

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE QUEEN AND THE BIBLE.

FOR a whole generation the religious press used the famous story of the Queen being asked by an African chief what was the secret of England's greatness, and replying, with the Bible in her hand, "This is the secret of England's greatness." The story was not only told and retold, but illustrated in the pictorial organs of piety. There stood the African chief, and there the Queen, grasping the blessed volume in her royal hand. But, alas, it was all a fable, one of those pious frauds in which the Christians have ever excelled, from the days of the Apostolic Fathers to the age of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Some time ago it was officially contradicted by the Queen's private secretary, and the poor old thing that bore such a burden of imposture went off to the knacker's yard for ever and aye.

Notwithstanding her seclusion, the Queen has seen a good deal of the world, for she has been brought into contact with all sorts of men, and taken part in all sorts of business. She knows very well, therefore, that the Bible is not the secret of England's greatness, but that it consists in our metal and mineral resources, our science, our geographical advantages as a commercial country, our naval enterprise, our migratory spirit derived from far-off ancestors, and the physical vigor born of a climate hard enough to eliminate weaklings yet temperate enough to admit of continuous industry. These are the influences that have made England strong, peopled such large tracts of the world with her stock, and given her an empire wider than that of Rome. Of course the Bible is kept as our great Protestant fetish, but when our secular welfare conflicts with its teachings they are quietly ignored, or else the hirelings of the Churches receive the hint to explain them away. A spasmodic protest may be made by a few honest conservatives, yet it attracts but little attention, and the reign of religious hypocrisy is practically undisturbed.

A recent case in point is furnished by the Victoria Divorce Bill, which allows the absolute separation of husband and wife for other reasons than adultery. Desertion by the husband, for instance, is rationally held to be a sufficient ground for freeing the wife. The colony resolved to have the Bill, and Lord Salisbury's government could not advise the Queen to exercise her veto. Yet she is Queen *dei gratia*—by the grace of God, as may be read on our coinage; she is Defender of the Faith; she is the head of the Church of England; she reigns over a nation whose laws declare the Bible to be the Word of God, and subject those who bring it into "disbelief and contempt" to imprisonment as blasphemers. Now it is perfectly clear that the Victoria Divorce Bill flies in the very face of the "inspired" teaching, and the *Guardian*—that sixpenny organ of sober orthodoxy—utters a justifiable complaint against its being allowed to pass into law. "Of the provisions of the Bill," the *Guardian* writes, "it is

enough to say that they allow divorce for causes which cannot by any conceivable ingenuity be brought under the principle definitely laid down by our Lord, even on the laxest interpretation of his words." It may, of course, be argued by astute clerics like the Bishop of Peterborough, that the Sermon on the Mount applies to public and not to private life; but, as the *Guardian* observes, "divorce is a matter of private life, closely affecting personal conduct." Curiously enough, also, as the *Guardian* farther remarks, "the law of marriage is almost the only subject on which our Lord has laid down a definite practical rule, and the Victoria Divorce Bill openly contradicts that rule." We agree with our pious contemporary that "the Christianity that leads to such a result as this is a very nominal affair."

What is the "definite practical rule" of divorce laid down by Jesus Christ? It is to be found in Matthew v., 31, 32.

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is divorced committeth adultery."

This rule is one-sided. It does not contemplate the wife's having any rights against the husband. Her adultery frees him, but his adultery does not free her. She is his, under all circumstances, as long as he chooses to keep her. But, one-sided as the rule is, it is perfectly clear. Fornication, which in married persons is adultery, is the only ground of divorce. This fact was insisted on in Mr. Gladstone's recent article in the *North American Review*. Yet the colony whose Attorney-General prosecuted Mr. Joseph Symes passes a Bill in the teeth of Christ's teaching, a Bill allowing other causes of divorce than the incarnate God permitted, thus showing the most practical contempt for the very Scripture which Mr. Symes impeaches. The Tory Government, led by that Christian nobleman, Lord Salisbury, accepts it without a protest. The Liberal opposition, led by that Christian statesman, Mr. Gladstone, utters not a word of complaint. And our Christian sovereign, Queen Victoria, gives her consent to the Bill becoming law in the most important colony of her empire.

Surely we may repeat the *Guardian's* observation that such a Christianity is "a very nominal affair." The present age abounds with unctuous cant about the Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount. That sermon, we are told, contains the moral charter of morality, the everlasting foundation of righteousness. Yet we see a Christian colony setting the moral charter aside, and shifting off the everlasting foundation, for its own social convenience; the Christian statesmen of the mother country conniving at the blasphemous defiance of God Almighty; and the royal Defender of the Faith letting it be flagrantly flouted under her very eyes. At the same time Free Thinkers are treated with contumely, and subjected to legal penalties, for openly disputing the divinity of teachings to which their persecutors and oppressors show a lip homage in

religious worship and a practical contempt in the business and pleasure of life. Could there be a grosser instance of hypocrisy? Is such a creed, and are such votaries, to be criticised gingerly? Can it be wrong, in such a case, to let the stern voice of truth take an accent of derision. When men are honest, and practise what they profess, even at their own cost, their very bigotry is in a measure respectable. But when they profess one thing and practise another, and at the same time uphold laws to gag the mouths of self-denying sceptics, they invite the sharpest rebuke, and have no right to protest if denunciation is mingled with disdain.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE, one of the shrewdest of Catholic controversialists, made the remark that "nothing accords so well with the religious as the military spirit." Both are essentially founded on arbitrary despotism. General Booth no less than General Ignatius Loyola has seen the advantage of combining soldierly discipline with fanatical zeal. Alike, both in their aims and in their organisation, there is this difference between the Jesuits and the Salvation Army, that the one is virtually a secret society, working in unobtrusive silence, while the other obtains its effects by show and noise. It is this which makes the former the more dangerous enemy, for, though the power of a secret society is usually over-rated, and never more so than in the case of the Jesuits, one is always less certain as to the issue of grappling a foe in the dark.

