

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SALVATION BY SIMILARS; OR RELIGIOUS HOMŒOPATHY.

MR. FORDER'S article on "A Bible Disease," in which he refers to the curious statement that the Philistines when smitten with emerods made golden images of the disease, reminded me of an old intention to write upon this subject. Few persons of those who read this story or the similar one in Numbers of how when the Jews were bitten by serpents Moses set up a brazen serpent which had the effect of curing the wounds, are aware of the large part played by this doctrine of Salvation by similars among the superstitions of mankind, or suspect that it had any share in forming Christian theology.

Some one has called the homœopathic doctrine *similia similibus curantur*, like things are cured by like, "a pleasantry founded on an hypothesis." Be this as it may, the hypothesis extends back to the very beginnings of thought. To connect things similar is, we may say, the first step in philosophy. It is a recognised principle in savage thought that things like each other, however superficially, affect each other in a mystic manner. Thus in Melanesia, according to Mr. Codrington, "a stone in the shape of a pig, of a bread-fruit, of a yam, was a most valuable find because it made pigs prolific and fertilised bread-fruit trees and yam plots."

Many curious customs and superstitions may be traced to this belief. In old medical works one may still read that to eat of a lion's heart is a specific to ensure courage, while other organs and certain bulbous plants are a remedy for sterility. This notion, which largely affected the early history of medicine, is known as the doctrine of signatures.

Certain plants and other natural objects were believed to be so marked or stamped that they presented visibly the indications of the diseases, or diseased organs, for which they were specifics; these were their signatures. Hence a large portion of the ancient art of medicine consisted in ascertaining what plants were analogous to the symptoms of disease, or to the organ diseased. To this doctrine we owe some popular names of plants, such as eye-bright, liver-wort, spleen-wort, etc. The mandrake, from its supposed resemblance to the human form, was credited with marvellous powers, and anyone who will take the trouble to inquire into the folk-lore concerning plants and disease will find that much depends upon the appearance of the remedy. The custom of sorcerers making a waxen image of the person they desired to affect is founded on a similar notion.

But what has this to do with Christian theology? More than one would think, as we shall perhaps find if we examine the ideas of the people among whom it arose. One of the most curious peculiarities of Christianity is its doctrine of a God crucified for sinners. So strange, so repugnant to reason as such a doctrine is, it was quite consonant to the thought of those who held the belief in salvation by similars. If Paul said since by man came death by man came

also the resurrection of the dead, the development of the doctrine necessitated that if it is God who damns it is also God who saves. Any casual reader of Paul must have been struck by the antithesis which he constantly draws between the law and the Gospel, works and faith, the fall of man and the redemption through "the second Adam." The very phrase, "second Adam," implies this doctrine, which is summed up in the statement that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii., 13). It is the old toper's doctrine "you must take a hair of the dog that bit you."

God in order to redeem man had to take on sinful flesh and be himself the curse in order to be the cure. Hence we read in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, chap. xvi., that "they who endure in their faith shall be saved by the very curse." Thus may we understand that which modern Christians find so difficult of explanation, viz., that the whole Christian world for the first thousand years from St. Justin to St. Anselm believed that Christ paid the ransom for sinners to the devil, their natural owner. Christ in order to become the Savior had to become the curse, had to die and had to descend to hell, though of course, being God, he could not stay there. Hence his being likened to the brazen serpent, that remnant of early Jewish fetichism which was smashed by Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii., 4). John makes Jesus himself teach that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness [as a cure for serpent bites] even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

So Irenæus says (Bk. iv., chap. 2), "men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent than by believing in Him, who in the likeness of sinful flesh, is lifted up from the earth on the tree of martyrdom, and draws all things to Himself and verified the dead." That is, Christ was made sinful flesh to be the curse itself, just as the innocent brass appeared a serpent because the form of the curse was necessary to the cure. Paul dwells on the passage of the law "Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree," with the very object of showing that Christ, cursed under the law, was a blessing under his glad tidings. The Fathers were never tired of saying that man was lost by a tree (in Eden) and saved by a tree (on Calvary); that as the curse came in child-birth* and thorns, so the world was saved by the birth of Christ and his crown of thorns. Justin says, "As the curse came by a Virgin, so by a Virgin the salvation," and this antithesis between Eve and Mary has been carried on by Catholic writers down to our own day.

As the Christian doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ has certainly no more foundation in fact than the efficacy of liver-wort in liver diseases, we suggest it may have no better foundation than the ancient superstition of salvation by similars.

J. M. WHEELER.

* Notice too 1 Tim. ii., 15, where women are said to be saved by child-birth, their curse.

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

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

[CONTINUED.]

THE clerical gentlemen with their "supernatural gift"—in other words, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost—have carried on the great work of Salvation. They have prepared men and women for Heaven, booked passages for them on board the ship of Faith, and guaranteed them a safe voyage over the sea of Death into the port of Felicity.

Doing good for men and women in this life was a mere accident of their profession. Morality itself they despised and derided unless it wore their colors. They taught that there was no Salvation outside the Church, nor any goodness apart from its dogmas. "We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God," says your tenth Article, "without the grace of God by Christ preventing us." Nor is this all. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God," says your thirteenth Article, "and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." The best man on earth was sure of damnation if he stood outside the Church pale. "They also are to be held accursed," says your eighteenth Article, "that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to the Law, and the light of Nature."

But now that people will no longer be damned for nothing, and even doubt your ability to send them to Heaven or keep them out of Hell, the wiser clergy see that a new move is necessary. The meaning of Salvation must be enlarged. It must include "the Salvation of Society," and "the Salvation of the Individual" in this world. The clergy are to be the savers of bodies as well as the savers of souls. They are to take up "the Social Problem." Socialism and Individualism are to be mastered, Henry George is to be read and digested, the better housing of the poor is to be tackled, and all the intricate problems of industrial life are to be solved by clerical brains. "No young man," you say, "can be considered as fully equipped for Ordination until he has some knowledge of these subjects."

How pretty, my lord! But do you think the brains of an ordinary curate will stand such a strain? Remember that the Church does not get the pick of young intellects. For the most part it gets the refuse. And is it possible, with such material, to make the Church a dominant force in the evolution of Society?

Religion, my lord, at the very best, cannot head the march of progress. When it is not the principle of retrogression, it is only the principle of order. It is the chief Conservative influence, sanctifying vested interests and inherited ideas. This is its particular rôle, and you can no more alter it than you can stop the motion of the earth or make it revolve from east to west.

Let me also remark that when the Church "gives herself to social problems and moral duties" she is descending from her throne and mixing with the crowd. Becoming the handmaid of morality, she admits that ethics are higher than religion, and acknowledges her old servant as her present mistress. She signs her own death warrant and rings her own knell. Like the lion tamer, she found safety in her imperious look. When she softens it into a pleading gaze her spell is broken. The moment she waits upon Morality she abdicates her crown for ever. She admits that she was only a usurper, or at best a regent, and gives place to the lawful sovereign. For awhile she may be tolerated at Court, but she will fall

into disfavor, and finally be banished, as Morality learns to sway the golden sceptre.

I do not expect you to admit this, and I therefore return to the clergy and their labor of Salvation. You protest that they will still maintain their Doctrines, and not lose them in the Service of Men. And what are their doctrines? Some of them you enumerate—such as the Inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection of the Body. It is a terrible cargo, my lord, which will sink you to perdition. You see that the Church is in troubled waters, and that the force of scepticism is very great. You admit that "at present there is something like a balance of currents," but you declare "there can be no doubt which will prevail." You have no doubt which will prevail, nor have I. But there we part company. You believe the Church will triumph, and I believe she will be overthrown.

You recognise the spread of Atheism among the French workmen, and you are apparently not blind to the fact that it is permeating the English workmen also, but you seek to dispose of it by a mixture of prophecy and false explanation.

"Atheism only comes to hand as a weapon, since the wish to exasperate the masses leads leaders ignorant of the true spirit of Christianity to think that a religious patience here, and the hope of glory hereafter, must make men acquiesce in injustice and a low standard of daily existence. We shall hear little of Atheism when they know what Christianity does teach."

