

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MR. BRADLAUGH HOME AGAIN.

MR. BRADLAUGH is home again. He is looking decidedly better and has put on some flesh. But he is far from being his old self. It is a pity he could not take a three months' instead of a six weeks' trip. He has his reasons for returning just now to the land of liberty—and rain and fog; but it will be a dreadful pity if he goes to work and overtaxes his strength. He has the temperament of a man of action, and it must be hard for him to lie idle; yet his life is far too precious to waste, and we earnestly hope he will champ the bit, however impatiently, instead of starting off for the racecourse. Let him run when his strength comes back, and he will take many a prize before he retires from the field.

What struck us as most hopeful was the genial animation of Mr. Bradlaugh's face as he greeted us in his library on Tuesday. He was in good spirits, and that is half the battle. His trip had been a pleasant one, his reception in India was magnificent and touching, and he was naturally proud of the mementoes of his visit to dusky Ind. A beautiful rug lay on the floor; a fine shawl for Mrs. Bonner, sent by an Indian in memory of his own mother, hung from the back of a chair; and near by was a splendid silk turban, meant to give the "member for India" the appearance of a full-blown oriental. But these are only trifles. The principal things—caskets and other articles in silver and gold—had not yet arrived. They were being cleared, happily at the expense of the Indian Agency, and were coming on in a day or two. Mr. Bradlaugh has arranged to have them on view in the minor hall, upstairs, on February 16. Judging from the inventory, made out by Parsees in a good clerky hand, they will be well worth seeing. They will afterwards go to Northampton for inspection by Mr. Bradlaugh's constituents.

Now Mr. Bradlaugh has, for the first time in his life, a collection of plate, he will feel a new anxiety. Burglars don't go for books, but plate!—there is a fascination in the very word. Oh the lumpy feel of the swag, and the joys of the melting pot! Mr. Bradlaugh will have to keep a good strong safe, and sometimes down at the House, about two-o'clock in the morning, he will say to himself "I hope the plate's all right"

Lecturing is out of the question with Mr. Bradlaugh for some time—no one knows how long. He has managed to cancel everything but an engagement at St. James's Hall, Manchester, which he will therefore fulfil. It is a mistake, however, if Mr. Bradlaugh will pardon our saying so. He ought not to go through the ordeal of three lectures in a monster hall in one day. If the engagement must be kept, we hope the lectures will be reduced to two.

Freethinkers will be pleased to see "the plate" on February 16, but ever so much more pleased to see Mr. Bradlaugh. Hearing about him is all very well, but they want to see him face to face. And it will be an eventful meeting. The old general—old in service at least—will bid farewell to the army. Fate

beckons him away, and he must lay down the leadership. Would that it might be otherwise, but "there is no struggling against fate." The parting will be pathetic to both sides. Let it not be supposed, however, that Mr. Bradlaugh leaves us in any other sense than as our active leader. His sympathies will be with us, he will share our convictions, he will rejoice in our success, he will remain a member of our Society, he will advise us in our difficulties, and he will stand by us in any dark hour of persecution. This mitigates the pang of separation. We lose our leader, but only as a leader; not as a friend, not as a comrade, not as a counsellor; and though he cannot, alas, ride at our head, we can still say, "He is ours."

SACRED STONES.

THE essay of Mr. Grant Allen, in the January number of the *Fortnightly Review*, on "Sacred Stones" deserves more attention than has hitherto been accorded it, as an attempt to illustrate a large and important chapter in the history of early religion, and especially as a theory of the origin of Jehovah the God of the Jews.

One fault we find at the outset. By refusing to discuss the phallic theory Mr. Allen spoils his own case. He not only loses the powerful support of the rite of circumcision, but leaves it unexplained how the worship of a stone became one of the most advanced cults of antiquity. But Mr. Allen has before now expressed his disinclination for martyrdom. We appreciate his reserve, and allow his right to refuse to enter into the question, but deny his reason given that it is "not cognate to our present inquiry."

We can understand how a stone, or a cairn set up simply as a memorial of a burial place might on that account be invested with sacred character and be supposed to be the peculiar residence of the departed spirit and the proper place to make it offerings. No doubt this is sufficient explanation of a large part of stone-worship. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence of conical stones being worshipped as creative and considered as presiding over generation. The stone pillars of Baal and the wooden Asherah cones, the chief objects of adoration among the Phœnicians are usually held to be of phallic character. It is unquestionable that the Jews at one time worshipped Baal (see Hosea ii., 16; Jud. vi., 32), the substitution *bosheth*—in the names of Ishbosheth, Jerubbosheth, and Mephibosheth for Eshbaal, Meribaal, and Jerubbaal—signifying sexual shame. The place where the ark stood was indeed called Baale, or place of Baal (2 Sam. vi., 2; 1 Chron., xiii., 6.)

That the early Semites were, in part, stone worshippers, will not be denied by any competent scholar. It is indeed admitted by a reviewer in the *Jewish World*, who, nevertheless, terms Mr. Allen's attempt to trace Jahveh to the ancestral fetish stone of the people of Israel "mental myopia."

This worship, in fact, lay so deep that Mohammed was unable to eradicate it, as every year's pilgrimage

to the Kaaba or black stone at Mecca testifies. The denunciations of the Jewish prophets, and the rectifications of the Jewish scribes were unable to erase it. In the story of Jacob's pillar we have an evident trace of stone-worship. The pillar itself was anointed by the patriarch (Gen. xxviii., 18), and the pillar itself, not the spot on which it stood, is called Bethel "the house of God." The very name shows that the stone was supposed to be the residence of a creative spirit. Dr. Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, p. 187, says, "it seems clear that the altar is a differentiated form of the primitive rude stone pillar." A similar practice of anointing stones, known as Baetylia, prevailed in Phœnicia according to Philo Byblius, and exactly the same anointing of the Linga is performed in India at the present day.

Mr. Allen points out that:—

"Samuel judged Israel every year at Bethel, the place of Jacob's sacred pillar; at Gilgal, the place where Joshua's twelve stones were set up; and at Mizpeh, where stood the cairn surmounted by the pillars of Laban's covenant. He, himself, 'took a stone and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen;' and its very name, Ebenezer, 'the stone of help,' shows that it was originally worshipped before proceeding on an expedition, though the Jehovistic gloss, 'saying Hitherto the Lord hath helped us,' does its best, of course, to obscure the real meaning. It was to the stone circle of Gilgal that Samuel directed Saul to go down, saying 'I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings.' It was at the cairn of Mizpeh that Saul was chosen king; and after the victory over the Ammonites, Saul went once more to the great Stonehenge at Gilgal to 'review the kingdom,' and 'There they made Saul king before Jahveh in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jahveh.'"

This last passage, as Mr. Allen points out, is very instructive, as showing that in the opinion of the writer, Jahveh was then domiciled at Gilgal.

There is no doubt the wandering Jews, like other nomads, carried their god about with them. Sometimes he was set up at Shiloh, sometimes at Baale. But the ark of the testimony (*Eduth* or significant thing) was his peculiar abode. This ark or travelling box of the Jewish god was *taboo*. It was taken into battle and relied upon for victory. When the Philistines saw it they said "A God is come into the camp" (1 Samuel iv., 7) When they captured the ark it gave them a secret disease. Although the scribes, as Mr. Allen says, evidently ashamed of the early worship they had outlived, protest somewhat vehemently more than once "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when Jahveh made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt;" yet this much at least even they admit, that the object or objects concealed in the ark consisted of a sculptured stone or stones; and that to dance or sing before this stone or these stones was equivalent to dancing or singing before the face of Jahveh.

When Jahveh, from being carried about in a box, got a house of his own, all its distinctive features were Phœnician.* What the Phœnician temples were like, Lucian tells us in his treatise on the goddess of Syria. The great pillars, the ornamentation of palm trees, pomegranites, and the lotus work of Solomon's joss-house were all Phœnician and all phallic.† Solomon himself "went after Ashtoreth" (1 Kings xi., 5) and built the mount of corruption for that "abomination of the Zidonians" (2 Kings xxiii., 13). We know how continually, despite the maledictions of the prophets, the people resorted to

Baal and Asherah worship. We read (1 Kings xv., 13, Revised Version) that Maachab, the queen mother of Asa, "made an abominable image for an Asherah." This the Vulgate translated Priape.