Protestants may be astounded at the statement that the aims of the Jesuits and of the Salvation Army are the same. But ostensibly, at any rate, this is so. Both seek to establish the kingdom of Christ, the reign of religion. Both regard Jesus as the great captain of their salvation and themselves as pre-eminently his followers, gladly enduring contumely and persecution for his sake. That they interpret the religion of Jesus differently does not alter this fact.

No one will ever understand the Jesuits who does not admit that not only are they Christians, but Christians of the most consistent and devoted type. Dedicated to the greater glory of God their object is to carry the name of Jesus over the world. Placing God before man and the interests of religion above everything else, they are consistent in deliberately subordinating all the interests of the world to making paramount the will of God. What Macaulay calls their "unscrupulous laxity and versatility in the choice of means" is warranted to them by the great object they have in view. It is just the thoroughness of their religion which has made their name a by-word of consecrated fraud in the vocabulary of every Christian nation.

Carlyle's Scotch Protestant prejudices prevented his seeing this. By identifying "Unsaunt Ignatius and his black militia" with cant and insincerity his powerful pen aided popular misjudgments. The Jesuit may be, usually is, deceitful, becoming like Paul "all things to all men," to save some, but he is in deadly earnest. What else could support him in his warfare with society or in his personal trials?

The process of becoming a Jesuit Father occupies at least seventeen years, during which he is under constant supervision. All this time his individual will is subordinated and his mind and spirit trained to the purposes of the Society of Jesus. As a novice he first endures thirty days solitude and perpetual silence. His mind is directed to thoughts of God and Eternal Life, and especially to the horrors of Judgment and Eternal Hell, pictures of which are placed in his cell. Not till he realises the horror of eternal misery and that he must be crucified to the world to

escape it, is he permitted to go on. He must then show his ability to bear the cross and perform menial offices for his superiors. A Jesuit novice must carry the slops as though it were a sacred chalice. He must put off the old man, Adam, and put on the new man, Christ. Father, mother, home, country, and kindred are renounced to follow Jesus—that is his superiors who are the chosen body-guard of the faith. "Not my will but thine" becomes his motto.

Implicit, unquestioning obedience to orders is the cement of the whole fabric of Jesuitism. In the *Constitutions* of the order it is written: "Let all be convinced, that those who live under obedience are bound to let themselves be set in motion and directed by Divine Providence through the medium of their Superiors, exactly as if they were dead bodies."

Father Anderledy, the Black Pope, has as much power as any commander-in-chief in time of war. Every member of the black militia is at his absolute disposal. To speak, as many writers do, of secret assassinations and other crimes being the work of over zealous Jesuits betrays insufficient knowledge. The corporate body must be held innocent or guilty for the action of the whole of its members. The entire purpose of the society is to make itself everything, and the individual nothing, but an instrument to carry out its objects.

The faculties given to the General of the Jesuits specifically extend to his employing any person in its service who is not a member of the order. It is this which has given rise to so much controversy about Crypto Jesuits, Jesuits of the short robe, etc. Jesuits may without much mental reservation deny that those are Jesuits who have not passed through the process and taken the vows of the order. But they cannot deny that others are affiliated to their ranks and working in their service who are not technically Jesuits. Men like Mr. W. S. Lilly and Mr. St. George Mivart are in this category. Judged by their writings I should guess they were working with the Jesuits; though I could no more determine their exact relations to that order than they could mine to the Sat Bhai.

J. M. WHEELER

(To be concluded.)

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IX.

ON "CHRIST AND HUMANITY."

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

[CONCLUDED.]

PRACTICALLY, my lord, you have no remedy for poverty. When you talk vaguely about co-operation and profit-sharing you are not speaking as an Archbishop. Such things have no conceivable relation to your Scriptures or your Church. All you recommend, as an Archbishop, is that the clergy shall take an intelligent interest in social questions; and, apparently, that laymen, whether employers or workmen, shall look up to them as divinely appointed guides. But the clergy have been the people's "guides" for ever so many centuries; indeed, for a long while, the people had *no other* guides; yet the result of their leading is the deplorable state of things which your Grace sees to be fraught with peril of social revolution.

Christ himself, your blessed Lord and Master, never dreamed of abolishing poverty. He looked upon it as a perennial institution—"The poor ye have always with you." Nay, if the words of the Sermon on the Mount are to be taken in their plain, honest sense, like the words of any other preacher, he looked upon poverty as a blessing. "Blessed be ye poor," he exclaimed, and "Woe unto you rich." I cannot conceive, therefore, why you wish to see poverty eliminated. It is making yourself wiser than

the Scripture, it is setting yourself up against the teaching of God. I must admit, however, that your practice—one sense—is more orthodox than your profession. You take and spend, or save for yourself, a princely income of £15,000 a year, and do your utmost to inflict poverty upon all who produce what you consume. I do not doubt, indeed, that you would cheerfully take a much larger salary, and still further qualify your “dearly beloved” paymasters, the people, to receive all the blessings that are promised in the next world to those who have been poor and miserable in this.

Your Grace devotes a whole chapter to the subject of Purity. You do not expend much eloquence on the vices of idleness and luxury, and it is natural that as an Archbishop, sprung from the privileged classes, you should declare that “Aristocratical institutions in themselves tend to the substantial preservation of ‘the Family’ as the ground of society.” Such a statement, however, is belied by history. Every social student is well aware that family life is most real, durable, and pure among the masses of the people who come into close contact with nature, and whose busy lives prevent the perversion of their instincts.