My lord, you are mistaken. Atheists are not ignorant of "the true spirit of Christianity." They have learnt it in the school of history and experience. They are not to be deceived by the plausible pretences of its modern apologists. They judge Christianity by what it did, and what it does, when unchecked. In the days of its supremacy it opposed science, kept the masses in ignorance, sanctified the robbery and oppression of kings and nobles, persecuted heretics, drenched the earth with blood and tears, built dungeons for honest thinkers, invented and applied the most diabolical instruments of torture, illuminated the black night of its despotism with the fires of a myriad stakes, where it burnt the best of men for the crime of *being* men, and lifted up the crucifix over their agony as a symbol of the loving-kindness of Christ.

Still in holy Russia, in Spain, and other countries where it is supreme, we see its inevitable fruit. And by that fruit the Atheist judges it; not by what it produces after many grafts of science and civilisation. Freethinkers in Spain have recently been condemned to six years' imprisonment for "insulting the Church," that is, for approving the erection of a statue to Giordano Bruno at Rome. Viktor Lennstrand is suffering two years' imprisonment in Sweden for lecturing against Christianity. Even in England, where you mouth about "the immense benefit of allowing free discussion," the Blasphemy Laws are in full force. Six years ago I was imprisoned for "blasphemy" like any common felon, and I have yet to learn that *your* voice was raised against the iniquity. No bequest to a Freethought Society is legal. Four years ago an Atheist left £500 to enable the Manchester Secularists to obtain their own premises, and the money was intercepted by a Christian legatee on the order of a legal tribunal. More recently still Mr. Bradlaugh brought in a Bill to redress these grievous wrongs, and it was rejected by an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons.

So much, my lord, for your Christian love of "free discussion." Atheists see it is a platonic affection, not meant for practice, but to inspire an elegant composition. They know that Christianity always persecutes to the full extent of its power, and is always as wicked as the moral sense of the community will tolerate.

"What Christianity does teach" is as open to an Atheist as to an Archbishop. Read the Sermon on the Mount, my lord, and see whether it does not offer "future glory," recommend "religious patience," and bid men to "acquiesce in injustice, and a low standard of daily existence." When the Atheist proclaims these facts he points to chapter and verse. He also points to the long record of popular misery under the sway of the Church. He does not "wish to exasperate the masses." He only preaches the divine gospel of discontent with evil and revolt against injustice. He tells the people to think for themselves, to throw off the fetters of superstition, to beware of a creed which once blighted the world and would do so again if it had the power, to study the problem of their secular welfare, to make the most of earth instead of dreaming of heaven, to build up the Republic of Man instead of the Kingdom of God. This is not "exasperating the masses." It is urging them on the path of wise and durable progress.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

"ABOVE THE CLOUDS."

A FEW days ago death destroyed a poor woman's only child, and the mother having wrung her hands piteously and bewailed her sad loss until her heart seemed almost breaking, was at last consoled by a Scripture reader, who informed her that the "dear little one" had been called "above the clouds" to the home of its Heavenly father, where the mother would ultimately join her offspring if she would but trust implicitly in Christ. The poor creature seemed satisfied for awhile, but at length burst into tears again, as though to demonstrate that human affection is stronger than superstition.

This sad incident set me athinking. "Above the clouds" I said! How far above them? Then I thought of the suns and stars that stud the universe. How many billions of miles of space separate some of the stars from our earth, and whether it was possible that somewhere in the illimitable universe, there could be a place where the souls of children as well as those of grown persons could be located, eagerly awaiting through untold ages the sound of the heavenly trumpet, which should announce that the earthly career of all men was at an end. Then I remember that I had a sister once who died in her childhood, and who a few moments before her life ebbed away, expressed the hope that she might meet her brothers and sisters in the "realms above!"

She was only eight, when her young soul, according to the theologians, was wafted to heaven. It would, indeed, be a great joy to me to see her beautiful face again. Have souls in heaven a materialised form? Maybe I shall live till I am sixty. Will the young soul of my sister remain young in heaven? or will years spent in heaven make any appreciable change in the appearance of her soul? How will she recognise my "old soul" when I arrive there?—a preposterous idea, I imagine my Christian friends to say, as though I should ever go "above" while there's the slightest possible room "below!" But if I have an immortal soul, unbelief will not kill it; and if all mankind are summoned to heaven on the Day of Judgment, we shall all at least have a glance at the heavenly throne, and probably meet the souls of a few relatives and friends before our own trial comes on.

Suppose while I am lingering outside the heavenly court of justice I should meet the soul of my dear young sister, what means will one spirit have of identifying another? Suppose my soul were to come within reasonable distance of that of Socrates, how would it be possible for me to converse with him? Do all souls speak one language? or is there a heavenly college where linguistic difficulties may be overcome? Souls are to sing in heaven, but without

mouths or tongues. Some earthly hen-pecked husbands will be glad of this. They will be perfectly satisfied to do without the tongue of their wives' spirit. Some of the male souls will be glad also to be relieved of feet, as it will remove all doubts as to there being any heavenly corns or bunions to trouble them as they pace the golden pavements above.

Then again, we shall have to consider the climate of these heavenly regions. If it is hot it will not suit Esquimaux souls, unless they should like a change after so many years of snow. If the climate is cold the number of "perishing souls" will be enormous. Hindoos, Chinese, Italians, Spaniards, will assuredly go in search of the "realms below." But enough! What do scripture readers know about heaven above! Nothing. And the parson knows just as much; but these charlatans for ages have played upon the hopes and fears of the ignorant as upon a stringed instrument; and thus the minds of the poor are perpetually filled with wild chimeras, which drive them into actions whose effects are detrimental alike to the happiness and progress of the race.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

HOW THE CHINESE REGARD CHRISTIANITY

In the numbers of the *Freethinker* from Aug. 28 to Sept. 25, 1887, appeared "Why I am a Heathen," by a Chinaman. Wong Chin Foo, the writer, had been a resident in Christian countries and knew the character of the Christians around him as well as the weak points of their religion. In China arguments against Christianity naturally partake more of an appeal to Chinese prejudices, especially to their moral sense of filial piety. To the Chinese the injunctions to "Let the dead bury the dead," and "if any man come unto me and hate not his father," etc., "he cannot be my disciple," appear perfectly unnatural.

Mr. Medhurst notices a tract written against him by a Chinaman, in which it is argued that "it was monstrous in barbarians to attempt to improve the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire when they were so miserably deficient themselves. Thus, introducing among the Chinese a poisonous drug, for their own benefit to the injuries of others, they were deficient in benevolence; sending their fleets and armies to rob other nations, they could make no pretensions to rectitude; allowing men and women to mix in society showed they were deficient in propriety, and rejecting the maxims of the ancients showed them wanting in wisdom. Truth was the only good quality to which they could make the least claim. Deficient therefore in four out of the five cardinal Virtues how could they expect to renovate others." The Chinese also resent the notion that a dead Jew was superior to their moral teacher Confucius. They point to the immoral lives of Christians, and especially to their deficiency in filial piety, and they do not forget to notice that among the followers of the dead Jew offices are accorded to the rich and noble, while among the followers of Confucius all positions are open to competitive examination.

Was it a slip or ironical? The *Daily Telegraph*, after stating that Earl Sydney's illness had become acute, and that prayers were offered on his behalf at several churches and chapels, added—"Lord Sydney, *however*, yesterday appeared much improved."

If parsons would but shorter preach,
How thankful we should be!
And practise half of what they teach,
How thankful we should be!
If Church and State were joined no more,
If all paid tax, both church and store,
And free schools flourished evermore,
How thankful we should be!

ACID DROPS.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* discovers another gross case of persecution in France. It appears that M. Saboraud, elected for La Vendée, has been unseated on the ground of clerical influence. A protest was made in the Chamber by Bishop Freppel, who claimed that the clergy had a perfect right to warn their flocks against voting for candidates hostile to religion. The Bishop was replied to by M. Ribot, a moderate Republican, who declared that the clergy had absolutely no right to busy themselves with politics, whether in or outside the Church. This rule was too often forgotten; but the Republicans would not permit the clergy to direct the consciences of their parishioners against the laws and institutions of the country; a declaration which was loudly applauded by the Left.

