

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE.

CONSIDERED as a human institution, Christianity is doubtless a remarkable phenomenon, and much may be said as to its being suited to mankind in a certain stage of its culture. But as a divine revelation—which is what it claims to be—it must be pronounced a failure. After eighteen hundred years it is not even known to a majority of the human race, and multitudes know it only to reject it. The number of the inhabitants of countries nominally Christian are not one quarter of the world's inhabitants.

Some nations have doubled their population in twenty-five years. Supposing Christianity to have progressed but half as fast as this, starting with the 5,000 men mentioned in the veracious Acts of Apostles, iv., 4 (about A.D. 34), at the rate of doubling its numbers in fifty years (surely not much to expect from a divinely-inspired faith!) there should be in the world now six hundred and eighty-seven billions, one hundred and thirty-five thousand, seven hundred and three millions, and forty thousand (687,135,703,040,000), or about 450,000 times more Christians than there are human beings of all creeds or no creed put together. That is, by this slow process there would have been two million times more Christians than there are at present. Even if they had doubled their numbers once a century they would now have numbered 1,975,680,000; far more than all the people in the world.

Christ is reported to have said he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. From that day to this his own people, the chosen race, those best able to judge of his merits as the promised Messiah, have rejected him. His own brethren did not believe on him (John vii., 5). The Jews, despite enormous sums lavished in vain efforts at their conversion, continue to reject Christianity. They know it and despise it.

The same may be said of educated Mohammedans. Canon Isaac Taylor, in his *Leaves from an Egyptian Note-book*, states that more persons were converted from Christianity to Islam in Cairo than from Islam to Christianity. Mohammedanism to this day holds the sacred places of Christendom, and Turkish soldiers have to keep the peace between the rival Christian sects, who dispute each other's claims to show the holy sepulchre.

Mohammedanism not only ousted Christianity from its sacred places; it still, in Africa, has greater success than the rival faith. Hear the testimony of Mr. Joseph Thomson, the African traveller, given in this month's *Contemporary Review*:

"As compared with the progress of Mohammedanism in Africa, Christianity in these lands has been practically at a standstill. Wherever Mohammedan seed has been sown, there it has taken root, and there it has remained to flourish with a vigorous grip of the soil which nothing can destroy. The same cannot be said of Christian seed: it has ever been as a delicate exotic, difficult to plant, more difficult to rear, and ever requiring outside support and watering."

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It is the same in India. Christianity is only embraced by the outcastes and aboriginal hill tribes, anxious for rice and easier living. By the educated, whether Brahmans or Mohammedans, it is rejected. Missionaries have gone there, it is said, since the days of St. Thomas, and certainly since the time of St. Francis Xavier; but that vast country, though under the sway of Christian England, remains "heathen."

But it is when we look at the results of Christianity—always, be it borne in mind, considered as a divine and supernaturally-instituted religion—that its failure is most patent. The nominal adherence given to Christianity in "Christian" nations is altogether deceptive. Emerson asks "In Christendom where is the Christian?" Echo answers, Where?

The condition of the masses in every Christian country affords proof palpable that Christianity, instead of being a divinely elevating power, has rather, by centring thought upon another world, hindered the improvement of this. Seeing how barbarous and degraded are the inhabitants of Abyssinia, where Christianity has existed since the days of Constantine, it is evident that whatever progress has been made is due to other elements than those found in religion.

The Bishop of Peterborough has lately admitted that the conduct of the State cannot be regulated by the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Standing armies in Christian countries of over six millions of men are a striking comment on the gospel of non-resistance. Nor is there any more attempt to carry out Christianity into individual lives. Society is based on principles directly antagonistic to those which lie at the root of Christianity. Its adherents only give it a lip homage, while their hearts are far away, concerned with the things of this world. The real gospel of the age is Secularism, and the fact is an evidence of the failure of Christianity.

J. M. WHEELER.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IX.

ON "CHRIST AND HUMANITY."
To the Rt. Rev. Edward White Benson,
Archbishop of Canterbury.

[CONTINUED.]

LET us now see what are your remedies for the poverty of large masses of the people. Beyond vague talk about co-operation, which is not the product of Church influences; and profit-sharing, which sprang up in the sceptical soil of France; I cannot find that your Grace has anything to propose. You do, indeed, allude to the population question, but you shirk its thorny points. You denounce the "infamous suggestions" of the Malthusian reformers, and assert that "early marriages are one great source of misery." You also add that "any marriage is too early of which the offspring cannot be reasonably expected to be nurtured and brought up decently," although "marriage at marriageable age is not too

early if there is reasonable prospect of children's maintenance in the condition of their parents."

For a curious commentary on the first half of this teaching I would refer your Grace to Mr. Arnold White's *Problems of a Great City*, where you may find a graphic account of a famous red church in the East of London, built and endowed by a wealthy lady, in order that poor young couples might be married gratuitously. The place is a direct encouragement to scandalous improvidence. Young people out of work are known to take the opportunity of getting married, and the levity of behavior and the freedom of conversation would often shock the "heathen" whom your missionaries are engaged in converting. I am not aware that you have ever sought to suppress this centre of social debauchery, and I am sure it is a fair specimen of Christian influence on the problems of sex and population.

The second half of your teaching is worthy of an Archbishop. You profess a great sympathy with the poor, but you put upon them the whole burden of your recipe. Population is to be restricted by the cessation of early marriages; those who cannot support whatever offspring Nature may send are not to marry at all; while those who have the means may marry as early as they please. And this is your social gospel for the poor! My lord, it is foredoomed to futility. You might as well shout against the northern blast, or push back the ocean with your feet. Nature has associated the chief and most durable pleasures of life with the rational gratification of the sexual instincts. The love of man and woman, and the love of both for their children, is at once the perennial source of pure joy and the pivot of civilisation. Yet from this paradise—not of idle enjoyment, but of labor and love—you would exclude all the men and women who cannot see their way to support an unlimited offspring. While the well-to-do know the comforts of a home, its blessings and its discipline, these poor brothers and sisters are to toil and wait until the bloom of life has fled, and the vital springs are impaired, and the glad strength that would have laughed at obstacles and adversities is gone, and the very apples of Paradise taste like Dead Sea fruit.

Such a gospel is a mockery. It is the old story repeated. Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. I have said it is worthy of an Archbishop, and I add that it could only be preached by courtiers to flunkeys or the hirelings of tyrants to slaves.

An unsophisticated poor Christian, fresh from reading the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, might suggest to your Grace that the divine solution of the problem of poverty is to share and share alike. Indeed, you are acute enough to anticipate the suggestion. Referring to the advice of Christ to the young lawyer—"sell that thou hast and give it to the poor"—you doubt whether it is "a rule of wide obligation." But, on the other hand, you declare that "such sacrifice falls within the scope of Christian ethics and in certain cases is a positive duty." *Certain cases!* Not your case, my lord; nor any other bishop's case; nor the case of any assignable rich man on earth; but only, perhaps, the case of some rich man in the moon. Thus you hedge and trim, so as to save the credit of Christ and your own £15,000 a year.

Following the teaching of their *Master*, the primitive Christians had all things in common, and if you followed *them* you would share your princely income with bricklayers and crossing-sweepers. This would never do. Consequently the practice of the Apostles, like the teaching of Jesus, must be explained away. You assert that "the public fund formed by a surrender of fortunes at Jerusalem was no instance of Communism." Begging your pardon, it was. There was never a clearer case of Communism in

human history. It is indisputable that the primitive Christians, like the Essenes, were a body of Communists. You pretend that their Collectivism was "an extraordinary effort to meet the sudden emergency." My lord, it is easy to assert. If you assert one thing, I have the right to assert another. Where is the *proof*? I defy you to produce it. The Communistic experiment at Jerusalem came to grief in the natural way. It was opposed to human nature. Bickerings and jealousies arose, and eventually the institution of private property re-asserted itself. Yet the spirit of that early Communism survived in the writings of the Fathers, who again and again denounce the possessors of wealth as recreants to the primitive faith. And whenever a sincere Christian, like Law the author of the *Serious Call*, deals with the subject, he is constrained to admit that the Christianity of the New Testament involves the holding of all things in common.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

SACRED TEXTS AND SECULAR COMMENTS.