Isaiah lvii., 6, referred to the custom of worshipping stones, and Jeremiah plainly indicates the phallic view, saying, "the people said to a stock (pillar) Thou art my father, and to a stone (cteis) Thou hast brought me forth" (ii., 27), and further that they defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with stocks (iii., 9), (see too Ezek. xvi., 17). In the old hymn, known as the song of Moses, embodied in Deuteronomy xxxii., God is frequently called *Tsur*, "The Rock which begat thee, etc." Professor Robertson Smith allows that the two pillars Jachin and Boaz, "The Stabliher" and "In him is strength," "were doubtless symbols of Jehovah," (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 191.) Taking these things in conjunction with the rite of circumcision and the evidence that the bull was a symbol of Jahveh, that he presided over the opening of the womb, and that sacred prostitution was practised by Jews as well as by the Phœnicians and Babylonians, we think there is some reason for concluding not only that the original object of worship by the Jews was a sacred stone, but also that that stone partook of a phallic character.

J. M. WHEELER.

AN OLD TALE

WHICH HAS BEEN TOLD BEFORE.

Mary had a little lamb, such lambs have been before,
But this one, so says sacred history,
(The first often is) was quite a mystery.
A mystery, "not too deep," indeed,
"Just deep enough" to start a creed,
Which being opposed to sense and reason,
To doubt it is most awful treason. Such creeds have been before.

The babe was born, as babies are, much as they were before,
And Herod sent his men of war,
To "scrag" the bairnies near and far,
And though so very well connected,
As this one could not be protected,
Warned by an angel to decamp,
Joe and "the missis" went on tramp. Such tramps have been before.

The child grew up. Its nothing new. Small boys grew up before.
Little is known of good or bad
About the simple village lad.
The youth, too, was kept from public view,
Biding his time to "fetch" the Jew.
The man cured fits, healed blind and lame,
In fact went through "the same old game" all prophets played before.

He cursed a fig-tree, branch and root. No one did that before—
But no one, save a daft "galoot."
At the wrong time would look for fruit.
He turned the water into wine,
And turned the devils into swine;
He stole a "moke" to meet his need,
He rode the fiery untamed steed, which no man rode before.

Leading a mob, a rabble rout, such mobs have been before,
He gave them, once! a good blow out,
That they might stay to hear him "spout"
Of Justice, which never interferes,
Mercy, which strikes through endless years,
Love, which unpitying marks our tears,
Love, that sees hunger, anguish, gloom,
Love, that relentless fixed his doom, thousands of years before.

He died! 'Twas a pious, savage age. It won't occur again.
Fanatics may prate, and priests may rage,
The growing years have turned that page. It won't occur again.
Above cruel superstition's tomb
The flowers of human peace shall bloom,
Reason and science no more dumb,
Have hailed the light. The dawn has come. It won't occur again.

AITCH JAI AITCH.

* See article "Temple" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

† The Rev. T. Wilson, in his *Archæological Dictionary*, article "Sanctum," observes that "the Ark of the Covenant, which was the greatest ornament of the first temple, was wanting in the second, but a stone of three inches thick, it is said supplied its place, which they [the Jews] further assert is still in the Mahomedan mosque called *The Temple of the Stone*, which is erected where the Temple of Jerusalem stood."

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

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

You assert that the Church "has always been the pioneer, the first beginner of every advance in systematic education." Again I turn to the episcopal voting list. I find that in 1839 the Parochial Schools Bill was before the House of Lords, authorising magistrates to provide schools where they were wanted, out of the rates. It was rejected in a full house by a majority of two to one. The Bishops, however, showed a still greater disproportion. *Their* majority against the Bill was five to one. Three voted for it and fifteen against.

The Reform Bill of 1831 was supported by two Bishops and opposed by twenty-one. Next year the Bill was carried in the House of Lords by a small majority. But the Bishops still showed a majority against it, their vote being twelve to fifteen.

Against every proposal in favor of religious liberty the Bishops have been in overwhelming opposition. By twenty-five to two they helped to reject the first Bill for enabling Catholics to sit in Parliament; and even when the Bill was finally carried in the Lords by a majority of two to one, the Bishops were still recalcitrant, twelve voting for the Bill and fifteen against.

For the admission of Jews to Parliament the bench of bishops gave three votes, and twenty against it. Two bishops voted for the admission of Dissenters to the universities, and twenty-two against it. They never gave a single vote in favor of the Church Rate Abolition Bill. In short, they have opposed every progressive measure, and even when they saw it must be carried they had not the grace to go with the stream. Thus, my lord, has the Church been "the soul" of reform.

Your Grace finds that the motive power of the Church's energies is threefold—"Knowledge of God, the Memory of a Self Dedication, the reception of a Supernatural Gift."

What knowledge of God do the clergy possess beyond laymen? Revelation, as you call it, is accessible to both; and it has yet to be proved that clergymen possess any special organ of spirituality. What knowledge, my lord, has *any* man of God? There is speculation, conjecture, and dogma; but how much real information? All religions, all sects, claim a definite knowledge of God; and some of their votaries—to borrow Matthew Arnold's language—speak of him as familiarly as though he were a gentleman living in the next street. But the religions and sects contradict, and often vilify, each other; and their only absolute agreement is a common disagreement. Poll them all, and there would be an overwhelming majority against each; and Atheists would vote with the majority in every division.

You and I, my lord, are both men. I know nothing of God, and I believe you know as little. Multiply your ignorance by the number of the clergy, and the result is still ignorance. Upon this subject the philosopher and the fool, the poet and the dullard, are on the same level. Differences of wisdom and faculty only relate to this world. With regard to the supernatural every man's intellect is a blank. He may pretend otherwise, but he is able to produce nothing but the scribblings and sketches of fancy on the canvass of the unknowable.

Knowing nothing of God, the clergy presume to be his oracles. Knowing nothing of futurity, they pretend to disclose its secrets. They trade upon the ignorance of their fellow men. Their business is mystery. From the savage sorcerer to the civilised Archbishop there are many gradations, but no change in the profession. There is a difference of persons in a unity of essence. The priest dogmatizes for a

living, and we must die to find out his truth or falsity; and as dead men tell no tales, the well-fed prophet has no dread of detection. He goes on with his craft until men see that he knows no more than they.

By the Memory of a Self-Dedication I presume you mean that the clergy are in a special sense devoted to their calling. I do not believe it. I believe they go into the Church, as other men go into the army or the navy, the law or medicine, tailoring or shoemaking, farming or shopkeeping—for a living. I believe thousands of them know that the "call of the Holy Ghost" is arrant humbug. They take on the Church doctrines like the fixtures of a business. It was a clergyman, the Reverend Sidney Smith, that told the story of the young man asked to sign the Thirty-Nine Articles, who replied "Forty if you like."

The clergy's "reception of a supernatural Gift" can mean nothing but their reception of the Holy Ghost. They claim to derive it by apostolic succession, which is one of the greatest in the long list of Church frauds. Bishops impart the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Placing them on the head of a young man who is being inducted into holy orders, the Bishop sends a discharge of the Spirit through the kneeler's skull, and the current is strong enough to penetrate the thickest. When the kneeler rises to his feet he looks a trifle sillier than before. He has no more sense, no more character, no more courage—but he is full of the Holy Ghost, and millions of dupes have the folly to believe this impudent imposture.

Bishops hawk about the Holy Ghost as a trade commodity. When a church is to be consecrated, a Bishop enters the edifice as the builder leaves it. The stones, mortar, and woodwork are exactly like those of any other structure. But the Bishop—for a consideration—fills the place with the requisite amount of the Holy Ghost. Henceforth the building is sacred. Stealing from it is not only robbery but sacrilege. Yet it is not at all safer from accident, and no Insurance Company would grant a policy upon the church unless a lightning conductor were placed above it, to prevent the first person of the Trinity from making mistakes in a thunderstorm.

For a consideration, again, a Bishop will consecrate a cemetery. An arbitrary line is made with a tape and chalk; the Bishop stands on one side of it, discharges some Holy Ghost, like a clerical torpedo, and that portion of the cemetery is fit for the reception of Church corpses. But there is no discoverable difference between the two soils, and the corpses on either side of the line of consecration rot with equal celerity, unless the Church has the elevated ground, and all the drainage runs into the Dissenting graves.

