

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. X.—No. 8.]

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1890.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—You have conferred upon me a great honor and laid upon me a heavy duty. I thank you for the one and I will try to fulfil the other.

The Presidency of your Society is a post of which any man might be proud. You are banded together, not for the promotion of merely material interests, but for the spread of ideas. You aim at moulding opinion, which in the long run determines everything else. You strive to infuse into society those great, subtle, and far-reaching principles, which are the source of all durable progress. And as the attachment to leaders is always in proportion to the depth of the interests they espouse, you show a striking affection for those who serve your cause loyally; above all, for the one whom you appoint the chief director of your forces, who must undertake the weightiest labors and bear the worst brunt of danger.

Mr. Bradlaugh has been a mighty leader, and it is hard for any man to follow him. But I will do my best, and in turn I shall claim your indulgence. Do not expect too much from me. The heroic period of Freethought is well-nigh over. Wars are no longer decided by single-handed combat. Every one of us must do his share of the work, and we must be content to toil steadily like good husbandmen, who plough the ground, sow the seed, and finally reap the harvest.

Happily Mr. Bradlaugh has promised to advise me in all legal difficulties, and to give me at any time the benefit of his long and varied experience. For this I am very grateful, and it will give you an added sense of security.

Every leader of a movement has his ideas and tries to realise them. I shall endeavor to carry out the projects I have long cherished. Their character may be inferred from the work of the Organisation Committee, appointed at the last Conference, and of which I have been chairman. It is to organisation, chiefly, that we must now look for the success of our movement.

But I do not intend to be hasty. Innovations must be made unless a Society is to stagnate and decay, but they should be made gently. One foot should be planted firmly before the other is lifted. Eager spirits must have a fresh prospect, yet the moderate must not be alarmed, nor the very laggards

frightened away. An army has its pioneers, its main body, its rear, and even its stragglers, all moving forward to the self-same goal.

I have no intention of being pig-headed. I do not believe I have any such disposition. I like firmness, but I dislike arbitrariness and despotic methods. My ear will be open to advice. Everyone who has an honest complaint to make, or a new idea to broach, will find me a ready listener. But I must be pardoned if I act upon my own judgment where I am solely responsible. My office, it will be remembered, is a constitutional one; I am limited by the rules of the Society and the decisions of its Executive; and it is only within a very definite limit that I have a special power.

Pardon me for not saying much at this moment. For many reasons I cannot present you with an elaborate programme. What I desire to see carried out will be proposed gradually; and at my age, and with my experience, I am too wary to map out a quantity of work that I may never be able to accomplish. Besides, I am but a temporary president as yet, being only elected until your annual Conference in May. Should you re-elect me, I shall then venture to indicate what, in my opinion, our Society should attempt in the immediate future.

There is one matter, however, which demands your prompt attention. You have generously responded to Mr. Bradlaugh's appeal, and cancelled the bond under which he paid five guineas per month into the General Fund. This will involve a serious diminution of your financial resources, and steps should be taken at once to repair the loss. At the next meeting of your Executive, a few days hence, I shall submit a proposal to that effect, with a practical scheme which I trust will not only sustain but increase the annual income of the Society.

And now, ladies and gentleman, I must conclude with a personal observation. I have served the Freethought party for more than twenty years, in various degrees, and I dare say with various success; and now, at the age of forty, I am rewarded with the highest mark of your esteem. I am past the heats and effervescences of youth, but not old enough to be useless. My life is wholly devoted to your cause. Whatever abilities I possess are consecrated to its service. As long as I may I shall work with pen and tongue, and on practical committees, for the welfare of your Society and the propagation of its principles. That is all I promise, and that I will try to fulfil. The rest must be left to time and destiny.

Yours faithfully,
G. W. FOOTE.

CAGLIOSTRO.—II.

BELIEVERS in alchemy, the transmutation of metals, the philosopher's stone, the elixir of life, etc., are by no means extinct, and at the end of last century they appear to have been pretty numerous. Cagliostro was an adept in the charlatan's art of changing his own brass into gold, and in his pretences to be able to confer wealth and long life to others found numerous dupes. Alchemical processes were, however, tedious and costly. Advances were required from believers before the *magnum opus* could be completed. Art is long and time fleeting. When patrons got too impatient for results, Cagliostro, to avoid their reproaches, sought fresh clients in another country, sometimes passing for an Italian nobleman, at others for a Prussian officer of high rank. We hear of him at Naples in 1773 and afterwards at Barcelona, where Secchi, the surgeon, affirms he decorated the pillory of the city. Cagliostro had many strings to his bow. For ladies he had "Beautifying Water"; for men canthardic "Wine of Egypt," capable of restoring youthful vigor to the old. In this pretence he has admirably seconded by the fair Lorenza, who, only about twenty, declared she was sixty and had a son a veteran in the Dutch service.

It was a second visit to England that laid the foundation of Cagliostro's future greatness. An *English Life of the Count Cagliostro*, dedicated in 1787, when he was in the heyday of his fortunes, to Madame la Comtesse, and written in the interests of the charlatan, gives an account of his misfortunes in London. It appears that through one Madame Blavary he got associated with gamblers and black-legs, who robbed him and made him glad to return to the Continent. In England, however, he acquired a manuscript on Egyptian Freemasonry said to be by one George Coston. Here were the elements of mummery, mystification and lofty pretence in which the soul of Balsamo delighted. He determined to be the head of a new sect, the founder of a fresh faith. From the Polish Jew who called himself the "Count St. Germain," (that *conte pour rire*, as Voltaire wittily called the pretender to immortality who, like Cagliostro, asserted he lived at the time of Jesus Christ); from J. F. Borri, Bombastes Paracelsus, and others he acquired a theosophic jargon, such a deal of skimble skamble stuff as can only be equalled in the book of Dzyan. Mr. W. E. A. Axon, the writer in the *Dublin University Magazine*, says "He had an abridgement of Egyptian masonry, ready for his disciples, as curt and as decisive as the creed of Mohammed. 'Live as you please, and only believe in me and in Egyptian Masonry.'" The initiates of this higher grade of masonry, which was said to be founded, not by Egyptians but by Enoch and Elias, were supposed to be on the path both of moral and physical regeneration. The former appears to have implied getting beyond human law and conventionally, while the latter power, as Carlyle inimitably puts it, was "not to be accomplished without a forty days course of medicine, purgation, sweating baths, fainting fits, soot, dust, phlebotomy, starvation, and desperation, more perhaps than it is all worth." In admitting a candidate to Egyptian Masonry this formula was used:—"In virtue of the power which I have received from the Grand Cophte [Cagliostro], the founder of our order, and by the particular grace of God, I hereby confer upon you the honor of being admitted into our lodge, in the names of Helios, Mené, Tetragrammaton."

The Egyptian Order was, indeed, a superior grade of Freemasonry in that it admitted ladies to the order. This department, under the presidency of Lorenza, the Grand Cophtess, was apparently the most popular. At Paris many ladies of high rank joined the "Isis" lodge. The fair neophytes were required to contribute each the sum of one hundred

louis, to abstain from carnal intercourse, and to give "the blindest submission to the rules and codes of our ritual, such as they may be communicated to me by the Grand Mistress." The ceremonies, as described by Figuier from the *Essai sur les Illuminés* of the Marquis Du Luchet, were highly indecent. The ladies were by the example of the high priestess induced to disrobe until they were "as naked as truth itself."

Cagliostro seems to have taken a genuine delight in his business of charlatany and to have fooled his dupes to the top of their bent. He amassed a deal of money, which he spent lavishly, and his renown spread through every country in Europe. In Germany, he for a time duped the mystical Countess Elise von der Recke by his pretended evocation of spirits, for which he had been counted among the originators of modern spiritism, but that fair saint came to see through him and has left her testimony to his roguery. In Russia, the supposed restoring of a nobleman's infant to health, brought him wealth and fortune, but the combined result of an amour between Lorenza and Prince Potemkin, prime minister and favorite of the Empress Catherine, and the discovery that the nobleman's child had been apparently changed, caused them to depart hastily with immense spoil towards the German frontier. "Scarcely is he gone," says Carlyle, "till the Prussian Ambassador appears with a complaint that he has falsely assumed the Prussian uniform at Rome; the Spanish Ambassador, with a still graver complaint, that he has forged bills at Cadiz. However, he is safe over the marches; let them complain their fill."

