

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IX. ON "CHRIST AND HUMANITY."

To the Rt. Rev. Edward White Benson,
Archbishop of Canterbury.

MY LORD,—

I have carefully read your new volume on *Christ and His Times*, and I propose to make it the theme of this letter. When I first saw the volume advertised I thought it would be an historical work, and my curiosity was keenly whetted. A book on such a subject by the head (under the Queen) of the English Church, of which I am by law a member, promised a rare treat to a prowling sceptic. So vast, and so important, is the literature accumulated on this subject since the days of Paley, that I was anxious to see what would now be said upon it by the Archbishop of Canterbury. But, on purchasing your volume, I discovered that you had undertaken a more modest task. Your title was only meant to imply that these are the days of Jesus Christ as well as those in which he lived "in the flesh," and under cover of this pious truism you have merely published some recent charges to the clergy of your diocese.

The volume is beautifully got-up by a high-class publisher. A thin rivulet of type meanders through broad margins of hot pressed paper, and the price of six-shillings for what might have made a shilling brochure, is a proof that your exhortations are not intended for common mortals. Indeed, I am puzzled to understand how the poorer clergy of the diocese of Canterbury are to obtain this high-priced wisdom. I would fain hope that your Grace will pity their poverty, and present the poorest of them with a copy of the volume. The gift will make a very minute hole in your income, and the poor clergyman who receives it will no doubt experience a very disproportionate pleasure. He will be able to place it on the parlor table, show it to all his visitors, and even carry it round to the aged and infirm. The possession of such a sumptuous little volume, written by a live Archbishop, will be among the crowning glories of his life.

This is an age of social progress and social speculation, and your Grace is anxious to push the Church to the front as *the* Social Reformer. How the terrible problems that beset us are to be settled is the perplexity, and sometimes the despair, of many earnest thinkers. Your Grace's panacea for all evils is a simple one. We are not to look for the cure in rash political reform. That might wind up with Disestablishment, and send Archbishops with £15,000 a year into the limbo of archæology. Nor should we look for it in socialistic proposals. The idea of such "equality" is enough to send a shudder along the whole bench of Bishops. Your Grace invokes the Church as the good angel of humanity. She is to arrange the conditions between the poor and the rich, out of pure love and holy disinterestedness. And who will refuse to listen to her sweet persuasive voice, the *timbre* of which is maintained by ten million pounds' worth of lozenges per year? She is to flit between the desperate combatants, telling the poor

not to be envious and uncharitable, and the rich not to be hard upon their unfortunate brethren. It is an idyllic picture, your Grace, and may commend itself to the rural clergy. But as a remedy for the grievous ills and injustices of modern life its efficacy is equal to that of rose-water for ulcers, or pills for earthquakes.

After reciting a number of social reforms, which have no more to do with religion than with the nebular hypothesis or the integral calculus, you exclaim that "Only the Church can supply the soul of the work." Elsewhere you say that "The English Church rejoices in the light of History, its investigations, its independent tests. She knows that 'Whatever record leap to light she never shall be shamed.'"

It is very good of you to appropriate Tennyson's fine praise of the Duke of Wellington, but I cannot find any independent historian to keep you in countenance. Macaulay's terrific impeachment of your Church, as the steady handmaid of tyranny, who only once raised her voice on behalf of the popular side, namely, in the reign of James II., when she herself was threatened—is too well-known to necessitate my quoting it. I will content myself, and I dare say more than satisfy you, by examining the list of the Bishops' votes in the House of Lords during the present century. When I have done, I am deceived if every candid reader does not allow that the Church has acted in a very extraordinary manner as "the soul" of reform.

In the early part of the century our jurisprudence was a scandal to civilisation. The death penalty was inflicted for trivial offences, and every Monday morning saw men and women hung in batches. Well, in 1810, a Shop-lifting Bill was before the House of Lords. Its object was to abolish capital punishment for stealing property to the value of five shillings from shops. It was defeated by 31 to 11 votes on the second reading. And how did the Bishops vote? Not one of them supported the Bill, and seven of them voted against it. The right reverend fathers in God declared that, so far as they were concerned, hanging should go on wholesale.

Seventy-three years later, in 1883, the Cruelty to Animals Acts Amendment Bill was before the House of Lords. Its object was to abolish the infamous aristocratic sport of pigeon shooting. It was defeated on the second reading by an overwhelming majority. And how did the Bishops act on this occasion? Did they listen to the cry of humanity? Did they show the Church to be "the soul" of reform? Not a bit of it. They acted like knaves and cowards. They were afraid to vote one way or the other, and not a single one of them spoke or took part in the division. They pleased their autocratic friends as far as they could afford to do so, without raising a storm of popular indignation, and helped to perpetuate an unspeakably brutal and degrading form of "sport."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

PRIESTCRAFT AND RELIGION.

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear and rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." JEREMIAH, v. 31.

SOME of the eighteenth century Deists, carried somewhat too far the argument that religion was at bottom to be identified with priestcraft. Religion has other and far deeper foundations than the self-interest of any particular class. It springs from the deepest wishes and emotions of the human mind. Fear and hope are alike its incentives; but, on the other hand, those who have insisted upon the natural foundations of religion, have often lost sight of, we might say, hid away from view, the fact that priestcraft has had a considerable share in fostering and developing the religious sentiments and making them subservient to its ends.

Toland was perhaps not quite right in summarising the matter in the four following lines:

Natural Religion was easy first and plain,
Tales made it Mystery, Offerings made it Gain,
Sacrifices and Shows were at length prepar'd,
The Priests ate Roast meat and the People stared.

But those most assuredly are equally wrong who study the phenomena of religion entirely oblivious that the self interest of those who live by it had any share in its maintenance.

As long as a savage pow-wows to his own fetish he suffers from superstition, but not from priestcraft. It is not long, however, before some medicine man persuades him that he has some more potent charm to drive away evil spirits, which he is ready to employ for a consideration. Here we see in simple shape how the very objects of faith may be modified through the action of cunning and self-interest.

Among primitive men the chief of a family or tribe usually has priestly functions, but with increase of territory and tribe comes accumulation of business, and the delegation of religious concerns to another. A priesthood thus established soon takes care to endow and perpetuate itself at the expense of the rest of the community. Wars, plagues and famines give the opportunity. If a battle is lost it is because the gods have been offended; the sacrifices have been insufficient; proper respect has not been shown to the men of God. The priestly caste is a leisured caste, and leisure enables them to cement its power. They are among the first historians and writers; and such stories as those of the deaths of Korah, Dathan and Abihu, for objecting to the authority of Moses and Aaron, and of the forty-two children torn by bears for reviling a prophet, show the sort of moral with which they inclined to adorn their tales. Some share of civil government too they usually contrived to obtain, of which we may find a remnant in the bishops in the House of Peers, and the clerical justices of the peace. Ecclesiastical courts, beginning as tribunals enforcing the discipline of superior priests over inferior priests, soon seek jurisdiction in all cases in which the clergy are concerned, and claim authority above that of any civil court. The history of law, no less than the history of science, is a record of the restraints put on priestly power.

It is to be hoped that the young brides who believe that the clergyman is entitled to the first kiss after they are married, do not know the original meaning of that custom. Herbert Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, §646, says:

"On finding 'among the Friendly Islanders the chief priest was considered too holy to be married, but he had the right to take as many concubines as he pleased'—that among the Caribs, 'the bride was obliged to pass the first night with the priest, as a form essentially necessary to constitute the legality of the marriage'—that among some Brizilian tribes 'the Paje (priest), like the feudal lord of former times in some parts of England, enjoys the *jus primæ noctis*;' or again on being reminded of the extent to which prostitution in temples was a religious observance among Eastern people;

we are shown, in yet another way, that there is no necessary connection between priestly guidance and right action."

It is difficult to contemplate the wide spread system of "taboo," upon which, as Prof. Robertson Smith in his recent *Religion of the Semites*, shows, the very notion of "holiness" is founded, without seeing how it subserved the interests of the priesthood. No one dared enter the holy of holies save the high priest, to touch the ark, even accidentally was certain death. It was even death to imitate the priestly ointment.