Another use to which the clergy put their "supernatural Gift" is the manufacture of holy water. Aqueous fluid, supplied by an ordinary Water Company, is put into a stone basin. Tried by chemical tests, it is precisely the same water as what flows from the domestic tap. But it is consecrated. There is a mysterious change. A little of the holy water, sprinkled on a baby's face, makes it a child of grace; and the price is only seven-and-sixpence. Henceforth God loves it, instead of hating it; and should it die, it will go to Heaven instead of Hell. No doubt the operation is worth the money if it does what you pretend. But I defy you to prove that it does anything of the kind. I maintain that baptism is on a level with fortune-telling, and one business is as disreputable as the other.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

MR. SYMES is continuing his articles on "The Roman Catacombs," quoting from the works of the Rev. J. S. Northcote, the Rev. W. B. Marriott, and Rev. J. P. Lundy, in proof that the symbols in the Catacombs were originally Pagan, and that no new doctrine can be found in the Christian creed.

ACID DROPS.

God has been up and doing of late, and the list of casualties in this best of all possible worlds is a long one. Here are a few items. Terrific gale in the Atlantic, several wrecks, and fatal fire on a steamship; Knowstone Vicarage, North Devon, the residence of the Rev. Prebendary Matthew, burnt down; a Catholic church destroyed by an avalanche at Sierra City; five persons killed at a funeral at Chicago; a train on fire, and one person burnt to death in Russia; trains blocked up on the Union Pacific Railroad and passengers dying of exhaustion; lighthouse keepers at Fastnet Rock hoisting flag of distress, and unable to be communicated with. These are all found in one copy of a paper, and afford sufficient material for thought to suffice Theists for the rest of their lives.

The south wall of the new Throop Avenue Presbyterian Church in course of erection at Brooklyn was blown down by the wind and killed six persons. Such is the Lord's care over his buildings and people.

The publication of Mr. Justin McCarthy's second volume of the History of the Four Georges recalls the old story of the dying Queen's appeal to her husband to take a new wife after her death, and the King's earnest disclaimer of any such purpose; the assurance that he would have mistresses, and then the Queen's cry of cruel conviction from hard experience, "*Oh, mon Dieu, cela n'empêche pas!*"

But there is another and equally significant story of Sir Robert Walpole, in connection with the Queen's death. When they brought the Archbishop of Canterbury to pray with her, it was for no better reason, according to Sir Robert, who recommended the step, than that it would do neither harm nor good. "It will satisfy all the wise and good fools, who will call us Atheists if we don't pretend to be as great fools as they are." This shows that Sir Robert Walpole, like his son Horace, was of what the first Earl of Shaftesbury called the religion of all sensible men. When asked what religion that was, Shaftesbury replied, "sensible men never tell."

Mrs. Alexander Ireland lectured on Sunday evening at Toynbee Hall on "Browning as a Teacher." With Browning, she said, there was no "perhaps" or "possibly." Now this is only saying that Browning was cocksure where he was ignorant. It is a poor compliment to his judgment, but these rabid Christians are so anxious to make the most of Browning as to run the risk of disgusting sober people. Could there be a sillier notion than this—that because Browning was a great poet, he was a special authority on the gospels and the divinity of Christ? Shelley and Byron were great poets and they rejected the gospels and the divinity of Christ. But Christians must rest on "authority" of some sort, and they are treating Browning as their sheet anchor. Why not make a new Christ of him? He had more brains than the old one. Still, there was a sappy spot in them, where the cells generated "religion."

After reading Shakespeare through again, a few years before his death, Browning said he was struck by the perfect ease with which the great dramatist mounted the throne of poesy, while the rest of the tribe climbed with difficulty to their lower positions on the steps. Well, it is impossible to make out that Shakespeare was a Christian at all. He seems to have been a thorough Pagan. And we believe he would have smiled at the religious stuff which Browning thrust into the least enduring part of his work.

Tennyson sings—

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be.

Yes, the creeds come and go, but MAN remains, and the poet that lives is the one who takes man for his theme. Homer's gods and goddesses are now but fantastic fictions, but Hector holding in his arms the boy who is frightened by his helmet, and Achilles weeping over the dead body of Patroclus—these are immortal, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Talmage went to Jericho. What a pity he didn't stop there.

Talmage carries to America a block of marble from Mars Hill and a piece of stone from Calvary. They are to be built into his new Tabernacle. But why not put them into a quarter-dollar side-show?

Before leaving Liverpool the great, grand, magnificent Talmage went to Hawarden and saw the Grand Old Man. We don't suppose Gladstone would ever think of inviting Ingersoll to the castle, but he might do a great deal worse, for "Pagan Bob" would probably be the best company he ever had. Gladstone admits that Ingersoll writes with "a rare and enviable brilliancy," and that is a great deal more than any man in his senses could say of Talmage.

Talmage was interviewed after his Hawarden visit by a *Pall Mall Gazette* man. The Yankee preacher said "I am writing a Life of Christ, and I have been to Palestine with that object in view." Talmage is like the gentleman who knew the truth of Noah's Flood, for he had just visited the part of the world where it happened, and actually went half way up Mount Ararat.

Good God! Another Life of Christ! Every popular preacher takes a turn at it. Poor old Matthew, Mark, Luke and John didn't understand the business, although they were inspired; and, although nobody knows anything of the life of Christ except what they tell us, dozens of divines try to set them right. There really ought to be a tax on Lives of Christ—a pound a page at the very least.

Mr. Gladstone was asked by Talmage whether his faith in Christianity had wavered in his old age. It was a silly question, for old age is not the time when faith wavers. Mr. Gladstone replied "The longer I live the stronger grows my faith in God, and my only hope for the world is that the human race will be brought more into contact with Divine revelation." Very interesting, of course; but Mr. Gladstone's "faith" proves nothing. When he condescends to reason, as in the tilts with Huxley and Ingersoll, he makes a very poor show for his creed.

The London *Star*, reporting an interview with Talmage, describes him as follows:—"There is nothing of the smug piety look about Dr. Talmage. He does not clasp his hands, or show the whites of his eyes, or speak in a tone of intellectual agony, or do anything in that style. He is a practical religionist, and he looks it. He is a tall, spare man, with a keen, shrewd, practical face, thin hair, turning grey over the temples, and an unmistakable Yankee accent. His clothes have no clerical cut, his manner has no clerical flavor, his voice has no clerical intonation. He stands before you looking and speaking like a clever and exceedingly practical man of the world. He gives you the impression that if he had been born a New Englander, and had been thrown by circumstances into the nutmeg business, he would have been the smartest and the biggest man in the trade."

The full text of the Papal Encyclical Letter is now published in the *Tablet*. It shows that the old Pope is still hankering after his temporalities, and yearning to reorganise society under the sway of a crushing absolutism. He says God—that is, the Pope—must be put before man—that is, the King. Yet everyone must remain in their appointed places, and the bishops must be obeyed, not only in matters of dogma, but (so the Letter implies) in everything else they may choose to command. The Letter shows that Pecci is more under the influence of the Jesuits than ever.

The Catholic journals have explained to their own satisfaction why the late learned Dr. Dollinger was not reconciled to the Church before he died. He was deficient in prayer. He said the mass, but laid aside the breviary. Hence his departure for *l.*

The Catholics are getting up a big pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the ensuing spring. It will have the Papal blessing and is expected to bring a pile of money into the Church coffers.

Dr. Parker is writing a story in *Great Thoughts*. It is a kind of antidote to *Robert Elsmere*. The last instalment contains some passages on "the comical side of God." That is a side with which Dr. Parker should be familiar. The

Bible gives a lot of "the comical side of God," and a good deal of his savage side as well.

Hugh Price Hughes has recently published a book on *The Philanthropy of God*. It seems to us that God's philanthropy is very old-fashioned. For instance, he has sent us the influenza, and the microbes' butcher's bill is worse than that of a big campaign. This may be a blessing, but if so, it is a blessing in disguise.

Said Mr. Dashwood, at a public meeting of the Lady Havelock Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association—"I have never known a Christian young woman to wear a fringe, or a Christian young man to part his hair in the middle." Well now, if you look at the pictures of Jesus Christ, you will always see his hair parted in the middle. What is Mr. Dashwood thinking about? He will spend a bad quarter of an hour when J. C. gets hold of him.