Speaking as the clerical head of the English Church, it is also natural that you should reprobate the Romish practice of Confession, which the High Church party is trying to re-introduce. Before the Revolution the Catholic Church “had absolute command of all education and of every official rank, and worked through the confessor’s access to every home.” And with what result?

“Memoirs of the time make one feel the influence of religion striking every vein of the body—and not the slightest *rapprochement* between it and morals. It was not *à la mode* then, to be a good father or a good husband, wrote a keen observer who had been through it all. Great men went from a mass to an orgy, and numbered great clergy among their intimates. A famous courtesan boarded in a convent, and astonished no one.”

The picture might have been painted in far darker colors, but it will suffice as it is. Your Grace thinks it a condemnation of Confession. But is it not a condemnation of Christianity? The *roués*, courtesans, and priestly and titled scoundrels of that age were intensely pious; and their conduct is one of the many proofs that the ages of faith are the ages of filth.

Society is far purer now than it was in the days of Christianity’s unquestioned ascendancy. The only cure for sensuality is thought, and this is a thinking age. Still, there are large classes of thoughtless persons, both among the rich and the poor, and you give us, in flying touches, a shocking picture of their depravity. You refer to the dreadful evil of prostitution, and although syphilis is too bold a word for an Archbishop, you speak of “a river of poison flowing into the blood of this nation.” But why does prostitution exist in Christendom after all the preaching, all the religious publications, and all the religious training of the young in Sunday schools? What is the use of a religion that cannot abolish the most flagrant social evils? Is there not something radically wrong in Christian methods of reform? I assert that there is, and history bears out my contention. Diseases cannot be treated successfully without a proper diagnosis, and your diagnosis is wrong. The causes of such evils as prostitution must be studied. They are more physical and economical than moral. No woman, except a phenomenal Messalina, would sell herself nightly to the first man willing to pay her price. Any girl may be led astray by her animalism, but she is driven into the brothel by the hypocrisy of Christian society and the difficulty of earning an honorable livelihood in an overcrowded labor market. You may preach till doomsday, but you will never diminish prostitution to any serious extent while its causes are in full operation; and all your rescue work is merely the

drawing out, for filtration, of a few bucketsful of water from a muddy stream.

Purity is a large subject, my lord, and there is an aspect of it that escapes your attention. It does not occur to you that the Church, by placing the Bible unreservedly in the hands of boys and girls, is the cause of more corruption than it will ever cure. There are portions of the Old Testament which the Jews would not allow their sons to read before the age of thirty; yet those very portions are thrust into the hands of Christian children as soon as they are able to read. Downright, brutal, gratuitous filth is forced upon them as the Word of God. What wonder, then, that the impurity of adults should be the constant theme of pulpit eloquence? There is an old adage which I read in your Scriptures—Physician heal thyself! And I tell you it is idle—nay, worse than idle; the veriest hypocrisy—to preach against impurity to men and women, while you force every successive generation of children to read, ay and to reverence, a volume which contains some of the most libidinous, and some of the most disgusting passages in the whole range of human literature.

There is another evil on which you touch—Drink. You admit that “Intemperance is in far greater rage and ravage” among us than it was among “those Gentiles” referred to by Saint Peter. Alluding to Africa, you say that “the earth’s long-sealed dark continent, stored with her grandest products, is being developed for the wealth of the world through the application of intoxication to its innumerable tribes by civilised traders and Christian merchants.” What a shameful confession! Drink-sodden populations at home, and the drink-curse carried abroad for the desolation of the heathen! Mohammedanism puts down Drink among its myriads of African converts, while the converts of your missionaries—according to the testimony of Joseph Thompson, the famous traveller—include all the drunkards and loose livers on the continent.

Christianity has had a grand opportunity, and has failed for the simple reason that it could not succeed. In the atmosphere of the church or the cloister it may flourish, but in the free air of life it withers away. Its only legitimate province is to prepare men’s hypothetical souls for a dubious future life. When it meddles with the affairs of this life it betrays its hopeless incapacity. Happily the world is turning to other agencies for relief and advancement. Science is taking the place of Faith, and Humanity the place of Christ.

G. W. FOOTE.

SOLD BUT NOT BOUGHT.

Chief Rabbi Adler had a humor of his own. He was pestered once by a miserable fellow who, finding his complaints unavailing, said he would go off and enrol himself as a “converted Jew.” The Rabbi bade him go, and be a better Christian than he had been a Jew. The man slunk away, but was soon surprised at being summoned again to the Rabbi’s presence. “For fear you should change your mind whilst walking, I have ordered a cab to take you to the office of the Society you want to join,” said he. The “convert” did not wait for the cab.

The small kid had been taught to pray for all the family, and she had a list of “God bless —” that was much longer than the usual prayer. It was “God bless papa, and God bless mamma, and God bless Uncle George,” and so on. She had got it all so perfectly that nobody paid much attention to the names she put in. The grown-up sister happened to come into the nursery while she was saying her prayer, and that seemed to recall the child to a mistake she had made. She stopped a moment and then said: “Please God I made a mistake. Don’t bless George Smith, ’cos Kittie went to the theatre to-night with Mr. Simpson, and I guess he’s her new beau.”

A conceited young parson once said: “This morning I preached to a congregation of donkeys!” “I thought so,” retorted a lady, “when you called them your beloved brethren!”

GREAT EVENTS.

[Extracts from the Diary of a Gentleman at Hamwell, dated April 1, 1901.]