"Cannot these French Republicans," says the *Pall Mall*, "see that they do far too much honor to the sacerdotal theory by forbidding the priest to do anything a man and a citizen is free to do? Surely the true Liberal is against sacerdotalism equally when it is invoked as a claim for privilege or as a pretext for proscription." But this is all nonsense. The *Pall Mall* forgets one thing—the French priests are state-paid. Is it likely that a Republican government is going to pay the priests to fulminate against Republican candidates? Of course the clergy can secure the same freedom as other citizens by ceasing to take the cash of the State. But their claim to have the money and the freedom too is simply preposterous.

The Queen's printer is not devoid of "cheek." As a memento of the Exhibition he presented President Carnot with a handsomely-bound Bible, of the pattern used in English cathedrals. Considering that M. Carnot is a Freethinker, this is a piece of exquisite taste. Of course he accepted the gift, in a polite gentlemanly way, but instead of keeping it he passed it on to the National Library, where it will be kept merely as a specimen of printing and binding.

There was a terrible fire at Washington on Monday morning. Mr. Tracey, the Secretary of the Naval Department, nearly lost his life, and his wife and an unmarried daughter perished in the flames. Miss Tracey occupied a front bedroom on the third floor. According to the *Daily News* correspondent, "she could be seen at the window in the light that flickered in between the blinding smoke and flames, clad in white, her hands in an attitude of prayer, and her face uplifted. The flames gradually hemmed her in, and she finally perished."

How many who read this fearful story will learn its lesson? Here is a woman burnt to death *in the attitude of prayer*. The only answer she heard was the hiss of the flames as they hemmed her in. Yet the incident will be quietly forgotten and the clergy will go on preaching their lies—for a living.

The list of English publications the prohibition of whose sales has been decreed by the imperial censorship in Russia has just been printed in London. It includes Ingersoll's *Social Salvation* and his *Household of Faith*.

Hardly a week passes without some instances of clerical bigotry endeavoring to obstruct the Burials Act. A correspondent of the *Daily News* writes: "Will the State-appointed religious teachers ever all learn obedience to the law? The devices for rendering funerals under the Burial Act of 1880 most difficult, or for attaching to them a social stigma, are many and various. In the case of a funeral in a parish in the diocese of Gloucester, on Thursday, the procession, on arrival at the churchyard, found the main gates closed and locked against it, and it was intimated to the officiating Nonconformist minister that a side entrance some distance off was open."

As that was not the usual entrance for funerals, the minister very properly declined to go to it. After a search the sexton was found, and the gates were unlocked, but not until the mourners had been kept long waiting in the roadway in front of the churchyard gates. At the service itself the sexton, whose special duty it is to assist at burials,

declined to sprinkle earth on the coffin as it was lowered into the grave, saying that he had been instructed not to do so. It does not seem to have occurred to him that there may be risk in obeying instructions which are illegal.

Mr. Joseph Brown's letter to the Newcastle papers on Canon Talbot's avoidance of debate with a representative Secularist has evoked articles from both the *Leader* and the *Chronicle*. They speak of Mr. Brown and the Newcastle Branch of the National Secular Society with respect, but between the lines you can see they regard the Freethinkers as infernal nuisances, who will not let the city live in peace; which, of course, means leaving Christianity in undisputed possession.

The *Leader* professes to love discussion, and says "let it be free, vigorous, honest, unrestricted." But a platform debate is "palpably ridiculous." Of course it is—if you feel you are on the wrong side. No doubt the *Leader* will frown at this suggestion, but when the frown subsides it might just ask itself this question—Why is it that the Secularists are so eager for discussion and the Christians so reluctant?

The *Chronicle* goes to the length of saying that the attempt of the Secularists to force Canon Talbot into a discussion is "unseemly." Hoity-toity! What airs the Christians give themselves! Then the Canon's offer to address the Secularists in a quiet way—that is, *his* way—is described as "generous." More airs! And more food for Secular mirth.

Lord Randolph Churchill and other persons of influence have signed a memorial, urging the danger of the accumulation of decomposing human remains near great populations. They do not, however, point out that the true remedy is cremation, which might be made cheaper than earth burial.

Madame Blavatsky takes her title of "The New Cagliostro" as a honor. At least we judge so from finding the initials H. P. B. appended to an article in the last number of *Lucifer*, entitled "Was Cagliostro a Charlatan?" H. P. B. contends that the so-called impostor was really a hero and martyr of Theosophy, one instructed by the Adepts to astonish the world and partially reveal the secret doctrine. H. P. B. casts doubt on "Cagliostro" having died in prison, and even hints that he may be still alive and on the earth! Cagliostro's character is not of transcendent importance nowadays, but as his career illustrates human gullibility, we shall give a short account of him next week.

"Economist" writes to the papers that he "recently met with a collection instituted by a Bishop which, on the face of it, cost as much to the public as the amount contributed." This is nothing unusual. The appeals for the heathen would be not so frequent, if the heathen got all the cash and there was nothing for the middlemen.

Archdeacon's Farrar's "eloquent discourses" on Christian missions have been as barren as the east wind. Concluding his last discourse, he said that he thought some of his listeners would have found their hearts stirred up to render financial help, and he had announced that he would be pleased to receive donations, but he had not received a single sixpence.

According to a pious contemporary a minister at Beccles has been presented with a copy of Farrar's "Early Days of Christianity in Morocco."

Mr. C. R. Haines has published, through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a kind of answer to Canon Taylor in the form of a volume entitled *Islam as a Missionary Religion*. Reviewing this work, the *Academy* says he doesn't understand the subject, and laughs at his talk about Mohammedanism spreading itself by the sword, as though Christianity hadn't done the same thing. "Moslems," says the *Academy*, "are so passionately attached to their religion because they believe it to be not only the best religion, but the only true religion. They appeal to the lofty morality which the Koran inculcates as the chief evidence of the divine mission of its founder. They attribute the marvellous spread of Islam, and the hold it has on its disciples, to its own intrinsic excellence; and they are unable to understand

how any heathen tribe if offered the choice between Islam and Christianity, could possibly fail to choose the former."

Flora Trinder, a domestic servant and a Salvationist, was charged on Monday at Bow Street with stealing a cheque for £10 and forging the endorsement. She was arrested at a Salvation Army meeting in Tottenham Court Road. Of course the affair is a small one. But just imagine how the religious and "anti-infidel" papers would shout if the police went into a Freethought meeting and arrested a Freethinker for theft.

Another suicide from religious melancholia. Mrs. Knight, of Rushden, after going to the Old Baptist Church and partaking of the sacrament, went home and cut her throat. The doctor had previously attended her for religious monomania. Oh, the blessedness of religion!

Eleanor Martin, of Plymouth, suffered from religious mania, which drove her to commit suicide. The jury returned the usual verdict of insanity, but forgot to add a rider, "brought on by religion."

In the Queen's Bench a farm bailiff named Carpenter, aged 70, was awarded £150 and £50 damages against the Rev. F. J. Aldrich Blake, rector of Welsh Becknor, Herefordshire, his late employer, for five alleged false and malicious prosecutions, and also for libel. Mr. Steward, a cattle dealer, who was charged with conspiracy with plaintiff in the previous case, also recovered £50 damages against the same defendant. The defendant conducted his case in person, as his counsel returned their briefs in consequence of not being able to agree with defendant as to the conduct of the case.

The Bishop of Bangor has had to prosecute the Rev. John Williams Meyrick, rector of Llandegfan, for wilful contumacy in refusing to perform divine service at the church, or to allow a curate to officiate in his stead. Finding no service conducted there, the bishop sent a curate, but the rector considered the church as his own property, and he was not permitted to enter the building.

Mr. Wm. M. F. Round writes in the American *Forum* on "Immigration and Crime." Mr. Round finds that the Irish contribute to the American criminal classes out of all proportion to their numbers. He shows that while the Irish are 3.6 of the foreign population, they furnish 9.2 per cent. of the prison population. We believe we do no injustice to their religion in largely holding it accountable for this. Without taking into account its doctrine of absolution, Catholicism, by encouraging its adherents to "increase and multiply," is a direct cause of their poverty, and so of the vice and misery which always follow in poverty's train.