NOT A CHRISTIAN YOUNG MAN.

He always was good to his ma and his dad,
And he played Sankey's hymns on the fiddle;
He looked on the Stage as the road to the bad—
But he parted his hair in the middle.

He never was known to descend to untruth,
And no man of a copper he'd diddle;
In all things he was a respectable youth—
But he parted his hair in the middle.

When a victim to praying and fasting as well
He gave up life's difficult riddle,
Old Charon remarked, as he labelled him "Hell,"
"He parted his hair in the middle."

—"Dagonet" in *Referee*.

Mr. Dashwood would have St. Paul's authority for a crusade against ladies' short hair. We advise him to go on that "lay" instead, if he has the courage to face the hornets' nest he would raise.

A good deal of correspondence on the subject of tithes has been going on in the *Conservative Standard*. The clergy say they can't get their dues, and the farmers say the tithes are ruining them. In some places it appears that the tithes actually exceed the rental of the land. Each party thinks of itself, and seems to forget the important fact that tithes, like all other Church property, is national property, and, whether enforced or remitted, it must be in accordance with the national will, and not in the interest of any particular class, whether farmers or clergy.

The heresy hunt after Dr. Marcus Dods continues to gather volume in Scotland. Several of the Presbyteries, alarmed at the prospect of students being educated by one unsound in the faith, have sent in petitions to have the matter inquired into.

A Mr. Nevins, who defends the plenary inspiration of the old Testament, says, in the *Church Times*, that there is no contradiction between 2 Sam. xxiv., 24, which says that David bought the threshing floor and oxen for fifty shekels of silver, and 1 Chron., xxi., 25, which says he gave for the place six hundred shekels of gold, since, says he, they were two different transactions. This is a pure assumption. Precisely the same things are referred to in both chapters. But Christians will resort to any subterfuge rather than admit the existence of any flaw in their fetish book.

There must be an awful lot of Sunday school teachers in Portsmouth. According to a newspaper paragraph a thousand of them have signed a memorial to the mayor, protesting against the hawking in the streets on the Lord's day. They declare that the noise greatly interferes with the training of the young in the laws of God and mars the solemnity of divine worship. They predict that the desecration will bring down the Lord's displeasure upon the town, and call upon the mayor to put an immediate stop to these lamentable violations of the fourth commandment.

We presume the poor hawkers are trying to get an honest living and keep out of the gaol and workhouse. Perhaps they make an unnecessary noise, but after all they may be less selfish than the golly folk who are so scan-

dalised by their behavior. When we were last at Portsmouth we had to pass a gospel-shop on the road from the lecture-hall. Outside the door there was a gang of "respectable" worshippers—men and women—who monopolised the pavement right to the kerbstone, and every passer-by had to step into the muddy road. Yet we dare say they had been listening inside to "the glorious gospel of love."

The Rev. J. Bar-Pollock, of Gateshead, has been setting Darwin, Huxley, and Haeckel right on Evolution. He has his own ideas of evolution—obviously enough—and he draws them, not from Nature, but from the Bible. Poor Bar-Pollock!

The reverend gentleman said, amidst immense applause, that he didn't believe in an ape becoming the man who built the Forth Bridge. Well, now, it strikes us that if an ape and Mr. Bar-Pollock began building the Forth Bridge a mile apart from each other, they would get on at pretty much the same rate, and get finished about the same time.

Chu-Fong, who in New York has been known as the Chinese Napoleon of finance, has been arrested for forgery. He proves to have been even more of a gay Lothario than was reported. He was found in a house on Fifteenth Street, in the midst of a circle of pretty American girls whom he was supporting, one of whom was his former Sunday School teacher. The pious have now discovered that his Christianity was a sham. But Chu-Fong had doubtless been taught that all good things were for those who love the Lord.

Episcopal Bishop Huntington, of New York, thinks these two prayers should be put in the liturgy of the Episcopalian church:

Incline the hearts of employers and of those whom they employ to mutual forbearance, fairness and good will.

Suffer not the hire of the laborers to be kept back by fraud?

What for? To inform God that capitalists and laborers are not getting along together very well? To persuade God to do what he would not otherwise do? Or are they two new planks in the Church's religio-political platform? They certainly resemble such planks in that they mean nothing.—*Twentieth Century*.

Canon Talbot, in his course of lectures on "The Bible: How we got it, and how we should use it," after stating that English Christians had to wait 900 years before the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts were translated into our own tongue—a very curious circumstance, if God was desirous of people reading his revelation—insisted on the great inferiority there must be between a translation and the original. This seems to us another reason why revelation should be direct. But, apart from this, we deliberately hold that much of the beauty of the English Bible has been given to it by the noble language of its translators. In truth, we yet want a literal translation of God's barbarous Hebrew and canine Geeek, and when that is made we predict that all the gilt will be off the gingerbread, the glamor of the Bible will be gone.

Advices from San Francisco report the collapse of a Chinese temple at Shantung and the loss of about two hundred and fifty lives. The people were witnessing a theatrical performance, which in China sometimes partakes of a religious character.

A youth at Bedford hanged himself on Monday morning in a barn adjoining his home, after attending a Christadelphian service on Sunday evening.

A religious crank named Robert Alexander shot at the Bishop of Philadelphia while he was conducting service at St. John's Church in that city. He probably felt himself inspired.

The Theosophical Society in India seems in danger of being eclipsed by a rival Psycho-religious Society, which has lately held a meeting in Calcutta, under the presidency of Dr. Salzer. From the address of this gentleman we learn that a great object of the society is to discover "how

psychic energy may be employed to rule a person from a distance of many miles." Well India has been ruled from a distance of very many miles and we do not wonder that Hindoos are anxious to learn the secret. But we fancy they will discover little through the Psycho Religious Society.

The editor of *Great Thoughts* is chairman of the Jerusalem Cyclorama Company (Limited), which proposes to raise £28,000 to buy a cyclorama picture of Jerusalem and the crucifixion, which, having failed to draw in America, will, it is hoped, just suit the religious minded people of England.

"Rector" writing in the *Church Times* objects to the assertion that it was a shark that swallowed Jonah as a contradiction to our blessed Savior, who in Matt. xii., 40, affirms it was a whale. Rector says that the spermaceti whale sixty feet long, has a throat wide enough to swallow a man. Pity J. C., did not inform us it was a spermaceti whale while he was about it.

Mr. Joseph English is demolishing Atheism at Wigan but the *Observer* devotes all its report to the speech of his chairman, Mr. Thomas Freeman. We learn from this that the great English not only annihilated Atheism, but completely refuted Darwinism, to the entire satisfaction of an audience that probably knew as much about the subject as their anthropoid progenitors.

Poor Darwin! He spent fifty years in deep research and hard thinking, and never foresaw that his theories would all be exploded in ten minutes by English.

The *Manchester City News* remarks that the lay nurses in the Paris hospitals are more expensive than the sisters of mercy. Very likely. The sisters took a small salary in consideration of being allowed to proselytise the dying. They pestered those who did not want their attentions, and made themselves a nuisance. On the whole it is always best to pay properly for service. Those who render it for nothing, or next to nothing, have usually an ulterior end in view.

Complaint is also made that the Paris Municipal Council has removed all emblems of religion from the hospitals. And why not? Why should a sick Freethinker, or a sick Jew, be obliged to lie in bed and look at a crucifix? Any sick Christian who wants such an article can cuddle it in bed with him. But somehow the Christian never thinks he has fair play unless he rules the roost.

By way of being all things to all men, the Bishop of Exeter is visiting the factories in the city and addressing meetings of the men. Very democratic, no doubt; but, at the end, the Bishop returns to his palace and his big episcopal salary. It will be a long time before he imitates St. Paul so far as to make a decent living by sail-making.

"Muscular Christianity" flourishes at Fulham. The Rev. P. S. G. Probert has established a St. Andrew's Athletic Club, and the other evening the muscular Christians gave a public performance. There was plenty of boxing, and one of the winners got a very sanguinary nose. We should like to have seen J. C. at this entertainment.