It is all true! Baxter is a real prophet and Jesus Christ is just about to appear. All has happened just as predicted by Daniel, the Revelation of St. John and the Prophet Baxter. First the French and Germans went to war, then Boulanger, whose name bears the mark of the beast, united twenty-three kingdoms into a ten kingdomed confederacy as prophesied in Daniel and the *Christian Herald*. It was a rare good thing for the stockbrokers and speculators and newspapers. What a rush there was for the last editions containing full particulars of the battle of Armageddon. And then what excitement at the reported capture of Gog and Magog. When the front doors of heaven were opened the great red dragon appeared in the sky and with his tail drew down a third part of the stars, and the Scarlet Woman seated on the scarlet wild beast with seven heads and ten horns—every one declared they had seen nothing like it at Barnum's Show. When a new Napoleon arose and became king of Syria and made a seven years' covenant with the Jews, all Christians saw plainly that the end was coming. Bishops began to give more away in charity; thousands gave up work and took to preaching; special correspondents were sent to all parts of the world to watch for the appearance of Anti-Christ, and the midnight cry arose "Behold the Bridegroom cometh."

What a great day was that when 144,000 male virgins, "not defiled with women," were collected from all parts of the earth, and ascended bodily into heaven, darkening the air as they flew upward. People then expected that the graves would give up their dead, and large prices were demanded for skulls and other portions of skeletons. And then the monstrous locusts with men's faces, women's hair, and lion's teeth, which came up out of the bottomless pit, and defied all the traps that were set to catch them, spread consternation everywhere. Everyone gave up their customary avocations except the author of *Louis Napoleon the Destined Monarch of the World*. Earthquakes, voices, thunders, and lightnings in the skies abounded, and hail and fire mingled with blood, fell on the earth, and a third part of the trees and all green grass was burnt up between Oct. 2 and 20, 1896, as predicted in *The Great Crisis* of the Rev. M. Baxter. After that there was war in heaven, the downfall of Satan to the earth, the flight of Christians to the wilderness of Sinai, and one third of the sea turned into blood. This was followed by the advent of Demons, Lion-headed Horses, Famine, Pestilence, Martyrdom, and General Smash.

Hallelujah the Lord has come! At last, on this fateful day, April the 1st, 1901, watchful Christians have assembled from all parts, most of them provided with clean nightdresses, Jew's harps, and parachutes. Mr. Baxter, attired in a long white robe, was the first to ascend, in order to meet the Lord in the air. And the Lord did descend, with a shout. Poor Baxter heard it, and endeavored to get out of the way; but, alas! it was too late. The Lord came down all the way from heaven and fell on poor Baxter with such velocity that the crust of the earth gave way, and both fell through into the bottomless pit, where they were received by the Devil and his angels. We are now anxiously awaiting their reappearance.

LUCIANUS.

AUNTIE, did the angels carry Mrs. Jones up to Heaven?" "Why, Charlie, I think so. Mrs. Jones was a good woman." "She was an awfully fat woman. The angels must be strong." Passengers in the train from Woodlawn turned to look at the six-year-old boy who was bent on getting information. He was a manly little fellow, with a bright, pretty face that showed intelligence beyond his years. His young aunt seemed to be anxious to stop the flow of questions, but he was bound to know something more about angels then and there. "How do you know there are angels, auntie?" "Because we read about them. Wait until you can read and then you will know more about them." "But why—why don't we see the angels? Did you ever see an angel?" "Hush! don't talk so loud, Charlie. Of course we don't see them, but we see their pictures. Don't you remember the angels in the pretty book that Uncle John sent you?" "Yes, but—where do the angels get their pictures taken, auntie? Is there a gallery where they take pictures of angels—only just of angels?" "Perhaps so. I don't know." "Then why don't the angels put on more clothes when they have their pictures taken."

ACID DROPS.

Hugh Price Hughes is a good liar, but he is far from monopolising the virtue. The Christian imagination, like old Jahveh in the Book of Genesis, broods upon the chaos of ignorance and credulity, and hatches a cosmos of falsehood. There are as many species and specimens of Christian lies as there are of organisms on the face of the earth. One variety is associated with the name of Thomas Paine. Stories of this famous "infidel" are produced every year. It is really wonderful how the Christians keep it up. Now and then one fancies the limit of invention is reached, when up starts a fresh stock, and one is left wondering at the fertility of the Christian mind.

From Dr. Monroe's *Ironclad Age* we see that a Campbellite preacher at Dexter, in Missouri, has been retailing a new yarn about Thomas Paine. When the "infidel" was on his death-bed his daughter said to him, "My mother is a Christian and you are an infidel. Now which shall I follow during life?" And Paine answered, "Follow your mother." How pretty! The only defect in the story is this—Thomas Paine *had no children!*

Another new Paine story reaches us from Redditch, where it was retailed by the Rev. Earl Gray. It appears that Thomas Paine—God knows where and God knows when—was "once journeying to a distant city." Being a man of considerable means, he naturally went on foot. A waggon boy offered him a ride, and of course Paine accepted it. Of course, also, that youth had read the *Age of Reason*. The interest of the story requires it, and Christian invention is not to be balked by mere accuracy and common sense. Well, they began talking about religion, and Paine told the boy that the Bible was undoubtedly the Word of God. He reasoned against his own *Age of Reason* and "removed all sceptical impressions from the young man's mind."

Charles Lamb wanted to "feel his bumps" when a dreadful fool was boring the company. We should like to feel the Rev. Earl Gray's bumps. His head must be fearfully and wonderfully made, and we hope the skull, at least, will be secured for a phrenological museum. What the brain is like we can hardly imagine. Unless we had seen this Paine story in print we should have hesitated to believe that there was anything in the shape of a man silly enough to relate it, or any audience, even of Christians, silly enough to listen to it.

This Rev. Earl Gray described Paine as "dissolute," and for some mysterious reason, compared him to Judas Iscariot. He forgot to say what cause Paine ever betrayed. This reverend gentleman reminds us of the person who saw a striking resemblance between peacocks and comets. They both had tails. Similarly, Thomas Paine and Judas Iscariot were both human beings, and there the analogy ends.