- I am come to send fire on the earth*—Luke xii., 49.
Our God is a consuming fire.—Heb. xii., 29.
 "Another church was destroyed last Sunday through overheated flues."—Morning Paper.
And thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.—Exod. xxxiii., 23.
 "The Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."—Herbert Spencer "First Principles" § 14.
The heavens declare the glory of God.—Psalm xix., 1.
 "The heavens declare the glory of Kepler."—Auguste Comte.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.—Prov. i. 7.
 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Superstition." Lucianus.
The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.—Psalm xiv., 1.
 "Children and fools speak the truth."—Popular Proverb.
Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.—Matt. viii., 22.
 "To insult the dead is cruel and unjust."—Homer's *Odyssey* xxii., 1. 450.
The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.—1 John i., 7.
 "By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another."—Buddha Dhammapada cxii., v. 165.
Think not I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace but a sword.—Matt. x., 34.
 "Curs'd is the man and void of law and right
 Unworthy property, unworthy light,
 Unfit for public rule, or private care;
 That wretch, that monster who delights in war."
 Homer's *Iliad*, bk. ix., l. 87. Pope.
Take therefore no thought for the morrow.—Matt. vi., 34.
 "If a man will take no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand."—Confucius, Lun-Yu, bk. xv., c. 11.
It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.—Matt. xviii., 7.
 "Hath a man erred unwillingly. He meets with pardon instead of punishment. Justice requires that instead of reproaching and reviling such a man, we should condole with him." Demosthenes, "On the Crown."
Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? Itell you, "Nay," but rather division.—Luke xii., 51.
 "More blood has been shed on account of the Christian Religion than from any other cause."—Voltaire.
The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God. 2 Thess. i., 7, 8.
 "Can heavenly minds such high resentment show,
 Or exercise their spite in human woe?"—
 Virgil, *Æneid* I., l. 17.
He that believeth not shall be damned.—Matt. xvi., 16.
 "No one who hath done good goeth to an evil place."—Krishna, Bhagvat-Gita, chap. vi.
If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple.—Luke xiv., 26.
 "There are no duties comparable to those we owe to our parents. Our parents are very divine."—Buddha, Sigala-Vada Sutta.
He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.—Matt. xvi., 16.
 "Away with those who preach to us the washing off of sin, Thine own self is the stream for thee to make ablutions in. In self-restraint it rises pure—flows clear in tide of truth, By widening banks of wisdom, in waves of peace and ruth. Bathe there thou son of Pandu, with reverence and rite, For never yet was water wet could wash the spirit white."
 —Ilitopadesa ch. iv. § 91. (Sir E. Arnold's translation.)
 LUCIANUS.

FREETHOUGHT IN YORKSHIRE.

THE following were the delegates who attended at Laycock's Temperance Hotel, Kirkgate, Bradford, last Sunday afternoon, to consider "the most efficient manner of propagating Freethought" in the West Riding of Yorkshire: Stanningly—Messrs. Benjamin Briggs, Joseph Guy and Thomas Taylor; Huddersfield—Wm. Cliffe and John George Dobson; Leeds—J. Greevz-Fisher, H. W. Riley and H. Hardcastle; Bramley—J. Parkinson; Bradford—H. Brooksbank, James White, W. J. Fawcett and J. W. Gott; Hipperholme—A. B. Wakefield; Farsley—H. Smith and John Grange; Halifax—J. W. Crowther, and another person. In addition to the foregoing there were friends to the number of about a score, making a gathering in all to the number of nearly forty.

The meeting having elected Mr. H. Smith chairman, he submitted, in a few well-chosen words, the following two resolutions as preliminary matter to the business for which the conference had specifically been assembled:—(1) Moved by H. Brooksbank, Bradford; seconded by J. W. Crowther, Halifax: "That this meeting of Secular representatives and friends in Conference assembled desire to convey to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh their best thanks for his past services as President of the National Secular Society, begs to congratulate him on his restoration to health, and hopes he will long live to use his unusual ability and influence in the cause of freedom." (2) Moved by J. C. Creevz-Fisher, Leeds, seconded by A. B. Wakefield, Hipperholme: "That this meeting of Secular representatives and friends in Conference assembled begs to tender Mr. George William Footes its most hearty and sincere congratulations on his elevation to the position of President of the National Secular Society in the Great Britain and Ireland, and trusts, as in the past, so in the future, it (the cause of Freethought) will receive from him his unswerving adherence and devotion." Both resolutions were passed *nem. dis.*

Passing to the question, What would be the best method of effectively propagating Freethought? the decision arrived at was that an executive council of thirteen, with treasurer and secretary, be elected, with power to add to their number, to consider and report what appeared to them the most practical course to pursue. The advisability or otherwise of holding a Freethought demonstration some Sunday during the summer months on Shipley Glen was also left for the executive to consider. The idea of issuing a "monthly record" did not receive much recognition, it being regarded more as a matter of individual enterprise than the work of a collective body.

The above is a summary of the proceedings transacted which was followed by a good plain tea, of which thirty and forty partook, and the proceedings between meeting of the West Riding (Yorkshire) Freethought Propaganda Association were brought to a close.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LANCASHIRE SECULAR FEDERATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—On February 13 I sent to every Secular Society in Lancashire a circular, inviting co-operation with Liverpool in an attempt to found the above organisation. Although we have not received replies from every society (the committees of some meeting once only each month), we feel satisfied that we can make a start. Several societies promise hearty assistance, and, though the labor of effecting a start will be great, we shall push on as fast as possible. I would earnestly invite Freethinkers in St. Helens, Warrington, Clitheroe, Leigh, Bury, Preston, Southport and Stockport to make an endeavour to give a helping hand. If societies cannot be immediately formed there, it is almost certain that, by means of correspondence in the *Freethinker*, a number of friends of Secular progress could be introduced to each other, and if halls can be secured in those towns I shall be glad to render every assistance in bringing down from London a special lecturer now and then. Freethinkers in the above-mentioned towns will please understand that it is not necessary to get halls for Sunday—any other day will do; indeed, week nights would sometimes be preferable. I hope some earnest friends will respond at once.

H. SMITH, Hon. Sec. pro tem. L. S. F.
3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Liverpool.

AN ATHEIST'S PRAYER.

TRANSLATED FOR "LIBERTY" BY B. B. TUCKER.

Who then are you? Speak out at last. The hour is come.
You can not always keep your tongue within your head.
Appealed to you have all men, wept and wailed have some,
Why have you nothing said?

Why stay you in the sky, huge bronze of livid hue,
With mocking smile on lips that all speech else avoid?
Impenetrable face and phantom form, are you
Of brain and heart devoid?

Why do you nothing say? Why do we see described
No wrinkle, stubborn spectre, on your brow austere?
Why that stupid air and aspect circumscribed?
Are you too deaf to hear?

If you speak not, then try at least to understand.
Despise me, if you will, but let me see, I pray,
Your face relax to show that I may lift a hand
And you know what I say.

To transform into faith the doubt that me o'erpowers
You need but put a yes into those eyes I spy.
You need but make a sign; my hate no longer towers;
It at your feet will die.

O Mystery proud, wrapped in your dismal veils,
He whom men call father should be one indeed.
If you are my creator, in the shades and vales
How can you see me bleed?

How can you see me humbly kneeling on the stone,
My arms stretched toward you, drowned my voice in accents
wild,
And yet no tear beneath your eyelid trickling down?
Am I, then, not your child?

Alms give, in pity's name! So poor am I and weak!
I am not wicked. Good be thou, and look at me.
My poor love-laden heart has naught that it can seek
But to exhale to thee.

But no! I still see on your face that stupid smile,
My cries, my tears, my insults bear no fruit, I fear.
No, you do not speak; you have no thoughts the while;
You have no ears to hear.

Then, after all, do you exist? What is your
Within the infinite—within that sound space,
Is what I see in the depths your shape I never miss.
See, perchance, the reflex of my face,
Mirrored in that abyss?

Is it my soul that lends a soul unto the world?
Were my heart's dream no more an object of my thought,
Would you in vain, like image on the wild waves
When sun goes down be sought?

Yes, yes, your haughty silence now is solved for aye.
But I too long have suffered; revenge is now my share.
These lips henceforth shall be of blasphemy the way,
Never again of prayer.

O God, thou floating fog above a field of lies!
O God, thou vain mirage of wishes here below!
Thy glory and thy pride but from our dreams arise,
Without us, thou must go.

From the French of Jean Richepin.

AN IRRELIGIOUS INSTRUMENT.