In Poland Cagliostro had the fortune to meet a prince who wished to obtain command of a devil. Cagliostro puffed him up for a long while with expectations of gratifying this laudable ambition, and actually procured presents from him to the amount of several thousand crowns. Being exposed by Count Moczinski, Cagliostro came westward and at Strassburg made great noise with his wondrous cures and bounty to the poor. Among his disciples Prince Cardinal de Rohan believed with a robust faith that he could make both gold and diamonds. The cardinal's credulity led to his own ruin and that of Cagliostro. Both seemed to have been deftly duped by the Countess La Motte in the famous matter of the Diamond Necklace, that farcical tragi-comedy so admirably described by Carlyle. Cagliostro and his fair Countess were both landed in the Bastille, and even when acquitted of having stolen the necklace, which Countess La Motte insinuated had been obtained for the chemical experiments of Cagliostro, were ordered summarily out of France (May 31, 1786). It was not long before the rascal's whirling fortunes culminated in a rapid descent. Induced by his wife to visit Rome, he attempted there to found a lodge of Egyptian masonry, was betrayed by one of his associates, arrested by an officer (Dec. 2, 1879), and lodged in the Castle of St. Angelo. Here, if we may believe the officers of the Inquisition, he and his wife both confessed. He was reconciled to the Church under the promise of being saved from the capital forfeit. Madame Blavatsky tells a curious story how a mysterious stranger called at the Vatican, sent not his name but a *word* to the Pope and was instantly admitted. As soon as he departed, the sentence on Cagliostro was commuted from death to imprisonment. As the lady gives no authority for this tale, it only suggests that the publisher knew his business who offered her a handsome sum to write romances.

Cagliostro died in the prison of St. Leo, Aug. 26, 1795. Madame Blavatsky seeks to throw doubt upon this, and hints that he may still be living. If the common argument that all men are mortal fails in the case of such a consummate adept as Cagliostro, there is another argument that should have force with

Theosophists. Death is necessary for re-incarnation. As good Buddhist women expect to become men in another life, so the great magician may, in these latter days, have changed his sex. But for the career of Cagliostro should we have had the new Theosophy?
J. M. WHEELER.

WHY I LEFT THE CHURCH.

BY THE EX-REV. H. O. PENTECOST.

From the "Truthseeker" Annual.

(Continued from last week.)

I am not now discussing whether Jesus or the church is right. I merely say that my first grievance against the church at a time when I was a firm believer in the divinity of Jesus, was that while she worships him she does not obey him, she does not try to obey him; she openly and scandalously opposes his teaching and manner of life as those of what we now call a "crank." Thus, while I was in the church, I saw what a shameless humbug she is as an organised institution. I saw that everything that Jesus said to and against the loathsome hypocrites of his day—the scribes and Pharisees—is applicable, in the last detail, to those persons—popes, archbishops, bishops, monseigneurs, ministers, vestrymen, elders, deacons, trustees—who manage the machinery of the church to-day. I saw that all the priests and ministers as a class (among whom there are noble exceptions, in their way) are time-servers, place-hunters and politicians. I saw that all gatherings of the church for legislative purposes—all councils and conventions—are exactly like similar civil gatherings; doctrines being formulated as are planks in a political platform, on the cowardly compromise plan, and men being elected or appointed to office on the same principles that govern in the trickiest political primaries or conventions.

I do not go into the question of motives here. I only report the facts. I do not say what these church dignitaries *mean* to do. I only say what they *do*. I do not say they *mean* to be hypocrites, I only say they *are* hypocrites. They pretend to love and to at least try to obey Jesus, but they do neither.

All this became clear in my mind while I was still a firm believer in the divinity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible, and the effect was to drive me to certain logical conclusions, which banged me at first against the solid wall of supernaturalism with all its hardness and horror, and then flung me, by a great and fortunate rebound, out into the boundless plains of Rationalism, where, at present, I enjoy the peculiar satisfaction of knowing that I am ignorant of a lot of things that I used to think I knew.

What I mean is, that when I became convinced that the church as an organisation is wrong, I determined to find the right road if I could. I started with the premise that the Bible is the word of God, and therefore must be true from end to end. It is not a book from which we may pick and choose. Historically, for example, if one event it relates is true they all must be. The withered fig-tree, the demon-dazed pigs, the arrested sun—all these and more must be swallowed as the great fish swallowed Jonah, and not be spewed forth, as Jonah was, because they do not comport with facts as things now go. I still think this is a correct premise. If the Bible, as the creeds say, is the word of God and "the only infallible guide of faith and practice," it must be true, and it must mean what it says from end to end. Any other conclusion is logically absurd.

Well, I determined to test the truthfulness of the book, not as a doubter, but as a believer. I picked out certain promises concerning the healing of physical infirmities, and as Gideon laid his fleece before Jehovah, I went upon my knees before the God in whom I believed and held up those promises before him for days and weeks fully expecting them to be honored. The promises are unequivocal and unqualified, and I was intensely in earnest. It is something for many of the readers of this *Annual* to laugh about, but those weeks and months when I put the Bible to the test became weeks and months of mental agony to me,

during which sleep fled from my eyes and flesh shrank from my bones.

When nothing happened, as of course nothing did, the doubt that may have been the unconscious motive of my testing work (as one becomes more attentive to his sweetheart when he unconsciously knows that he is beginning to love her less) began to grow and fret me. I then began to read. I read Robertson Smith, the *Age of Reason*, all of Colonel Ingersoll's published writings that I could find, Volney's *Ruins*, and a lot of works of that sort. But I wanted to get at the root of the matter. I read James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, *The Bible for Learners*, and a number of works of the Dutch school, some of them many times, and a lot of other books along that line that I need not mention particularly, and some of which I have at this moment forgotten. But I wanted to go clear down to the bottom. I read Clodd's *Childhood of the World*, *Childhood of Religion*, *Birth and Growth of Myth*. I went into the whole subject of man's early thinking, reading a class of books of which Dorman's *Origin of Primitive Superstitions* and Tylor's *Early History of Mankind* and *Primitive Culture* are splendid examples. It need not be said, I hope, that I read Darwin, Spencer, Huxley and their interpreters. I dug down to the roots of things through five or six years of such mental pains and anguish as I hope to spare my children. To pull out a religion from a man who has been a thorough believer is incalculably more wrenching and tearing than the pulling of his teeth.

The result of all this reading, studying and thinking was that the whole process of religion planting, growing and training was laid bare before me, and I saw, as in the fair sunlight, that man has made all his religions just as he has made everything else that he has.

Of course it was a long time before I could bring myself to admit that there is not the slightest evidence of the existence of a God or of the likelihood of a future life—that there is no evidence of the existence of life or "spirit" (whatever that may be) except in apparently integral conjunction with matter, but having determined to go to the bottom of the subject when I once started, I could not honestly stop until I stood upon the outer edge of matter, and was obliged to declare that I could see neither God nor soul beyond.

This failure to find God and the way to a future life scared me for a time. But while I was agitated upon the religious question I also became interested to discover the reason why some men are political rulers and others are ruled; why I am compelled to give up my money to the politicians whether I wish to or not; why policemen prevent me from doing many things that I might do without injuring anybody else; why some persons who never do any work are fabulously rich and those who work all the time when they are not asleep are horribly poor. In studying this question of the political enslavement of the minority by the majority and the industrial enslavement of the majority by the minority, I discovered how neither of these things could be done except by the use of the belief in God and a future life. I then saw that whether there is any God or not, and whether there is any future life or not, it is a very unfortunate thing for the world that anybody *believes* there is.

I do not know whether it would be good for us to have a God or not, but I think not. I do not know whether it would be good for us to live after death or not, but I am inclined to think not. But I do know that kings, emperors, czars, presidents, popes and priests could not sit upon their tyrannical and unjust thrones another year if all the people would stop believing in God and a future life. Those two beliefs for the benumbing of the intellect, and a skilful use of clubs, guns, prisons and gallowses for the subduing of the body, form the groundwork upon which every tyranny over the mind and oppressive robbery of the poor are established.

