigated curse, because with our missionaries we introduce guns, gunpowder, and gin. Our trading stations, instead of being centres of beneficence and elevating influence, have been in the past disease-breeding spots, which have infected with demoralising poison the whole country. The Christian missionary, propagating a creed of a delicately exotic character, and having too little of that elasticity and adaptability to the stage of development reached by the people who are to be converted, has been, in fact, a failure, and Mohammedanism has beaten Christianity all along the line. Mr. Thomson sees the cure for this in a total revolution in the method of work—in the proper equipment of missionaries under professors. Only by men having the spirit, the enterprise, and true Christianity of Livingstone can the negro be effectually attacked, and the Cross be reared above the Crescent.—*Glasgow Evening News.*

### VISITATIONS OF GOD.

Evidence is accumulating that our heavenly father no longer approves of churches or church going. Here are two instances of divine visitation on the same day, and both in church:

Hopkinville, Ky., Nov. 13.—During service at the colored Methodist church last evening, Hannah Gibson suddenly fell dead. She was shouting at the time, when she fell on her face and instantly expired.

Millersburg, O., Nov. 13.—David Love, aged 76 years, of Mechanic township, was stricken with paralysis on Sunday morning while at church, and died this morning.—*Ironclad Age.*

HE WAS PREPARED.—A travelling missionary had been through a very rough country, and his meek spirit had been sorely tried. He had found a spirit of irreverence and disbelief all over the land, and the ground was very stony. But he left in despair when he struck an old man at a railway station in Texas. They were both waiting for the train. They discussed various things, and finally the missionary asked—"Are you prepared to die?" "I guess you've always got to be prepared in this country. Yes, I'm prepared to die or get the drop on the other fellow." "I don't mean that. Are you prepared for a hereafter?" "A hereafter! Look here, stranger, I was brought up in Arkansas, an' I went from there to Missouri, an' from there I came to Texas, an' I've lived here ten years. I guess I can stand any hereafter as may be."

### THE LATE SIR HARDINGE GIFFARD, BRADLAUGH-BAITER AND FOOTE-PROSECUTOR.

At Sudbury, an addition was required to the Bench of Magistrates in 1886. The Corporation sent up to the Lord Chancellor three names—a Conservative, a Liberal-Unionist, and a Liberal. The latter (Mr. Mattingly) had served as Mayor for three successive years. The Lord Chancellor only appointed the two former, on which the Town Council earnestly requested him to reconsider his decision. The only reply was an acknowledgment of the memorial. A year ago the Bench again required strengthening, owing to deaths and the illness of its members. The Corporation sent up three names—Mr. Grover (C.), Mr. Mattingly (L.), and Mr. Joy, Mayor (L). The Lord Chancellor entirely ignored these recommendations, and appointed Mr. Salter (L. U.) and Dr. Mason (C.) Mr. Mattingly has now been re-elected mayor, and actually presides over the bench on which the Lord Chancellor considers that he is unworthy to serve. It really is full time that a Parliamentary Committee should investigate the magisterial appointments of Lord Chancellor Halsbury. What has taken place at Sudbury is only an exemplification of what takes place in other towns. A more gross and impudent jobber never sat on the Woolsack. He never loses a chance to prostitute his high office to political wire-pulling. It is full time that he should cease to disgrace the ermine.—*Truth.*

CLERICAL SHINDY.—The vicar and the curate, in the village where we were raised, were not on the best of terms—in fact, the former lost no opportunity in snubbing the latter. A parishioner, one of the oldest and most respectable of the inhabitants, lay dead, and had to be buried. The curate was on the spot, the vicar was not; he was absent—as usual, he was late. The curate waited; no vicar appeared, so he began to read the burial service. He had just arrived at the words, "I am the resurrection," when the vicar rushed up, breathless with haste, snatched the book from his hand, and said, in a tone of contempt, "You the resurrection? I am the resurrection!" and, as if nothing had happened, he continued the service.

THEY were only just engaged, and had gone to church for the first time after plighting their troth. And the good old grey-headed sky pilot weighed in with the Ten Commandments, and Algernon wondered within himself whether, if he pinched his loved one's arm about the time that the theft clause came on, whether she would rightly interpret his meaning, that she had stolen his heart. He knew she knew them well, so he chanced it. But whether it was that he was too previous, or had got them in his head by the wrong numbers, deponent sayeth not; anyway, he pinched her arm and said, "Now bear this one in mind." Just before the reading of the seventh, and before the eighth came up on the tape, she had indignantly left the church.