Take again the great central feature of all ancient religious, *sacrifices*. Who can suppose such an institution would have become so all important but that the priests found their account in the food sacrificed? This was not only always of an edible kind, but that of the very choicest quality. We are, indeed, told in plain terms that the sin offering was eaten by the priests (Lev. vii., 6), who even had its skin (vii., 8). Nor is this all. It is clear from Num. xviii., 12-21, the priests had the right to pick the best of everything, "all the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee."

In the books of the Apocrypha, which according to the sixth Article of the Church of England, are to be read for example of life and instruction of manners, there is an amusing story of Bel and the Dragon, cut off, it is said, from the end of Daniel, because only found in the Greek. The story tells how the Babylonian priests had an idol called Bel, upon whom was spent every day twelve great measures of fine flour, forty sheep and six vessels of wine, which the god was supposed to consume. Daniel got the king's servants to strew ashes in the temple, and though the seals upon the doors were intact, showed him the footsteps of men, women and children, who of course came into the temple by a private way and consumed the provender supposed to be devoured by the god. This story, be it said, not only illustrates the custom in the temple of Bel, but also doubtless that in the temple of Jahveh, where a table of shewbread was always kept and large holocausts often slaughtered.

No one can look at all carefully over the religious ground—it matters not at what time or in what country—without seeing the "footsteps of men, women and children." We suppose none can be so simple as to suppose the essential situation is changed, because priests prefer offerings in money to offerings in kind.

Just consider the question of *tithes*, how they have been preached as an essential part of religion from the time of Aaron until now. Think of the denunciations of those who dare to refuse these offerings and are thus guilty of robbery of God. Has not the Archdeacon of Montgomery quite recently told of the awful deaths of those who in Wales have dared to commit this blasphemy. Who can suppose that Christianity would be so stoutly defended by so many learned volumes were there not prizes in the shape of rich emoluments attached? Did we not know how men can juggle with themselves and from being called ministers of God come to identify their own interests with those of God, might we not be tempted to suppose that instead of priests being subsidiary to religion, religion in reality is subsidiary to priests.

J. M. WHEELER.

Bishop Fava, of Grenoble, having refused to permit the church to take part in the obsequies of the prefect of l'Isère, on the ground that he was a Freemason, has given rise to a discussion on the relation of the Church to the State; since the Church, whilst continuing to take State pay, consults only itself as to how its duties shall be performed. Sensible people see that if the Church wants liberty, it must at the same time resign its emoluments.

A BIBLE DISEASE.

WHEN one is an invalid confined to his room, doubtful as to his escape therefrom, he naturally, after taking the advice of the medicine man, is prone to consider whether there may or may not be remedies of a more recondite nature that will ease the sufferer and appease the disease. Those who are acquainted with the ideas of uncivilised, semi-civilised, and even of races fairly advanced in material prosperity such as the Italian, Russian and Irish peasantry, but who are mere children in mental progress, know that other means than scientific are resorted to when their bodies and minds are afflicted with disease. In the religions of antiquity it was a practice to offer in the temples gold, silver, or wax, and even wood models of the organs that had been affected after a cure, such care being attributed to the god to whom the fane was dedicated, and the *ex voti* were exhibited and preserved there to the god's or goddess's credit and power. Such offerings, with others, were of course a splendid source of revenue, and could be used by the priests when other means failed them. Christianity imitated these follies and all others of the ancient superstitions, extending them to an almost unlimited degree; at all events, limiting them only to their knowledge of the various diseases that flesh is heir to. They improved on the pagan practice, and assigned to each country, city, town, and village its patron saint. Churches, seas, rivers, hills, dales, markets, trades, and professions were in like manner provided with one or more of the saints in the calendar. When one had the epilepsy, what doctor was equal to St. Valentine? if the gout, what leech could cure it like St. Maur? St. Martin was invoked for the itch, St. Clara against sore eyes, St. Lucy against the toothache, St. Fiage against nameless diseases, St. John against poison, St. Quintan against coughs, St. Ruffin against madness, St. Romanus against devils, and a hundred others. When a cure was effected a present was made to the saint and deposited at his or her shrine. Every visitor to Catholic countries notes these offerings in every church. How many stop to think what size the churches would require to be if a part was set aside for an offering from those that had invoked the saints and *died*? Protestant Christians, or at least some of them, condemn these practices, it is true, generally on the ground that there is no warranty for them in the Bible; and if the Catholic join issue with them on this score they fall back on corrupted text or mistranslation.

But our object in this paper is to examine a Bible disease, and the peculiar remedy that removed it. In Dent. xxviii., 27, says "The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed."

The revised version has "boil" for botch, and "scurvy" for scab. Samuel Sharpe, in his version renders it thus. "Jehovah will smite thee with the ulcerous inflammation of Egypt, and with the piles, and with the scab, and with the itch, of which thou canst not be healed." Is Sharp justified in translating the Hebrew *ophelim* as piles? We shall see in the sequel. The French Bible gives d'hémorroïdes, and the Douay "The Lord strike thee with the ulcer of Egypt, and the part of thy body, by which the dung is cast out, with the scab, and with the itch, so that thou canst not be healed." The whole of this chapter of sixty-eight verses is devoted to the blessings and evils promised to the Jews, fourteen to blessings, and fifty-four to curses, ending with the enigmatical curse "and the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee. Thou shall see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bond women, and no man shall buy you." With this pre-

ponderance of evil predicted against his *own* people one might exclaim

"Add not unto thy cruel hate,
Thy still more cruel love."

Let us see how this threat of the infliction of emerods (whatever they were) was carried out. When Eli judged the Jews, the Philistines, long after the settlement of the former in Canaan and notwithstanding God's *oath* that this land should be theirs for ever, were engaged in one of their frequent wars with them. The heathens were victorious; the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas were slain, together with thirty thousand footmen of the Jews, and the ark in which Jahveh was kept fell into the hands of the victorious Philistines. Eli, when he heard of the latter calamity, fell off his seat and broke his neck. His daughter-in-law, Phineas' wife, gave birth to Ichabod, and fell down dead. The ark was taken by the victors to Ashdod. This city, according to Joshua xv., 47, had been given to the tribe of Judah three hundred years before; and seven hundred years later, according to Nehemiah, it was still in the hands of the aboriginals, and had its own language, which the Jews could not understand; thus are Jahveh's promises fulfilled. Being at Ashdod, the Philistines put the ark in their temple with their god Dagon. But two of a trade seldom agree. During the night there was evidently a row between Jahveh and Dagon, for the next morning Dagon was laying flat on his face. To give their deity a chance, they set him up again, but unwisely left no seconds to see fair play, for the next morning there lay poor Dagon again with his head severed from his body and the palms of his hands cut off. Having given Dagon his quietus, Jahveh turned his attention to Dagon's worshippers, and killed some, and others were smitten with *emerods*. They naturally were anxious to get rid of it, but instead of sending it back to the Jews, they passed it on to another Philistine city, Gath, with the result that Jahveh again went at it, "and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had *emerods* in their secret parts." The people of Gath sent it on to Ekron with the same result—*emerods*, more *emerods*. For seven months this went on, no one thinking or hinting that it would be wise to smash up this fatal box and its contents and burn the lot. Strange to say the priests and diviners of Dagon were called in and consulted, and their advice was that it would not do to send it back as they had captured it, but recommended the making of five golden mice and five golden emerods to send with it. This was done, put on a new cart yoked with two milch kine and sent on to Bethshemish. We will pass over the golden mice, but ye gods and little fishes! what were golden emerods? Ye Bible believers from Genesis to Revelation, enlighten us on this marvellous construction. What became of them afterwards? Did Samuel have the care of them. Did they pass as heirlooms to Saul and David, or did Solomon use them for the decoration of the temple? Golden *emerods*!! Why not try for the prevailing epidemic half a dozen golden influenzas and send them to prophet Baxter or St. Paul's Cathedral. And, now supposing Sharpe's translation is the correct one as given above, will the Christian Evidence Society take immediate steps to verify God's blessed word from the cavilings and revilings of ignorant sceptics, by at once requesting the Goldsmiths Company, (who I believe have aforetime given it a donation, "to stem the infidelity of the streets,") to make fine golden *piles* which might be sent for careful preservation to the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons.