Every ruler on earth to-day, from the cruel Czar to the pale Presbyterian in the White House, occupies his position because the people have been humbugged into the belief that it is the will of God that he should be where he is. And the great mass of poor people are kept poor because petticoated liars and white-neckties

deceivers have succeeded in making them believe that it is God's will that they should be poor, and that if they will quietly submit to being robbed on earth they will, by and bye, enjoy equal privileges with the robbers in heaven—both saved by grace. A prominent Newark, N.J., clergyman said not long ago in his pulpit to a congregation of rich and well-to-do persons that it would never do to lose faith in immortality, because that belief is necessary to keep the poor quiet and contented. He told the truth. The idea of God and the belief in a future life are two doctrines that stand squarely across the road of progress, and the human race will never be truly civilised until they are eradicated from the mind. We are not here to worship a hypothetical God, but to study the facts of the universe. We are not here to pray for help, but to help ourselves. We are not here to hope for another life, but to use this one for our highest happiness, which will be found in promoting the happiness of others.

This is the outline of the story of my escape from orthodoxy, told in this personal, face-to-face fashion, because the editor of the *Annual* thought it would be most acceptable in that form. It has been a very interesting and exciting journey for me—as from the depths of a mine full of pinchbeck into sunlight, pure air, green fields and all that makes life worth living.

I am sometimes asked the question if I am as happy now as when I was in the church. Yes; incalculably happier. Why should I not be? I am FREE! My mind works now. My morals are better, because springing from higher motives. Happier? Yes. But not happy. No thinking person who cares for his fellows can be happy while a political ruler or religious guide remains on earth. Government by force and superstition are incompatible with happiness. Poverty and happiness cannot exist in the same world. No one ought to be happy while there is a policeman or a priest, a prison, a poorhouse, or a church on earth.

ACID DROPS.

Canon Talbot—the gentleman who declined to discuss with Mr. Foe or any other leading Freethinker—has been treating the Tyneside folk to a number of amazing lectures; and after reading reports in the local press we can quite appreciate his aversion to a public debate. One of his lectures was on "The Bible and Science," and Canon Talbot made it evident that he sits upon the fence with a leg on each side. He does not deny that the "letter" of Genesis is queer in the light of modern science, but he says that the "spirit" of Genesis is in harmony with all our discoveries. On the other hand, it would be foolish to expect the writers of the Bible to be abreast with the scientific knowledge of to-day. Precisely so! But is it not just as foolish to expect them to be abreast with the morality of to-day?

Canon Talbot's position is this. God taught the Jews morality but he couldn't teach them science. Our position is that God taught them neither the one nor the other.

"A Churchman" writes to the *Newcastle Chronicle* that Canon Talbot is really giving up the inspiration of the Bible. "I remember," says the writer, "that, in a letter sent to the press, he stated that if the Secularists would invite him to lecture to them, they would find there was very little difference between them. Truly he is right, for if his lecture means anything, it means conceding every point of sceptical attack."

"A Churchman" is answered by a "beneficed English clergyman of twenty-four years' standing." He allows that the Bible abounds with mistakes, but for all that we have in it "a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel." Well, the earthen vessel is pretty obvious. The "heavenly treasure" is more obscure. Perhaps the "advanced clergy" will be good enough to tell us where the clay ends and the treasure begins; or, better still, smelt down the lot, and give us the treasure for weighing and testing.

Sarah Bernhardt's impersonation of Joan of Arc has led to a revival of the controversies that surround that famous

name. M. Ernest Lesigne, a French Positivist, has written a book entitled *Fin d'une Legende*, end of a legend, with a view of proving that Joan of Arc was but a very insignificant factor in the expulsion of the English from France. M. Lesigne must be a very sanguine man if he fancies legends will evaporate simply because shown not to have sufficient evidence. Their very life consists in appealing to sentiment instead of to reason. His book, like Dr. Milner's *End of Controversy*, is likely to prove the beginning of a new controversy.

Devout Hindus of Madras have had a shock to their faith. The High Priest of the Temple of Tripati has been convicted of stealing certain treasure committed to his holy keeping. The true theory of religion is everywhere the same (1) The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. (2) The Lord has given the dominion of the earth to his saints. (3) We are the saints.

After Sunday's meeting at the Hall of Science a brief report of the proceedings was left by Mr. Wheeler at the offices of the five principal daily papers—the *Times*, *Daily News*, *Standard*, *Chronicle*, and *Telegraph*. But his trouble was nearly wasted. Only one of the papers inserted the paragraph.

Freethinkers may see from this what to expect. They are to be treated, as of old, with a conspiracy of silence. Mr. Bradlaugh himself is only to be recognised as a politician, and even so important an event as his resignation of the presidency of the National Secular Society is quietly ignored.

Never mind. The Freethought party has made its way despite the boycotting of the press, and it will continue to do so. Ideas operate under the surface of life, with which alone the press is concerned. Our lectures have their effect whether they are reported or not, and the writings of our various penmen produce abiding results in the minds of thousands.

The *New York Herald* reports ghostly pranks at Ottawa, Canada, far better attested than any of the pranks of the Holy Ghost in olden times. The ghost pulled off the bedclothes and indulged in many other tricks. Milk pans were emptied, butter was taken from the crocks, filth was strewn on the floor, and, no matter in what inaccessible places these articles were placed, the tricky spirit was able to get at them and exhibit his malevolence. Finally two boys and a girl testified to having seen a beautiful old man dressed in shining garments, who had addressed endearing words to the little ones, and then bidding them good-bye, had mounted into the air leaving behind him what the children described as a "line of blaze," and so vanished, à la Jesus Christ.

Muscular Christianity also flourishes in America, judging by the following telegram:—The pastor of a church in the vicinity of Sparta, North Carolina, made from the pulpit some remarks condemning the manner in which one of the church members treated his wife. The clergyman's comments evoked great uproar, which led to a furious fight, in which two persons were killed and several more were injured.

A "Pentecost band" of faith-healers in Illinois are in trouble, the citizens living in the vicinity where they hold forth having become provoked by their boisterous manner of holding meetings, which continue up to two o'clock in the mornings. Warrants were issued for the arrest of some twenty, including the Rev. Vivian A. Dake, the originator and founder of the Pentecost band; the Rev. Thomas Nelson, another high priest; the Rev. I. A. Ullness, the Rev. Charles Bryant, the Rev. Frederick Osborn and a number of the young women who travel with them. Over fifty witnesses have been summoned on the side of the prosecution. Evidently the Salvation Army can take more licence here than abroad.

The Rev. Walter Walsh, who has been lecturing to the Newcastle Freethinkers, is possessed of considerable coolness. In his last lecture on God he inquired, "Who asked them to worship the God of the Hebrews?" We reply, nine-tenths of all the Christian teachers in the world.

And they are logical. If the God of the Old Testament is a mistake, the God of the New Testament may also fall into the same category. In fact, the God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament, somewhat improved, and also somewhat worse, with age and emigration.

Mr. Walsh has advanced beyond the God of the Old Testament. Good. But Freethinkers have advanced beyond the God of the New Testament. That is a point that does not appear to have dawned on Mr. Walsh's imagination; so that, in a certain sense, his lectures have been a waste of time and energy.

General Gordon, though an admirable man in many ways, seems to have been quite soft on the subject of religion. Among his many curious beliefs was one that an island of the Seychelles must be the site of the Garden of Eden. Mr. H. W. Estridge, late Receiver-General, British Bechuanaland, writes: "I was at Seychelles, in the Colonial Service, when General Gordon came there from Mauritius. I saw him very often. He dined with us, and on one occasion (as I have stated in my small book, *Six Years in Seychelles*, published 1885), he said he thought 'Paradise must have been the Garden of Eden.' When I suggested that if so the coco de mer could not have been the apple (the husk being some four inches thick before one arrives at the shell of the nut), as Eve could not have bitten it, he remarked 'I never thought of that.'"