It will be observed that when the Rev. Earl Gray wishes to damnify an infidel he compares him to Judas Iscariot. What does this show? Why that the Christians have a prize villain of their own with which they measure others.

We have no patience to follow the Rev. Earl Gray in his stupidities about the "last dying speech and confession" of eminent Freethinkers. The real facts are given in *Infidel Death-Beds*. If Mr. Gray is able to impugn the truth of that little volume we will give him the use of our columns.

It is no wonder that belief in witchcraft survives in places where the chief mental pabulum is drawn from the Book which says "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." At Penzance, two brothers named Jilbart have been bound over to keep the peace, they having threatened to carry out the Bible command on an old woman named Mrs. Clarke, who they believed had bewitched their horses.

An American Sunday paper says the preacher in denouncing Sunday papers is simply sticking up for his trade. Let people do as they please on Sunday and his occupation would be gone. It is simply a struggle for trade between the preacher and the Sunday paper.

Talmage says he has a friend in his family who prevents his reading any unfavorable comments upon himself. He says this accounts for his cheerfulness. We also suspect it accounts for his vanity. But what a task the friend must have and how curtailed must Talmage's reading be.

A big book entitled *Woman's Suffrage Wrong* has recently been put out by Mr. J. McGrigor Allan. One of its chief arguments is that the Bible is opposed to woman's suffrage. There is no doubt that this eccentric controversialist is correct here. Paul is as flatly opposed to woman's emancipation as the spirit of the age is opposed to Paul.

A lecture delivered on behalf of the Church Association at the Town Hall, Cardiff, by the Rev. C. H. Wainwright on the subject "Is the Church of England Protestant?" resulted in a free fight between the contending factions of High and Low Church. Both the lecturer and chairman were continually interrupted, and the noise was deafening. Policemen were called in but without avail. The religious spirit was roused, blows followed words, and a free fight ensued in which feet, fists and sticks played prominent parts. The hatred displayed by Christians towards each other is scarcely exceeded by that which they bear to the infidel.

Nine of the clergy attached to St. Swithin's, Leeds, have gone over to Rome. It was founded by the late E. B. Pusey, and a recent circular issued on its behalf says it has well fulfilled the object for which it was built.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes keeps on energetically touting in the *Methodist Times* for contributions for Methodist Sisterhoods, but takes no further notice of the challenges sent him as to the Atheist Shoemaker.

The *Birmingham Gazette* reports a rare old shindy in a Wesleyan chapel in the Black Country. The organist and the choirmaster had a misunderstanding, which led to a scuffle in the gallery and an exchange of blows. Prayers were disturbed; and the music went to the dogs, the choirmaster starting one tune and the organist playing another. At length the preacher was obliged to terminate the quarrel by pronouncing the Benediction. But the quarrel was not really terminated; it was only adjourned; for the partisans of the organist and the choirmaster breathed out slaughter against each other outside the gospel-shop. How these Christians love one another!

On the 21st of Feb. the Rev. Henry Duncan ascended to heaven from Ozark, Alabama, where he was then hanged for the murder of his wife.

Thousands of pilgrims are visiting the "miraculous" wells at Miklostolek in Hungary, but if they crowd like worshippers they fight like fanatics, and the military have had to be called out to quiet their dissensions.

A young man named Clark has gone wrong at Plaistow. For two years he has been a regular attendant at St. John's Free Church, and on Sunday evening the spirit of the Lord fell upon him and he prophesied. "The end of the world is at hand," he shrieked, "prepare to meet your God. Listen not to false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, but repent! To-morrow sees the end of all things. Prepare, prepare, prepare!" And they *did* prepare. Six men collared him and chucked him out, but it took them all their time, for the spirit of the Lord wrought powerfully within him.

George Lambert cut Grace Lloyd's throat at Lurg, near Greta, Victoria. He cut his own throat with the same razor. According to an entry in his diary, God told him to do it, and the murderer and his victim were going to heaven together. Religion has a curious effect on some minds.

A boy named West drowned himself in a pond at Great Malvern. On the bank was found a piece of paper, containing the following in his handwriting:—"Oh, Lord, give me a new heart, and the Holy Spirit. Pardon all my sins for Christ's sake, amen!" Talmage please note.

George Edward Conyers shot himself on Newcastle

Town Moor. He hoped "God would pardon the rash act." Another for Talmage. It is really getting monotonous.

The new Tithe Bill of the Government seeks to release the Church from scandal by abolishing distress for tithes, and making the action for recovery against the landlord. So far there is little objection, but in also seeking to redeem tithes and making over the redemption to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners it is helping permanently to divert money which though now devoted to religion may some day be required for other objects.

Nothing is more certain than that tithes were originally in part devoted to the maintenance of the poor. To use them again for this purpose, or for promoting free education and recreation, would not only be legitimate but just.

Judging from some advertisements in the *Catholic Times* the confidence trick flourishes in religious circles like a green bay tree. One priest advertises for cash for a poor Mission dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. He will say Mass every Sunday for benefactors, and send on some water from the Lourdes grotto—very likely obtained from the domestic tap. Another, who rejoices in the suggestive name of Fazakerley, advertises a long list of prayers to be sold for twelve pence. You begin any week, renew yearly, and are sure of the holy man's prayers as an offset to your peccadilloes. So universal is the holy man's charity that he will enrol the living or the dead on his prayer list, the only stipulation being that if he prays for a dead man the all-important shilling shall be paid by a living one.

The Rev. R. R. Dolling, late missionary of St. Agatha's Landport, appears to be, *mirabile dictu*, a honest man. He permitted Mr. Headlam and others to give Sunday afternoon lectures on Christian Socialism in his church, whereupon his spiritual chief, the bishop of Winchester, drops on him and Mr. Headlam like a thousand of bricks, and as head of the mission, threatened to sever his connection if Mr. Dolling continued missionary, whereupon Mr. Dolling sent in his resignation, to the great grief, it is said, of his congregation.