R. FORDER.

Mother: "Do you know, Bobby, who wrote the story of the loaves and fishes I've been telling you about?" Bobby: "No; but it sounds a good deal like pa's funny yarns."

WERE THE JEWS IN EGYPT?

PROFESSOR ALBERT LEIGHTON RAWSON, LL.D., who writes in the current number of the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, on "The Pharaoh of the Exodus," is one of the greatest of American travellers. He has spent many years in the East, and written on the *Antiquities of the Orient*, the *Chorography of Palestine*, etc. Like our own Freethinking traveller, Captain Richard F. Burton, he penetrated to Mecca disguised as a Mahomedan. It is worthy of note that this person, who has studied the questions on the spot, holds that the alleged twelve tribes of Israel, never had any definite historical existence as twelve tribes, the two known as Judah and Israel alone having historic reality. He also holds that there is no proof that the Jews were ever in Egypt, and justly remarks that "Apion, a Greek in the first century of our era, attacked Josephus for advocating what he considered an absurd claim of the Hebrews to a remote antiquity, and of which no one had ever heard of before, and Josephus was unable to offer one word of real evidence in support of the claim."

Prof. Rawson addresses himself to the task of replying to a paper in the *Century Magazine*, in which the Rev. John A. Paine seeks to identify Seti-Menephtah of the Egyptian Monuments, a first-born son of Pharaoh who sat on a throne, with the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Prof. Rawson says "This absolute identity, if it were true, would only prove that the writer of the story of the Exodus knew the inscription on the monument, for in the absence of any reference to the Hebrews, anywhere in Egypt, the story cannot be connected with history." But Prof. Rawson gives good reason to show that Seti-Menephtah cannot be so identified, since there is no word of any of his people being slaughtered with him, and he is honored in a way not bestowed on any who died a violent and untimely death.

Professor Rawson mentions that the Jews were unknown to ancient historians as Herodotus, Ctesias, Thucydides or Xenophon, and they were unknown to Pharaoh Shishak when he conquered Palestine and mapped it in 960 B.C. (Turin Papyrus). After showing the different dates assigned for the Exodus, varying from 1866 B.C. to 1233, he says:—

"The Exodus has no place in time. Have the scholars located it on the maps? No. From the earliest to the latest in the Christian era, we read of guesses and arbitrary assignments of localities, but of no proof to any one out of four or five routes or localities, had any claim above those of another site. The mythical Israelites are made to cross the Red Sea a few miles south of Suez, where the water is from fifty to seventy feet deep for eight miles across from Jebel Atakah to the shore near the so-called Wells of Moses; or to march around north of Suez, where for three or four miles the water is shallow enough to admit of wading, as Napoleon attempted to do; or they are assigned to a route by the Bitter Lakes, to which place the Red Sea is supposed to have extended at that time: and finally, Dr. Brugsch would have the route through or near the marshes by the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, which are filled with reeds, for the Hebrew name of Red Sea is Reedy Sea (Yam Suf).

In neither of these localities is there a stone or any monument, whatever, or any inscription, or anything that can be offered as evidence of the alleged Exodus. Some very sanguine Christians once proposed to explore the Red Sea, near Suez, for the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots, but no discoveries have been reported.

Of course there is a possibility that some fact underlay the Jewish traditions of Egyptian bondage, but Christian advocates are compelled to fall back on their imaginations for anything in the way of actual evidence.

At present bull-fights are usually performed on festal days, and form part of most great religious festivals, especially those in honor of the Virgin.—Lecky, "History Rationalism," vol. i, p. 303.

CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

THE rumor that some of Mr. Goschen's surplus will be used to "assist" elementary schools in the Tory fashion has stirred up the Nonconformists, who loudly declare their intention to fight to the death against the disguised endowment of Church schools with the taxpayer's money. For that is what the Government is said to be contemplating. "Free education" is to be carried by giving Church schools all the cash they need, and freeing them from all control by the people's representatives.

A *Pall Mall Gazette* man has interviewed some of the Nonconformist leaders. Dr. Clifford proclaims himself a supporter of the "Secularist plank." He is for ending these wretched intrigues, and this constant struggle, by excluding all religion—even the reading of the Bible—from our public schools. But he confesses to a fear that the general body of Nonconformists will not accept this view.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, of course, wants to keep the Nonconformist religion at the expense of Jews and Freethinkers. He thinks the conscience cause is quite good enough for *them*, but his blood boils at the idea of Nonconformist children experiencing the tender mercies of the conscience clause in Church schools. He is for keeping religious education in the curriculum, but there should be nothing sectarian; that is, there should be just as much Christianity taught as the sects can agree upon. Poor Hugh Price Hughes! He has as much logic in him as a donkey. He does not see that the Church will beat Dissent hollow on this wretched no-principle of self-interested compromise.

Dr. Parker is more sagacious. With all his faults he is no fool. He speaks out very clearly:—"I would get rid of all priestism, ecclesiasticism, and religious teaching of every sort and kind from rate-aided schools; all schools should become Board schools, and personally I would give no public aid where any religion is taught, whether Papal, Anglican, or Nonconformist, during school hours. Secularism pure and simple is my motto in day-school education."

It is thus apparent that the Dissenters are divided, and unless the division is healed the Church will win an easy victory. The duty of Freethinkers is clear. They must uphold the flag of secular education, and they must do so in loyal co-operation with such of the Nonconformists as accept and support the principle. A big battle is looming before us. If the Church wins, priestcraft and dogma will secure a new lease of life. If the Church is beaten, we shall be within measurable distance of a public school system without a tincture of religion. The priest will then be relegated to the pulpit, and the child's mind will be freed from his cramping influence.

ACID DROPS.

Dr. Sisley, in the current number of the *Universal Review*, gives some remarkable reputed cures for influenza. Sir Monier Williams, for example, tells a story of the cure of a whole village by a Hindoo doctor, who assembled the people, and solemnly let loose a pair of scapegoats into a neighboring wood which was supposed to be infested by demons. This method is exactly equivalent to the one ordered by God in Leviticus xvi. for getting rid of sin. Yet the one would doubtless be ridiculed by Sir Monier Williams as an absurd superstition, while the other is extolled as divine.

The Oberammergau Passion Play, which is performed every ten years in commemoration of the village being spared from a pestilence, will be produced on Whit-Monday next, and already great preparations are being made for the influx of visitors which the event brings to the Tyrol. Joseph Mayer again plays the character of J. C., and is in Vienna to have his photo taken in a number of positions. What a pity it is the original J. C. cannot favor his admirers with a faithfully executed photograph

They would be probably considerably astonished to find he was a swarthy hook-nosed Jew.

The important character of Judas will this year be taken by a person, Johann Zwink by name, whose capable representation of St. John ten years ago shows his fitness for the more difficult, if not higher, rôle of the red-haired disciple. Mary the Virgin will be taken by Rosa Leng, and Magdalene by Amalia Deschlam, both new to their respective parts.

The Vicar of Clewer St. Stephen says "If a Bible accidentally falls, we always kiss it on picking it up." All the reverend gentleman has now to do is to sit and talk to the Bible. Then he might give daily performances in public, so that the world might learn the glorious upshot of a State Church, and the perfection to which Bibliolatry may be carried.

Modern Society is a little out in its reckoning. It finds that one shilling per day was allowed for the expenses of the Archbishop of St. Andrews, who was a prisoner at Winchester in 1307. This amount included the cost of a man servant and a boy, with a daily mass by the chaplain. Of course it could not have been done for a shilling at the present purchasing-power of money. Multiply the shilling by twenty, and we shall be much nearer the right figure. Still there is a big chasm between £365 a year and the £15,000 which it takes to keep the Archbishop of Canterbury out of heaven.

A minister once said he would have a good time in this world were he not afraid of going to hell. He was asked "Do you live an honest life simply because there are gaols?"

A man called on an artist the other day and inquired if he could paint him a picture of his father. "Yes" said the artist. "Where is your father?" "Why" replied the man "he's been dead this ten years." "Dead ten years! How can I paint him then?" "Well!" said the visitor "I thought there would be no difficulty about that, seeing as you have just painted a picture of Moses who died some thousands of years ago." The artist, seeing the sort of customer with whom he had to deal, agreed for a certain sum to paint the required picture, and when completed a day was fixed for its inspection. Uncovering the painting the artist showed his client what purported to be a likeness of his deceased parent. After mutely gazing a few minutes he asked "And is that my father?" "Yes" replied the painter. "Well, here's your money, but I never should 'a believed ten years would have made such a wonderful change."