There is one Rev. James, a Methodist divine and man of God, whom the wicked have been persecuting in Los Angeles, California. Ungodly L. S. Baisly sends here a lengthy newspaper report of the sore tribulations of this good man. Mr. B. says Los Angeles is "infested with preachers and other dead-beats." But this doesn't justify the ungodly in putting the wife of good Rev. James up to sue her divine spouse with all her might for a divorce, and to go on to the witness stand and tell how the man of God turned her and his home into a Turkish seraglio. It seems that the ungodly will never permit the messengers of the Most High to harvest their perquisites in peace. The holy men of God know the good book allows them all the wives and deputy wives they want. But just let one of them live in accordance with the divine law and see how quick man's law will yank him before the judge! It is a shame. We haven't heard what was done with the Rev.

James, but have no doubt he was juggled out of all his women and gaoled!—*Ironclad Age*.

An astonishing number of people claim to have been Darwinians before Darwin. Professor Max Muller, in an article on "Thought Thicker than Blood" in *The Open Court*, enrols himself among the number. His claims are about as groundless as the rest, being based simply on the fact that in 1854 he believed in the unity of mankind, and said that "the common origin of the negro and the Greek admits of as little doubt as that of the poodle and greyhound."

We are glad to see the stand which Mr. Hopwood, Q.C., is making against our prison system. He says it is cruel, torturing and degrading; yet "we are fools enough, or hypocritical enough, to believe that this sort of *régime* can do good, can elevate, can reform!" The fact is, our prison system is based on the stupid and brutal Christian idea of punishment, and it will only be reformed as that idea perishes.

The Bishop of St. Davids, preaching on Sunday in Westminster Abbey, was good enough to say that he feared Dissenters did not always pay sufficient attention to moral teaching. Of course the Church does. Hence the number of clergy who get into trouble.

Alas poor ghosts! They can't get a recognition in the courts. Mr. Kinney, of Drogheda, found he had taken a haunted house, where the ghost not only made objectionable noises, but actually flung the furniture on the family when in bed. Mr. Kinney left the place and declined to pay "rint" like a true-born Irishman. But the magistrate said that ghosts were no excuse for non-payment, and made an order in favor of the landlord.

Mark this, dear reader. Mr. Smith, the defendant's solicitor, was prepared with plenty of witnesses to prove that the house was haunted, but the magistrate snapped his finger at their evidence. No quantity of witnesses would fix up the ghost. Just carry this reasoning a little further, and what becomes of all the Bible ghosts, for whom *no* witnesses can be produced? Not a single one of them would be able to make out a case in a law court—not even the great Jerusalem ghost, no nor the Holy Ghost.

Dr. Dale does not countenance the attempt to get rid of the good old orthodox theory of the Atonement. The Church through all ages, he says, has held the doctrine of atonement and substitution; Christ himself declared that he came into the world to give his life a ransom for many. This is at least honest. We like to see a Christian stand up for his creed, instead of crying "Please sir, I didn't mean it."

Dr. Parker is appealing to the world at large to support his Temple. But there is one sort of supporter he doesn't want—"the man who exhausts the patience and tries the Christian temper of members of the staff by his particularity in the selection of a sitting, who omits to pay the subscription at the time, and is never again heard of." "Such instances," adds the Doctor, "are by no means infrequent." Sad confession! There ought to be more honor among—Christians.

A sad story was that of the poor, forlorn Terra del Fuego woman who died in St. George's Union Infirmary. Separated from her savage companions who were exhibited at the Aquarium, she was for some time unable to eat, as the doctors didn't understand that she wanted raw horse-flesh. Her dirt came off in layers, and she gibbered a protest against being washed. Still, she had a sense of religion. Go down as far as you will you find that. Father Herbert found she would pray and kiss a crucifix; so she made quite an edifying end, and no doubt she is now in "the happy land, far, far away." Anyhow she is far, far away from Father Herbert's fellow Christians who brought her over on show, as a kind of prize beast, and left her to die in a strange land.

Writing in the *Signal*, Mrs. M. Baxter, the wife of Prophet Baxter, says: "It is no great credit to our English Christianity that the native Hindoos believe that in order to be Christians they must also become drunkards."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 2, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London; at 7, "Why I am an Atheist."

Feb. 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.

E. H.—We do not know the name of a bookseller or newsagent in Chester who sells the *Freethinker*. Perhaps some of our readers in that city can inform our correspondent.

J. H. S.—Mr. Foote is recovering, but the after-effects of the influenza are still troublesome. Thanks for the cuttings.

GREY-HEADED ATHEIST.—It was dealt with last week, and we cannot reprint the verse, otherwise yours should have followed it. This correspondent wishes to know of any newsagent at or near Walham Green who supplies the *Freethinker*.

A. DARTON.—Thanks. There are hundreds of good Voltaire stories, and some day we may make a collection of them.

R. E. W. (Liverpool).—Look at the difficulties. It is hard to obtain halls at all, and when we can obtain one, like the Lord Nelson Street Hall, the proprietor insists on charging us three times as much as he charges the religious bodies. Further, all religious bodies are more or less endowed, and the law does not permit Freethought to receive a legacy.

H. P.—Your letter is interesting, and your efforts at self-culture do you great credit. We advise you to read the following works:—Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, Giles's *Christian and Hebrew Records*, Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*, Havet's *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Lecky's *Rationalism*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall and Supernatural Religion*.

A. HINDLEY.—Yes, there is a third Freethought journal, the *Agnostic Journal*.

A RECRUIT.—Always glad to receive cuttings, but the one you send appeared in the *Freethinker*—in substance—several weeks ago.

W. L. W.—Of the *Prisoner for Blasphemy* there are only shilling and sixpenny copies left. The latter are water-stained. Thanks for the cuttings.

W. H. BROWN.—Our readers do us, and other readers, a real service by sending us cuttings.

G. NAEWIGER, 5 Hull Place, Osborne Street, Hull, will be glad to receive any Freethought literature for distribution.

S. STANDRING.—One side has as much right to be heard as the other, and many of Mr. Symes's friends in England were anxious to know his view of Mrs. Besant's conversion to Theosophy. Mr. Symes doesn't mince matters, but we don't like him the less for that.

A. SWINNEY.—See "Sugar Plums." Your Sick Society seems extremely well managed.

No. 12.—Glad to hear you are still spreading the light.

ABBERITE says: "When, for the philanthropic purpose of helping some poor Christian to get the superstition out of his head, a *Freethinker* is left in some public place, it is a very good plan to first write on it the address of the nearest newsagent where it can be procured. I have recommended this plan to several friends of Freethought who had never thought of it before." This correspondent asks us to publish a complete list of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker*. We shall be happy to do so. Will the newsagents who see this paragraph send us their names and addresses?

H. O. THOMAS.—The address of the *Freethinker's Magazine* is 143 Main Street, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A. Its price is twenty cents a single number, or two dollars per year. Dr. Brown, in his *Oriental Researches*, published at Rockford, Illinois, goes further than Prof. Rawson in the same direction. He holds there is no proof of a Jewish nation before the Babylonian captivity.

R. CHAPMAN.—We are still considering the feasibility of inserting reports.

W. B. THOMPSON.—There is a half-crown edition of Marlowe published by Vizetelly in the "Mermaid Series." Mr. Rogers must have a strange pair of eyes not to see that Marlowe was far from a Christian.

W. HOLLAND.—Mr. Foote is gradually improving. Thanks for the cutting.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) Faith is belief beyond reason. It is not primarily an intellectual, but an emotional function. (2) The debate between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote was on Socialism. (3) David King's pamphlet is addressed to believers. There is nothing in it for a Freethinker to answer or consider.

W. MITCHELL.—The verse is meritorious in sentiment but defective in workmanship.

C. B. HYDE.—No thanks are necessary. We desire to see the N. S. S. include every reader of the *Freethinker*.

ADMIRER.—You don't seem to have much religion left. Thanks for the cuttings, but there are so many "converted Atheist" stories afloat that we can't deal with all of them. We want the Hugh Price Hughes one settled first.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Arme Teufel—Ironclad Age—Freidenker—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Liberator—Fritankaren—Freethought—Secular Thought—Open Court—Evening Standard—Western Figaro—Western American—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Leeds Daily News—Twentieth Century—Devon Evening Express—Argonaut—Essex County Chronicle—Golden Perhaps.

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.