An American murderer, Thomas J. Cole, who killed a friend with a hatchet while he was sleeping, will shortly take his place in glory. He is very devout and is constantly attended by Father Daley, of the Church of the Annunciation, Philadelphia.

Bishop Barry has addressed a West-end meeting on behalf of the Christian Evidence Society. His remarks on "unbelief"—which means, of course, unbelief in his religion—were worthy of his cloth as well as the Society for whose funds he was pleading. He said that the chief root of unbelief is "sheer ignorance." Well now, we have a pretty large stock of unbelief, and if Bishop Barry thinks it is all the result of ignorance, we shall be happy to give him an opportunity of exposing it in public. His knowledge ought to settle our ignorance in a single evening's debate. Let him smash up the Editor of the *Freethinker*, and he will do a good deal of damage to Freethought; and, for our part, we are ready to be smashed up, if Bishop Barry is disposed to try his holy hand at the business.

The second root of unbelief, according to Bishop Barry, is "moral evil, whether vice, crime, or sin." Now if we were to say what this sort of nonsense invites, we should call Bishop Barry a libellous humbug. But we won't say it. We simply remark that if moral evil is a cause of unbelief, the Bishop will find plenty of preventive work in his own Church without going outside.

Fancy a man being prompted by "moral evil" to disbelieve the Hebrew yarn about the first woman being manufactured out of a spare rib! Fancy a man being moved by "vice" to suppose that Darwin knew far more about biology than Moses! Fancy a man being impelled by "crime" to smile at the story of a missionary taking a three days' trip inside a whale! Fancy a man being instigated by "sin" to think that miracles are the offspring of ignorance and credulity! Really, when you reduce the Bishop's little argument to the concrete, its bigotry and vulgarity are lost in its infinite absurdity.

Bishop Barry complained, too, that unbelief shows "an impatience of anything like mystery." And then he went on to juggle about "mystery," like a professional purveyor of the article. There was the "mystery of matter," the "mystery of life," and so on. Everywhere you come to mystery at last. Very true, but that kind of mystery is simply ignorance. We see no further because the light fails us. But *your* mystery, O right reverend father in God, is artificial. It is not natural darkness, but smoke. Or, to drop metaphor, while natural mystery marks the end of knowledge, religious mystery marks the end of sense. A mystery of nature is something we don't understand; merely this, and nothing more. A theological mystery is something very different. It is a flat contradiction between the priests' doctrines and the facts of life.

Take an illustration. You go to church and hear the preacher say that God is infinitely good and loving, as well as infinitely powerful. You come home and find your house on fire and your children mere smoking masses of charred flesh. In your agony you ask why the infinitely loving and all-powerful God allowed such a tragedy to happen. "Ah, my brother," says the priest, "it is a mystery." In other words, it is a fact giving the lie direct to his hollow mouthings.

We have just a parting word for Bishop Barry, and it is this—Let him quote from the Bible with a little less looseness. We are well supplied with "sheer ignorance," but we know whether a text is right or wrong when we see it. The Bishop advised his audience "to follow the Apostolic injunction to give a reason for the *faith* which is in them." Now the Apostolic injunction (1 Peter iii., 15) is to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the *hope* that is in you with meekness and fear." Of course we don't expect meekness and fear from a Bishop, or any other Christian controversialist, for their religion "bosses the show" now, whereas it sang very small in the days of Saint Peter. But we do expect them to quote correctly from their own fetish, the inspired Word of God. Nor is this a small point; for the "hope" spoken of by Peter is a very different thing from "faith," as may be seen from Paul's famous panegyric on charity. The Christian's *faith* is retrospective. It means his belief in the miraculous career, death, resurrection, ascension, and teaching of Jesus Christ. His *hope* is prospective. It means his expectation of a reserved seat in heaven.

The Young Women's Christian Association is going in for a "Universal Week of Prayer." What will they pray for? Good-looking husbands, says the cynic.

Baptism by total immersion—which is undoubtedly the rule of the English Church, sprinkling being the exception—will, I hear, in future be insisted on at all public christenings at the Chapel of Ease, High Street, Ilford, where the infant of one of the clergy was triply immersed a Sunday or two ago as a start. I hope the youthful clergy, who generally hold babies as if they feared the children might tumble to pieces, will be careful if this immersion practice increases. No one but a parent knows how slippery a wet baby is; and just imagine the declension in female favor of a favorite curate who let an infant—before it was quite regenerate, perhaps—tumble into a deep font and get drowned, or even catch cold!—*Weekly Times*.

The *Bournemouth Guardian* publishes a curious letter from a Baptist missionary at Stanley Pool, Central Africa. He says "The people here buy slaves, and fatten up and kill and eat them." But he is glad to say he is on good terms with them, and concludes by saying "I am quite

happy"—there being no chance, we presume, of the missionary being treated like the slaves.

The Lyons judges have a queer law-suit to settle. A pious lady had the lower jaw of a saint, Jean Soanen, Bishop of Senez, who flourished in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth. A broker introduced her to a lumber-shop-keeper, who had the holy man's skull to dispose of. The purchase was effected, but the lady refused to pay the broker's commission, and he sues her for his little bill. No doubt the Court will fight shy of discussing the authenticity of the relic, but it may turn out that the lower and upper jaws don't fit.

A want of aggression in the Church was complained of by the Rev. T. Green at the annual meeting of the Congregational Churches in the Manchester district. We hope the complaint will stir the Church up, if only to defend itself. Fighting a Church that doesn't hit back is like punching a feather-bed.

Hugh Price Hughes has been addressing a big meeting at Bolton in behalf of "the great London Mission." "Oh help us," he exclaimed, "and every nation under heaven shall share our joy." He then resumed his seat "amidst a burst of enthusiastic applause." Somehow he forgot to say anything about his "Converted Atheist." We hope to make him wish he *never had* said anything about that wretched imposture.

The Rev. R. S. Blair told a recent meeting of the London Primitive Methodist Ministers that during the last six years there had been a great development of antipathy towards the Churches. He attributed it to the Sunday meetings of workmen for the discussion of social questions. But the Rev. Thomas Guttery said it was owing to the want of sympathy shown by the clergy to the workmen in their labor troubles. Anyhow *the fact* is admitted, and it is a growing fact. All the Churches are becoming more and more mere middle-class organisations.

The trashy paper that rejoices in the title of *Anti-Infidel* says of Mr. H. L. Hastings, the American Christian advocate "his teaching is unscriptural, and consequently productive of infidelity." Does the reader want to know whence comes this recrimination among the Lord's defenders. Both lay claim for their publication to the same title of Anti-Infidel Library. Hence these war-whoops.

Pious frauds are ubiquitous. When they cannot take hold at home they slip off to the other side of the world, and try to catch on there. We gather from *Freedom*, of Sydney, Australia, that certain Christian advocates in that city are circulating with much detail the statement that Mr. Bradlaugh, during his late illness, embraced the Christian religion and renounced his connection with Free-thought. Possibly the pious bigots who circulated the tale trusted to Providence to settle Mr. Bradlaugh outright, so that the lie might go the round unrefuted.

Christ lived and died (perhaps!) more than eighteen hundred years ago. He left the Holy Ghost with his Apostles to enlighten them. They preached and made converts, and by-and-bye the New Testament came into existence as the infallible Word of God. Churches arose, sects abounded, quarrels prevailed, and in the course of time Christians butchered each other by the million to settle disputed points of faith. But still the matter is as unsettled as ever, and the *Christian World* is inviting ministers to say "What is a Christian?" Reading their answers is a beautiful lesson in Christian harmony.

Ten years ago, while passing through Stratford-on-Avon, Mr. Toole, the English comedian, saw a rustic sitting on a fence. "That's Shakespeare's house, isn't it?" he asked, pointing to the building. "Yes." "Ever been there?" "No." "How long has he been dead?" "Don't know." "Brought up here?" "Yes." "Did he write anything like the *Family Herald*, or anything of that sort?" "Oh, yes, he writ!" "What was it?" "Well," said the rustic, "I think he wrote for the Bible."