The *British Weekly* is now discussing the question, "Does Christianity Forbid War?" Eighteen hundred years have not sufficed to unite Christendom on such a fundamental question as this, the truth being that texts can be found to suit either side of this or almost any other question. On the one hand J. C. is alleged to have said "Resist not evil"; and on the other, "Let him that hath no sword sell his garment and buy one."

The *Golden Gate* thus reviews the most recent joint production of the Theosophists at Landsdowne Road. "If there is any Atma-Buddhi, Manasic, eidolon among our readers, whose Kama-Rupa has not yet assimilated sufficiently with the higher triads to understand all about the Devachanic state, we advise him to come up out of Kama-loka, impregnate his Ego with the ideal efflorescence of the abstract and read the book."

The Bishop of Lincoln officiated on Sunday morning at St. Agnes Church, Kennington Park. There was a fine display of pious trumpery. Decorations were on an extensive scale, and six enormous fir trees occupied the arches of the three bays of the nave. A richly-gilded screen was also on view. There was incense, orientation at the "Glorias," and kneeling in the middle of the Creed, with ceremonial processions at the opening and the close of the service, the bishop and his clergy perambulating the Bethel accompanied by a retinue of acolytes, thurifers, crucifers and banner-bearers. If Bishop King goes on at this rate he will soon eclipse Barnum.

Fancy all this addle-headed nonsense being thought conducive to the salvation of souls! Fancy a God who feels pleased at seeing a grave, elderly episcopus gallivanting about a church like a master of the ceremonies at a Foresters' Feast! Still, we don't at all object to Bishop King carrying on in this fashion. On the contrary, we rather like it. It helps to bring the Church into discredit, and that helps on the cause of Disestablishment—and Disendowment!

The *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* is responsible for the statement that the Bishop of Newcastle sometimes goes about in disguise in order the better to oversee the souls of his diocese. Recently while travelling third class in somewhat seedy clerical garb he was accosted by a pitman. "'Ise suppose ye're a poor curate noo, travelling wi the likes o' us." "I once was" replied the bishop, "but—" "Oh ay," cried the other "I understand; that cursed drink. It brings many down of all sorts."

Some of our contemporaries must have learnt their arithmetic from the Bible instead of Colenso. They gravely tell us—even the *Speaker* does—that we have just entered on the last decade of the nineteenth century. Now 1891 begins the last decade, not 1890; just as 1901, not 1900, begins the twentieth century.

A story is appearing in the papers of two reverend gentlemen, both canons, riding in a third-class carriage in Wales. Finding a poor hawker of stockings in their compartment, they call a porter to turn him out, as they want a private conversation. The porter, of course, declines to do anything of the kind, and says the hawker has as much right there as the parsons. But the poor hawker, being much the finest gentleman of the three, offers to go to another compartment, and does so, leaving the sky-pilots to have their talk out and feel themselves a mean and contemptible brace of prigs.

The legal adviser of the Salvation Army is a blind man. What a pity it is that Booth can follow Jesus in nothing but hauling in the shekels. If he could only do the clay-and-spittle ointment trick, Dr. Ranger might soon have a pair of sound optics.

"Should the Clergy Smoke?" Such is the momentous question discussed in *Answers*. Cannon Farrar and Mr. Talmage are emphatic against the "noxious weed." On the other hand Mr. Spurgeon smokes the very best cigars that money can buy, and it is confidently remarked that if a poll of the parsons were taken, the immense majority would like to "go and do likewise." Some think the clergy are quite right to smoke at home, but that they weaken their influence if they appear smoking in public. Just fancy Jesus Christ puffing an Havannah while descending from the mountain, or whiffing at a churchwarden while ascending up to heaven.

Sarah Hawkrige, a charwoman, put forward her little daughter, something over six, as a witness in her favor at Bow Street Police Court. Being asked "What book do you call the Bible?" the child answered "The Prayer-book." Mr. Bridge then asked her "Who will punish you if you tell an untruth?" and the child answered "No one." The reply was perfectly accurate, in all probability, but the child's evidence was refused. Had she told a long, lying, silly rigmarole about Hell and the Devil, the magistrate would have treated her as a competent witness.

A Nottinghamshire parson, at a local Conservative dinner, has delivered himself in response to the toast of the "Bishop and Clergy" as follows:—If they looked back at what had been done during the past year they would find that nearly everything had improved except the Grand Old Man, and he was afraid he would never improve, for he had just received the following telegram from Hades:

Says the Devil, "This place is as full as can be,"

But I would like to make room if I can;

So he let Ananias and Judas go free,

And took in the Grand Old Man.

We do not presume to question the statement that this political parson is in direct communication with the locality in question, only he has forgotten that it is supposed to be ruled by the father of lies.—*Echo*.

We don't wonder at a parson's receiving telegrams from Hades, for the Devil and the clergy have always been good friends, at least under the rose. What we should like to see the parsons able to boast is a telegram from Heaven. They haven't had a message from that quarter for nearly two thousand years.

Rev. Dr. Alexander Whyte has been lecturing at Edinburgh on Imagination. Among other things, he said that the first and the last pages of the Bible were the fruit of imagination. Whoever penned the first chapter of Genesis, containing the account of Creation, it was from his imagination that he copied it. And this in Scotland, the land of orthodoxy and heresy-hunts! What is the world coming to?

There was no mistake about Talmage having the influenza when in London. He got friends to offer him a good round sum and to put out big bills announcing his sermon at Holborn Central Hall, and was then unable to put in an appearance.

Talmage when in the East was forced to give his testimony to the devoutness of Mohammedans. He says that not one in a hundred thousand Christians would venture in public places to demonstrate his religious faith in the manners customary to the followers of the false prophet.

The Rev. Walter Walsh of Rye Hill Baptist Chapel, seems to be one of the shuffling Christians, who try to preach a brand new doctrine under guise of the old faith. "Lecturing on "Some Mistakes of Unbelief," he is reported as saying "They might say, too, that, Darwin knew more of science than did Moses, and Herbert Spencer was a better preacher of ethics than was Jacob, and with that he agreed. But unbelievers did not attack so much the theology of to-day as that of a past age." Christian Theology, he wished unbelievers to notice, has been moving on. Yes it has, simply because science and criticism have been at its heels, and it has moved so rapidly with Mr. Walsh, that Jesus Christ himself would not recognise it. "He that believeth not shall be damned" was disingenuously explained by Mr. Walsh as meaning only condemned or judged, irrespective of the other passages in the gospels which prove the belief in everlasting fire. But Mr. Walsh preaches the gospel of treacle with all the brimstone left out.

This is what the *Reporter's Magazine* says:—"If you want to make journalism pay, have nothing whatever to do with any of the religious papers if you can help it, as the majority of them pay very niggardly, whilst one or two are downright frauds."

The Rev. C. Lloyd Engstrom at the clerical meeting at Islington said of the cursing Psalms. "They need not be supposed to express any personal vindictiveness, but rather the sense of outraged justice." When the man after God's own heart says of his enemy "Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off," etc. We must suppose this pious wish towards fatherless children is the outcome of the sense of outraged justice. What greater outrages are there on justice than these defences of the Christian Evidence advocates?

Another Atheist didn't commit suicide, or rather another Christian did. His name was Moses Glass, and he dwelt at Frome. In a letter to a friend, Mr. Rawlings, he wrote—"Good bye, God bless you, as I hope he will forgive me." Talmage please note.

"Lay not up to yourself treasures upon earth" was hardly the motto of the late Rev. Hy. G. Watkins, vicar of St. John's, Potter's Bar, the value of whose estate amounts to upwards of £251,000.

Signor Baldacchino, secretary to the Congregation of Charity, Rome, has disappeared, leaving defalcations amounting to about 15,000 francs. He was very pious and was chosen by good people as the means of distributing their benefactions.

Who's Griffiths? Well, she advertises in the *Church Times* for a girl's school where the birch is laid on well. Fancy such an advertisement in the *Freethinker*! It is the Christians who cling like limpets to every form of stupid brutality.