DESPITE the blustering weather there was a fine audience at Camberwell on Sunday to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on the Devil. One old lady, eighty-three years of age, was brought by a grandson to hear a Freethought lecture for the first time. She was accommodated with a front seat, but even then her deafness prevented her from hearing very much. Perhaps this was fortunate, for at such an age the shock of such a lecture might have been disastrous. The people who did hear were apparently delighted.

THERE was one exception, however. Mr. Morden was in a dreadful temper. He mounted the platform, and was so uncivil and objurgatory that he soon communicated his ill temper to the audience. The poor man was awfully solemn too. He complained, for about the fiftieth time, of Mr. Foote's jocularities. In especial he denounced the saying that "people were rarely treacled but generally brimstoned into religion." Such facetiousness was beneath the dignity of the awful subject. Poor Mr. Morden! He is really to be pitied. A grain of humor would be a saving ingredient in his constitution.

THIS evening (Feb. 2) Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science. His subject is "Why I am an Atheist."

DR. T. R. ALLINSON, the famous medical reformer, has invested £50 in our publishing business, and gives us leave to announce the fact *pour encourager les autres*. It is a brave thing for Dr. Allinson to do, and it entitles him to our admiration even more than our gratitude.

WE beg to repeat that only members of the National Secular Society will be admitted to the meeting at the Hall of Science on February 16, when Mr. Bradlaugh will formally resign the presidency and his successor will be appointed. Those who are not members, but wish to be present, should qualify themselves at once. Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, will be happy to enrol them.

THE Metropolitan Radical Federation holds its annual dinner at St. Paul's Café, St. Paul's Churchyard, on Monday, February 10. The N.S.S. is represented on this organisation which is full of Freethinkers. Tickets for the dinner (3s.) can be had of the hon. sec., James Tims, C.C., 6 Queen Anne Terrace, Battersea, S. W.

THE first series of *Letters to the Clergy*, including all that appeared in the *Freethinker* during 1889, is in the binder's hands and will be ready in a week or so. Considerable additions have been made to the letter on Prayer, and a Preface has been written for the whole

collection. The second series will be paged on from the first, so that those who wish to bind will have a proper volume. The price of the first series is one shilling for 128 pages of type.

AMONG the Sunday Society's lecturers at St. George's Hall, London, during the ensuing months of the season, we notice Mr. H. L. Brækstad. It is pleasant to see that some very pronounced Freethinkers are creeping into the list. Mr. J. M. Robertson crept in some time ago.

MR. FOOTE has undertaken to read a paper before the Shelley Society in March on the poet's Religious Opinions.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, the co-editress with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony of the *History of Woman's Suffrage*, announces in the American papers that arrangements have been perfected for organising a Woman's Freethought Association of a national character. Mrs. Gage says: "Woman's political enfranchisement does not advance because women themselves are no longer progressive. The tendency in existing societies towards conservatism, apparent for some time, has now reached the point when it has become imperative that a new society should be formed of women brave enough to say of her own slavery, as the old abolitionists did of negro slavery, that the American church is its bulwark."

MRS. GAGE further points out that the Christian party in politics, both Catholics and Protestants, whose aim is union of Church and State, is vastly helped by women, and it is thus high time advanced women united in work for their own enfranchisement, and to arouse public thought to a sense of the impending danger. A convention on the subject will be held at Washington, U.S., Feb. 24 and 25, 1890.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—We have received the following subscriptions:—Angus Thomas, 10s.; W. Gregory, 5s.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—J. A. Lampard, 1s. 6d.; J. Barnes, 1s.; A. F. W., 2s. 6d.; J. Gompertz, 2s.; H. M. Ridgway, 2s. 6d.; O. Bonser, per E. Truelove, 10s.; G. Corner, 2s. 6d.; S. Jenson, 1s.; T. Waud, 1s.; R. Weightman, 1s.—R. Forder, secretary.

Fritankaren translates into Swedish a recent letter from Mr. Foote to Mr. Lennstrand in Stockholm prison. We are pleased to notice that Mr. H. V. Berghell and others are worthily upholding the Freethought cause upon the platform during Mr. Lennstrand's enforced absence.

THE London, England, *Freethinker* issued an extra paper for Christmas. It is elegantly illustrated for the benefit and enlightenment of the pious followers of our Lord and Savior. Our heavenly father appears in his tripple god-ship—Father, Son and Ghost—one in three and three in one. The faithful would be greatly edified by religiously studying the special Christmas issue of the *Freethinker*. But just as likely as not they won't do it. It is shocking to observe how stubbornly they resist the efforts of benevolent heathens in all parts of the world to familiarise them with their Maker and his works and ways.—*Ironclad Age*.

UNDER the title "An Ancient Freethinker," the veteran Dr. L. Büchner is contributing a series of articles upon the Roman poet Lucretius to the *Freidenker*, of Milwaukee.

THE *Golden Perhaps* is a lively little paper of pronounced atheistic opinions edited by Dr. C. W. McCormik, and published at 912 Twentieth Street, Denver, Colorado.

A CREMATION SOCIETY has been established at Hamburg, with a capital of 80,000 marks.

PAINÉ'S birthday has been celebrated in America by a Freethought Convention at Seattle, Washington. Mr. C. B. Reynolds seems to have been the presiding genius.

THE Rev. J. P. Hopps, of Leicester, has written some plain words on the approaching Education struggle in the London *Echo*. "The Nonconformists," he says, "delivered

themselves into the hands of the Philistines when they consented to the introduction of so-called 'religious instruction' into Board Schools, and thought they found salvation in merely excluding any formulary or catechism distinctive of any sect; or in that inane failure—a Conscience Clause." Mr. Hopps points out that the Conscience Clause throws all the odium and persecution upon the children who are withdrawn from the religious instruction, and heretical parents shriek from making their little ones targets for bigotry to shoot at. National education and religious education, Mr. Hopps contends, are quite incompatible; and he calls upon the Nonconformists to fight their battle upon the only principle that gives them a chance of victory—pure secular education.

MR. HOPPS concludes, "There is really no alternative. We must give in to the clericals, who will take public money and use it to the uttermost farthing for Church purposes, if we will let them; or we must grasp the real meaning of national education, which, when properly understood, will be sharply severed from priest and parson, church and chapel, catechism and creed, and put within the reach of every child an education given for its own sake, and worthy of the name of 'National,' because it steadfastly refuses to admit anything that could interfere with common interests and the common good. Let them 'paint an inch thick,' 'to this favor' they must come at last."

ENERGETIC Mr. Sam Standing debated on Tuesday evening at Plaistow with Mr. James Marchant on "Is Secularism Reasonable and Beneficial to Mankind?" The chair was taken by a live clergyman, the Rev. T. Given-Wilson. On Sunday morning Mr. Standing debated at Wood Green with a staff-captain of the Salvation Army.

THE third annual balance sheet of the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society is a modest but healthy document. Other Societies might go and do likewise.

LAST Sunday the Liverpool Branch considered our suggestion as to forming a South Lancashire Secular Federation. It was resolved to make the attempt, and the preliminary arrangements were entrusted to Mr. H. Smith, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Liverpool, who will be happy to hear from the secretaries of other Branches. We print a letter from Mr. Smith in another column.

WE have received a copy of the San Francisco *Argonaut* which contains a very broad article on Christianity. It says, "We do not learn from heathen writers whether Jesus ever lived at all. Jewish historians, contemporaneous with the age in which He is claimed to have existed, afford but little proof of the fact. We search the pages of Tacitus, Suetonius, the elder Pliny, Herodotus, and all the Hebrew writers, and we are still in scholastic clouds whether the life and history of the incomparable author of the Christian faith and founder of the Christian church is not a legend." It is curious that an omnipotent God should leave the revolution of his incomparable Son in such an unauthenticated state.

IT was announced at a conference of trade and other societies convened by the National Sunday League, that one of the vice-presidents of the League was ready to bear the cost of the opening of the National Gallery, and the Bethnal Green and Kensington Museums on Sundays for one year, to test whether the people desire to attend or not. We trust the gentleman's generous offer will be accepted, and feel sure his money could not be better laid out. But, after all, the matter of the Sunday opening of the people's property is a matter of right and ought not to depend upon the generosity of individuals.

RESOLUTIONS were passed at the meeting, which represented twenty-eight trade societies and sixty clubs, declaring that the vast majority of the working classes desire the opening of museums and art galleries on Sunday.