A negro boy having secured a thermometer, took it home to astonish his father.

"What you got dar?" the old man asked.

"Got er 'mometer."

"What's dat?"

"W'y, it's one o' deze yere things whut yer tells how col' ur hot it is wid."

"Tells how col' ur hot it is?"

"Yes, sah?"

"Look yere, is you sich er fool dat yer kain't tell how col' or hot it is? Is yer dun los' dat 'bility whut you 'herited from yo' mudder and daddv—mos'ly yo' daddy?"

"W'y, o' co'se I ken tell how col' it is, but dis yere gins yer de figgers—how many 'grees it is."

"Whut's 'grees got to do wid it? W'en it's col' it's col', and dat's all dar is erbout it. Men gittin' mighty brash dose days er gittin' up mersheens ter fool wid de Lawd's erfairs. Reckon after w'le da'll git sunthin' ter figger out how much 'ligion er man's got. Put dat blame 'mometer dar 'hind de fire."

ACID DROPS.

Surely the Archbishop of Canterbury is a subtle humorist. Last Sunday evening he preached at the old "Vic." to a crowded audience—or should we say congregation?—of the poor people of South London. His grace wore his full robes to gratify their love of a bit of show, and addressed them familiarly as "dear people." But the cream of the joke was his text—"Give us this day our daily bread." His Grace forgot to dwell on the fact that he had £7,500 a year for bread, and another £7,500 for butter—every penny of which is wrung from the industry of the poor. Instead of this, he maundered and drivelled about the good God sending bread to his dear working men by giving them the means of working for it; although, almost in the same breath, he admitted that thousands of men were able and willing to work, but unable to find it. What wretched mockery! It is just like saying that God looks after their eating by giving them jaws to eat with. Some of them get very little bread between their teeth, but then, look at their splendid jaws! You can't expect the Lord to give a man every blessing at once. By and bye, when the poor man's jaws are tired of biting nothing, he will go to the blessed land of compensation, where those who have hungered shall be filled; and then—ah yes, then!—he will champ the manna of paradise free, gratis, for nothing, *ad libitum*, while bishops and archbishops preach to him for nothing a year, paid quarterly in advance.

After the Archbishop of Canterbury the bishopric of Durham is the best living in the Church. Ten thousand a year, a fine palace, and enough livings to dispose of to content all one's cousins to the third and fourth generations is a higher prize than any held out to a Cabinet Minister. No wonder there has been some speculation why the good berth has not been filled up. Rumor has it that Lord Salisbury wants to appoint Canon Liddon, but the Queen objects to more Ritualistic bishops and wants to put in a man of her own.

The great Mr. Conybeare, with five more Cornish members out of the total seven, is sponsor for a Bill prohibiting the sale of liquor in Cornwall on Sundays. But why Sundays? Why not Mondays or Saturdays? Some day or other a Bill may be brought in for the suppression of humbug, but Mr. Conybeare will never back that.

An attempt is being made to raise £30,000 to superannuate the poor, hard-working, and meritorious clergy of the diocese of Manchester. But why on earth should the "teachers" of the people require to be relieved of the ordinary duty of providing against old age or disablement. There are many good Provident Societies, and the clergy should put by for a rainy day like other people.

This superannuation fund was preached up at a special meeting in the Manchester Town Hall. The Mayor presided, with Canons to right of him and Canons to left of him, and there was a large attendance of the clergy—to see what the laymen were going to do for them. One reason for public charity, in the Mayor's opinion, was this—the clergy were very often blessed with large families! Yes, and they *beget* those large families; and then, having deliberately brought into the world more children than they can maintain, they make their imprudence a plea for charity. And these are the "teachers" of the people. Then God help the people.

Talking about clerical families, here is a paragraph from the *Christian World*—"Rev. James McNeil, of Drumbo, a minister much beloved and esteemed, has died at the early age of forty-nine, leaving a widow and a young family of eleven children." *Eleven children, and all young!* And now the Rev. Jas. McNeil is gone to glory, leaving his eleven young children to pull through their troubles with all the assistance that Jahveh sends them.

More division among the Theosophists. A new affair has been started in London, the Christo-Theosophical Society, its object being to show that Christian truth is in harmony with reason and intuition. This society has a big task before it.

The *Christian World* points out the danger to religious liberty in Mr. John Morley's proposal to endow all sectarian schools out of the public taxes. This is merely the endowment of religion in disguise, and is hardly worthy of "Honest John." Fortunately the Liberals are not in a position to carry out the proposal. Let us hope that by the time they are they will dismiss it with scorn.

Mr. John Morley is curiously slack about doing anything in the House of Commons to redress the wrongs of Free thinkers, among whom, we presume, he is still reckoned. He bears with remarkable equanimity to be that they are, as a body, outside the pale of the law. But, on the other hand, he is distressed because Roman Catholics are deprived of the privilege of ever becoming Lord Chancellor of England or Lord Lieutenant. He has backed a Bill whose object is the relief of Ireland; and a dreadful wrong. We hope the Bill will be passed, but we also hope that Mr. Morley will show some day or other a little practical sympathy with those who are treated as outlaws because they happen to share his religious convictions.

The Protestant Alliance is up in arms against this Bill as "mischievous and menacing." What an illustration of characteristic jealousy! Mutual hatred is the most striking feature of the many sects of the true religion.

The *Hospital* is a very decent little paper, but its number for Feb. 8 gives currency to the old mistake as to know the Christian origin of hospitals. The writer ought to know that there are no injunctions to erect hospitals in the New Testament, and that the only directions in regard to the sick are that they should be anointed with oil and prayed over. He ought, moreover, to know that in the eleventh century B.C. there was in Egypt a College of Physicians in receipt of public pay; that the Egyptian and many of the Greek temples, notably those of Asclepius, were virtually hospitals; and that in India, Asoka, in the third century B.C., established hospitals both for men and animals in various parts of his dominions.

So far from the world being indebted to Christianity for hospitals, they were not found among Christians until the fourth century. The writer of the article, "The Christian Origin of Hospitals" in *The Hospital*, says: "The first complete establishment for the reception of the sick was built by Basil the Great, in Cappadocia (Asia Minor), soon after he became archbishop of that see (A.D. 370)." Yet before this the Emperor Julian (died A.D. 363), who gave up Christianity for Paganism, had, as the writer ungraciously admits, established hospitals. With true Christian niggardliness of appreciation of good deeds done by those not of the faith, he says: "It was doubtless as much with the desire of excelling the clergy in their own work as of benefiting his subjects, that Julian decreed the establishment in various places of hospitals for the reception of the sick, and hospices for the entertainment of travellers." Julian certainly did excel the clergy, since their authorised method of restoring the sick, as we have said, consisted in sacred oil and holy prayers.

A scoundrel at Plymouth went to the Salvation Army Barracks, set light to a copy of the *War Cry*, flung it into the meeting, shouted "Fire!" and decamped. The fiery organ of Blood and Fire ignited a female Salvationist's best gingham, and a terrible scene ensued. No one being anxious to go to the "beautiful land, wonderful land, wonderful land, ab-o-o-ove," the Salvationists bolted for the door. Women were knocked down and trampled on, dresses were torn, and bonnets crumpled up like brown paper. Such is the beautiful sense of repose which religion gives us in the presence of danger.

Mr. John Moss, farmer of Loughborough, has obtained a verdict of £80 damages for slander against the Rev. E. Smythies, rector of Hathern.

A medical friend of ours has a patient who is troubled with nervous attacks and very bad dreams. The other night this patient dreamed of Hell, and wrote out a circumstantial account of what he saw there. Carriages were driving along a splendid broad road, like the Queen's Road at Brighton. Then he came to a noble iron gateway,

blackleaded all over, so that it dazzled the eyes. This led to a long road extending for miles, and roofed in like the Crystal Palace. About every four feet there was a cell, but the dreamer did not look inside. Thousands of attendants flitted about, but all was silent as the grave. Accosting one of these attendants, the dreamer was asked "How long have you been dead?" "I am not dead at all," he replied. Thereupon the ghostly gentleman sneered as if meaning "Then you have no business here."

The Theosophists would look upon this patient's dreams as very significant. We should advise him to eat moderately, take plenty of outdoor exercise, avoid stimulants and narcotics, and, if necessary, take a rhubarb pill once a week. An occasional aperient is a great enemy of devils, whether black or blue.