The *Jewish World* seeks to show that modern scientific views upon life and death can be made to fit in with the Genesis story, as thus. In the earliest epoch of history, when life was manifested in unicellular organisms, death was unknown. The simple creatures of those days propagated their kind, much as Adam before the fall, by painless division. At last an ambitious amoeba yearned for a more-complex structure, and with it came death and the struggle with natural selection. The result of this reconciliation of science and Genesis is, of course, to make Adam a unicellular organism. But this need trouble no lover of his Bible.

The *North West London Gazette* reports a smart attack by Mrs. Besant on the inspiration of the Bible in a lecture delivered at Milton Hall. The reporter finds one thing in her favor—she does not, like Mr. Foote, go "out of her way to revile the Creator." The reporter forgets that Mrs. Besant has now got a God, while Mr. Foote has none.

The reporter asks how it is, if Freethought is spreading, that our meeting-places are so few. He should remember that, under the existing law, Secularism cannot receive a legacy. If a legacy is left it—as in the case of Mr. Spencer of Manchester—the Christian law sets the legacy aside. Surely, after robbing us of what we should possess, it is rather hard to ask us where are the places we have built with it.

Mr. Bradlaugh asked the House of Commons to abolish this infamous law, but an overwhelming majority refused to do so. It is high time that Christians ceased robbing us. If they treated us with common honesty we could smile at their impertinent questions.

Chief Rabbi Adler died at Brighton on Tuesday morning. He was a tough specimen of his race, but he was not distinguished by any special service in the cause of progress. We believe the poor East-end Jews, who made a fight against sweating, did not succeed in gaining any of his sympathy. There is a more distinguished Dr. Adler in America, a man of liberal ideas and character, with whom the deceased Rabbi was sometimes confused in the public mind.

The Philistines have a hard grip on poor Ernest Parke, who is doing twelve months' imprisonment for "libelling" Lord Euston. No one acquainted with Mr. Parke will doubt his being animated by a high sense of duty, and we hope the agitation for a shortening or a mitigation of his sentence will be successful. We feel a special interest in Mr. Parke for he is a Secularist. He was down for a toast at both annual dinners of the London Secular Federation, although his press duties prevented his fulfilling the engagement.

Enterprising burglars broke into the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, Birmingham, on Monday night and rifled the poor box. We don't know what Cardinal Newman thinks of it but, in our opinion, the crime of the burglars was less in breaking into a church than in robbing the poor. We hope the rascals will be captured.

Cardinal Newman's last days ought not to be disturbed by such a miserable incident. He is the only Catholic dignitary for whom we have very much respect, and we have spent many an hour over his exquisite pages. We can imagine his lofty disdain of mere ecclesiastics like Manning. When that bigoted priest was shouting damnation at Mr. Bradlaugh, the great Cardinal at Birmingham refused to sign a petition against the admission of an Atheist to Parliament; saying, in his quiet, dignified way that he did not understand the fuss that was being made; he only knew of one oath, the Christian oath, and that was abolished when Jews were admitted to the House of Commons.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 26, Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell, 7.30, "An Hour with the Devil."

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.

J. B. P.—Cuttings are always welcome.

PETER.—Your verse is hardly up to the mark.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—A. Anderson, 5s.; J. Murray, 1s.; G. J. Judd, 1s.; J. Mosenthal, £1 1s.; C. H., £1. J. Crabtree, £1.

NORTH DEVON.—Yes, the second series of *Bible Heroes* will be bound up like the first. There was a break-down with the last two numbers, but we hope to have them ready again some time next week.

P. BRABAZON.—Thanks. Extracts are always welcome.

A. B. MOSS.—Always pleased to hear from you. We know the younger lecturers require encouragement, and we have always done our best to give it, without being very cordially seconded.

G. H. JUDD.—Glad to hear the *Freethinker* is selling well in your district. We have dealt with H. L. Hasting's lecture before. His footnote about Thomas Paine's deathbed is a lie, and his statement that Paine crawled into a drunkard's grave would be best answered, perhaps, by a blow on the mouth.

J. KEAST.—We thank you for your efforts to promote our sale. So long as newsagents are too timid or bigoted to do justice to this journal, we have a claim on the good offices of our readers, who, by lending the *Freethinker* about, are able to materially promote our circulation.

J. BURRELL.—See paragraph.

AMICUS says: "I have read your open letter to the Bishop of Peterborough with great satisfaction, and am circulating the pamphlet amongst my friends. I hope many other readers will go and do likewise."

C. H. KELF (Newcastle).—Canon Talbot's answer is disingenuous. The Jews at the time of Christ are supposed to have spoken a Syrian dialect, such as we have a fragment or two of in the Gospels. That they spoke Greek is an absurd statement. Josephus says his countrymen in Palestine were averse to learning any language but their own, and he himself—an educated man of leisure—mastered Greek with great difficulty.

JAMES HOOPER.—It would be impertinent to question the solidity of a veteran like yourself. We know what gallant work you did in the stormy days of old.

A. DOEG, secretary of the Liverpool Branch, writes:—"I hope to see in next week's *Freethinker* that you have suffered no ill effects from your journey here. On behalf of the Branch I beg to thank you for your valuable counsel, and sacrifice of personal comfort, in what seemed to us a moment of danger."

W. ELDER (Paisley).—Pleased to see your "fist" again. We don't know of any good book against Swedenborgianism. White's *Life of Swedenborg* is very plain-spoken on the subject of his madness.

A. HINDLEY.—Cuttings are always welcome.

IGNORAMUS.—(1) Mr. Holyoake's works in print can be ordered through Mr. Forder. (2) Yes. (3) Of course. (4) We don't know, unless the herding of children away from home breeds mischief. (5) Perhaps so. (6) Read the account of Socrates by Xenophon. (7) Jesus apparently meant that those who are interested in the things of this life are careless about the things of the next. (8) Yes. (9) Competitions without prizes are apt to be dull.

C. B. HYDE.—If you wish to join the N.W. London Branch you can do so any Sunday evening at Milton Hall. The general Secretary is Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C. We hope to see a large accession of members this year.

G. STANDRING acknowledges receipt of 2s. 6d. from C. Williams for the London Secular Federation.

C. H.—We shall be happy to receive your "occasional donation," and beg to thank you for helping to lighten the burden of conducting this journal.

STUPID AWE.—The lady's explanation of the barren fig-tree business is sheer nonsense. Besides, Scripture says "the time of figs was not yet." Anyhow, cursing a barren fig-tree is a queer game for a wise man to play, much more an all-wise God. If that young lady ever gets married, and has no children, she would hardly recognise the Lord's right to curse her for it.

SHANKS.—You ought to be happy with thirty Freethinkers on board your ship. Don't quarrel with the pious folk who come on board to convert you. They are deuced malicious when crossed, and poor Jack has few rights. When you have a collar round your neck you must go easy. Kick out now and then, when it is safe.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Reading Observer—North-Western Gazette—Menschenthum—Western Figaro—Evening Standard—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—La Verité—Bulletin des Sommaires—Fritankaren—Jewish World—Der Arme Teufel—Liberator—Leicester Daily Post—Referee—Newcastle Daily Leader—Child of the English Savage—Manchester Guardian—Philadelphia Sunday Item—Freethinkers' Magazine—Der Lichtfreund.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

SIR DAVID WEDDERBURN, who presided over the National Congress in Bombay, has arrived in England. He gives a very encouraging account of Mr. Bradlaugh's health, describing him as quite a changed man. We hope Mr. Bradlaugh's presence will soon corroborate this good news.

INSTEAD of being at home nursing himself, Mr. Foote was lecturing at Liverpool on Sunday. The afternoon audience was far from large, but the morning lecture was well attended, and in the evening the hall was very unpleasantly crowded. Mr. Foote did his best to re-assure the Branch. There does not appear the least danger of a prosecution at present. The police appear to see that they far exceeded their duty, and the idea of treating Free-thought lectures as "entertainments" under the local Act of 1889 is simply preposterous. But whatever follies the authorities may commit, the Branch will assert its rights, and will be supported by the whole Freethought party. Mr. Foote's remarks on this point were lustily applauded.