IT was on the 17th December, 1876, that Mr. Symes delivered his first distinctively Freethought lecture. The subject was, "The Biography and Character of Jehovah, the Jewish and Christian God." Thirteen years form a good slice of a man's life-time. They have been spent in the service of Man, and their effects will surely appear in the future course of the race. An earnest life flowing into

the great river of human existence is not lost; it may be hidden; but it tells; and the river is never again the same as before that affluent lapsed into it. The eddies such an inflow makes may constitute no storm; but they stir the surrounding waters; and in that stir things come to light that would otherwise have remained hidden; and the particles around swing and flow in curves they never could have taken but for this one life. Life is a serious fact, short as it is: its possibilities are simply tremendous. And an earnest life may change the destiny of a whole people. The man who treats life as a joke, or a thing to be trifled away, is a fool, and may be a criminal. Secularists should be in earnest, as this is their only life, and it is a short one—long enough perhaps, if properly used, too long if not.—*Liberator.*

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDRENS' PARTY.—Per H. Courtney, 3s.; per G. J. Warren, 4s. 7d.; per W. Davey, 3s.; per Mrs. Forder, 1s. 6d.; per Mr. Sunderland, 3s.; per Mr. Bater, 5s. 3d.; per Mrs. Sunderland, 3s. 6d.; per Mr. Dumville, 1s. 3d.; G. Anderson, £3 3s.; A. Lewis, 2s.; J. Cobby, 2s.—R. Forder, secretary.

THE Rev. W. Walsh's lectures at Newcastle are pleasing the Secularists immensely. They find the discussion very profitable. Last Sunday afternoon Mr. Joseph Brown presided, and to-day the chair will be taken by another Secularist, Mr. Creswell.

THE Newcastle Branch is going ahead, making progress with the Sunday agitation, and keeping the city more or less alive. A deputation of the Branch interviewed Canon Talbot and invited him to a public discussion with Mr. Foote. But the wily Canon declined. He did not believe in discussion. Subsequently he wrote that his Bishop agreed with him as to "the unprofitableness of debate." But he had the Bishop's sanction for an offer to address the Secular Society. Of course the Branch declined this offer, and Mr. Joseph Brown wrote a careful reply which has appeared in the local papers. Canon Talbot appears desirous to win his laurels cheaply. He doesn't want to meet a "professional" champion of Freethought, forgetting that he himself is a professional champion of Christianity.

A SHERIFF'S SALE IN PARADISE.

By HUGHES LE ROUX. TRANSLATED BY BENJ. R. TUCKER.

ON the morning of which I speak, Sheriff Leloucheur, of Paris, assuming for the occasion the function of auctioneer, in company with his crier and several acolytes, climbed the path to Paradise.

On account of the lateness of the season, white clouds creaked beneath their feet like snow, and covered, to right and left, as far as the eye could see, the perspectives of the sky. And Sheriff Leloucheur, heated by the ascent, said as he wiped his brow:

"It's a pity that this sale comes in winter. When I came here the first time, in spring, there was an enchanting view from the gate of Paradise; the earth was as green as my table-cloth. Ah! the situation was well chosen for a summer resort. But in winter it must be a little dreary, and communication is not easy."

They were beginning to see the end of the path, and at the top the walls of Paradise crowned with embattlements, the gate in pure Romanesque, sacrilegiously restored in the Jesuit style of the end of the last century. Two green placards were fastened to the panels.

On them was the announcement:

Sale of Furniture by Order of the Law.

And the word PARADISE was conspicuous on the placards, in big, ironical, impious letters, calculated to catch the eye of passers-by and fill with melancholy the souls of those who have kept a tenderness for the past and grow sad over ruins. Sheriff Leloucheur was past the influence of these emotions.

He approached the gate with a deliberate step, and raised his hand to knock, solemnly, like an actor.

At first there was no stir; then he heard a murmur of voices, the jingling of a rosary striking against a bunch of keys; then a hesitating approach; then a slow unbolting of the gate.

Finally the gate half opened, and an old man's face, with lashes falling over his eyes and a beard hanging like his lashes, peered out timidly.

It was the first time that the crier had accompanied his employer; yet he recognised Saint Peter at once, having seen his portrait on stained-glass windows in his youth.

"What can I do for you?" asked the door keeper in an agitated voice.

Sheriff Leloucheur answered:

"I come to verify the inventory. It is an indispensable formality before the sale."

At these words Saint Peter's chin trembled. He lifted his thin hands with a movement that caused the large sleeves of his surplice to fall back to his elbows.

"What!" said he. "We have got as far as that?"

The sheriff made a gesture of impatience:

"Come, Monsieur Saint Peter, we do not take you by surprise. The sale has been advertised, and you have been made keeper."

The saint shook his head.

"Excuse me," said he; "all this is so new to us.

Then, in a tone of gentle resignation, he added:

"Can you not save Our Lord this last humiliation? You know very well that we have removed nothing. We do not know yet where we shall go to seek refuge."

Sheriff Leloucheur's pantomime indicated that they were trying his patience too far.

"What! you expect me to fail in my duty! I suppose, however, that I must be contented with God's oath; upon what shall I swear him?"

"On himself," answered Saint Peter, with dignity; "I suppose you do not doubt his word?"

The crier insinuated:

"The word of an insolvent debtor. . . ."

But the saint's face expressed such indignation that, distrustful though he was, Sheriff Leloucheur yielded.

"All right," he grumbled, as he turned his back. "We will pass that part of it. This whole proceeding has been irregular to a degree. . . ."

Then, coming back to Saint Peter, he added:

"Get me a table, some chairs for my men, and some benches for the audience; the sale is advertised for half-past nine, and I see the people coming yonder."

In fact, dark and swarming groups were approaching the gate from the path. Already the murmur of voices could be distinguished. There were old-clothes dealers, women with baskets, hyena jaws, Jew noses, the whole army of unclean brokers, "fences," and corpse-devourers that follow the scent of suburban sales. In front and apart were some personages of importance, with new high hats and fur cloaks, talking familiarly.

The crier pointed them out to Sheriff Leloucheur. Immediately that functionary left his table.

"You here, gentlemen? . . . What good luck! Then I am to have the honor of selling to you?"

"To whom is he talking?" asked a dealer of his neighbor in the crowd.

"It seems that they are theatrical managers: M. Rochard, of the Ambigu; M. Duquesnel, of the Porte-Saint-Martin; MM. Clèves and Floury, of the Chatelet."

"And the little dark man yonder, who has such an amiable air and is biting the head of his cane?"

"That is M. Koning, of the Gymnase."

"Why do they come here?"

"They see the stage-setting, like everybody else, and buy properties."

"The bidding will be warm."

"Hush! they are about to begin."

Sheriff Leloucheur was standing on a chair behind his table. In his most emphatic voice and with a gesture on a level with the occasion, he pronounced the words:

"Gentlemen, the sale is opened."

Immediately the crier, facing the public, announced in a shrill voice:

"The first lot that we sell consists of domestic and wild animals: the ox and the ass of the stable, the eagle and the lion of St. Mark. And first the ox."

"Two hundred francs is bid."

"Two hundred fifteen!"

"No one says a word? Sold to M. Rochard!"

"What are you going to do with that quadruped?" asked M. Koning of his fellow-manager.

"I want him for an understudy to my cow in the play of 'La Fermière,'" answered the sympathetic manager, "in case of an epizootic. You cannot imagine how difficult it is to find horned beasts that are not afraid of the footlights. This one must be used to noise and light."

Meanwhile the crier had disposed of the four evangelical animals. Amid silence he announced :

"A lot of white robes and halos, thrones and dominions, crowns, palms, gold, silver, white metal, zinc, angels' surplises, martyrs' tunics." . . .

"Thirty thousand francs!" shouted MM. Clèves and Floury as one man.

A syndicate of dealers in religious articles disputed valiantly for this lot. It was knocked off, however, at seventy thousand. And Rochard, bending over, whispered in in Koning's ear :

"I'll bet you the Chatelet is going to mount a mystic fairy spectacle."

"A bad scheme," said Koning. "I wouldn't risk a thousand louis on it."

But the sheriff had risen, and he repeated after his subordinate in an emphatic voice :

"Do you hear, gentlemen? We are going to sell the thunder."