DISCORD prevails in the African Methodist Episcopal church of Fairview, Cumberland county, N. J. Deacon Moore heard a noise in his hennery a night or two ago. Instinct told him what it meant. Seizing the loose leg of a three cornered stool he marched boldly out. This exclamaton startled the night: "Brer Tappey. I'se amazed. Don't 'pear to me possible dat you, a deacon in de church—" "Why, bress yo' heart, Brer Moo'," broke in the trembling figure that crouched in the hen-house, "I done cum in heah outen de rain—" "Git out niggah, I'se done clean mad (kerwhack)!. You, a deacon in de church (whack!), comin' roun' a brudder's hennery (bang). Git out!" Deacon Tappey's face looked like a gerry-mandored assembly district map when Deacon Moore got through with him. There is now a division in the church.—*Philadelphia Record.*

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY.—J. Chapman, 2s 6d.; Mr. Trevillion, 1s.; Dick Edwards, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Burton, 5s.; G. W. Foote, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. Doran, 1s.; Mrs. Hunt, 6d.; J. Austin, 1s.; Mr. Searle, 1s.; Mr. Banks, 6d.; W. Bullimore, 6d.; J. Allen, 1s.; R. Carr, 2s. 6d.; J. Chamberlain, 1s.; E. P. 2s. 6d.; J. Hemingway, 2s. 2d.; C. Bently, 1s.; J. B., 3d.; F. Lane, 6d.; F. Woolnough, 6d.; W. Chambers, 6d.; Daylight, 2s. 6d.; W. Hunt, 5s.; A. Mills, 6d.; Jim, 6d.; Miss Barnard, 1s.; Mr. Lyons, 6d.; Mrs. Hill, 1s.; Mrs. Richardson, 1s.; J. Robertson, 5s.; G. Fowler, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Doran, 1s. 6d.; Croughan, 6d.; Friend, 1s.; C. Williams, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Billot, 2s.; J. Robertson, 5s.; R. Rossetti, 6d.; J. Neate, 6d.; Miss Simpson, 3d.; Fielding, 6d.; A Friend, 1s.; B. Fuller, 1s.; Solur, 1s.; Turkington, 1s.; Milroy, 6d.; H. F. S., 1s.; C. Irons, 6d.; Harris, 1s.; J. Fagan, 1s.; C. Cousins, 2s. 6d.; A. Lemaitre, 1s.; Mr. Martin, 1s.; Mr. Moore, 1s.; R. Isherwood, 1s.; J. G., 1s.; W. Henny, 6d.; S. Blunt, 1s.; Mrs. Blunt, 1s.; Per Mr. Cousins, 10s. 6d.; G. S., 2s.; W. H. Reynolds, 2s.; L. Baxter, 6d.; J. Searle, 6d.; L. Swift, 6d.; H. Coward, 2d.; A. Masters, 2d.; G. Chapman, 2d.; Earley, 6d.; W. Jones, 1s.; Cresswell, 1s.; Hettrick, 6d.; Mrs. Farr, 2d.; J. A., 6d.; C. Muller, 6d.; C. Haggard, 1s.; N. Harris, 6d.; B. Santon, 6d.; M. Mullem, 4d.; M. J. M., 6d.; H. Symes, 6d.; W. J. Birch, £1.—R. FORDEK, Secretary.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. T. Parris, "How I Became a Freethinker."  
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. F. Millar, "Mahomet and Islam."  
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Capt. Pfoundes, "Buddhism."  
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 11, Debate; 3.15, General Meeting of Members: 7.15, a lecture.  
 Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 7, Harold Cox, B.A., "The Eight Hours' Bill."  
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3, Mr. C. Bentley will open a public discussion on "Socialism." Admission free.  
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road, 7.30, Mr. C. Johnson, "Why I am Not a Christian."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Mr. C. C. Cattell, 7, "The Man of the Past: His Natural Origin, and Great Antiquity."  
 Chester Le Street—Important meeting at Mr. Gray's, Old Piton, 6.30, to hear Report from Secretary, etc.  
 Glasgow—Ramsbottom Hall, 122 Ingram Street, 6.30, Mr. R. M. Ritchie (Edinburgh), "Artemus Ward" (illustrated with readings).  
 Huddersfield—Littlewood Bridges, Upperhead Row, Mr. Sam Standing, 11, "Better Men than Jesus: Socrates, Plato, etc."; 3, "The Fight for Freethought from Luther to Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "Why We are Secularists"  
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, 3, the Rev. Walter Walsh will lecture on "Bible Inspiration," Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., in the chair. All Secularists are earnestly invited to attend.  
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mr. A. Lord, "Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?"

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

E. TOLEMAN GARNER, 8 Heyworth Street, Stratford, London, E.—Jan. 19, Portsmouth; 26, Woolwich. Feb. 23, Woolwich. March 9, Woolwich; 24, Woolwich; 30, Westminster.

PROFANE JOKES.

A Michigan paper recently closed an obituary notice with the misquotation, "Though dead, he yet squeaketh." The printer apparently wasn't minding his p's and q's.  
 A Illinois minister announced on his Sunday night bulletin: "The funeral of Judas Iscariot." To which an obliging friend added: "Friends of the deceased are cordially invited

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