A pious yarn went the rounds of the American press telling how one John Chana, of Pottsville, became a hope-

less paralytic, and died after cursing his Maker in a terrible manner. An inquirer wrote to the local paper to ascertain the truth of the story. He was told that certainly the man, a Hungarian, had died in a paralytic fit, but from natural causes, the chief one being the constant use of whiskey. There was no truth whatever in the story that he had cursed his Maker, or, as some others said, the Virgin Mary. No doubt other cases of wicked blasphemers suddenly punished, if similarly examined, would prove similarly groundless.

Converting the converted is a very old form of missionary enterprise. We do not wonder, therefore, that three English clergymen, Messrs. Pitman, Dickenson, and Knight, are going out to labor as missionaries in Canada. It is stated that they propose "to work in one of the large Canadian towns." "Imagine," says the *Toronto Mail*, "missionaries leaving all, bidding farewell to friends, and starting out fully equipped to work in Toronto, where there are thirty Anglican churches already." We fear the *Toronto Mail* doesn't allow for the glutted condition of the clerical market in England.

When Stanley returns to England he should go about preaching. He is constantly talking about Providence, which he appears to have discovered in Africa. Speaking at the Cairo banquet, he gave an account of poor Emin's tumbling into the street, and then added: "There upon the ground was the most pitiable sight it was possible for me to witness. Man proposes, but God disposes. Over and over again have I seen that a mysterious power guides human affairs, and here was a signal proof of it." Surely this is rough on Emin. It *looks* hard, at any rate, that poor Emin should be battered about, and half killed, to furnish Stanley with a fresh lesson in theology.

In an article on the London Clubs, the *Echo* complains of "the hard, narrow, bitter Secularism" which dominates so many of them, and which is "as superficial as it is unlovely." All these epithets only show that the *Echo* doesn't understand the Secularists of the Clubs. They are not on the look-out for a "lovely" creed. They are honest enough to want a *true* one.

The *Echo* thinks this "hard" Secularism might be "softened by the best poetry and music." We venture to say there are more readers—and lovers—of true poetry among Freethinkers than among any other section of the community. The *Echo* makes the usual orthodox mistake of supposing that a hard head means a hard heart. It generally means the reverse.

The Buffalo gals have been going it. Two thousand Polish ladies in that city mobbed a Catholic priest appointed to succeed their favorite pastor. Two hundred policemen had to protect him, and the Buffalo gals fusilladed them with salt and pepper. Twenty guardians of law and order were put *hors de combat*. We are not informed what became of the priest.

Weep, weep for our darling priest!

They've packed him off to another living.

Curse, curse the horrible beast

The Holy Church in his stead is giving!

O the darling eyes and the kissable mouth

Of the beautiful priest we're grieving after!

This one's the ugliest, north or south-

Greet him, girls, with shouts of laughter.

Pinch him, punch him, scratch him, tear him;

Give him the ten commandments galore.

Ugly wretch! we can't abear him;

Buffalo gals will have his gore.

Bobbies round him! Give them pepper,

Right in the eyes, and salt as well.

And as for him, the dirty leper,

Give it him, gals, as hot as hell.

A coffin and grave for the ugly creature!

But oh for the darling that's gone away!

The grace of God was in every feature.

Honey come back, and come to stay.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 9, Oddfellows' Hall, King Street, Blackburn, at 10.30, "Is the Bible Inspired?" at 2.30, "Defence of Atheism—in reply to the Rev. J. Ogmores Davies"; at 6.30, "An Hour with the Devil."

Feb. 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.

A. BRITON.—2 Chron. xxi., 20, and xxii., 1 and 2, say that Ahaziah, the youngest son of Jehoram, was forty-two when he began to reign, and he was made king instead of his father, who died at forty. But that was in the days of miracles.

T. CARYER.—Yes, Mr. Foote will be nominated for the Presidency of the N. S. S., and if elected he will accept the office. He has not asked anyone to nominate or second him, nor has he made the slightest canvas, or even mentioned the subject at all until now, when he is pointedly asked and feels it an honorable thing to answer. Branches have written to Mr. Foote on the subject weeks ago, but he preferred to say nothing publicly, so that the meeting on the 16th inst. might act with spontaneity.

F. TOWNSEND, 11 Leather Lane, E.C., supplies the *Freethinker* and exhibits a bill.

AMICUS.—Our invitation for capital is still open, but we do not intend to give any more prominence to it at present.

GLASGOW SECRETARY.—Your Guide Notice was sent to Stonecutter Street, and reached us too late for insertion last week. Our editorial address is 14 Clerkenwell Green.

H. J. BARTER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

NO. 12.—Glad to hear from you. Peg away.

P. BRABAZON.—There is truth in what you say. But if we find room for reports, in the sweet by-and-bye, it will involve a new departure for the reporters. Glad to hear the West Ham children's party was a success.

A. WHEELER sends us the annual balance-sheet of the Finsbury Branch. The income is small, but the Branch only does open-air work and pays its way. We congratulate the few working men who hold up the Freethought flag on Clerkenwell Green.

J. CASPAR.—Thanks.

H. COURTNEY.—Mr. Foote is nearly quite well again. See "Acid Drops."

J. C. B.—There is no Secular hall in Swansea. Sorry to hear that, in shifting about, you have such trouble in getting the *Freethinker*.

H. J. S.—It is uphill work, as you say. But those who know you respect you, and that is the great thing after all.

JOSEPH BROWN.—You are doing a splendid work in Newcastle. The Branch should be proud of such an able and energetic secretary.

H. PORTER.—Under consideration.

J. RAWLINSON says Freethinkers should be on their guard against the Mr. English referred to in one of our last week's paragraphs.

BATH FRIEND.—Shall be dealt with in our next.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Newcastle Daily Leader—Chat—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Echo—Bulletin des Sommaires—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Ironclad Age—Independent Pulpit—Yorkshire Chronicle—Truthseeker—Freedom—Liberty—Our Journal—Church Reformer—War Cry—Der Lichtfreund—Echo—Gravesend and Dartford Reporter—Sunday Chronicle—Boston Investigator—Bournemouth Guardian—Menschentum—Evening Standard—Kensington Churchman—Progressive thinker.

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.

THE influenza having abated, and the evening being fine, there was a great improvement in the attendance at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Why I am an Atheist." The audience was both large and enthusiastic. Mr. Standing enrolled a dozen new members of the National Secular Society.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Feb. 9) at Blackburn. The afternoon lecture, a "Defence of Atheism," is in reply to a local minister whose discourses on the subject have been reported in the Blackburn press. As few Freethought lectures are delivered in this town (at present; it will be better by and bye), it is to be hoped that the Freethinkers in the district will not only attend themselves, but try to bring some orthodox friends with them.

THE London Secular Federation will organise courses of week-night free lectures—followed by discussion—in several districts of the metropolis. A beginning is to be made at the Hall of Science on Thursday evenings, February 20 and 27, and March 6 and 13. The lectures and subjects will be as follows:—(1) G. W. Foote, "Freethought and God." (2) J. M. Robertson, "Freethought and the Bible." (3) G. Standing, "The Church and the People." (4) G. W. Foote, "Freethought and Christ."

AS we have said, the admission to these lectures will be free, but there will be a box at the door for the donations of Freethinkers inclined to assist the experiment. We may add that the Christian Evidence Society has been invited to send representatives.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges £1 from W. H. Reynolds.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMPSON has been elected chairman of the Stockholm Branch of the Utilistiska Samfundet, and puts a great deal of energy into the organisation. We cannot sufficiently admire the bravery of this good captain, who has broke up his home at Eskilstuna in order to be in the position of danger at Stockholm. We notice that already the typographical appearance of *Fritankaren* is much improved. But money is needed to assist it, and thereby sustain the organisation and maintain the prisoner. We trust a good share will be forthcoming from English sympathisers.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMPSON writes us that the "Gotha Hofrath," the court before which two prosecutions against Mr. Lennstrand were pending, has declared him "Not Guilty." This, accompanied with a pointed judicial explanation directed against the Court of King's Bench in Stockholm for its former sentences against Lennstrand, has delighted all friends of freedom in the northern peninsular. It is another item showing the decline of the power of bigotry.