Mr. Joseph Thomson writes on "The Results of European Intercourse with the African" in the March number of the *Contemporary Review*, and affirms, despite all the missionary reports that "so far, our intercourse with African races instead of being a blessing, has been little better than an unmitigated curse to them."

Theophilus Edwards, a London City missionary for over twenty years, whose wife stated he had no domestic or monetary troubles, was found lying in bed with his throat cut. A knife was lying close by, also a Bible with several passages marked. Probably another case of religious mania.

Buffalo Bill and the Pope met at Rome on Monday. Bill is a big showman, and so is Barnum, but the Pope is the biggest showman on earth. Bill himself seems to have recognised this, for on Monday, when the anniversary of Papa Pecci's coronation was celebrated, he played a second fiddle in the performance. He and his troupe stationed themselves in the Grand Ducal Hall of the Vatican, and dropped on their knees for the Holy Father's blessing as he was carried along on his papal chair. Of course they got the blessing, and Buffalo Bill presented the Greatest Showman on Earth with a beautiful cushion, which will no doubt be appreciated by the bony nether parts of the aged Leo.

The Catholic Church is the final support of every despotism. Bismarck finds he must rely on the Ultramontane party for a majority in the New Reichstag.

The Rev. R. F. Horton says it is an impossible theory that the universe is the result of blind chance. Now if Mr. Horton will define chance, blind or seeing, and show how it could be the cause of *anything*, the matter will be open to discussion. Meanwhile the Materialist may think that the "blind chance" hypothesis is no more impossible than the theory that an Omniscient God could turn out beings who reason like Mr. Horton.

Bishop Walker, of North Dakota, has a "scattered" diocese. He is therefore fitting up a holy car, to be attached to ordinary trains, and switched on to a siding when a service is to be held. He will baptise and confirm on board, and perhaps administer the sacrament and perform swell weddings. Was there ever such a travelling joss-house since old Jahveh perigrinated in his trunk?

"The Bible is the Word of God." That is a plain sentence. Everybody can understand it, and believe it or reject it. But plain dealing is no longer the cue of the Churches. They are going in for round-the-corner business, like Hamlet's politician—"one who would circumvent God." Even the Presbyterians are adopting the compromise that "The Word of God is contained in the Bible." Aye, and so is the needle contained in the haystack; but 'tis a devil of a job to find it.

The Rev. W. Gelley has been replying to Mr. Foote's recent lecture at Blackburn. One half of his sermon was a wretched waste of words. Mr. Foote, holding a copy of Bacon's *Essays* in his hand, quoted from the essay on Superstition the passage that "Atheism leaves a man to sense," &c. The press reporter wrote *leads* for *leaves*—a very easy mistake. Yet upon this simple blunder Mr. Gelley based a half of his sermon! Surely a very little

common sense might have suggested that *leads* was a misprint for *leaves*; and that a public speaker who wished to misquote would hardly be so foolish as to misquote from such a popular volume as Bacon's *Essays*. Perhaps Mr. Gelley will be more considerate in future when he sees how the reporter has reproduced *his* extracts from Bacon, the opening sentence of the essay on Atheism being printed in a fashion that would make every hair on Bacon's head stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

Mr. Gelley is deceived if he fancies (not having heard the lecture) that Mr. Foote quoted from Bacon as a favorer of Atheism. The Rev. J. O. Davies had asserted that Atheism tended to immorality, and Mr. Foote simply quoted a famous passage from Bacon, among other writers, to show that Atheism left a man to sense, philosophy, and other influences, all of which are guides to moral conduct "though religion were not." Bacon's opinion as to the philosophy of Atheism is quite another matter.

The proposition to have Sunday concerts in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, was, of course, opposed by the Rev. G. S. Barrett on behalf of his brother sky-pilots, who desire the monopoly of business on the people's leisure day. Of course Mr. Barrett's chief dread is lest such sacred concerts be held during the hours of divine service and thus prove a rival show to his own.

Still more blasphemy. Here is a firm of distillers advertising their whiskey as "the purest spirit known." This dangerously approaches the confines of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness neither in this world nor in the world to come.

It has been calculated that, from first to last, not fewer than 9,000,000 persons have been burned for witchcraft under the Christian régime. For these cruel murders, perpetrated with the accompaniment of torture for the most part on poor old women, God's holy word, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," must be held largely responsible.

Probendary Anderson says there is nothing like Christianity to afford happiness. Absolutely nothing. What can make a Christian so happy as the thought of a jealous God who damns the great mass of his creatures to everlasting torment, and was only appeased by the blood of his own innocent son? When a Christian thinks of his friends and relations roasting in eternal fire, how can he be other than happy?

The *Banner of Faith* is one of those journals which, put into other covers, circulates as the parish magazine for many different places. The kind of hog's-wash with which the parishioners are supplied may be guessed from the following *argument* directed against marriage by the registrar: "If you'd call yourself married without a clergyman to marry you, and do it all in that godless way, you might do anything." The sentiment is, appropriately enough, put in the mouth of an old woman.

According to the *New York World* Mr. Pentecost says "If the priests are to be believed the devil has been more active than Jehovah, and more powerful too. He always gets there. Jehovah builds churches, and the devil not only occupies the pews but very often the pulpit."

The Rev. E. Sydney Savage, vicar of St. Marks, Barrow, is savage at dancing prevailing in his parish. He denounces it in a letter to a local paper quite unmindful of the dancing of Miriam or the pranks of David before the ark.

How to reach the masses is the problem continually put forward in our religious papers when they are not considering the question of money for foreign missions. We commend to their attention the utterance of a Natal paper which proposes to send over to England a few educated Kaffirs as missionaries and civilising agents among the poor heathen dwelling in Ratcliffe Highway, the Seven Dials, and other similar localities in our large towns. It confesses they would do little good unless they brought over also a cargo of mealies to feed the poor, starving English wretches. Thus provided, the writer considers the educated Kaffir would prove more successful than the missionaries we send abroad, and he says: "I am sure he would extend

the hand of pity to his poor, unfortunate white brother, who has not the same blessed advantages he himself is able to obtain."

William Nicholson was charged at Hull police court with disorderly conduct. William had got intoxicated upon the worst kind of spirit, the Holy Ghost. He raved and shouted "Glory Hallelujah, Jesus for ever," and when asked to desist he replied "I shall not go away. I'm sent by the Lord, and am the master of all policemen." William declared that by God's grace he would continue to do it all his life. In court he protested his readiness to die for God. William is seemingly of the fanatical stuff of which the Christian martyrs were made.

Another exhibition of the beauties of religion was afforded by two brothers named John and Thomas Price, living at Pistyll Farm, Llandrindod, Wales, who have become insane through religion, and, after frightening several people by attempts to convert them, have been committed to the asylum at Abergavenny.

"God moves in a mysterious way!" Floods and storms are showing his anger in the Western States of America. A cyclone on the coast of Japan has drifted away fishing-boats with a loss of two thousand lives, and wrecks and railway collisions are thrown in as other instances of the supreme benevolence of our heavenly father.

A sample missionary is the Rev. C. B. Cahusac, who having left a wife and three children in England, went to Chicago, where, under pretence of being engaged in missionary work among young girls, he succeeded in bringing several of them to ruin. He has been arrested, and has confessed his guilt.

Canon Westcott, who is probably the most learned writer in the Church of England, has published an edition of the Epistle to the Hebrews with Notes and Essays. Dr. Westcott says, "The Epistle cannot be the work of St. Paul, and still less the work of Clement. It may have been written by Barnabus, if the Epistle of Barnabus is apocryphal." So, for the superscription in the Bible "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," we are given a "may-be." Will Dr. Westcott propose the removal of this false heading in our English Bibles? Not a bit of it. Such facts, though the merest commonplaces to theologians, are carefully kept from the general public.

Who is the W. Rodger Smyth who writes on "Converted Atheists" in the *Inquirer*, that organ of "reverent free thought"? He professes to have in his pocket a list of twenty "leaders of Secularism" who have been converted to Christianity. *Leaders*, mind. Will Mr., Mrs., or Miss Smyth kindly produce them? We suspect not, for he or she has the indecency to refer to Price Hughes's story as "a piece of fiction" which is "much too ideal for the exceedingly realistic mind of the editor of the *Freethinker*." According to W. Rodger Smyth it is "idealism" to print a fiction as though it were a fact, and "realism" to ask for evidence. Even Unitarians seem unable to escape the great historic vice of Christianity, its absolute want of the sense of veracity.