THERE are some able young men connected with the Liverpool Branch, well fitted to occupy the platform. Mr. Foote urged upon them, as well as upon the older members, the advisability of forming a South Lancashire Secular Federation for local purposes. It is to be hoped that this project will be matured during the summer, and carried into effect in the autumn. Mr. Foote promises all the help in his power, and ample publicity shall be afforded in our columns.

THOMAS PAINE'S birthday will be celebrated next Wednesday evening at the London Hall of Science. Messrs R. O. Smith and G. Standring, on behalf of the Secular Federation, have provided a good entertainment, and Mr. Foote will deliver a brief address on the author of the *Age of Reason* and the *Rights of Man*. Dancing will begin at 11 o'clock. The tickets are one shilling each, and the profits will accrue to the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, which is in a sad state of depletion. There ought to be a big gathering.

OUR readers are again invited to circulate Mr. Foote's exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's "Converted Atheist." The articles that appeared in the *Freethinker* are reprinted, with a Prologue and an Epilogue, at the lowest possible price of one penny. One gentleman, living near the headquarters of the Wesleyan Sisterhood, has taken five dozen copies for distribution. Mr. Forder will supply quantities at trade price to private purchasers.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—We have received the following—A. Anderson, 5s.; Lover of Liberty, £1 10s.; H. E. L., £1; A Friend, 10s.; A Radical, £2.

MR. R. FORDER acknowledges receipt of the following—J. Mosenthal, £1 1s.; F. Goodwin, 2s. 6d.; J. H. Powe, 2s. 6d.; H. Abbott, 1s.; J. Roos, 1s.; F. Roos, 1s.; J. Robinson, 1s.; C. H. G., 6d.; A. C. G., 6d.; S. Hartman, 5s.; A. Watts, 2s. 6d.

WE have just received a long letter from Captain Otto Thomson. He thanks us for keeping the Swedish persecutions before the Freethinkers of England, and says that the help we are sending is putting new courage into the veins of the gallant little band of heroes who are holding up the flag of the *Fritankeren*. Already their cause is attracting the quiet support of some influential people in Sweden, and letters of sympathy are coming in from the leading Freethinkers of America.

The *Reading Observer* gives a very admirable report of Mr. Foote's recent lecture in the Assembly Room. It also reports a lecture on the following evening by the great Barber of Northampton. This worthy could not help seeing that Mr. Foote had spoken like a gentleman to everybody's satisfaction; so he explained it on the ground that Mr. Foote was "feeling his way." "Wait till he is successful here," said Barber, "and then you will hear some terribly strong language." Well, if Mr. Foote tempered the wind to the shorn lamb, he showed himself a dexterous propagandist.

WHO on earth employed this ignoramus of a Barber to hold forth at Reading? According to the *Observer* report he opened his mouth as follows:—"The New Testament could not have been written in any other age than the first century, because the language of the New Testament ceased to be spoken after the destruction of Jerusalem." Gods and little fishes! What does the man mean?

MR. FOOTE'S lecture at Reading resulted in the formation of a Branch of the National Secular Society, which was started on Sunday evening with seventeen members. We believe the Branch will double its strength in a month or two.

J. MORISON DAVIDSON is contributing a series of "Apostles of Democracy" to the *Weekly Dispatch*. The second, which appeared last week, was on Thomas Paine. Mr. Davidson deals fairly with Paine's religious views, and denounces the humbugs who tried to convert him on his death-bed, and who, having failed to do so, bespattered his memory with slander. A generous tribute is also paid to gallant old Edward Truelove.

A CORRESPONDENCE has been taking place in the *Wigan Examiner* on the contentions between Papists and Protestants on the true Catholic religion, the Immaculate Conception, etc. We are pleased to notice that J. K. Tomlinson has struck in, and in smiting the old Romish Church he aims some pretty severe blows at Christianity itself.

VOLUME II. of *The Life, Labors, and Times of Robert Owen*, by the late Lloyd Jones, brought out under the superintendence of Mr. Malcolm Lloyd Jones, will shortly be published by Swan Sonnenschien and Co.

MR. J. CLARKE, our latest recruit on the platform, is to lecture at Liverpool on February 23, and he is anxious to spend a fortnight lecturing in the neighborhood. The South Lancashire towns would do well to engage his services. Mr. Clarke is not exorbitant. He only wants to live, in order to work.

MR. A. B. MOSS lectures in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, to-day (Jan. 26). He will be happy to see old friends and meet new ones. Mr. Moss is a zealous propagandist and deserves support.

THE Rev. W. Walsh delivered the first of his course of lectures on Sunday afternoon in the Nelson Street Lecture Hall, Newcastle. There was over an hour's discussion, and the Secularists are delighted with the result. The Branch is trying to bring about a debate between Mr. Foote and Canon Talbot.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—We have received the following: A. Cooper, 2s. 6d.; Amicus, 2s. 6d.; R. Bell, 5s.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY:—Mr. Ely, 6d.; W. T. Leekey, 3s.; W. J. Woillaume, 5s. and box of sweets; a box of sweets from R. A. Cooper, Norwich.—R. Forder.

THE Camberwell Branch is going to have a Children's Party on February 12. Subscriptions and donations of articles for the Christmas Tree will be gratefully received by the new secretary, Mr. W. Lappage.

A NEW and fine crematorium has been erected at Zurich, where we learn the cost of five burials will only be ten shillings. The movement does not progress so rapidly in France as we should fancy, judging from a list of only twenty-one, eleven men and ten women, who were cremated from January to October last year. It takes time to break down old customs, and no doubt a change of feeling upon the subject of burial is going on both in England and on the Continent.

I HAVE seen bodies cremated at the crematorium at Milan, and there is absolutely nothing repulsive in the process. I made up my mind to be cremated directly I had seen "how it was done." One can look forward with a certain amount of pleasure to spending one's time till the day of the trumpet-call as a nice little parcel of clean white ashes in a nice clean urn, but there is something repellent in the idea of passing a few centuries in a damp vault—merely a packing-case of corruption. "Tinned corpse" is an abomination, and the time has come to say so. We can only hurry cremation on by ceasing to mince our words about the present loathsome and pestilential system of human interment.—G. R. Sims in *Referee*.

WE read that the Rev. F. H. Stead, a congregational minister of Leicester, brother to the editor of *The Review of Reviews*, has resigned in order to devote a year to systematic reading and research. But for the fact that his modesty has been so well advertised, we should have a word of praise for Mr. Stead. We hope his study will be thorough, and that we shall henceforth congratulate him upon the result as we do now upon having escaped the shackles of the ministry.

THE *Freidenker* of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, issues an almanac with its number for Jan. 7. The *Freidenker* can be commended to all readers of German as full of interesting readable matter.

WE are glad to notice that the portrait of Mr. H. L. Green, the editor, adorns the January number of the *Freethinkers' Magazine*. Mr. Green is a long bearded man with a good head and keen, thoughtful, American face. There are also portraits of Miss Helen H. Gardener, the lecturers, and Miss Ira C. Craddock, the new secretary of the American Secular Union. Views of the medallion portraits of Palearia, Sarpi, Vanini, and Campanella, which adorn the Bruno monument, are also given. The literary contents include a lecture by Col. Ingersoll; "Religion or no Religion?," an open letter to H. O. Pentecost by A. B. Bradford; an able article on "The Pharaoh of the Exodus," by Prof. A. L. Rawson, who holds there is no proof the Jews were ever in Egypt, Reminiscences by Lucy Colman, and other interesting articles.

THE San Francisco Freethought Publishing Company is fairly started. *Freethought* has removed to new and larger premises, No. 838 Howard Street, San Francisco.

MISS SUSAN H. WIXON, editor of the "Children's Corner" of the New York *Truthseeker* and a writer in the *Boston Investigator*, has recently been elected to the School Board of Fall River, Massachusetts, her opponent being a popular Episcopal minister.

MR. SYMES has begun in the *Liberator* what promise to be important articles on "The Roman Catacombs." He points out the absurdity of supposing that a persecuted people, as the early Christians are said to have been, being allowed to excavate 350 miles of galleries, and shows that

the symbols found in the Catacombs are rather Pagan than peculiarly Christian.