What bunkum bishops will talk when they know it is not likely they will be contradicted. Here is the Bishop of Salford declaring: "The Church had from its earliest days always been against slavery; it had stood up against kings and princes, and opened out a better life for the poorest classes by education and other means. It had protected the oppressed and taught the rich to love their neighbors, to do to others as they would be done by. As early as Saxon days, when the poor formed guilds to protect themselves from the oppressions of the lords in the country, the Church aided them, and so when the craft guilds, which began in England in the eleventh century were first formed they received such countenance from the Church that, in great part by its aid, they covered all England in the fifteenth." The Bishop reads history upside down. But this is always the policy of the Church; for long ages it has opposed every improvement; then when the improvement is effected and a new generation has arisen, it turns round and calmly declares, "We did it."

The *Daily Chronicle* points out that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has got into a fix over his story of "The Atheist Shoemaker." The reverend gentleman is beginning to experience the truth of the text, "Be sure your sins will find you out." But of course his policy is silence, for anything he could say would only make a bad matter worse. Mr. Foote's pamphlet is being widely circulated, and we trust that the remaining copies will be placed in the hands of persons who have heard of Mr. Hughes's little story.

The *Chronicle* says that many of Mr. Hughes's Wesleyan brethren "are much annoyed at the obstinacy of the rev. gentleman in declining to publish all particulars about this reputed conversion, which, if authenticated, would, they say, be a source of strength to the mission," and "some among them will probably demand that the proofs which are alleged to be in his possession should be produced."

The *Echo* says "there is nothing improbable in the conversion of a Secularist to Christianity," but at the same time it regards Mr. Hughes's refusal to give the name of his convert as "a mystery." "Unless he does so," the *Echo* says, "the whole story will be regarded as fabulous."

"Apropos of the Rev. H. P. Hughes's prayer for £500," says our correspondent "D. W.," who encloses his card, "I beg to make him the following offer. Let him and all his congregation, if they think fit, offer up a prayer to the Lord that I may present £100 to their mission—which I am in a position to do—within the next twelve months; and should the Lord answer it, the reverend gentleman will have gained £100, proved the efficacy of prayer, and really converted an Atheist."

The Rev. T. L. Davies, curate at Merthyr, is a very zealous Christian. In company with a sister of mercy, without being asked for, and in spite of being told by the master and the nurse that it was not convenient for them to visit, he made his way through the infirmary and administered the sacrament to a man who, according to the master's report, was not seriously ill. The curate probably believed he was doing something to save a soul from perdition by his intrusion, but the Board of Guardians took a different view of the matter and ordered that the rector's attention should be strongly drawn to his curate's conduct, and that in future sisters of mercy should not be admitted unless at the express wish of a patient.

The Poles and Lithuanians at Plymouth, America, have been illustrating the beauty of religion in rival faction fights. Members of the Polish Church went to the cemetery and dug up the bodies of the Lithuanians, opened the coffins, and threw the bodies over the fence. Armed Lithuanians appeared and the Poles fled. The dissension at bottom is understood to be all about religion.

"Send him to God," shouted Stanley, as he ordered the hanging of "a traitor." The man went, but nobody knows whether he has arrived at the destination. Apparently the great explorer looks upon the Deity as a sort of midden.—"N.B. Rubbish shot here." Yet Stanley would call us "Blasphemer!"

God's tender mercies are over all his works. Last year the snakes killed 1,165 persons in India, and 65 were killed by wild animals.

God v. Humanity again. At an inquest held upon an infant aged two years, who died at Birmingham, it transpired that the mother took it to the Medical Mission in Floodgate Street. Here they had to wait and hear the Bible and Divine Service and sing psalms before they got their medicine. The medical evidence showed the child died from bronchitis, accelerated probably through exposure to the cold air. God must be very exacting for praise if he cannot dispense with it in such cases as this. How would it do if the Medical Mission held its service of praise for those who were restored after taking the medicine? Probably the attendance would be smaller, but the devotion more genuine.

We have been sent a card of St. Anthony's Altar Society, which shows how the priests work the oracle. Subscribers to the Society are to have "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass" offered twice a month for their spiritual and temporal welfare, no one to enjoy this benefit unless his or her subscription has been paid regularly.

The Mormon party has been routed in the recent Utah elections. While the voting register was being made up the Liberals objected to the votes of those who had passed through the Mormon Endowment House. It was alleged that in the ceremony of initiation they swear to avenge the blood of Joseph Smith, to recognise the authority of the Mormon priesthood as superior to that of the United States, and never to divulge the secrets of the Endowment House on pain of having their throats cut, their tongues cut out, and their hearts torn from their bodies. A reputable witness was produced who swore that in 1862 he had actually seen a Mormon so treated; the corpse, after being disembowled, having been thrown to the wolves.

The Rev. John Hunter has been preaching at Glasgow on Intolerance. He had a good deal to say on the subject, and we give him credit for denouncing all kinds of persecution. But his illustrations were rather ancient. Servetus was butchered some centuries ago. Far more recent was the prosecution of poor old Ferguson for selling the *Freethinker* in Glasgow. Nor did Mr. Hunter advert to Mr. Bradlaugh's ill-treatment or Mr. Foote's imprisonment. Still, we hope his sermon will do good, and we like the ring of his closing remark that the only real and damnable heresy is wrong-doing. That is what Colonel Ingersoll tried to impress on the New Jersey jury, but they gave a verdict of Guilty against Mr. Reynolds, and the judge fined him twenty-five dollars for "blasphemy."

Mr. Hunter spoke out very freely on the Christian press.

"Where," he asked, says the *Christian World*, "do you find more unfairness, meanness, and bitterness than in the pages of the religious newspapers and magazines?" Rather warm, eh?

Here in the same paper which reports Mr. Hunter's sermon (the *Christian World*) is the Rev. J. I. Jones, who argues that Christians should have no intercourse with Unitarians on the ground of the injunction of St. John, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Mr. Jones is quite consistent, and endeavors to act up to the teachings of the book. Fortunately there are Christians who have got beyond its level, and are better than their creed.

The *Northern Advance*, an organ of the Nonconformist Church, discusses the question "Are the Churches Losing their Seriousness?" It calls attention to a church announcement that Mr. D., "the Manchester humorist," and "a troupe of minstrels" will appear, along with the parochial choir and a famous woman preacher. There is no doubt the parochial choir and the famous woman preacher would take a back seat while the funny man or the minstrels were on. The churches are losing their seriousness. The Devil is in a decline, and hell is cooling fast. Without these gruesome elements Christianity becomes a farce. Brimstone gives place to treacle.

The Vicar of Paul, Cornwall, the Rev. R. W. Aitken, lecturing on the Forward Movement, said the principles which would serve the rising generation were: First and greatest, the acknowledgment of the Fatherhood of God; second, the brotherhood of man, a brotherhood not based on French ideas or "liberty, equality, fraternity," but on the recognition by every man of his obligation to do his duty in the state of life to which he was called. That is, the Forward Movement consists in giving a new label to the old and tarnished goods, the brotherhood of man implying the Archbishop in Lambeth Palace with £15,000 a year and Dick outside in the gutter wondering how he can get bread for his children.

There are ever so many millions of fools in this world, and their stupidities are infinite. But is there, or was there, ever a greater stupidity than giving an ordinary custom-house officer the right of deciding what literature a country shall import? Over in Canada the *Age of Reason* has been seized at Toronto and Montreal as "immoral and obscene." The importer of one lot entered a suit against the collector of the port of Montreal, but lost on a technicality. Then the Montreal Pioneer Free-thought Club decided to test the question. A number of copies were ordered from the United States, but the censorship was relaxed, and the copies were entered at the custom house, and duty paid on them, without a word of comment from the officials.

Some time ago Ingersoll's works were seized by the custom house as "immoral and obscene," although the Colonel is one of the purest writers and speakers on this planet. What a roaring farce, to be sure! If the Canadians stand this they will stand anything.

Ely and Peterborough are both blessed with bishops, and we read in the *Lynn News* that the first-named city has to follow the example of the latter in passing bye-laws to suppress "the filthy language in the streets."

Truth says that the "Bishop of Peterborough is one of the few prelates with a grain of sense in his head." That isn't saying much. But it is all true. Bishop Magee knows what's what. Hence his dexterous article on the Sermon on the Mount, which is dealt with in Mr. Foote's *Impossible Creed*.