A well-known Manchester Freethinker has received a cadging letter, stereotyped, from the Rev. Sutton Patterson, who hails from No. 1 The Sanctuary, Westminster Abbey, London. An attempt is being made to raise £12,000 to give a free education to clergymen's children, in connection with the St. John's Foundation School, and the cadging letters seem to be dispatched at random. The game must be very profitable to pay for so much powder and shot.

The Rev. A. Gwatkin, who is said to be a personal friend of the Archbi-hop of Canterbury, says that amid all the Primate's business he finds time to address letters to working men who have felt their faith tottering. We hope his Grace will devote a spare hour or so to answering Mr. Foote's recent letters. The columns of the *Freethinker* will be gladly placed at his disposal.

A firm of Roman Catholic publishers had the coolness to refuse to fulfil a contract with a customer who ordered a complete set of Victor Hugo's works. The ground of

refusal was that the works were "immoral," the reason for this extraordinary view being the fact that they are placed on the Romish *Index expurgatorius*. The customer sued the firm for damages for breach of contract, and the Supreme Court at Montreal will decide the case. Of course Catholicism is a great power in Canada as well as in the United States, but the Court can hardly be so slavish to Rome as to decide that every little bigot has a right to bark and bite at the readers of the greatest French genius of the nineteenth century.

The Rev. W. H. Farnell, of Wellington, says he once heard the editor of the *Freethinker* deny that a whale could swallow a man. Mr. Farnell admits the impossibility, but urges that the Greek word translated "whale" means a sea monster of an unknown description. Perhaps it was a shark, says Mr. Farnell. But this is jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. No doubt a shark could dispose of Jonah, but imagine the poor prophet's condition after running the gauntlet of the shark's rows of frightful teeth! On the whole he would do better with the whale.

Christian apologists are always ready to boast how their faith has elevated woman, although if allowing her legal justice is any part of the "elevation" it is clear that Christianity has done nothing of the kind. It might do some of these apologists good to read the extract in the *Pall Mall* of Tuesday from the diary of Nawab Mehdi Hassan, the Chief Justice of Hyderabad. This gentleman thought the Mohammedan marriage law fairer to women than the law of England, and gave many excellent reasons for the opinion.

The Rev. Canon Robert Baynes was charged with being drunk and disorderly. He failed to put in an appearance, and has been summoned to show cause why his bail should not be estreated.

Blessed be ye poor. One number of the *Daily Telegraph* mentions the wills of the Rev. Folliot Baugh, formerly rector of Chelsford, Kent, who has left behind him £26,000, and of the Rev. John Fenwick, late of Thurnery Rectory, Norfolk, whose personal estate amounts to over £25,000. These men of God must have a tough job to pass through Peter's wicket gate if there is any truth in the utterance of their professed master.

ONE OF THE GOOD OLD SORT.

We sympathise with the Rev. Dr. Duncan of Islington. He is one of the good old sort, and we should be sorry to see the species extinguished, for a few of them, at least, should be preserved for the public amusement. The reverend gentleman has delivered a special discourse on "infidelity," of which he has a remarkably profound knowledge. He referred in withering language to the "fees" of Secular lecturers. What an excellent joke! Mr. Duncan is welcome to all Mr. Foote's lecturing "fees" for 1890 in exchange for his annual salary. This is a fair offer, made in downright earnest, and we await the reverend gentleman's answer.

Mr. Duncan found four causes of infidelity—"conceit, ignorance, uncleanness, and folly." Well, we neither know nor want to know anything about Mr. Duncan's "cleanness," but we are bound to say that if conceit, ignorance and folly are the causes of infidelity, Mr. Duncan should be the biggest infidel in England.

"Infidelity," said Mr. Duncan, "has done nothing for literature. If all the books written and published by infidels were burned we should not miss them." Of course not, dear Duncan: *you* would not miss them. But other people would. There is a very small number of readers who would regard Duncan's Sermons as a fair exchange for the works of Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh, and Ingersoll, to say nothing of Shelley, Byron, Swinburne, Mill, Clifford, Darwin, and Huxley. And now, dear Duncan, let us pray!

THE Rev. H. G. Watt, of Dundee, finds no fault with football, except that it keeps young men who play Saturday matches from coming to the kirk on Sunday mornings. He would even prefer to see matches held on Sunday afternoons, so long as he was sure the players had first had their weekly dose of sermonising. But what would godly Scotland say to this?

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 9, Secular Hall, 61 New Church Road, Cambridge Road, S.E., at 7.30, "Why I am an Atheist."
 Thursday, March 13, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 8, "Freethought and Christ." Free admission. Discussion.
 March 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.

S. P. GODFREY.—*Letters to the Clergy* forwarded. All orders should be sent to Mr. Forder as above.

F. MORRIS (Cardiff).—Bill to hand. You shall be advised as to Mr. Foote's train.

ON THE WAR PATH.—(1) An Agnostic who has a God is an anomaly. Such a person is a Theist, and should call himself so. However, as you approve our assault on Christianity there is that point of agreement between us and you had better leave the rest alone, for our convictions are the result of much thought and research, and are not likely to be affected by occasional correspondence. (2) Your proposal as to a shop for the sale of Freethought literature in the centre of every large town would be a boon if it could be carried out. Certainly a town like Birmingham ought to boast some news-agent willing to display the *Freethinker*.

J. MILLER.—The subject is far too large to be discussed in a paragraph, and we are unable at present to give it the space it would require.

E. S. JONES.—(1) Mr. Wise seems to be developing his faculty for misrepresentation, and if the Liverpool Freethinkers mean to correct him in every case they will have enough to do. Mr. Foote's debate with the Rev. A. J. Harrison took place at Newcastle more than thirteen years ago. Mr. Harrison made no arrangements for a report. Mr. Foote did. But the reporter, who obtained £2 on account, turned out to be a drunken scoundrel, and never supplied a line of copy. The facts were stated in the *Secularist* at the time. You must pardon us if we give no further attention to Mr. Wise or his statements. (2) Thomas Cooper's opinions we only know from his writings, and they are accessible to those who wish to consult them.

W. BUSSEY.—He is a brother (by blood) of the Mr. Bradlaugh. The name keeps him going. As Smith, Jones, Brown or Robinson he would be unheard of. Thanks for your good wishes.

J. CLARKE.—Sorry for the misprint in chronicling your success at Liverpool. We will remember your initial is J., not W., in future.

H. NICHOLSON.—We must not expect perfect fairness from the press. It is something to get a few lines inserted in reply to editorial calumnies. We hope the Ox Hill Branch will not be discouraged.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—It shall be seen what can be done in your direction.

F. SMALLMAN.—We value your congratulations.

A. B. WAKEFIELD hopes that Mr. Moss's advice will be followed. He has himself opened debates at local Young Men's Mutual Improvement Societies and administered doses of Freethought.

J. DONALD.—Hardly up to the mark.

GREY-HEADED ATHEIST.—Thanks for your offer to stand surety to your newsagent for twenty copies of the *Freethinker*. To obtain a weekly contents-sheet post free it is only necessary to send us the name and address.

C. BENTLEY.—Your letter is not a word too long. Many thanks for that chapter in the history of Secularism. We hope the Bethnal Green Branch will flourish. The London Federation will have to do a bold stroke in the East End.

W. H. TAYLOR.—Pleased to learn you joined as an active member of the N. S. S. on Sunday night. We wish all our readers, especially the younger ones, would join the real Salvation

Army. Send us your experiences in regard to leaving copies of the *Freethinker* in public conveyances.

J. DOWIE.—The Free-Lovers, as an American sect, were started by Christians in America. The most noted community was that founded at Oneida by Father Noyes, who, after diligently studying Paul's doctrines, came to the conclusion that they inculcated Free-Love. A full description of the sect was given in *Progress*, March, 1886, under the title "A Bible community."

C. THOMSON.—A full account of the Crusades is found in *Crimes of Christianity*.

M. STITT.—Glad to hear you are going to join the N. S. S. Thanks for papers. See "Acid Drops."

A. SCARONI.—Thanks for the Italian papers. We have glanced through Dr. Manzoni's papers, and they are rather interesting; but the Paris Exhibition is now a matter of history. Thanks also for your good wishes.