WE are delighted to hear from the *Liberator* that our Sydney friends will lay the foundation stone of their handsome new hall in Campbell Street in the present month of January. Mr. Collins and the Sydney friends are to be congratulated. There is no doubt Secularism has a large future before it in all the colonies.

THE French Federation of Freethinkers have started a monthly Bulletin, which may be obtained from the Secretary, 6 Rue de Jarente. We notice that the full report of the Paris International Conference, Sept. 15—20, 1889, is now in the press. It will consist of a volume of 320 pages and be published at two francs.

WE are glad to notice from *La Verité* that there is a decided improvement in the organisation of French Freethinkers, owing to the impulsion given by the Congress of September last.

MR. SAM STANDRING debated on Monday and Tuesday at Liverpool with Mr. George Wise of the Christian Evidence Society. The subject was Atheism, there were good audiences, and we hear that Mr. Standring gave great satisfaction to the Secular side.

PARSONS PULL THE STRINGS.

According to the codes issued by the Education Department, the religious opinions of any candidate for the post of a school teacher under a School Board are not to be inquired into when seeking employment. Yet the following advertisements appear in an educational contemporary:—

EMBERTON SCHOOL BOARD.—WANTED, 25th of March or earlier, a Certificated MASTER. Member of Church of England preferred.

GADDESBY SCHOOL BOARD.—WANTED immediately, for a Small Mixed School, a First Class Certificated MISTRESS. Must be Musical and able to play a small Organ in Church.

This shows how the Churchmen abuse their positions as Board School Managers.—*Star*.

WHAT DID HE DO WITH THEM?

A stranger in clerical garb, after looking in the window of Mr. Bunton, Banbury, walked into the shop and inquired how many copies of the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* (some of which were exhibited in the window) he had. Mr. Bunton replied, "About forty." "How much are they?" inquired the priest. "They are threepence per copy," was the reply. "I will take them," said the priest. No sooner said than done; the window was cleared of the three copies there were in it, and after muttering a few words, in which "Ought to be burnt" were clearly distinguishable, the priest walked off with his good-sized parcel of *Freethinkers*, and Mr. Bunton had the money to send for a fresh supply. He hopes to find a few more customers like this one.

OBITUARY.

It is my painful duty to record the death of Mr. William Perry, member of the Westminster Branch, N. S. S. He contracted Influenza which turned to rapid consumption. His end was very peaceful. His wish was that the Secular Service should be read at his grave. The interment took place on Tuesday afternoon the 14th, inst. at Kensal Green Cemetery. Mr. F. Haslam conducted the funeral service and read the beautiful words of the oration for the dead in an impressive and solemn manner. There were present members of the Branch, also from the political club of which the deceased was a member. The late Mr. Perry was a most zealous and earnest worker, always endeavoring to further the cause at every opportunity, and won the respect of all he came in contact with. For the last two years he had travelled with the Home Rule Van having visited every county in England. He leaves a widow (equally earnest) and two daughters to mourn his loss.—J. BURRELL.

I have just received a notification of the death of a staunch Atheist, Mr. Andrew Feeny, of Stranraer. He was one of the promoters of the Ulster Branch of the National Secular Society, and has been a steady member and supporter since its formation. He was originally a Roman Catholic, and he left that creed through becoming convinced by earnest thought that it was not the friend of truth and humanity, and that its promises were greater than their hopes of realisation. Mr. Feeny had been ailing for a considerable time before his decease, but his convictions were in no way shaken, and he died an Atheist.—W. KNOX (Sec. Ulster Branch N. S. S.)

WHERE IS HE?

Where is the God of tradition,
Who rules the whole world by his will,
And calms the storm and the tempest?
Is he here? Alive? Is he real?

What does he—this God you worship?
Does he soothe your sorrow and fear?
Are the wrongs and ills all righted?
When you pray, is he quick to hear?

Where is he?—God, who loves justice?
Is not nature shamed by the name?
Are the honest e'er successful?
Aren't intrigue and scheming the game?

Is he not found in the dollar,
Whose impress the people adore?
By which some are highly favored,
Though vile in their hearts, to the core?

Has he gone to some mystic land?
Has he left this world and its care?
Or is he a name; no person?
A delusive belief, a snare?

In name we call all men brothers,
Yet rob them on every hand;
Keep from them nature's endowment:
A right to the use of the land.

Our laws are made for the robbers,
Who plunder and legally steal;
Live on the earth's best fruition—
Do naught for humanity's weal.

Oh, Thought! Thou mighty exponent!
Oh, Mind! Thy good work has begun!
Some wrongs e'en now thou hast righted,
But yet remains, much to be done.

HENRY BIRD.

THOSE POOR MISSIONARIES.

From the *West End Review* we extract the following:—
Harrowing pictures are drawn of the perils and sacrifices which fall to the foreign missionary's lot. There is no class of self-denying divines which should have such a claim on our pennies as those evangelists who are without script or purse. Here is a deserving case:—

Preliminary Notice.—We are instructed by the Rev. H. R. Pigott (who is leaving the island) to sell at his residence, Baptist Mission House, Maradana, on Saturday, 7 Dec., 1889, all his excellent household furniture, mostly in nandun and satinwood, made to order. Handsome lamps, glass and china ware, rattan matting, cooking-stove, and general effects. Choice ferns and flowers in pots, several fine milch cows, bulls, and calves; a light pony dogcart, English and other choice poultry, &c. Also (if not previously sold) a large American organ (Mason and Hamlin's) fit for a church.—J. Auwardt and Co., Auctioneers.—*Advertisement from a Ceylon newspaper.*

AN INNOCENT.

Ever since the occasion on which the late Lord Beaconsfield wrote an important letter and dated it "Holy Thursday," there has been a craze for adopting this ecclesiastical nomenclature. A properly-brought-up parson, therefore, when he writes to one of his flock, heads his letter say, "Feast of Saint Port Winus," and the docile sheep commences his reply with, say, "Feast of Saint Barebones the Martyr." So thoroughly has this habit become ingrained, that it showed itself quite unexpectedly at the close of a recent watch night service, when a young and heavily moustached pastor was bidding good-bye to the tender ewe lambs of his fold. "Yes," said the pastor, "we have had a glorious Advent, a bright and happy Christmas Day, and now I wish you a happy New Year." "Thanks, thanks," exclaimed the gushing of his young lady adorers. "And I'm sure we all hope you will have a jovial Circumcision—and many of them." The curate trembled violently; but he was equal to the occasion, for he replied, "Ah, you have forgotten the Innocents' Day, and (aside) I fancy you're one of them."

Fanny Emma Harvey, a lady residing at Marlborough Crescent, Bedford Park, when charged with using threats to the Rev. Ernest Kevill Davies of Longridge Road, Earl's Court, stated that the prosecutor's father the Rev. Kevill Davies seduced her while preparing her for confirmation.

THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA.

By HUGH O. PENTECOST.

*Delivered at New York, Sunday, December 15, 1889.
(Concluded from p 28.)*

A GREAT deal is said against long-faced Presbyterian ministers, but I declare to you that a Presbyterian minister who is *not* long-faced shows that he does not believe in his creed, in which case he is a deceiver and a humbug; or else that he does believe it and can still be jolly, in which case he is a loathsome monster.

Calvinism is a horrible doctrine, but it grows out of the belief in a personal God by logical necessity. Because it is horrible Presbyterians are beginning to shrink from it, but because it is logical they do not know what to do with it. And this is their dilemma.

If you will have a personal God he must be a devil. It was the logical necessity of this that led to the invention of the devil, who is simply a bad God upon whom all the ugly things may be blamed. But I leave it to any thinking person to decide whether the devil isn't a gentleman beside the Presbyterian God. It is no use to talk about putting a God of love in place of Calvin's God. The theory will not work. It does not fit the facts. There is no use to talk about there being a good God while popes and archbishops live in palaces, supported by servant girls and sewer cleaners; while Christian villains are in office and good Atheists are in prisons; while rotten men are millionaires and pure women are paupers. There may be a bad God, but there is certainly not a good one. The question that is up for decision is whether there is a Calvinist God or none. There is no logical middle ground. The great thought battle is on, and if the world gives up its Divine Monster it must go on to Agnosticism.