Much nonsense has been talked about there being room in the church for all parties. The treatment of Mr. Dolling, who, according to his own account, has been driven from place to place, and of Mr. Headlam, who is prohibited from preaching in London, is a sufficient comment on the liberality of the Church.

The Rev. Mr. Mayrick, vicar of Landegfan-cum-Beaumaris, having failed to conduct public worship in his church for some time and having refused to allow the curate appointed by the Bishop of Bangor to do so, has been suspended for two years and has to pay the cost of the proceedings.

The writer of "Powder and Shot" in *The Weekly Times and Echo* wants to know if the prophet Jeremiah took his tot of absinthe daily. The question is suggested by the passage "He hath made me drunken with wormwood" (Lam. iii., 15). The "he" is usually taken to mean Jehovah. As the same lugubrious prophet says, in language more forcible than polite, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue and fall and rise no more" (Jer. xxv., 27). We can hardly think that the liquors of Palestine were so innocuous as they are sometimes represented by our Christian Temperance friends.

More thorough humbug than this gospel temperance business can scarcely be found unless it is with those who find vegetarianism in the Bible. The fact is the Church is forced by outside pressure to take up questions of secular interest, and hopes to regain lost ground by patronising "temperance" despite the example of its founder at Cana in Galilee.

The Rev. E. Bigoe Bagot, in introducing the claims of the Christian Evidence Society to the Manchester Ruridical Conference, spoke of "the restless and ubiquitous propaganda of Infidelity under the name of Secularism." The Rev. Bagoe Bigot accused his opponents of "fallacies,"

"misrepresentations," and "mendacious assertions." "Fibs and sophistry," "dirty work," and "blood poison of scepticism" were among the "choice derrangement of epitaphs" which he hurled at Secularists, to make good the claims of the C. E. S.

The Bishop of Rochester, preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, said that "Christianity distinctly declines to be proved first and practised afterwards. Its practice and its proof go hand in hand, and its real evidence with its power." This is a pompous variation on the old tune of "Open your mouth, and shut your eyes, and take what the parson gives you."

Dr. Thorold also said that for such questions as that relating to the origin of evil "science properly so-called has nothing but unspeakable disdain and religion a solemn indignation." But of course "science properly so-called" and "religion" are the same thing in the mouth of a Bishop. Real science sees no difficulty in the origin of evil. "There's nothing good or ill, but thinking makes it so." The difficulty about toothache, for instance, doesn't come in until you say it is an ingenious device of Almighty Goodness. Then the joke is enough to shake an elephant.

The Bishop of Ripon, preaching at Bradford, admitted that modern criticism had played havoc with old ideas about the Bible. Things that were thought to have been written by Moses and Isaiah were really written by other persons. But what did it matter? Whoever wrote them, there they were. The grand old Book stood firm all the same. In other words the Christian will stick to his fetish, and priests will still earn a good living by looking after the joss-house.

"One who knows" writes in the *Daily News* that "we have more genuine cases of boycotting in Herts than in all Ireland," and he gives cases illustrating the pressure and injustice brought to bear on chapel goers by the church party.

It was elicited by a question in the House of Commons that children attending the Fisherton National School, Salisbury, had received religious instruction contrary to the express wish of their parents, and it was stated that others who had been exempted have been, in winter, shut up in a porch between the inner and outer doors in darkness and cold and without instruction. Salisbury is a most pious city, where School Boards are detested. This treatment of the rights of nonconformists indicates what the Church party would do if it only dared.

Who is the Philip Childs, cabinet maker, of Islington, whose name appears in the papers as the prosecutor of a poor old man for embezzlement? The jury acquitted the prisoner, and on the whole rightly, for, although the old man seems to have helped himself, he had apparently been badly used by his employer who was actually in his debt to the tune of £6. According to the evidence the prosecutor was a Freethinker and the prisoner a Christian. If this be true we are sorry for it. Meanness and unkindness are always hateful, and we detest them all the more when they are displayed by those who profess to share our convictions.

The superintendent of the Christian Lad's Society at Finsbury Park, is accused of indecent conduct with one of the Christian lads, and has been remanded.

The Pope is said to be preparing yet another Encyclical letter on the subject of Socialism. Poor Pecci! The world's course will hardly be altered by letter writing.

The Rev. C. Friskin, a Presbyterian minister at Spenny-moor, recently died in his pulpit. The event was natural enough, for the reverend gentleman's heart was affected. But what a lot of trashy sermons would be preached on the event if a Freethought lecturer fell dead upon the platform in the midst of an "infidel" discourse. Heart disease or no heart disease, such a death would be treated as "a judgment."

The Vicar of All Soul's, Brighton, got chronicled in the papers what he calls a remarkable answer to prayer. For

some time past the schools connected with the Church had been in financial difficulty. On Friday public prayers were offered for help, and Saturday's post brought the rev. gentleman a cheque of £50 from an unknown friend. Wonderful. Almost as wonderful and astounding as Muller's Orphanage supported entirely by prayer and advertising. If the vicar wishes to test the value of prayer he should not express his wants publicly but obey the precept of Jesus, retire to his closet and pray in secret, and then see if his father, who sees in secret, will reward him openly.

The Presbyterians of America are much exercised upon a revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which has been proposed by the Presbyteries of New York and Chicago, and the question is being put to the vote, as though the decrees of an immutable deity could be affected by the opinions of Presbyteries. The parsons take care that hell is always as hot as the people will stand it, and it is only because they show signs they will not stand it that the sky-pilots now hint that the temperature has been reduced.

By a vote of 22 to 18 the Presbytery of Cincinnati have declared that "infants dying in infancy are saved." What a narrow escape for the poor babes! Three more votes would have damned them forever.