B. HARRIS.—You are mistaken in supposing that we have not studied "both sides." For the rest, we must agree to differ.

FIAT LUX.—Your letter is no reply whatever to Mr. Wheeler's articles. Your statement that Newton's *Principia* is jargon to the non-mathematical is a good specimen of false analogy.

ALEX. MCINNES, 204 Dumbarton Road, Glasgow, writes:—"I send you an account of my conversion from Atheism to Christianity 33 years ago. Will you have the honesty to make known my case to your readers?" Well, we have had the honesty to do so. We are also prepared to insert—as a prepaid advertisement—an announcement of the death of Queen Anne.

A. LOVETT.—Your congratulations are welcome. Glad to hear that, although you are more than half dead and blind, Freethought has given you a cheerfulness that you once thought it impossible to attain to. As you say, self-help is the only practical gospel. It is well that we should try to help each other, but such help is futile unless it helps us to help ourselves.

INCOG.—The incident was amusing. Mr. Foote will do his best as President.

H. BRYCESON.—(1) The 9,000,000 killed for witchcraft is Sprenger's calculation, and probably under the mark. (2) Yes, it would be a good thing to have some large posters for the Freethought lectures in London.

JOSEPH BROWN, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne, acknowledges the following subscriptions for the N. E. Secular Federation:—A. B., 5s.; Darlington Branch, 3s.; Mr. Wharrier, 10s.; J. Humble, 1s.; Mr. Collinson, 1s.; F. Humble, 1s.; T. Humble, 1s.; J. H., 1s.; Bedlington Branch, 4s. 6d.; Mr. Sanderson, 2s. 6d.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Echo—Truthseeker—Market Rasen Mail—Bulletin des Sommaires—Open Court—Liberty—Overland Ceylon Observer—Leeds Daily News—Freethought—Evening Standard—The Brooklyn World—Hull Daily News—Freidenker—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Menschentum—Consett Guardian—Eastern Evening News—Belfast Evening Star—Manchester Courier—Western Figaro—Blackburn Times—Fair Play—Echo—Western Figaro—Woman's Suffrage Journal—Inquirer—La Riforma—Il Dovere—Manchester Guardian—Liberty—Loughborough Herald—Crook Wesleyan Magazine—Sunday Chronicle—Retford Times—Twentieth Century—Bishop Auckland Methodist Messenger—Newcastle Chronicle—Shields' Gazette—South Wales Echo—Laughter—Marlow Parish Magazine—Banner of Faith—The Coming Man.

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.

PERSONAL.

EVER since my attack of influenza I have been more or less unwell; chiefly, I suspect, through not allowing myself an interval of rest. On Thursday night I took the chair for Mr. J. M. Robertson at the Hall of Science. I see now it was a foolish thing to do, but I was anxious about the success of this enterprise, and disinclined to break an engagement. I had a troublesome cough, but I contrived to minimise it to appearance by coughing during the outbursts of applause. On Friday I felt worse, and during the night I was the victim of severe bronchitis and inflammation of the lungs. On Saturday morning Mr. Wheeler did his best to find a substitute for me at Manchester, but his efforts were fruitless, and Mr. Forder had to telegraph to the secretary of the Manchester Branch that I was unable to fulfil my engagement. Seven years ago, also on the first Sunday in March, I was

unable to keep a lecturing engagement at Manchester because Judge North locked me up in Newgate. Since then I believe I have been able to keep all my Sunday engagements until now. I am very sorry I could not let the Manchester friends know earlier, but I quite meant to go—cough or no cough—until I found on Friday night that I could not move without being half suffocated.

I am writing this with pencil in bed on Monday afternoon. I am rapidly improving, but I must be very careful. For some time I fear I have been overworking myself. As soon as possible I must cast my work aside and spend a few days on the south coast. Meanwhile I find that editing a paper is like turning a wheel. You cannot miss a single revolution. So I am sitting up in bed, pencil in hand, scrawling away, "Copy, copy, copy" for the *Freethinker*.

P.S. (Tuesday evening).—My improvement continues, but on my doctor's advice I have postponed my visit to Chatham, which was fixed for Friday. There is little doubt but I shall be able to lecture, more or less efficiently, at Camberwell on Sunday evening.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. J. CLARKE, of London, took Mr. Foote's place at Manchester on Sunday at very short notice. He was at Oldham and came over on learning the state of affairs. He gave great satisfaction and was heartily applauded. All's well that ends well.

THE circulation of the *Freethinker* is steadily improving, though less rapidly than we could wish. Will those who are interested in its welfare do their level best to push it among their friends and acquaintances, or otherwise during the next few months?

AT the last Executive meeting of the N. S. S. Mr. Foote took the chair for the first time as President. Before the meeting broke up he submitted a scheme for augmenting the Society's revenues. It was unanimously approved, and Mr. Foote was authorised to draw up a circular on the subject.

MR. J. M. ROBERTSON'S lecture at the London Hall of Science on "Freethought and the Bible" was a great success. There was a capital audience, and the lecture was skilfully conceived and delivered with fluency and force. Mr. Robertson's opponent, representing the Christian Evidence Society, was the Rev. Mr. Tinning, who did not prove a good debater. The lecturer's replies were very satisfactory, and elicited great applause from the Freethinking portion of the audience.

MR. G. STANDRING is down for the third lecture of this free course, his subject being "The Church and the People." This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of its London readers before the lecture takes place, and we hope they will bring some of their orthodox friends to hear Mr. Standring. Next Thursday, March 13, Mr. Foote will wind up this course of Free Lectures with an address on "Freethought and Christ." He will be opposed by the Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society.

IMMEDIATE steps will be taken to carry on this Free Lecture movement, on week-nights, in other parts of London. Freethought will make no conquests by going to sleep. Our cry must be a double one, "Agitate, agitate, agitate! and Organise, organise, organise!"

De Dageraad devotes over a page to a review of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, which it highly praises and characterises as the most important Freethought work published during the past year.

The Secretary of the Oxley Branch of the N. S. S. has utilised his copy of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, by adducing it in evidence against a

writer in the *Consett Guardian*, who looks on Freethinkers as obnoxious people of no account.

SWEDISH PRISONER'S FUND:—F. A. Sutton, 1s.; Amicus, 2s. 6d.

THE *Truthseeker* (Feb. 22) gives portraits of Viktor E. Lennstrand and Captain Otto Thomson with a sketch of their labors for Freethought in Sweden.

WE urgently press upon our Derby readers the necessity of responding promptly to the appeal we made last week. Mr. H. McGuinness, who is only a working man, has taken the responsibility of the rent of the hall, which is £10 per annum, and the place will be useless for meetings without furniture. Up to the present only nine shares have been taken up in the Furnishing Company, and they are only 5s. each. Some persons might like to give a subscription instead of taking shares. Mr. McGuinness's address is 20 Newland Street, Derby.

PROFESSOR MAX MULLER, in the fourth of his second course of Gifford lectures, helped to smash another Christian idol. It is taught in the Churches that the Bible is the oldest book in the world. But not a scrap of it can be carried beyond the ninth century before Christ; while the Vedas, according to Max Muller, could not have been collected before B.C. 1,000 at the very latest, and a long time before that is necessary to account for their growth.

WE have received the monthly bulletin of the French Freethought Federation which was decided to be formed at the last International Congress. The annual subscription to the Federation is only four francs, and entitles the subscriber to the receipt of the Bulletin.

WHILE the New York Presbytery was discussing the proposed revision of the Confession of Faith, the Rev. D. G. Wylie said: "Mr. Ingersoll has been quoted in this debate. We are to give up the Confession, because we cannot answer his arguments against the doctrines of the Confession. Can we answer his arguments against the Bible and the character of God? If we cannot, shall we give up the Scriptures and God? The arguments of infidels cannot be answered on the grounds of pure reason."

A METHODIST at Hull having thanked God "for having raised up such men as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes," Mr. Billany sends a well-timed letter to the *Hull Daily News* exposing that person's inventive genius in his story of "The Converted Atheist Shoemaker," and his subterfuges for refusing to give his name.

WE are glad to give news from the Secularists of Australia. The Freethinkers of Sydney have now a fine edifice of their own, and Mr. Symes reports that the Melbourne Hall of Science is quite a success, and is becoming more and more a centre of influence and power in these colonies. The literature department also, including the *Liberator*, is flourishing as it never did before. Scarcely a day passes without the enrolment of new subscribers to the *Liberator*, mostly in the country districts; and the amount of literature now sent constantly out into the colonies is something astonishing—though not a tenth of what it should be.