So far so good, but unfortunately this is not all. The prosecutors have appealed to the Higher Court of King's Bench, and that court, it is only too likely, in its customary subserviency to Church and State, will add some months' imprisonment to our brave young friend, who, Captain Thompson assures us, is cheerful and stout hearted as ever and fully worthy of the sympathy he receives from all quarters.

MORE money is wanted for the Swedish Prisoners' Fund. Every Branch should make a collection at once. Mr. Forder holds over a further list of acknowledgments till next week.

OUR exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's "Converted Atheist" is being well circulated. A Lancashire friend has paid for six dozen to be distributed among Wesleyan ministers. The Chatham Secular Society has bought a parcel for distribution. When the present supply—a good one—is exhausted we shall be happy to print more.

— THE Rev. W. Walsh has concluded his pleasant address on unbelief, and the Newcastle Branch is delighted. It has gained six new members by the discussion. If other ministers will follow Mr. Walsh's excellent example the city will soon be converted to Freethought.

LAST Sunday's council meeting of the North Eastern Secular Federation was the best attended since the first start. It was decided to engage Mr. Clarke for a fortnight's tour. Other useful business was transacted.

Good Friday is to be commemorated by a social gathering of Secularists in the Arcade Assembly Rooms, Newcastle. Those who mean to attend should write to Mr. Joseph Brown, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle.

MR. A. B. MOSS gave great satisfaction at Manchester on Sunday, and his evening lecture on "The Mission of Freethought" drew a capital audience.

MRS. ELIZABETH H. CHURCH, of San Francisco, died a staunch Freethinker, and left one hundred dollars each to Mr. S. P. Putnam, of *Freethought*, Mr. H. O. Pentecost, of the *Twentieth Century*, Mr. H. L. Green, of the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, and Chas. Watts, of *Secular Thought*. By her wish Mr. Putnam conducted the funeral service, and her nephew, an Irvingite clergyman, had the grace to express his "sincere appreciation" of the manner in which her wishes were carried out.

"ACCOMPANYING the regular issue of the London *Freethinker* comes a Christmas number. It contains sixteen pages, neatly covered, and profusely illustrated with comic pictures. The reading matter is varied all the way from sober reasoning to humorous joking. The *Freethinker* is one of the ablest papers in the Liberal ranks. It is edited by Mr. G. W. Foote, who has no superior as a controversial writer. He can find more weak places in the armor of sanctity, or rather Christian hypocrisy, than any one we are accustomed to read after. He never writes a dull sentence, and invariably hits the mark aimed at. Mr. Foote is happily aided by two splendid writers, Messrs. J. M. Wheeler and W. P. Ball; besides, Mr. Forder is an admirable business manager. There are no dull, heavy and pointless papers in the Liberal field that we know of, and the *Freethinker* is abreast with the ablest and liveliest of them all."—*Independent Pulpit* (Texas).

THE *Independent Pulpit* also congratulates Mr. Wheeler on the completion of his *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, and says he has "performed a noble service to Freethought." It hopes "some Liberal publisher and bookseller in America will arrange to put the work on sale." So do we.

MR. WHEELER'S work has not yet reached America in the bound form. Copies have been sent, however, and we may soon expect reviews in the Freethought papers.

MR. W. W. COLLINS will leave Sydney on a lecturing tour in New Zealand immediately after the laying of the foundation stone of the new Sydney Freethought Hall. There is a large Freethought population scattered in New Zealand, which we trust Mr. Collins will do something to unite in an effective organisation.

THE *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* has a very good letter from Mr. Chas. H. Kelf in answer to Canon Talbot on the question "Did the Jews at the time of Christ understand Greek?" Mr. Kelf quotes from Josephus, bk. i., against Apion, to show that even this eminent and learned man did not learn Greek until after he was taken captive in the war with the Romans. How preposterous is it then to suppose that Jewish fishermen understood and wrote in that language.

MR. SAM STANDRING says the North Middlesex open-air stations will resume operations in March. He will be glad to hear from a few volunteer lecturers.

THE Schoolmaster versus the sky pilot again. The *Gravesend and Dartford Reporter* gives in extenso an account of the arguments used by Mr. R. A. Brown, headmaster of the Higher Grade School, Gravesend, in favor of

Evolution, which are to be replied to by the Rev. W. Tucker, who argues in favor of "Special Creation." The schoolmaster has put a strong case for the sky pilot to answer.

THE London School Board, on the motion of Mrs. Besant amended by Mr. Stanley, has decided in favor of Free Education. We congratulate London on the vote, and hope it will powerfully assist the rational re-organisation of our public school system.

"ALASTOR," whose name often appears in *Secular Thought* (Toronto), turns out to be the financial pillar of the paper. He has been making up the weekly deficit for some time. But unfortunately he is unable to bear the strain, and he is obliged to ask the Freethought party in Canada to do more for their only journal, unless they want to see it drop. We earnestly hope the appeal will elicit a generous response. *Secular Thought* ought to be maintained.

WE have received from New York the *Truthseeker's Annual*, which has now become a permanent American institution. It gives as frontispiece a photographed bas-relief illustrating Bruno's martyrdom, and an account of the inauguration of Bruno's statue (the event of 1889) by T. B. Wakeman. The *Annual* gives a Freethinker's Almanac, but there are also many other attractive features. An account of Freethought in the United States informs us that the progress of the movement, though quiet, is satisfactory. One of the most attractive pieces is a story by Miss Helen H. Gardener entitled "The Boler House Mystery," and one of the most telling is *The Inventions of Science and The Inventions of Christianity* in which illustrations of the principal scientific instruments are given side by side with the instruments of torture invented and used by the Church. An article on "Why I left the Church" by H. O. Pentecost is so interesting that we shall reprint it for the benefit of our own readers. The *Annual* is capably got up and reflects great credit on the publishers.

NEXT Sunday (Feb. 16) the long-expected, eventful meeting will be held at the London Hall of Science. Mr. Bradlaugh will formally resign the presidency of the National Secular Society, and state his reasons for doing so. Should his resignation be accepted—and it is hard to see how it can be rejected—his successor will be appointed. Only members of the N. S. S. can be present, and we repeat (for the last time) that present non-members who wish to attend, and see and hear Mr. Bradlaugh, must enrol themselves without delay. If they leave it till the last minute they will find themselves too late.

MR. BRADLAUGH has kindly arranged for his Indian presents to be on exhibition in the minor hall, upstairs, before and after the meeting. By the way, the meeting commences punctually at eleven.

THE N. S. S. Executive has instructed Mr. Forder to arrange for a luncheon at the Manchester Hotel, in Aldersgate Street. London is a dreadful place for obtaining refreshments on Sunday, and friends from the country, as well as some from the suburbs, will be glad to have a certain meal in front of them. Mr. Forder should be informed during the week by those who desire tickets.

THE TRUE RELIGION IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

A correspondent of the *Midland Counties Express* gives the following dialogue as a sample of what goes on in a State-aided school not far from Wolverhampton:

Q. "Children, you know which is the True Church, don't you?"—A. "Yes, sir."

Q. "You know that there is only one True Church?"—A. "Yes, sir."

"Yes," says he, "the Lord Jesus Christ made our Church, you know. He had nothing to do with the making of these little petty chapels that are about, did he?"—A. "No, sir."

"Now, you children that belong to the True Church, put up your hands."

Up goes a forest of hands.

"Now, you that go to the chapels, put yours up."

Only a few are held up.

AN INTERRUPTED SABBATH CALM.
(Founded on fact. A childish recollection.)