The Archbishop of Paris has issued a blast, against Cremation, which he describes as an outrage on Catholic doctrine, tradition, and sentiment. It is, he declares, one of the devices of the atheistic Municipal Council of Paris to destroy religion. Poor Archbishop! We half pity him. The time was when his Church could murder Freethinkers. Now it can only scream at them.

M. Renan takes a peculiar view of Cremation. Like Voltaire, he says that anyone can have his body when he has done with it, and he does not care whether he is burnt, buried, or dissected. But he thinks the survivors have an interest in the matter. Burying the dead is sad enough, but burning them is still sadder. We fail to see why, however. It is custom that counts most in these things.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the author of *Robert Elsmere*, is trying to set up an imitation of Toynbee Hall on the lines of the experiment suggested in her novel. The circular of the "University Hall" scheme is a very lengthy document, but the *Pall Mall Gazette* thought it good copy, and printed it in full on Monday evening. University Hall is to be "a fresh rallying point for all those to whom Christianity, whether by inheritance or process of thought, has become a system of practical conduct, based on faith in God, and on the inspiring memory of a great teacher, rather than a system of dogmas based on a unique revelation." Like other schemes, it will require cash. £700 a year will be needed for three years, and we have no doubt it will be raised. But we have also no doubt that the scheme will finally fail. There is no logicity in the principle it embodies. Christianity without doctrine, the worship of Christ without a belief in his deity, a special veneration and study of the Bible without regarding it as inspired; such things are sentimental compromises, doomed to extinction in the mighty struggle of opposites like Catholicism and Freethought, each of which has a vital idea that acts upon every study and every department of practice.

"Nunquam," of the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*, replies as follows to a correspondent who complains of his hostility to the Church, and says that a Christian, who has a heaven in prospect, is better off than the unbeliever:—"But I don't object to the Christian consoling himself with the hope of a heaven to come. What I object to is the bishop drawing ten thousand a year for telling me that I shall be damned if I don't agree with him."

An African clergyman, in preaching from the text: "And multitudes came unto Him, and He healed them of divers diseases," said: "This is a terrible text, my dying congregation. Disease is in the world. The small-pox slays its hundreds, the cholera its thousands, and yellow fever its tens of thousands, but in the language of our text, if you take the divers, you are gone. These earthly doctors can cure small-pox, cholera, and yellow fever, if they get there in time, but nobody but the good Lord can cure the divers."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 16, Public Hall, Queen Street Arcade, Cardiff: at 11, "After Death—What?"; at 3, "The Gospel of Secularism"; at 6.30, "Heaven and Hell."
Friday, March 21, Gladstone Hall, Military Road, Chatham, at 8, "What has Christianity Done?"

March 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.
R. FENN.—We cannot insert business notices in this column.
J. M. HYSLOP.—We will devote an article to Archdeacon Farrar's seven silly questions.
FREETHINKING POLICE OFFICER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
MISS MCINNES, Goodram Gate, York, supplies the *Freethinker* and other secular publications.
A. R. WILSON.—We respect your right to differ on some points. Very likely the Siamese twins differed about some things.
W. GODWIN.—For the circumstances of Darwin's death see *Infidel Death-Beds*, under his name, and *Darwin on God*, pp. 21, 22. There are no material advantages attached to membership of the N. S. S. except the possibility of assistance in distress.
R. D. WILLIAMS.—Mr. Foote appreciates the flattering resolution of the Swindon Branch, and hopes to merit its "steadfast support."
K. A. G.—Joseph Cook is not a biologist, except in the amateur sense of the word. Huxley is not likely to waste his time in discussing biological problems with anyone but a specialist.
QUIZ.—The explanation is absurd. There is not the slightest evidence of the existence of any Christians at Damascus before the Ascension. Besides, Paul says that Jesus was seen of 500 of the brethren at once. How could this be if 120 were at Jerusalem and 380 at Damascus? And why so many at Damascus (a foreign city) and so few in Jerusalem?
W. GUISE (Redditch) writes: "For a long time I was the only one in the town who regularly took in your admirable paper, but with some little trouble I have increased its local circulation to nearly twenty copies." Other dear readers, as the Christian editor would say, might go and do likewise.
L. BROWN.—Mr. Foote would have brought the matter before the N. S. S. Executive, but Mr. Bradlaugh is averse to the idea of a testimonial or a banquet.
C. K. LAPORTE.—We never heard of Philip Childs before. He is not a member of the N. S. S.
C. TOMLINSON.—Improvements can only be made gradually, if they are to last. Besides, general advice is of little use; it is necessary to suggest something definite and practicable. Mr. Foote will gladly listen to anything of that kind. Meanwhile, if you take an active interest in the work of some Branch, you will see in what direction it is possible to move.
J. O'DONOVAN.—Received. Shall appear in our next.
J. H. S.—No worker in the cause "intrudes" in writing to us. We are always glad to hear from such. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. It is pleasant to learn that some of your Christian friends find the *Freethinker* "interesting" though it does not reflect their ideas.
G. WISE.—We give publicity to your statement that you have made no such reference to Mr. Foote's debate with the Rev. A. J. Harrison. Our correspondent said he heard you refer to the debate in a manner which justified his writing.
T. BOX.—Mr. Forder has been desired to attend to your complaint. Thanks for the cutting.
H. COURTNEY says he went to hear George Chainey at the Zepher Hall on "Revelation Revealed," and left in disgust because the lecturer had "conscientious objections to discussion." The chairman described him (Chainey) as "lately the Bradlaugh of America." Gods and fishes, what a Bradlaugh! Enough about poor George.