MR. SYMES continues, "Still our work is just beginning. Hitherto we have had to do soldier work, sapper, and miner work; we have had to fight for the right to live. We must push ahead. There must be a Secular College for the training of young men and women to cope with the priests and parsons, especially to deal with their dupes. This is where our greatest conquests must be won. The priests and parsons are too wide-awake to subject themselves to the humiliation of a defeat by entering upon argument with us. They leave that to their hangers-on, who have no idea of the merits of the case, and who are too stupid to know how to attack us or to know when they are beaten. Our people must get at the dupes of superstition; not by way of attack; but in friendly conversation they must point out the absurdity of the Christian superstition."

MR. JOSEPH SYMES has been on a visit to Tasmania and

preaching the gospel of freethought in that island. At Launceston in the open air the Christians showed by rowdiness how little they relished an attack on their faith. His chairman was thrown down but not injured.

MR. SYMES gives his readers over a column of items from the *Freethinker* and says of our Christmas Number, "The illustrations are very telling. Why don't the hypocrites once more prosecute the paper as they did seven years ago? Have they learned a lesson? Did they burn their poor fingers?"

THE lively, philosophic, and we must add poetic "Nunquam," once more girds at the Sabbatarians in his "As You Like It" columns of the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*. A sacred concert was given in Manchester on a Sunday on behalf of the widow and children of a respected citizen, whereupon the secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society wrote that this was in contravention of the commandment of God and Act 21, George III. No wonder "Nunquam" was roused.

THE Belfast Secularists give their Society bold advertisement in the *Evening Star*. A Christian lady wrote to that paper objecting to its inserting such an advertisement, but the letter only produced a better advertisement in the shape of an editorial stating that the Belfast Secularists have always shown a love of fair play. They allow the opposition view to be presented at their meetings. Arguments should be met by arguments and not by boycotting.

IN a case of marriage with a deceased wife's sister one of the parties said they could find nothing in Scripture against it, whereupon Mr. Justice Stephen remarked, "The sooner people learn that religious belief has nothing to do with the law of marriage the better."

THE Affirmation Bill doesn't work quite smoothly. At Newcastle, a Mr. Sadler called as a juror desired to affirm as he was of no religious belief. When the form was read over he stopped short at the words "contrary to my religious belief," and Mr. Justice Day rather peremptorily dismissed him. If this is the treatment meted to sceptics the chances are they will be found more numerous than ever in the jury-box.

AN International Conference of Cremationists will be held at Berlin on 4, 5, and 6 of August. Many questions affecting the spread of the movement will be considered.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that may remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

OBITUARY.

We regret to announce the death of Baron Ferdinando Swift, president of the Workmen's Society of Venice, and one of the leading Italian Freethinkers, who died at Venice on Feb. 22. Baron Swift was some few years ago prosecuted for being president of an atheistical society, and he retained his sentiments till the last. He was distinguished both as a political economist, an individualist, and as a public and private benefactor.

We regret also to notice the death of Photius Fisk, a wealthy and benevolent American Freethinker, of Greek birth, who leaves a large fortune to the poor of Boston.

WHY I AM NOT AN AGNOSTIC.

AN Agnostic is one who is in doubt concerning the existence of a God. But, to be candid, I am compelled to say that I am no more in doubt concerning such a hypothesis than I am in doubt concerning devils, dragons, and other chimeras. An infinite good being is precisely as great an impossibility as an infinite bad being, a heaven as absolutely impossible as a hell.

I not only believe, but I know, there is no God—simply because I do not know there is one. Neither does anyone else know that there is one. No one ever has proved it, no one does now or ever can prove it. God himself, if there were one, has not proved and does not now prove it. There is absolutely no evidence, directly or indirectly; no logic, reason, sense, or analogy, to prove it.

If there were a God I should know it, because I have anxiously sought. But I have sought in vain. And if the Theist insists that I should not know God, then I, in turn, insist that, for like reasons, no one else has known or now knows God. And what I cannot know, what nobody else can know, and no one has ever known, is, of course, unknowable, and therefore we should not believe it.

Therefore my honest denial and fearless assertion, There is no God, is tantamount to absolute proof that there is no such being.

Upon those affirming devolves the proof. Should one say, There is a devil, it is not necessary that we should explore the world and sweep ethereal space with our telescopes in search of his satanic majesty. Oh, no; we simply say, No, there is no devil, and this denial is equivalent to proof that such a being does not exist. Those affirming must do the searching, produce the evidence, and submit it to the world, or their bald assertion falls to the ground as so much nonsense.

But the God-idea positively conflicts with all that we know, directly or indirectly. When closely analysed and considered in the light of modern science, it becomes a nursery tale, and the time is near at hand when millions of our best men and women will stand aghast at the thought that at one time they actually entertained the notion.

When we can prove that twice two are five; that two cannon-balls can occupy the same space at the same time; that two locomotives can pass on the same track; that a receptacle already full can be filled again; that a finite body can be everywhere at the same time; that nothing can produce everything; that miracles are the order of the day, then, and not till then, may it be reasonably affirmed that there is a God.

Like Colonel Ingersoll, I have subjected my belief to the full scope of freethought, the methods of science and closest reasoning. The freedom of thought and the right of expressing such thought, vouchsafed to us by the genius of our glorious republic, has led me on, even beyond Mr. Ingersoll's Agnosticism; beyond the conservative "perhaps," beyond the equivocating "I don't know;" beyond Spencer's "Unknowable;" beyond the compromising attitude of an unbeliever, to the more aggressive one of an outspoken Atheist and Materialist.

An absolutely authoritative and infallible gospel once questioned, once subjected to human tests and reason, once doubted in its minutest detail, there is no stopping place until the goal of Atheism and Materialism is reached.

Theology is miracle. Based upon miracle, it must always remain miracle, and, consequently, must be accepted without human understanding or reason. It is emphatically non-progressive, to-day precisely as and what it was two or four thousand years ago. It means to-day what it did then, and one word taken from or added to it destroys its authoritative character. It is either a gospel according to Moses and the prophets, and Peter, Luke, and John, or it is simply a human affair, a fraud, a gospel according to Tom, Dick, and Harry. Until new revelations "from on high" are given to the world, all attempts to evolve religion or to substitute a "new theology" will but tend to destroy the old.

But how many honest, *thinking* minds to-day remain true to the old theology and all it implies? None! It is to-day upheld only by the unthinking but honest masses, who resignedly accept it without thought or reason, and those conventional Christians who go for popularity and to please their good wives. All better and progressive minds within the Church are to-day free to confess their unbelief in many of the most important events and doctrines recorded in the Bible. The six days creation, the personality of God, the doctrine of the Fall of Man, the scheme of redemption, infant

and heathen damnation, a literal hell, etc., all are alike repudiated. Yet the plain language of the Bible on these things cannot be misunderstood. "And the morning and the evening were the first day," etc., proves beyond doubt that the writers of Genesis meant six literal days of twenty-four hours each, for the creation of the universe! "In the image of God created he them;" "God walking in the garden in the cool of the day;" "Moses spoke to God face to face"—all these expressions clearly indicate beyond cavil that the God of the Bible was supposed to be a person, "very like" a man. Of course "walking in the garden" clearly implies that he could not have been anywhere else in the universe or upon the face of the earth at that particular time. In fact he did not even occupy all the garden, or it would not have been necessary for him to walk or to search for Adam. So much to establish the very limited personality of a God to-day still believed by millions of Christians to be the creator and ruler of an unlimited universe!

Again, the doctrines of man's fall, of total depravity, of infant and heathen damnation to an eternal and literal hell are all recorded there as plain as the rule of three in mathematics. And all are essential to the survival of the Christian religion. If there is no hell there is no Christianity, the mission of Christ was a lamentable failure and his death worse than butchery. If man through Adam's sin is not damned, if man must not be "born again," if the heathen may be saved without Christ, would it not be infinitely preferable if all the human race died in infancy, or if all were born Hottentots and Laplanders and thus saved, than to have them live to see "the light of Christianity" and, perchance, for this reason be damned to eternal perdition? Would not Christ in such a case have been and still be the cause of millions being damned, instead of being the savior of the race?

Being one of the many who by methods of reason have discarded a blind faith in the ancient Bible, I can neither consistently embrace the inconsistencies of the so-called "new theology" as revealed according to Beecher, Swing, Barrows, and others, finding no foothold for such a belief, but discover a correct solution for all existing problems in nature, its law and order.