A religious silence ensued, amid which a bantering voice suggested :

"Suppose you try it in our presence, to see if it is still in working order?"

Immediately—by the will of God—the thunder roared.

It roared tremendously, like a faithful old thunderbolt bursting for the last time in the service of a master long obeyed. The effect was such that it terrified the irreverent audience. A few persons fainted, and M. Koning thought to himself :

"I should like to have it for my storm in 'L'Abbe Constantin.' It is much better than the tempest of 'Le Roi S'Amuse,' in which Claretie imitates the thunder with a wheelbarrow."

So he acquired this old instrument for frightening men while the sheriff's falsetto proclaimed the next item :

"We will now sell a lot of musical instruments—harps, harmoniums, lutes, æolian harps. I hear a bid of fifteen hundred francs."

"Sixteen hundred!"

"Sixteen hundred fifty!"

"Seventeen hundred!"

"Twenty-five!"

They turned around to look at the bidder. He was a handsome fellow with an engaging face, a light colored beard, and a seductive smile. The sheriff winked as he quickly let fall his hammer.

"Sold to M. Colonne!"

The managers turned around.

"You too? You here?"

"Yes, I came to get all this old trumpery, and then to engage some choruses of virgins. It is so difficult to find disciplined chorus-singers."

This transaction closed the sale. Sheriff Leloucheur was adjusting his collar, when the crier whispered in his ear.

Immediately he exclaimed :

"Pardon me, gentlemen! I had forgotten! The jewel of the collection! The pride of the amateurs!"

And swelling his voice till it was audible in the very last row, he shouted :

"Saint Peter's key!"

On the instant the groups pressed forward, moved not by the merchant's scent for a bargain, but for curiosity.

"We have an offer of ten thousand francs, signed Alphonse de Rothschild," declared the crier, placing his hand to his mouth in the form of a shell.

Before the hammer could fall again, some one responded :

"Twelve thousand!"

The size of the bid was a severe shock to the expert dealers, used to haggling over five-franc pieces.

The man who had ventured it wore a large-checked overcoat and a soft brown felt hat. Previous to this he had not opened his mouth.

When the bidding reached twenty thousand francs, his voice showed not the slightest agitation. At fifty thousand he was as phlegmatic as ever. At one hundred and ten thousand his opponent's fire was extinguished.

"One hundred and ten thousand, gentlemen; let us hurry. One hundred and ten thousand, the bid is from the second row. There is no error. Come, it is worth more than that. A historic curiosity! One hundred and ten thousand! No new bid?"

He raised and lowered his hammer with jerky little movements—the nervous beats of an orchestra leader who wants to put life into his musicians.

A last pause suspended the ivory instrument; then, as if overcome by a sudden resolution, the sheriff concluded :

"Once, twice, three times! One hundred and ten thousand? Sold at one hundred and ten thousand!"

The man with an overcoat nodded his head, and the admiring crowd whispered as they moved away :

"He is an Englishman!"

. . . An hour later.

The gate of Paradise is swinging, the auctioneer's table abandoned. Along the again deserted path an august personage glides, borne on the clouds. Rays of light, obscured as if by ground glass, shine upon his face and the straight folds of his tunic. And at a respectful distance in the rear the mass of faithful seraphim, angels, saints, martyrs, virgins, follow the dethroned Lord in the road of exile.

Suddenly he whose sight is piercing sees in the road, ascending from earth, an aged man in a hurry. He is dressed in a green coat, with an opera-hat under his arm and a sword at his side. His smooth and chubby face, slightly inclined in an attitude of benevolent attention, betrays a sentiment of becoming condolence.

"Why, it is Ernest Renan," says the Lord to himself in surprise. "Why is he coming to meet me?"

The Academician is soon within speaking distance. And controlling the fit of asthma that stifles his words and makes his speech spasmodic, he says :

"Ah, my God! I arrive too late! . . . How sorry I am! . . . I should have so much liked to soften your painful moments! . . . I know these law people! . . . they are in a hurry to go ahead. . . . they do not delay . . . hence a lamentable brutality. . . . And toward a person like you! . . . so respectable! . . . of such ancient consideration."

The Lord lifts his hands in a gesture of sovereign pardon and oblivion.

"They have not left me," he says, "where to lay my head."

Then the illustrious expounder bows and bends in deploring reverence, and asks indulgence for the ingratitude of men.

"These are deplorable excesses. . . . But we will repair them. A pious person has just built, in the heart of Paris, opposite the Exposition, a retreat for Gods in exile. You were not expected so soon. But I am on good terms with the keeper. I will see that he reserves for you an honorable place, the lodging to which you are entitled in the Museum of Religions."

A SOUTH LANCASHIRE FEDERATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

THE note in last Sunday's *Freethinker* referring to the formation of a Federation of Lancashire Secular Societies, is indeed a "Sugar Plum." If full advantage of Mr. Foote's generous offer of assistance, in the work of constructing such a Federation, is not taken by Lancashire Societies, the neglect will reflect upon them and also upon individual Secularists, the deepest disgrace. Surely there can be no doubt as to the necessity of such an organization; and as to the utility of such, the success of the Tyneside Federation, and that of London, is sufficient demonstration. By means of a number of societies acting in concert, much more work, more solid work, more satisfactory work, can be accomplished. New societies, in towns hitherto strangers to freethought lectures, would spring into existence. The best lecturers in the ranks of Secularism, and possibly able speakers not attached to our party, might be engaged to make a tour of the federated and neighboring towns, without the waste of time, labor and money now expended in travelling long distances for every engagement. The first-class lecturers, and even new aspirants to the platform, would have a better chance of a fair return for their labors. There are many towns in Lancashire, at comparatively short distances from each other, where priestcraft is working mischief, and freethought opposition unknown. An effort ought to be made by the existing societies to establish branches there. Halls are now more easily obtainable than formerly, and even where halls are not to be had open-air lectures (on fine days) could be given; (and would be, willingly no doubt) by some of the branch lecturers.

The above being but a rough outline of the programme of work for the proposed Federation, Societies are invited to communicate with Mr. H. Smith, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Liverpool, for further information.

Mr. L. Small, 27 Churchill Street, Liverpool, and the writer of this note, are willing to lecture for local societies, or in towns where no organization exists.—H. SMITH.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Why I am an Atheist."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. T. Parris, "The Son of God."
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Musical evening, orchestral band, etc.
 Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N, 7, Mr. J. Hunt, "Pagan Origin of Christianity."
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3.15, Mr. J. Cooke will open a debate on "God is," being a reply to Mr James Marchant. Discussion invited; admission free.
 Edmonton Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. R Forder "Did Jesus Christ ever Live?"
 Old Southgate—Cromwell Hall, 7, Mr. L. Keen, "The Christian God."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, Mr. S. Standring, "Secularism and Socialism Compared."
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road, 7.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Miracles."
 Westminster.—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. G. V. Roger, "Objections to Housing of the People."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Mrs. A. Besant, 11, "Socialism in Theory and Practice;" 3, "What Is Theosophy?" 7, "The Inspiration of the Bible."
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, 11, Committee Meeting; 7, Mr. Gowland, "Christianity an Impediment to Progress."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Society's Rooms, 4 Hall's Court, 3. Meeting of Council of North Eastern Secular Federation. Tea will be provided in Rooms at sixpence each. In the Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, the Rev. Walter Walsh, 2.30, "The Origin of the Bible."
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Miss E. A. Hawksley, "An Hour with the Ancient Philosophers."
 Huddersfield—Littlewoods Buildings, Upperhead Row, Mr. J. Grange (Farsley), 3, "Is the Bible a Book of Truth?"; 6.30, "The Life and Writings of Thomas Paine."
 Hull—Cobden Hall Waltham Street, Mr. J. Hooper, 10.30 "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought;" 2.30, "Concessions of Theology to Science;" 6.30, "The Ten Commandments, and how they are kept."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

Mr. A. B. Moss, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E.—Feb. 2, Manchester; March 2, Woolwich; 20, Woolwich. April 12, Camberwell. May 25, Regent's Park.
 TOLEMAN GARNER, 8 Heyworth Street, Stratford, London, E.—Feb. 23, Woolwich. March 9, Woolwich; 2^d, Woolwich; 30, Westminster. May 11, Clerkenwell Green; 18, Regent's Park.
 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; 28, Huddersfield.

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