What a foolish people we are! Fancy paying thousands a year to a lot of Bishops, most of whom are devoid of "a single grain of sense"! We must be bigger fools than the Bishops, for they have sense enough to make us pay them handsomely.

The Young Men's Christian Association is in a bad way at Portsmouth. A meeting of members has been held for

the purpose of disposing of its effects, and there was recrimination enough to show what a happy family they are. When another meeting of the same kind is held, the Association should hire a steamer, and take care that no reporters are on board.

Talmage wanted to buy Calvary. But he was unable to strike the bargain. Part of it is used as a Mohammedan burial ground, and all the gold in America would not persuade the Moslems to sell their dead.

"There was a moderate attendance." And no wonder. When Mr. George Harwood, M.A., discourses to the Bolton Young Men's Christian Association on Christianity and Science, and stands up for the Flood, the Adam and Eve story, and all the rest of the Bible outfit, it is surprising that the room wasn't empty. Even the chairman must have had iron nerves to stand it at this time of day.

The *Consett Guardian* twitted the Ox Hill Branch of the N. S. S. with holding its annual meeting in a public-house, and not publishing the names of its elected officers. "A Secularist" replies that Christian bigotry allowed the Branch no other place of meeting, that Christians steal any money left to build Freethought halls, and that many members of the N. S. S. have to remain "passive" because they would lose their bread if their employers knew their opinions. We dare say the *Guardian* wishes it had let the subject alone.

"Six days shalt thou labor and do all that thou hast to do," says the commandment, but Christians go on lying seven days in the week. Here is a tract before us about "converted infidels," issued from Drummond's Tract Depot, and apparently circulated by a Wesleyan chapel in Leeds. It informs us that the London infidels have "one hall and three lecturers," and the rest of the tract is on a par with this for accuracy.

"Lord, how the world is given to lying!" said Jack Falstaff. Yet he lived before the age of tracts and West-end missions.

The *Vegetarian* is a curious mixture of vegetables and Christianity. The vegetables we understand. They are wholesome and necessary. But what has Christianity to do with dietetic reform? Jesus Christ was neither a vegetarian nor a teetotaler, and no doubt the Galilean trawlers would have smoked but for the want of pipes and tobacco. Jehovah himself, the head of the firm, was quite carnivorous. He accepted Abel's mutton, and turned up his nose at Cain's turnips. Yet Mr. Hills, the editor of the *Vegetarian*, fills the paper with Christian gush, and refuses to insert anything by Freethinkers, although Dr. Allinson is well known to be a pronounced sceptic, and Mr. F. Smallman, a member of the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., has done as much practical work for vegetarianism as any man in England.

The most curious part of the business is that the *Vegetarian* professes the principles of universal brotherhood, independent of race and creed. But somehow a Christian doesn't understand working with other people unless he bosses the show.

OBITUARY.

On Saturday, Feb. 15th., the remains of Mr. William Russell Ord, of South Shields, were interred at Preston Cemetery, near North Shields, in the presence of a large number of Freethinkers. The Secular service was delivered by Captain W. B. Duncan, Vice-president of the South Shields Branch. Mr. Ord, who was for some time President of the North Shields Branch of the N. S. S., was accidentally killed while following his employment as a boat-builder at the Wallsend Slipway.—R. CHAPMAN.

Died, on the 12th. inst., Mary, the wife of John Tomkins (N. S. S.) of Nottingham Road, Wandsworth Common, aged 54. The interment took place at the Necropolis, Woking, with Secular Service composed and read by Mr. J. H. Ellis (N. S. S.)

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 23, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C., at 7, "The Future of Freethought."

March 2, Manchester; 7, Chatham; 9, Camberwell; 16, Cardiff; 19, Southwark Radical Club; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.

April 6, Milton Hall; 9, Shelley Society 13, Portsmouth; 20, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science, London.

May 4, Newcastle; 11, South Shields; 18, Hall of Science, London; 25, N. S. S. Conference.

June 1, Hall of Science London; 8, Gladstone Radical Club and Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d. Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

IT being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

L. L. COCKS.—Thanks for your congratulations. It was too late for us to attend or send a representative to the Rev. H. Bevan's lecture on Freethought.

SPIRITUAL FREETHINKER.—You appeal to our faith in the unknown and we have little of that article in stock. What you say about "sudden death" has some force with respect to the dead person, but you forget the shock to his relatives; a shock that sometimes ruins a promising life. You may find some benefit to the race from a colliery accident. We cannot.

J. S.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

L. MACFORM (Bombay).—Father Lambert's reply to Ingersoll was analysed by Mr. Ball some three years ago in the *Freethinker*. Ingersoll doesn't think Lambert worth answering. The subject of Christianity and Slavery will be fully dealt with in a future chapter of *Crimes of Christianity*. The "heathen" testimony to the darkness at the Crucifixion is an admitted forgery. You are misinformed as to the miracles of Christ in the Talmud. See the *Jewish Life of Christ*.

J. HAMPSON.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. H. ADAMS, 23 Burton-Street, Leicester, asks us to "pause." We did, for twelve months, in Holloway Gaol. We thought our position out carefully, and our correspondent is wasting his time—and still worse, ours. He says he was trying to get people to come to church, and one of them gave him a copy of the *Freethinker*. We are glad to hear it, and we hope our correspondent will show it about as a sample of infidel wickedness. We can give a good commission on new subscribers.

A. J. FIELD.—Delighted to hear from you as "one of Mr. Foote's converted Christians." Such letters as yours cheer us in the midst of work and worry.

C. C. CATTELL, Snow Hill, Birmingham, offers to send his volume of collected Essays and Lectures (240 pp.) post free to any reader of the *Freethinker* on receipt of seven stamps.

IGNORAMUS.—Thanks for the parcel of Positivist literature. Mr. Truelove, 256 High Holborn, may be able to tell you of some print bearing Bentham's motto, "Maximise morals and minimise religion." There are some good works on morality by evolutionists. Would they meet your wish? If so, we will give you a list. Sorry to hear you are a permanent invalid, but glad that you are able to find some relief in good reading.

LOUISA SAMSON.—The matter is under consideration, and we will keep your letter beside us. We appreciate the congratulations of an intelligent woman.

G. NÆWIGER.—Delighted to hear of your success in Hull.

J. D. LEGGETT.—Never fear. We don't intend to leave Mr. Hughes in peace.

J. E. A.—There was a "high hill" for the Devil to take Jesus up, but no mountain in the vicinity. Of course the whole Roman empire wasn't visible from the top of the highest mountain, and had they gone a million miles high they could not have seen more than half of a globe at once.

H. READE.—See "Acid Drops." Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* is published in 2 vols. at 12s. It should be in the Manchester Free Library.

H. T. BAILEY.—Cuttings should arrive by Tuesday morning to be of use for the number in preparation. We hope your propaganda will be successful.

C. DOEG.—We quite approve of what you are doing. You would be foolish to run off from your own Sunday evening meetings, to furnish Mr. Wise with an audience.

J. B.—Mrs. Gaskell was a Unitarian, George Eliot a Positivist Charlotte Bronte Broad Evangelical, Mrs. Humphrey Ward a Theist, Miss Olive Schreiner and Mrs. E. Lynn Linton Agnostics.

H. PALMER.—Sceptic comes from a Greek word signifying to view or look carefully. Blind scepticism is therefore a contradiction in terms

H. NORRMEN (Helsingfors).—Many thanks. We are rejoiced to hear there are a party of Freethinkers who read our writings as far north as Finland.

C. W.—Thanks for cuttings and congratulations. George Eliot's verdict on Byron is extreme, but it has a certain amount of truth.

S. R. S.—The tract ought to be placed among the chief curiosities of the British Museum. If Joseph and Moses "accepted Christ" they were in advance of his offer. But both were Jews and the Jews have always been keen in business.

SAM STANDRING.—Your good, cheerful, letterismuch appreciated. It may be, however, as you say, that the bigots may attack us more fiercely now that Mr. Bradlaugh's powerful leadership is gone; but there are no immediate signs of an outbreak, and if it comes the Freethought party will fight as one man for the common cause.

D. W.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Liberator—Der Arme Tüefel—Secular Thought—Liberator—Truthseeker—Market Rasen Mail—Bulletin des Sommaires—Methyr Express—Western Mail—Boston Sunday Herald—Northern Advance—Western American—Polytechnic Journal—La Verité—The Vegetarian—Ironclad Age—Reading Observer.