'Twas in the parlor's sacred shade
We sat, in Sunday clothes arrayed—
A little band of scholars small,
Who learned their creed and knowledge all,
And morals too, by book and rule,
At good, dear Madame Blobbs' high school.
The Sabbath twilight shadows fell,
As to the organ's solemn swell
We sang in clear and ringing tones
From some hymn-book of "Mary Jones."*
At least, they sang, my school-mates dear,
But I, less mindful or sincere,
Was sitting in a corner dark
Where none my sinful deed might mark;
And with my handkerchief at play,
A drama sweet did there essay,
Enacting, as head bobbed to head,
What Francis unto Sarah said.
But short my sport, for Madame dear
Did chance to draw my corner near
As my *dramatis personæ*
Had dropped from high civility;
And, like the Tuscan spears at Rome,
Would drive the morning kiss well home.

"You bad, you naughty, wicked child,"
Cries Madame Blobbs in accents mild,
"To mar this holy Sabbath calm
With such vain sport," and grasps my arm.
My childish soul rebels within
Against this awful charge of sin,
And loud protests with stamps and sobs.
"Obstreperous," says Madame Blobbs.

The cane, at least three inches broad,
Was kept upon a smooth sideboard
Behind a set of polished trays
That held good cheer on festive days.
She snatched the cane, and jogged the trays—
They slide, and naught their progress stays;
Then clatter down upon the floor,
Clang, clang, ter bang; a roar-r-r-r-r.

O, what a crash and jar and din!
The scholars shriek and teachers grin,
And governess, staid with "Sabbath joys,"
Does bravely strive to drown the noise;
But all in vain. Some laughed, some ran,
While danced my feet a wild can-can;
And loud and fast upon my back
The cane came down thwäck, thwäck.

'Tis done, that great chastisement's done;
The noise subsides, so, too, the fun;
The organ once again doth peal,
And voices sweet the twilight thrill.
But I'm a-bed, choke-full of woe
And sin. Ah me! 'twas long ago,
And I am still a wayward child—
An Atheist in the "desert" wild;
But, strange to say, no rude alarm
Now mars my Sabbath evening's calm.

ALFRED LOVETT.

COL. INGERSOLL has been delivering a discourse in New York on "Crimes against Criminals." He thinks the American treatment of them not humane enough. Habitual criminals are beings with a mental twist. They are so to speak morally deformed. Punishment in the ordinary sense he deems useless. The worst criminals he would keep apart from the community just as we treat lunatics. Less depraved criminals should have a chance of cure by kindness. Col. Ingersoll would have prisoners paid for their work, that is what they earn beyond their cost placed to their credit, and paid them when discharged. No doubt this would give them a better chance of starting an honest life, and as to the objection, where would the money come from, we think it would be such a stimulus to perfunctory prison labors, that it might make those institutions self-supporting.

* "Mary Jones and Her Bible," Services of Sacred Songs, Sunday School Union.

POETRY IN LAW.

LAST week Colonel Ingersoll was defending a man in a breach of promise case. Here are some of the little bits of poetry that appear in his address to the jury:

When a man gets to a point where he'll lie, there isn't much choice of subjects.

You must take it for granted that men of ordinary sense do not act like extraordinary fools.

I'll go as far as anyone to whip naked through the world the man who deceives a good, pure, and confiding woman.

A marriage without love is immoral. I don't care how many forms you go through, I don't care if all the churches in the world, united beneath the dome of heaven, filling all the air with incense, pronounce them wedded, if that sweet perfume called love does not arise there is no marriage.

The woman who marries a man because he is rich, for a title, or for office, place, or power, is not a virtuous woman, and the man who marries a woman for any such reason is not a virtuous man, but a contemptible wretch.

She knew that he could obtain a divorce only by perjury and fraud, yet she was willing to marry him, and be divorced only by papers and perjuries, and not by facts.

Epithets are so cheap that you can make money on lies at fifty cents a hundred.

People who are fond of music are sometimes dangerous.

There is no evidence that her heart was ever quickened one-hundredth part as much as it would have been by the sudden appearance of a mouse.

If I got such love letters as hers, I'd keep 'em until summer and then carry 'em in my pockets hot days.

Oh, what an orator is love! What honeyed words run over the rose of his lips.

When another commits a fault it is a great dead tree half decayed, bare and hideous, but when we do it ourselves, oh, my God! think of the reasons, climbing around it like a thousand clinging vines, covering with soft loveliness every branch and twig, turning it into a beautiful object.

His love letters are sincere and good; who would have thought there was so much blood in the old man?

She was coldly and placidly correct, as correct as a crystal pane upon a frosted window.

I think any woman in the world is repaid for an ordinary breach of promise by being taken to hear Wagner's music.

"Tristan," that Mississippi of melody, flowing deep and strong, with hundreds of little tributaries bursting over the rocks into flowers of foam.

Every heart is like a theatre in one respect; there are certain effects produced, but you don't want everyone to see all the ropes and pulleys.

A VOICE FROM CARLILE'S COUNTY.

I wish to make a few hasty remarks on the *Freethinker*, and to express approval of the general ability with which it is conducted. Whoever writes the short paragraphs on passing events, comments on assertions in orthodox periodicals, etc., does his work with admirable skill, with wit, sarcasm, humor, "sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer," and accomplishing in eight or a dozen lines as much destructiveness as could be accomplished by a column of close logical reasoning. I have mentioned the "solemn sneer" of Gibbon, of which Carlyle says, "As soon as I had read the twelve volumes in as many days, I put down the books, and never afterwards believed in miracles." The finer the wit, the keener the edge of the instrument, and the absence of even a tinge of vulgarity, the more effective the remarks become. I could give numerous instances, if I had time to refer to the pile of *Freethinkers*, as I put a pencil-mark against the best. The leaders are good and instructive, both Mr. Foote's and Mr. Wheeler's. "Letters to the Clergy" are able and argumentative, and have a value as a book of reference, as I see they are to be published in book form. Ingersoll's oration on the death of Horace Seaver, ought to be published as a pamphlet—his turning to the corpse and addressing it is startling and has fine dramatic effect.—DELTA (Plymouth).

["Delta" is informed that the *Freethinker* paragraphs are all written by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler. Ingersoll's oration on the death of Horace Seaver may be included in a little collection of his funeral addresses.—EDITOR.]

REVIEWS.

The Psychology of Attention. By T. RIBOT (Authorised Translation). "Open Court" Publishing Co., Chicago. Price 75 cents.—Dr. Ribot occupies the chair of comparative and experimental psychology at the Collège de France. He enjoys a European reputation, and apparently an American reputation also, for the present volume is one of a series with which the "Open Court" Publishing Co. is enriching the philosophical literature of the United States. The translation seems admirably done; indeed, except for the title page, the reader would imagine himself perusing an English work. As for the study itself, we have no hesitation in pronouncing it a very important contribution to positive psychology. Space does not permit of a lengthy *critique*, and a thinker of Dr. Ribot's eminence is not to be dealt with superficially or piecemeal. We content ourselves, therefore, with heartily recommending the volume to all our readers who are interested in the deeper problems of life and mind, and who desire to see them treated in a purely scientific spirit.

Religious Systems of the World. London: Sonnenschein and Co.—This is a collection of the Sunday afternoon lectures delivered at South Place Institute in 1888—89. We venture to hope it will have a wide circulation. A few of the lectures are unimportant, but the rest are well worthy of attention, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find elsewhere such a bird's-eye view of religions, sects and philosophic systems. The writers include Edward Clodd, Canon Rawlinson, Dr. James Legge, Professor Beal, Sir Alfred Lyall, Arthur Lillie, Oscar Browning, Rev. Edward White, Rev. John Clifford, Sir F. Pollock, Frederic Harrison, Dr. Stanton Coit, etc. Two writers specially known to the Freethought party are J. M. Robertson, who contributes an able and learned paper on Mithraism, and G. W. Foote, who writes on the Gospel of Secularism.

Will Shakespeare, Tom Paine, Bob Ingersoll, and Charlie Bradlaugh. London: R. Forder, (6d.)—This pamphlet is from the pen of a veteran Freethought scholar, and is very good reading. The author's object is to show that "Will," "Tom," and other diminutives were no marks of disrespect, but a sign that the man was "a jolly good fellow." We believe this is about the truth. But it won't do to turn it upside down, for some names can't be diminished at all, nor some without vulgarity; and of course we don't choose our own names. It appears pretty certain that "Tom" was applied to Paine by his contemporaries without a tinge of insult. That is entirely posthumous—a bit of retrospective Christian charity.