But the funniest thing imaginable is to observe how the Presbyterians are going to settle this question about their creed. They are going to settle it by majority vote. A number of doctors of divinity—the thing is sick enough, in all conscience, to need doctoring—are going to come together and decide whether there are any non-elect infants in hell or not. And they are going to decide it by vote! If ninety-nine Presbyterians say the infants are in hell and a hundred say they are not, why, then they are not. Facts manufactured by a vote of the majority! If I owned a marble statue that couldn't see the fun of that, I'd break it all up.

I can understand how a majority can make a minority do something. Because they possess the necessary power. But I cannot understand how a thing that is not true becomes true by a majority vote, or how a thing that is true becomes not true by a majority vote. How perfectly absurd the whole thing is. Some two hundred and fifty years ago the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church into all truth, taught the Westminster divines all that is in the famous confession. And now the same Holy Spirit is about to tell the Presbyterians of to-day that he was only joking then in what he said about heathens and infants being damned. Why, one of the Presbyteries has already decided, by vote, that only non-elect adults go to hell—that there are no non-elect infants. They say nothing about the exact age at which the non-elect person is in danger. But that was, no doubt, an oversight. They might have specified, as well as not. All they need is a majority vote to decide it. And now the interesting query arises as to whether the vote of this Presbytery settles the question or whether we shall have to wait for more returns.

I suppose it is not in very good taste to joke about such things, but, really, if there were not a funny side to it, I should lose my temper, or else burst into tears, over what seems to me to be one of two things: hopeless idiocy or shameless hypocrisy. And yet I suppose there are persons among the Presbyterians to whom it appears quite possible to create facts by a majority vote.

But there is one thing this voting does. It offers the tangible evidence that what I am always telling you is true. It shows you at a glance that every church is simply a machine for the management of religious politics. A creed is not meant to be a declaration of what is true. It is the formulation of a number of compromise statements upon which the religious politicians are willing to agree, and it is therefore, necessarily, *not true*. The Westminster Confession was framed for the purpose of uniting several parties in the Church. Every other creed is formed for the same purpose. A creed is to the Church exactly what a platform is to a political party. The Church is nothing more nor less than

a religious political party. In the Catholic Church things are settled in the star chamber, because that Church is a monarchy. In the Protestant Church things are prepared in a caucus and settled in a convention, because that Church is a republic. The Church has its office holders chosen from among the clergy, and the clergy constitute a set of politicians, as ambitious, as scheming, as timeserving, as dishonest, as tricky, as any other set of politicians in the world.

Look at them as they sat in the Metropolitan Opera House a few evenings ago, almost within arm's length of the suffering poor, spending two hours over a course dinner, talking and laughing gaily, while an orchestra gave them music, and strains from the German opera in the main room of the building floated in upon them. After such a dinner, in such a place, the reverend politicians arose and began to discuss, in witty speeches, whether the heathen and non-elect infants are really damned through all eternity or not. And by and by they will decide that the Church has been teaching lies for two hundred and fifty years, and will start out with a fresh political platform, and declare that everybody will be damned who believes the old and does not believe the new creed.

How can sensible people have any reverence for such an institution? How can you fail to see that it was against such hypocrisy, such Phariseism, that noble Jesus flung himself in scorn and hatred? How can you fail to see that one of the things that makes life worth living is the privilege of fighting against this organised hypocrisy, this infamous debaser of the mind, that has created a God who is the scandal of the world and will not give him up, if by any skill of platform making he can be kept upon his cruel throne?—*Twentieth Century*.

THE DEVIL HAS THE BEST OF IT.

A WRITER in the New York *Sun* has been figuring up an approximate estimate of the population of hell. He finds in round numbers the earth has a population of 1,300,000,000, of whom 300,000,000 are professed Christians, the other 1,000,000,000 being Mohammedans, Buddhists, Jews, pagans, and heathen. The whole race was condemned to eternal punishment for the sin of Adam, from the consequences of which there is no redemption save in the blood of Christ. Biblical chronology gives the earth a period of 6,000 years. From Adam's time to Christ was 4,000 years, during which period no human souls were saved. The population may then have averaged 1,000,000,000. Three generations, or 3,000,000,000, pass away in each century. Forty centuries, therefore, consigned 120,000,000,000 of men to eternal fire, and, for all we know, they are there now. In the 1,900 years which have elapsed since the birth of Christ 57,000,000,000 more of human beings have lived and died. If all the Christians, nominal and real, who have ever lived on the face of the earth have been saved, they would not number more than eighteen thousand millions. Now, if we deduct this latter number from the grand total of one hundred and seventy-seven thousand millions, we find one hundred and fifty-nine thousand millions of souls who are suffering the torments of hell fire, as against the eighteen thousand millions who have escaped. But this is not the whole truth. Nobody believes that more than ten per cent. of the professed Christians are saved. Calvinists themselves say that the elect are few. If this is a fact, heaven contains but eighteen hundred millions, against a population in hell of one hundred and seventy-five thousand millions. But what a horrible scheme of theology it is that thus crowds a place of eternal torment!

PROFANE JOKES.

Rev. Mr. Poser: "I defy you to give me a single reason why the Apostles should not be believed." Mr. Incredulous: "They were fishermen."

"Eh, mon," exclaimed an elder, in a tone of pathetic recollection, "our late minister was the man! He was a poorful preacher, for in the short time he delivered the word among us, he knocked three pulpits to pieces and danged the guts out o' five Bibles!"

The judgment of Solomon was attempted by a Transatlantic judge recently. Two women claimed the same negro baby. The puzzled judge seized the baby, pulled the bowie-knife from his belt, and proposed to halve the child, with the unexpected result that both claimants rushed forward, exclaiming, "Boss, don't kill him; you may have him yourself."

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, "Proposal of a Society for the Reformation of the Upper Classes."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "An Hour with the Devil."
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road N.W., 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "Three Bible Stories Astronomically Explained."
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 11.15, W. Heaford, "The Bishop of Peterborough's Repudiation of Christianity"; 7.15, Capt Pfoe des, "Buddhism." Social evenings every Tuesday. Debates every Friday at 7.30.
 Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N, 7, Mr. J. B. Coppock, "The Origin of the Present Phase of the Universe."
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3.15, Mr. A. Eagle will open a public discussion on "Christ's Sermon on the Mount." Admission free; all are invited.
 Edmonton Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, S. Standring, "The Present Crisis in the N. S. S."
 Old Southgate—Cromwell Hall, 7, J. Rowney, "The Resurrection."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, Mr. S. Standring, "The Salvation Army."
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms" Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road, 7.30, Mr. E. T. Garner, "The Lord's Prayer."
 West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, G. Cave-Hill, "Monism"; 7, Robert Forder, "Signs of the Zodiac, Part II."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Mr. A. B. Moss, 11, "What do Christians Believe?"; 3, "Old Souls in New Bodies"; 7, "The Mission of Freethought."
 Derby.—Meeting at British Oak, Carrington Street, for Report and return of tickets of Paine Anniversary.
 Glasgow—Ramshorn Hall, 122 Ingram Street, 2, Annual Meeting to receive Report, elect office-bearers, etc.: 6.30, Soiree and Concert in memory of Robert Burns.
 Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 3, Mr. Henderson, "Pygmalion and Galatea;" to be followed by a tea and social evening.
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, 11, Committee Meeting Tontine Society; 7, Mr. E. Stanley Jones, "Nature and Law."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, 3, the Rev. Walter Walsh, "The Bible, and How to Read it." Soiree's rooms, 4 Hall's Court, 11. Meeting of Sunday Music League; 7, an important business meeting of Members.
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, Graham Wallas, 11, "The Historical Abandonment of *Laissez Faire*;" 7, "The True Radical Policy."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

Mr. A. B. Moss, 44 Creden Road, London, S.E.—Jan. 26, Birmingham. Feb. 2, Manchester; March 2, Woolwich. April 12, Camberwell. May 25, Regent's Park.
 E. TOLLEMAN GARNER, 8 Heyworth Street, Stratford, London, E.—Jan. 26, Woolwich. Feb. 23, Woolwich. March 9, Woolwich; 23, Woolwich; 30, Westminster.
 MR. JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—Feb. 2, Hull; 16, Birmingham.
 E. STANLEY JONES, 53 Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool—Feb. 9, Sheffield; 23, Huddersfield.

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