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.

THIS evening (Feb. 23) Mr. Foote will deliver a lecture of special importance on "The Future of Freethought." What he has to say will be very carefully prepared, and will be a kind of manifesto to the party which has just elected him President. All who are interested in the future of the National Secular Society should attend.

MR. BRADLAUGH'S great personality is appreciated by the Freethinkers of Australia. Mr. Symes appeals to him to remain among his "old and tried friends" to the last; to continue as President even if others do all the work, and he only looks on. Ah, Joseph, you let your heart speak instead of your head. You ought to know that Mr. Bradlaugh is not the man to fill an ornamental office. But you will be glad to know that he does remain—as a Life Member. This gives him a right to step forward whenever he chooses, and it keeps him—to use your words—OUR OWN BRADLAUGH, though not exactly in the old sense.

"NOWADAYS," says the *Speaker*, "Mr. Bradlaugh stands almost alone as a successful amateur lawgiver." This refers to Mr. Bradlaugh's way of piloting his Bills through the House of Commons.

MR. SYMES pays a just tribute of admiration to Mrs. Besant for her splendid speech against Parson Hoskyns and in defence of the Malthusian principles which she so nobly maintained.

VIKTOR LENNSTRAND sends us a bright letter from his Swedish prison. He says that English sympathy is helping him and his friends in their struggle. The quashing of two prosecutions, already referred to in our columns, has caused a profound sensation, the case having been fully reported in the principal daily papers. Two distinguished members of the Council of State have openly rebuked the bigotry from which Mr. Lennstrand is suffering. Captain Otto Thomson, despite his years, is working with a youthful energy. Two intelligent young men, Messrs Berghell and Menizer, have joined the Society. The former is on a lecturing tour in the provinces, and establishing Branches in various towns. Mr. Lennstrand says he shall work with redoubled vigor when he is a free man again: Meanwhile he sends greetings to the Freethinkers of

England. "We will show us," he says in his imperfect, touching English, "worthy of their warm sympathies." We are sure they will.

SWEDISH PRISONER'S FUND.—D. W., 10s.; Dr. T. R. Allinson, £1 1s.

NORWICH is a cathedral city, but the Town Council is enlightened enough to open the Free Library on Sundays. The experiment is so far successful. The rooms are well occupied, and the visitors behave like ladies and gentlemen.

WE stated last week that our invitation of capital for our publishing business is still open, though we do not care to give it the prominence in our columns which it occupied some weeks ago. During the present month we have repaid £100 to an investor in Devonshire, and we have to repay him another £100 shortly. We have also repaid £50 to a London investor this week, besides some smaller amounts to other investors. Our publishing business cannot be conducted as efficiently as it should be without more capital. We pay five per cent on all deposits, and they are withdrawable on six months' notice. Any sums, from £5 upwards, will be acceptable.

MR. FOOTE'S letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury will be concluded in our next. The final portion is crowded out this week.

THE *Blackburn Times* gives a long and excellent report of Mr. Foote's lecture on Atheism in reply to the Rev. J. Ogmores Davies. It is so good that we are sorry we have not space to reproduce it.

A MEETING of Freethinkers from Leeds, Farsley, Hipperholme, Bradford, and other places was held last Sunday at Laycock's Temperance Hotel, Kirkgate, Bradford, to consider the advisability of trying to resuscitate the Freethought party in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It was decided to convene (by circular) a meeting for March 2nd, which will be held at above address, and Aurelia B. Wakefield, The Green, Hipperholme, will be pleased to hear from anyone interested in the movement.

ABOUT a year ago we inserted two appeals to the Hull Freethinkers to meet at Mr. Naewiger's house and form a Branch of the N. S. S. Some of our readers took the hint, and a Branch was formed there and then. A large hall was engaged and fortnightly meetings have been held ever since, the place being sometimes very inconveniently crowded. The Branch now numbers forty-five financial members *all paid up*; it has a fair balance in hand and no debts. At the outset the croakers foretold a failure, but Hull has shown what earnest Freethinkers can do if they will but try. There are fifty towns in England that ought to be encouraged by the example of Hull to start Branches immediately.

THE Reading Branch is making good progress. Mr. Forder lectures for it to-day (Feb. 23) at the Assembly Room, Friar Street. His subjects are—morning, "The Exodus from Egypt"; evening, "The Gospel History."

THE Camberwell Branch had a very successful Childrens' Party on Feb. 12. All the donors are thanked for their contributions. They are too numerous to catalogue.

IN most parts Secularists find a difficulty in obtaining competent opposition. The Portsmouth Branch of the N. S. S. insert in the local *Evening News* an advertisement, a challenge to debate the fundamental principles of Christianity with any minister of any denomination. Good for Portsmouth.

FREETHOUGHT is evidently spreading among the troops at Dum Dum, Calcutta, for the little magazine run by the Methodist chaplain is stuffed with answers to "infidelity." Ingersoll is crushed, and will no doubt retire into obscurity for the rest of his days. Yes, the Rev. J. A. Macdonald is a great man. But why does he appropriate wholesale from H. L. Hastings?

THE Rev. D. Amos, of the Unitarian Free Church, Reading, has been lecturing against the inspiration of the

Bible. According to the report he acquitted himself manfully, and demanded that the Bible should be treated as a human production. His remarks were greeted with loud applause. One of his critics, Major Liebenrood said that Mr. Amos's lecture was only a repetition of Mr. Foote's. There was some truth in this, of course, for every lecture on the inspiration of the Bible must of necessity traverse the same ground. For the rest, the observation was only the Mayor's way of being offensive.

"INFIDELITY" is attracting attention on all sides. During the past week four lectures on its modern phases have been delivered at Gresham College by the Rev. H. E. J. Bevan, Gresham Professor of Divinity and vicar of St. Andrew's, Stoke Newington. The first lecture was on "Freethought."

AT the Second Annual Convention of the Californian State Liberal (*i.e.* Freethought) Union Mr. S. P. Putnam was re-elected President. He is supported by an executive council of ten, and no less than ninety vice-presidents. There must be a large number of Freethinkers of importance in the state, or is it that in American organisations vice-presidents are as plentiful as colonels?

A SYMPOSIUM on the subject "Is there an Affirmative, Positive, Constructive, side to Freethought?" is commenced in the *Truthseeker* for Feb. 8 by a letter from Col. Ingersoll, which we shall reprint in our next issue. Mr. Westbrook, the president of the American Secular Union, Captain Robert C. Adams, the president of the Canadian Secular Union, and others, contribute their various opinions on the affirmations of Freethought.

THE TESTIMONY OF A GREAT POET.

Charles Marie Leconte de Lisle, of the French Academy, is unquestionably at the head of French poetry. His Freethought, which is strikingly exhibited in his poem on Cain, is pronounced in a popular brief prose *Histoire du Christianisme*, which he published in 1871. At the end of that work he says, "Christianity, and by this term must be understood all the Christian communions from Roman Catholicism to the smallest Protestant sects or schismatics, has never exercised other than a deplorable influence on intelligence and on morals. It condemns thought, it annihilates reason, it has perpetually denied and combatted all the truths successively acquired by science. It is unintelligible in its dogmas, arbitrary, variable, indifferent in its morality. Humanity has lost her faith in it, and it no longer inspires other respect than that accorded to old things which have been long used. It is an object of art, powerfully conceived, venerable by its antiquity, whose place is marked in the religious museum of history."

THEOLOGICAL ITEM.

Reverend Eli Soote, a colored parson, has considerable trouble in collecting his salary from the delinquent members of his flock. Jim Crow, in particular, shows a great deal of delicacy in paying his pew rent. Not long since Soote met Jim and tackled him on the subject.

"See heah, Jim, you hasn't paid up fur two munfs. Doesn't yer know dat dose who serbs at de altar mus' lib by de altar?"

"Dat's so, my berlubbed pasture, but dar am ernudder text in der Bible what am in conflic wid dat ar."

"Whar did yer find 'em?"

"I sarched de Scriptures an' found 'em. I'se one ob de sheep ob yo' flock, ain't I?"