Horrors of the French Revolution. By CHARLES WATTS. "Secular Thought" Office: Toronto (10 cents.)—An excellent reply to the orthodox libellers of the Atheists of the Revolution. Mr. Watts reduces the "horrors" to their proper proportions, shows how small they were in comparison with the horrors of kingcraft and priestcraft, and finds their causes in the brutal oppression of the French people in previous centuries.

Christianity, Defective and Unnecessary. By KATE EUNICE WATTS. "Secular Thought" Office: Toronto (10 cents.)—A spirited, well-written pamphlet, that ought to be circulated among women.

Our want of halls is often cast in our teeth by those who uphold the laws which prevent the endowment of Freethought. They should turn to Gregory's *Christian Church*, vol i., p. 118, where he says of the Christians, "They met in private houses, and only in the third century did they become respectable and were permitted to erect places of worship."

OBITUARY.—I have the painful duty of recording the death on January 30, aged 35, of Mr. Samuel Pratt. The interment took place on Saturday, the 1st inst., at West Hartlepool Cemetery. By his death the members of this Branch have lost a consistent advocate. He was deeply respected by his fellow workmen, who came to his grave in large numbers. At his request I read A. Holyoake's service at his grave. Every word was listened to by all present with due decorum, and no truer description of his aims and aspirations through life can be given than the perusal of that service conveys.—JAMES McNAMEE.

BLASPHEMY AND BLASPHEMY.

WELL, and so the Bolton Guardians of the Poor have decided to accept Mr. Elliston's invitation to his pantomime on behalf of the workhouse children. after all—but not until one, a Mr. Ramsden, who said he had never been to a theatre in his life, had spoken of "the baneful influence of such entertainments on the young," and another, a Mr. Dutton, had said that "he could not ask God's blessing on a child whom he took to the theatre." Why, if he can't, he can't—and there's an end of that. It is still conceivable that the Creator of the Bolton Workhouse children may know whether they should be blessed or cursed without waiting for instructions from Mr. Dutton. Nay, when you come to think of it, what monstrous, amazing blasphemy is this, that a bombastic, inflated, self-sufficient, prosperous prig should dare to pretend that the relations of the Deity towards the poor castaways of his creation require to be arranged and directed by Mr. Dutton's officious intercession!

And what is to be said of the self-righteous ignoramus who, having never been in a theatre himself, presumes to pronounce damnatory judgment on a pleasure which unquestionably brightens the work-a-day life of thousands, and of which he, by his own confession, can know nothing? Just think of the delight which the bright and tinselled glories and wondrous unaccustomed drolleries of a pantomime must produce in the preternaturally staid and gloomy mind of a child inured to the bleak hospitality of the workhouse! Then think of the Jack-in-office who, having never seen a theatrical performance in his life, assumes the responsibility of meeting with a churlish and slanderous denial the kindness of the man who would gratuitously provide this rare delight for a whole legion of hapless waifs! And then they dare to prate of how *they* shall dispose of "God's blessing"! Faugh! Foote sent to prison for blasphemy. Are there no laws to punish the audacious and revolting impiety of these blasphemers of Bolton?—"Dangle" in *Sunday Chronicle*.

WAS COMTE AN ATHEIST?

Mr. Alfred W. Benn writing in the *Spectator* in reply to Mr. F. Harrison, says, "Comte was beyond all doubt an atheist." Mr. Benn gives several citations in which Comte speaks of the substitution of the love of humanity for the love of God, and other passages incompatible with a belief in theism.

But Comte said "the atheist is the most irrational of theologians." To us it is evident he meant the person who spends his time in seeking to prove a negative. There is no doubt that Comte was anti-Christian, and as Mr. Benn points out, he says that the founder of Christianity exhibited "a mixture of hypocrisy and fascination always incompatible with a true superiority of heart and mind."

The parishioners of St. George's, Southwark, have been paying £480 a year to the rector in accordance with an Act passed in 1807. They have, however, through their vestry, made a protest by taking a poll upon the subject as to whether the rate should be continued or not; 905 persons voted against it, and only 78 in favor. As, however, the discontinuance will involve the parish in heavy penalties, the next step must be a proposal in Parliament to repeal the Act under which the impost is levied, and this, we trust, will be taken up in earnest.

ROBERT BURNS' literature is very extensive and mixed. Some of it shows how ninnies can be inflated. Some is a combination of cant and unctious, and when a Scotchman goes in for that sort of thing he licks creation. The Rev. Andrew Douglas, we notice, has been holding forth at Arbroath on "The Influence of Robert Burns on Religious Thought in Scotland." The reverend gentleman's poetical faculty may be estimated from his extravagant praise of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," which is one of the least poetical of Burns's pieces, and not a distinctively Burns piece at all. Then the Douglas claims Burns as "the first" who had the courage to protest against the dreadful doctrine of everlasting future torment. Now this is simple nonsense. Burns did indeed, like a true great poet, fling the Greek-fire of his sarcasm at the Church Creed of his time. He did revolt against the teaching of a burning hell. But he was not "the first" to do so. The protest was made by Freethinkers before him.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant "Deluges: Biblical and Other."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, 30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Uselessness of Prayer."
 Clarendon Hall, 7, J. M. Robertson, "How the Bible was Made."
 Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N, 7, Mr. F. Millar, "The Gospel of Evolution."
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3.15, A members' special meeting; important business.
 East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, E, 7.45, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Mission, Character, and Teachings of Christ."
 Edmonton Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "God: Where and What is it?"
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. R. Forder, "A Night with Old Nick."
 Old Southgate—Cromwell Hall, 7, Adam Taylor, "Things as they Are and should Be."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, Mr. S. Standing, "Secularism: the Socialists' John the Baptist."
 Westminster.—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "David the Royal Psalmist"
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms" Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road, 7.30, Mr. L. Keen, "Holy Matrimony."
COUNTRY.
 Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. R. S. Bransby, "Is it Rational to Believe in Theosophy?"
 Cardiff—Queen Street, large hall (entrance from Working Street). Mr. J. Clarke, 11, "The Absurdity of Prayer;" 3, "The Progress of Secularism;" 6.30, "Is the Bible Inspired?" Tickets at door.
 Derby—British Oak, Carrington Street, 6.30, Mr. H. McGuinness, "Half an Hour with Colonel Ingersoll;" after which an important business meeting to organise an open-air propaganda for the coming spring.
 Glasgow—Ramshorn Hall, 123 Ingram Street, 5.20, Special meeting of the members of the N. S. S.; 6.30, Open discussion, "The Single Tax."
 Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, [a Meeting and Reading.
 Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upperhead Row, Mr. J. Spencer, the popular Lancashire Reciter; 3 and 6.30, "Humorous and Dramatic Recitals from the Best Authors."
 Hull—Cobden Hall, Waltham Street, First Anniversary of Branch, Musical Entertainment. Quarter's subscription due; members please note.
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, 7, Mr. Bergmann, "Noah's Deluge."
 Manchester—Rusholm Road, Oxford Road, All Saints, Social Evening and Entertainment at 6.30.
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—11, Meeting on the Sand Hill of Sunday Music League to collect signatures to petition; 2.30, Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, the Rev. Walter Walsh, "On the Origin of the Idea of God and Creation;" 7.30, Society's Rooms, fortnightly financial meeting.
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mr Sydney Oliver, B.A., 11, "The Moral Basis of Socialism;" 7, "Practical Municipal Socialism."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, Mr. E. Stanley Jones, 3, "Evolution and the Origin of Life;" 7, "Mind and Body";

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

MR. A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon Road, London, S.E.—March 2, Woolwich; 30, Woolwich. April 12, Camberwell. May 26, Regent's Park.
 TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Street, Stratford, London, E.—Feb. 23, Woolwich. March 9, Woolwich; 16 (morning), West Ham; 2, Woolwich; 30, Westminster. May 11, Clerkenwell Green; 18, Regent's Park.
 MR. JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—Feb 16, Birmingham.
 E. STANLEY JONES, 53 Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool—Feb. 9, Sheffield; 28, Huddersfield.

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