Theism and Spiritism imply miracle and impossibility. These theories divest everything tangible of all potencies to do anything, then invest some imaginary nothing with supernatural powers to do everything. But we know twice two is four and cannot possibly be five. So we know that the universe fills all space at the same time, therefore, all space being occupied by matter—solid, fluid, or aeriform—no other body, person, or thing can occupy the same space.

All objects of knowledge are natural. All we see on the earth, in the earth, over and under the earth, beyond in ethereal space, among suns, moons, planets, stars and systems; all the revelations of our strongest lenses reveal but natural things and causes, never a God.

All causes, powers, and agencies operating within the vast realms of nature are natural; if we can trace any effect to its cause or causes we shall always find a natural, never a supernatural cause.

The universe is eternal. It had no beginning, can never have an end. It is infinite—having no limit, centre, or circumference. Its existing now, absolutely proves that it has always existed—not, indeed, in its present form, but as an infinite aggregation of living, potent, elementary particles, combining (yes, fortuitously) in ever changing form. A beginning implies an eternity of time when it did not exist, when all was infinite vacuum—eternal nothingness. But if this at any one time had been the actual state of space, nothing would exist now, as from nothing nothing can come. Possessing no attributes or potencies, nothing would for ever remain nothing, and consequently the universe could not exist to-day.

A God postulated as existing before any imaginary "beginning," miraculously creating it from nothing, is still more absurd, as a God existing in infinite vacuity during an infinite period of time, before this imaginary beginning, who would or could not create the universe at least ten millions of years multiplied by this number *ad infinitum*, before the time it is said he created it, loses at once all attributes of an "omniscient" being and vanishes. Because if it was consistent with "divine wisdom" to omit the creative act during all these ages and cycles of beginningless time, he of course would never have consummated it, because if it was consistent with his wisdom to create it six thousand or six millions of years ago, then it must have been very foolish to

leave the creative act undone during the eternity preceding this time, and in this case, God again loses his divine attributes.

I insist that it is utterly irrationally with reason that an eternal God, who is supposed to be perfect, omniscient, and unchangeable, who existed in infinite dark vacuity voluntarily, and of choice, during all eternity, without relations or conditions surrounding him, could have suddenly conceived of a motive for the creative act never experienced or thought of before; and that after being content in absolute idleness and stagnation in his dark and cheerless abode during eternity, he should all at once so radically change in his manner and tastes as to create a universe, which would henceforth entirely change his relations, conditions, and mode of life, and to say the least, keep him pretty busy making human beings and other animals, listening to the countless prayers of the different denominations, counting hairs, permitting sparrows to fall, and at the same time whirling countless millions of planets through the immensity of space.

But, God or none, any beginning implies a miracle—a creation from nothing—which childish notion must be abandoned.

Again: God, if real, must be a person, a living organic being, otherwise he cannot be a God and all it implies. And surely the personal pronouns and appellations, "he," "his," "him," "our heavenly father" (still indulged in by Professor Swing), etc., would be anomalous if he is not a being or person of some kind. But here again we find it very difficult to retain a God. A personality implies limit, outline, form; necessitates animal organism, nervous system, digestive and respiratory organs, and circulating processes. "What does not breathe does not live." This postulate of science consigns God to oblivion unless he has lungs. Thought necessitates brain; sight, eyes; sound, ears; and speech, physical organs to produce it. All these processes are simply functions of living beings, in the absence of which they have no existence in nature.

Exterminate all animal organism from the face of the earth, and thought, wisdom, love, sight, etc., would vanish also. Science recognises no manifestation of wisdom, love, etc., in inorganic matter, in air, in ethereal space, between the earth and moon or sun, simply because it is occupied only by inorganic matter, and this never contains such attributes. Matter, moved by its own physical and chemical potencies, must first evolve into organic forms before any manifestations of intellect and consciousness become possible.

Therefore, if God is a thinking, living reality, he must be an organic, breathing being, or he cannot possibly be a God and all it implies.

But now the problem stares us in the face—and which the church must solve, or Atheism will soon take its place—how can an organic, limited, living God be a God and all it implies and at the same time occupy the relation of creator and ruler of an unlimited universe? How can the limited be related to the unlimited as a controlling power? It is all childish talk to talk about an "infinite God" when we know of only one infinite reality and that is the universe. It is likewise absurd to talk about a God being here and there and everywhere when the universe monopolises every point of space.

It is either all God and no universe, or it is all universe and no God.

Unless the church can intelligently solve the problem how a God with a brain can be infinite, or how a God without a brain can be a God, it will be but a few years before it will come to an ignoble end.

Therefore I am *not* an Agnostic. The God-idea—in spite of its hoary traditions and venerable associations—never having been duly established by logic, science, and reason, and being utterly unthinkable, and, when properly analysed, childish and absurd, I do not put my reasonable unbelief on a par with an unreasonable belief and say "I don't know," but insist that upon those affirming devolves the proof; and unless the idea can be logically demonstrated as consistent with truth and sense, my fearless and simple denial absolutely proves and establishes the fact, startling though it be to the unthinking millions, that there is no God!

And the world will be infinitely better without one.

Truthseeker (New York).

OTTO WETTSTEIN.

Outside man is no salvation.—Feuerbach,

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SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7
 Mr. F. Millar, "The Struggle for Existence."
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30,
 Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Remedies for Poverty"
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary
 premises), 3.15, a members' special meeting; important business.
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. G. W.
 Foote, "Why I am an Atheist."
 Clarendon Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville Road, N., at 7, Mr.
 J. M. Robertson, "Christianity versus Paganism."
 East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, E.,
 7.45, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death."
 Edmonton Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, a lecture,
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant,
 "Christianity and Woman."
 Hyde Park, near Marble Arch; 11.15, Mr. T. Thurlow, "An
 Hour with Renan's 'Life of Jesus.'"
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt,
 "Can Man by Searching Find God?" preceded by a recital from
 "Macbeth."
 New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11, Mr. S. Standring, "Who
 Wants to Go to Heaven?"
 Old Southgate—Opposite Cherry Tree, 7, Sam Standring,
 "God's Wicked Ways."
 West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, G. Cave-Hill,
 "Monism"; 7, Capt. C. Pfoundes, R.G.S., "Theosophy, its Follies
 and Failings"; 8.30, music and recitations.
 Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7,
 Mr. R. Forder, a lecture.
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, various speakers.
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead
 Road, 7.30, Mr. Toleman Garner, "The Dying Creed."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Major-General A.
 Phelps, "Vaccination at Work," with lime light views.
 Glasgow—Ramshorn Hall, 122 Ingram Street; at 6.30, Soiree.
 Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, 7, Mr. A. Hall will give
 a reading: Morality of Atheism.
 Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upperhead Row, 6.30,
 special important general meeting.
 Hull Branch—No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion
 Street, 6.30, Mr. G. Franks, "Are Foreign Missionaries Suc-
 cessful?"
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, at 11, Tontine
 Society; 3, discussion: "Purified Christianity: its effects on
 Humanity," Mr. Batricksen to open; 7, Mr. Harry Smith, secular
 sermon, "Unto the Greek's Foolishness."
 Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 8.30, an entertain-
 ment or social evening will be given.
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30,
 meeting of Sunday Music League; 7.30, important business meet-
 ing of members; on Wednesday, Mr. J. Sadler will open a debate
 on "Socialism."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, Mr. Edward
 Carpenter, 3, "Musical Vibrations" (with experiments); 7,
 "Foreign Competition." Tea at 5.
 South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King
 7, Mr. Waddington, "The Second Advent of Christ Critically
 Examined in the Light of Reason and Science."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E.—March 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 Road, Stratford, London, E.—
 March 9, Woolwich; 16 (morning), West Ham; 23, Woolwich;
 30, Westminster. May 4 (morning), Mile End Waste; 11, Clerken-
 well Green; 18 (afternoon), Regent's Park; 25 (morning), Hyde
 Park. June 1 (morning), Mile End Waste; 8 (morning), Clerken-
 well Green.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Notting-
 ham.—March 9, Nottingham. April 13, Nottingham.

E. STANLEY JONES, 53 Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool.—March 16,
 Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—
 March 9, Hyde Park. April 13 (evening), Plaistow; 27, Hyde Park.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—
 March 9, Liverpool. April 6, Liverpool.

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