"You is, Mr. Crow, but I feels you am one ob de black sheep."

"Kinder strikes me yer ain't no strawberry blonde yerse'f but ain't de commandment gibben ter de shepherds and pastures ob de flock, 'Feed my sheep!' an' heah yer comes to me—one ob de sheep—an wants ter be fed, you ole blackened sepulchum. Ei yer means ter bide by de Bible, why doan yer lead dis heah sheep inter er iceter saloon an' set up er dozen on de half shell? De good book say 'feed de sheep;' but you do nuffin' but shear 'em. Whar did yer read 'shear my sheep?' Go home, ole man, an' sarch de Scriptures, 'stead ob nosin' erbout fer money what I'se earned by de swet ob my brow."

MR. BRADLAUGH RESIGNS.

ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT.

We doubt if in all the churches in London combined there was anything like the enthusiasm and warm feeling which prevailed at the Hall of Science last Sunday. The meeting was called for 11.15, and long before that time the hall was filled with an expectant audience, many having come early to obtain a good inspection of the Indian presents, which were on view in the minor hall, among which we specially noticed a handsome gold casket containing an address from the Freethinkers of Bombay.

The proceedings commenced punctually by Mr. Forder reading Mr. Bradlaugh's letter of Nov. 5 desiring the meeting, and the resolution of the Executive Council that it should be called.

Mr. BRADLAUGH, who on rising, as upon entering the hall, was received with rounds of applause, could for some moments scarcely speak from emotion and appeared as though he would actually break down. Old men, many of whom had come from various parts of the Kingdom, were also observed to be overcome by their feelings during the proceedings and furtively wipe away the welling tears. Mr. Bradlaugh, who spoke throughout with the deepest feeling, said: With a very slight break I have led this movement for over thirty years—a fairly long period in any life. I have been President of this Society almost since it has existed, and I am very sorry to resign. Unfortunately, while my work has never been easy, it grew much harder during my parliamentary struggle and the litigation which that struggle involved. I have felt the last three or four years that the pressure on me was becoming so great that a breakdown might be at any time possible. Last October it came, and the wonder is I am here to tender my resignation at all. I was brought then face to face with the fact that I could no longer do the whole of my work, and I am now advised that the resumption of my old work would mean another illness which might be fatal. Some kind friends have suggested I might continue to hold the office nominally. But I could not do that. I must be a real President or none. The fault found with me has been that I have been too real in times that are gone. I think I am entitled to say we are stronger now than we were when you first put me in the presidential chair. I don't want to leave you. (Cheers.) I could not take any other office; but if you like to make me a life member I should be grateful to you to do it. (Cheers.) I have another request. I have never held any paid office in this Society, and I have never refused aid to any branch of the Society, which I thought fairly justified in demanding help. There has not been a day of my life in which five or six people have not brought their trouble to me, and I have done my best for them. In 1879 a sum of £1050 was given by a Mr. Thomson, which he wished invested in the Freethought Publishing Company for which five guineas per month was to be paid to the National Secular Society. A sum of £630 has already been paid, and I want to ask you to release me from the responsibility of the remainder. (Cheers.) I think I am entitled to ask this. I would not ask this if I could lecture. I do not know at present how I am going to live. I used to think my tongue would always bring my living, but I know now it may also bring death. I hold a number of shares in various Freethought building companies in Great Britain, some of them of value, some probably worth nothing. I am willing to transfer the whole of them to the Executive. They are all paid up except two or three shares. I think I have given away £3000 during my time. I am not putting this as any credit to myself, only to show I am not making a request unduly. I ask you to accept my resignation. I should like to be your President still, but I could not do the work, and I could not hold the office as a sham. Some may say why not wait until the annual Conference. I always like to go to the Conference with a budget of work. I could not do this, so thought it best to resign now. I do not say we part friends for we are not parting at all. (Much applause.) The movement is to me what it has ever been, and I see some old faces in this hall of those who have known what it has been to me for over forty years. I hope I will always remain your trusted counsellor. (Applause.) I lay down the wand of office, which I hope I have held untarnished; I give back the trust you gave me. (Prolonged applause.)

Mr. SMITH (Kingston-on-Thames) wished to know if the original gift had gone.

Mr. BRADLAUGH: There was no gift beyond the five guineas per month to the N. S. S.

Mr. BRUMAGE (Portsmouth): Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you will pardon me if I speak rather low, for, like my friend Mr. Bradlaugh, I have been suffering from illness for the last three months, and this is my first outing since my recovery. I am happy to say I have known Mr. Bradlaugh from my boyhood, and have watched his career from then till now when he occupies a position we are all proud of. You will excuse my making any further remarks. I will conclude by proposing the following resolution: "That this meeting of the members of the National Secular Society accepts Mr. Bradlaugh's resignation with the profoundest regret; it thanks him for his many years of unwearied and gratuitous service; it records its admiration of the ability and courage with which he had led the practical forces of English Freethought; and it hopes that he may long live as an honored and distinguished figure in the public life of our country and empire." (Much applause.)

Mr. H. GEE (Woolwich) said he had been a follower of Mr. Bradlaugh over twenty years, and he seconded the resolution, not with pleasure, but as the inevitable.

The resolution was put to the meeting and was carried unanimously.

Mr. FOOTE moved that Mr. Bradlaugh continue in the chair for the rest of the meeting. Carried.

Mr. BRADLAUGH: Now with regard to my request that you cancel the bond and make me a life member.

Mr. NEWCOMB (Liverpool) said that city would be proud of the honor of proposing Mr. Bradlaugh as a life member.

Mr. MOON (Southampton), who described his city as the Liverpool of the south, seconded the resolution.

A member wished to propose that Mr. Bradlaugh be made a life member of the council, but Mr. Bradlaugh said he would not like to be a member without being able to attend. The original motion was carried with applause.

Mr. SODDY (Camberwell): With regard to the payment of five guineas per month, I am sure Mr. Bradlaugh would not have asked us to release him from payment if he had not some good reason for doing so. The Freethought Publishing Company we have gathered is not in a very flourishing condition. After thirty years work the least we can do is to release him. No doubt his illness has been a great strain on his resources. He moved that this meeting of the National Secular Society release Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant from paying the £5 5s. per month, and thank them for their services in the past.

Mr. FORDER said he did not second the resolution in his capacity as secretary, the only paid officer in the Society, but as delegate of several Branches. He read a letter from the Hull Branch warmly eulogising Mr. Bradlaugh. He had also important letters from various places, including Sweden. On behalf of these societies he seconded the resolution that the bond be cancelled.

Mr. BRADLAUGH: Would any one like to ask any question?

Mr. DEANE asked if it was necessary to cancel the bond.

Mr. BRADLAUGH said he would prefer it that way. The responsibility is a moral one, because your Society has possibly no right to exist at all. He wished them to cancel his moral liability and what ought to be his legal liability if the law was just. The resolution was then put and carried unanimously.

Mr. BRADLAUGH: The next business is the election of a new President, and upon that I have a motion to make. I have considered very gravely what would be for the best interests of the movement, and I trust I will have your unanimous support. Whoever takes this office it will put upon him or her great labors. I'll take off the new President's hands all the legal questions, but there are often questions of conscience, domestic difficulties, cases in which people lay their hearts bare, and which require the greatest thought. The duty of the President in a movement like ours requires constant watchfulness; it often requires as much courage to do nothing as to do much. Sometimes you may land poor people in a struggle they are unequal for. The meeting that morning was proof that he had done his best. He now begged to propose that Mr. George William Foote—(cheers)—be the President until the next annual Conference. We have no power to elect him for longer.

Mr. FISHER (Battersea) seconded the resolution.

Mr. A. B. MOSS: I have much pleasure in supporting the resolution. Having known Mr. Foote a considerable number of years, and the assiduity with which he has taken in hand the Freethought propaganda, and knowing also his business ability, I think he will be the most suitable one we could select. We know he has the interests of Freethought

at heart, that he has suffered for his convictions and showed heroism in the hour of danger. In view of his tact and ability, he is the best man for the office.

Mr. CARTER (West Ham) said some prophets of evil are saying that when Mr. Bradlaugh leaves, the Society will fall to pieces.

Mr. BRADLAUGH asked if the speaker had an amendment.

Mr. CARTER answered "Yes," and proposed that Mr. J. M. Robertson be elected President. He had heard members say they would decline to be led by Mr. Foote. (No, no.)

Mr. BRADLAUGH: If you have any personal reason against Mr. Foote, it would be well to say it.

Mr. CARTER disclaimed other than a personal interest in the welfare of the Society. Unfortunately there are some who regard Mr. Foote's method of advocacy as an awful example of retrograde metamorphosis.

Mr. L. KEEN (Wood Green) urged that no one could find a better man to take the place of our late President than Mr. Foote.

Mr. STUART: The very fact of our late President recommending Mr. Foote shows he is the best man we could have. It is impossible to please all. Many in the past had held aloof because they would not be led by Mr. Bradlaugh. There might be one or two who disapproved of Mr. Foote's style of propaganda, but they were few and far between.

Mr. NEWCOMB (delegate for Liverpool) stated how recently Mr. Foote had gone to that city in answer to the attempt of the police to stop their meetings. That in itself was a sufficient recommendation.

The resolution was then put and carried unanimously amidst loud applause.

Mr. BRADLAUGH (turning to Mr. Foote): I tender the only emblem of office we have. This hammer, presented to us by the widow of James Watson, was used in the old Rotunda, in days when such freedom as we now enjoy was impossible. Carlile has often used it. I give it you joyfully, Foote, and trust you will hand it on to your successor.

Mr. FOOTE (who was received with prolonged applause): Fellow members of the National Secular Society, the office, temporary as it, till the next Conference, which you have entrusted to me I reckon as a high distinction, and I value it all the more because Mr. Bradlaugh, despite some past differences of opinion, has had the magnanimity to propose me as his temporary successor. It is quite impossible for any man to please everybody. Mr. Bradlaugh knows he has never succeeded in doing that. Any person with positive opinions is likely to rouse some antipathy, but this I did not expect from any member of the West Ham Branch. No one could know this morning who would be elected, and I confess I did not come with a cut and dried speech in my pocket. What I have to say to the party they will soon know. For the present I want to say just this. I am in a position to ask and to claim your indulgence. (Applause.) Mr. Bradlaugh, as you all know, is a man in a million. Anyone who comes immediately after him is judged by a severe standard. No one can tell precisely what he himself is going to do, but one knows what one has done. I have been connected with the Secular party for over twenty years, and during all that time Mr. Bradlaugh has seemed to be a fixture of the Society. As he has said, we do not really part, and that makes my task the easier. Mr. Bradlaugh knows my feet have not frequently trod the road to St. John's Wood, but if I have to take counsel with him, which he offers to give, it is likely that St. John's Wood will see me more frequently. I hardly know how, taking the presidency of an illegal society, one could feel comfortable or even sleep easy in bed at night unless one had the advice of the best lawyer in England. (Applause.) Mr. Bradlaugh has been a brilliant leader. He has not only led the Freethought party, but occupied a high position in the public mind. We shall have to find some compensation for the loss of his brilliance. I confess I see no alternative but in the perfecting of the organisation of our Society. We feel his loss and must feel the necessity of each doing his utmost to make up for it. There are thousands of Freethinkers in this country outside the Freethought societies. (Hear, hear.) Hundreds who do but little, and a few who do nearly all. If we can make the apathetic more active; if we can induce more Freethinkers to join us, then great as is Mr. Bradlaugh's loss, by forcing us to do more and to work to the best of our ability, we shall find some compensation. When we meet again at the next Conference no one knows what may happen. I occupy this office till then. If it should be my good fortune to be re-elected as President

of this Society—which I consider the most important in the country, because its purpose is to promote and sustain those principles which lie at the root of all political and social reform—(applause)—I trust that when I lay down the office, whatever others may think, I myself may feel, in the sanctuary of my own heart, that I have tried to hold it with something of the courage, sincerity, and enduring enthusiasm of my great predecessor. Mr. Bradlaugh occupies a lofty position in the public mind to which I dare not aspire, but I look up to where he is, and I say to him, I recognise your example and I will try to follow it. (Loud applause.)

Mr. BRADLAUGH, in closing the meeting, said it was no light burden that was laid on the President of the Society. He thought he discerned several growing causes of difficulty. There was the anti-Jewish agitation which, unless he was mistaken, would spring up in this country after the publication of the report of the Sweating Commission. There was the lower strata of the Salvation Army who could scarcely be expected to accord a quiet hearing to opponents of their faith, and there was the great danger to Europe in the endeavor of the Church of Rome to secure the suffrages of the democracy. He could not believe the skunk had changed its smell. (Applause.) He asked them to unite against the great danger. He had taught that the struggle in the future in England is not so much with the Church of England, not so much with the Dissenters as with the Church of Rome. Any man standing in Mr. Foote's position had a right to indulgence. With the responsibility of the position there would be a sense of duty higher and graver than when fighting for one's own hand and with one's own arm. [Then turning to Mr. Foote, he said]: I hope yet to meet you and thank you for what you have done, not for my sake, but for the history of the movement of which we are common soldiers. I believe you will do the best that man can do. (Applause.)

The meeting then dispersed, many crowding again to see the presents from India. Some London and more country friends adjourned to the Manchester Hotel and partook of an excellent luncheon.

A DOUBLE?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As your "Sub." is a gentleman known for accuracy, and as one would fain hope that he is not emulating the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, would he be good enough to state in your columns the precise date on which Madame Blavatsky appeared in the British Museum, glittering with gold and gems? Mr. Wheeler could not have invented the story of her presence there, merely for the sake of pointing a sneer? Yet Madame Blavatsky has been for several weeks more than fifty miles away from London, and for many weeks before she left she had been confined to the house by her doctor's orders, and was so feeble that she could only walk across her room with difficulty. Her friends did not know that her remarkable powers extended to being in two places in the body at the same time, and they are naturally eager for the evidence which will doubtless be furnished by a man of such unimpeachable veracity as Mr. Wheeler. It would be lamentable if his story should be untrue, and so doubts should be thrown on his other equally well-founded assertions about the same lady.

ANNIE BESANT.

[My belief that I saw Mdme. Blavatsky at the British Museum on Feb. 5th and 6th, was founded upon a fancied resemblance between a photograph of the lady, which I saw at 63 Fleet Street, and a lady whom I saw on those dates with copies of *Lucifer* and an American work on *Reincarnation*. I was mistaken. I unreservedly withdraw my statement, and tender my sincere apology to Mdme. Blavatsky for the error, and for having thus aspersed her occult knowledge. I have read in *Isis Unveiled* (vol. i., p. 360—I like to be accurate, if possible) that a medium "may be entranced in his cabinet, while his astral body (double) or *doppelganger* is walking about the room moved by another intelligence." But as a Theosophist who knows her assures me that Mdme. Blavatsky is unable to go to the Museum, I must express my regret for having made the statement, and conclude that I saw another lady, though who that lady is I should much like to discover. I have been mistaken as to ladies before this, but fail to see that a mistake as to identity has any connection with what I have quoted from published works on Mdme. Blavatsky or with my criticism upon her writings. The logic seems to me lamentable, but Theosophy may perhaps explain it. It is right to add that I am informed Mdme. Blavatsky does not wear gold and gems, but dresses "in rags." Such was the expression of my informant.—J. M. W.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote "The Future of Freethought."
Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7, G. Fernard Shaw, "Socialism and Secularism."
Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 11, 15, "Modern Moralists"; 7.30, Orientalist, "Obseques on Theosophy;"
Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3.5, Mr. Gouke, "God is."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 11, Mr. J. W. Mahony, at 11, "Social Utopias;" 7, "Are our Sundays Failures?"
Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upphead Row, Mr. E. S. Jones (Fellow of Liverpool University), at 3, "Evolution and the Origin of Life"; at 6.30, "Mind and Body."
Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a business Meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 41 Credon Road, London, S.E.—March 2, Woolwich; 23, Milton Hall; 30, Woolwich. April 6 (morning), Kingsland Green (evening), Ball's Pond; 13, Camberwell. May 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25, Regent's Park. June 15, Ball's Pond; 29, Mile End. July 13, Mile End.
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.
JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—Feb. 16, Birmingham.

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