J. W. WITTERING.—Thanks for your congratulations. We should feel a good deal more thankful if the Grimsby Branch could be more active in propaganda. Is it not possible to make an effort?
J. D. LEGGET.—Cuttings are always welcome.
G. J. WARREN.—Mr. Foote is very uncertain about any open-air lecturing this year.
J. W.—We don't understand the extract. Could you send us the magazine?
A. GUEST.—Mount Olivet is about half a mile from Jerusalem, Bethany two miles. The supposition that the eastern declivity of the mount was called Bethany is only a plausible conjecture to avoid the difficulty of Luke saying he went "as far as Bethany." Why should there be even an apparent discrepancy in the word of God? As the Ascension is not mentioned by either of the apostles Matthew or John a slight discrepancy begets suspicion. Moreover it appears from Matthew xxviii., 16, that the last appearance of Jesus to his disciples and his charge to set on a mission to the Gentiles was given in Galilee.
F. SOUTHWELL, Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, will supply the *Freethinker* wholesale to newsagents.
HARRY ROSE—Apply to the Liberation Society, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet St., E.C. We have no special work on the Church and Education.
HARRY LONG.—"Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, New York, U. S. A." is sufficient.
LAURET.—There is no verbatim report of Mr. Foote's speech on his election as President, but a pretty full one appeared in the *Freethinker* for Feb. 23.
C. EMMET.—Received with thanks.
W. WAKEFIELD.—Pleased to have the good wishes of such a veteran. You are right in saying that something should be done at Leeds. The present state of the Branch is a perfect scandal. If the recently-formed Federation does not improve matters in Leeds, the Organisation Committee will have to take the business in hand.
K. K.—The Truthseeker Publishing Co., 28 Lafayette Place, New York.
R. D. WILLIAMS.—Mr. Foote is uncertain as to the train.
G. H. WILSON.—The N. S. S. does not insist on Atheism, but it opposes all theology. Perhaps you have perused an old copy of its Principles. They were revised two or three years ago. Mr. Forder, or the Branch secretary, will supply you with current copies.
FREETHINKER'S BENEVOLENT FUND.—D. Baker, £2.
"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—D. Baker, £2.
L. STANLEY.—Thanks for the cuttings.
J. BRUMAGE.—Glad to hear your health improves. Mr. Foote is getting better.
T. R. FOX.—The Sunderland Branch would have done well—in fact it *was* doing well—if it had not been driven from pillar to post. The bigots went to the proprietors of halls, and every place was closed to them. Still, we should like to see a fresh effort in the town, where there are many Freethinkers. Perhaps the N.E. Secular Federation will see what can be done.
G. RUTLAND.—The Christians must be thankful for small mercies to crow over such a case. The man is not a member of the N. S. S.
QUID NUNC.—Conscience is an ambiguous term. It sometimes means the perception of right and wrong, sometimes the shrinking from the wrong, and sometimes remorse for having committed it. But the subject is too big for a paragraph.
T. CLARK.—Contents sheet shall be sent. Thanks.
A. E. HOLDING.—Yes, the presidency means work, but someone must do it. The Wiggans' sheet seems to us beneath contempt. We can't make paragraphs out of sheer idiocy. There must be something to catch hold of.
FREETHOUGHT.—We do not know of any statistics as to the percentage of crime among the various religious sects in England.
J. HOUNSTONE.—The subscription to the N. S. S. is 4s. per year, payable quarterly or annually. To be enrolled you require to write your name and address at the foot of the Principles. Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, will supply you with the necessary form on application. Or you might join the Camberwell Branch any Sunday evening.
H. CALASCA.—Thanks for cuttings.
PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Echo—Truthseeker—Market Rasen Mail—Bulletin des Sommaires—Liberty—Ironclad Age—Menschentum—Freidenker—Freethinker's Magazine—Freethought—The Hindu—Life Lore—Knowledge—Star—Rochester and Chatham Standard—Western Mail—Ashford Express—East Anglian Daily Times—Birkenhead News—Yorkshire Daily Chronicle—Eastern Evening News—Evening Standard—Devon Evening Express—Portsmouth Evening News—Fair Play—Gravesend and Dartford Reporter—Bradford Observer—Swindon Advertiser—Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter—L'Eclair—La Lanterne—La Bataille—Mot d'Ordre—Le Rappel—Petit Parisien—Western Figaro.
FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish our attention directed.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had a splendid audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening. He was in improved though by no means in perfect health, and managed to get through his work to the obvious satisfaction of the meeting. But the effort told on him the next morning. Happily, however, it produced no serious evil, and with proper care Mr. Foote will no doubt be soon himself again.

AFTER Mr. Foote's lecture, and a moving appeal for the Swedish prisoner by the chairman, Mr. Angus Thomas, a collection was taken up on behalf of Viktor Lennstrand and his gallant colleagues. A fair sum has been subscribed to this Fund, but up to the present very little has been done by the Branches.

MR. FOOTE lectures at Cardiff to-day. His subjects will be found in another column. We draw attention in this place to his visit, as it may meet the eyes of readers in the district who might regret to lose the opportunity of hearing the lectures.

MR. STANDRING'S free lecture on the "Church and the People" at the Hall of Science was well attended, and the discussion with the Rev. F. W. Ford, who appeared on behalf of the Christian Evidence Society, was satisfactory from the Freethought point of view. On the 13th, Mr. Foote concludes this series with a lecture on "Freethought and Christ," being opposed by Mr. Engstrom. These free lectures have been a great success and arrangements are being made for courses to be given at Milton Hall, Camberwell, and elsewhere.

WE are glad to report that Mr. Forder, the Secretary of the National Secular Society, is somewhat improved in health. He has been seriously unwell, and some of his friends were alarmed; but the milder weather is in his favor, and we hope he will speedily recover. Meanwhile he would do well to refrain from entering into any fresh lecturing engagements; indeed, we are of opinion that, with his chronic weakness of the chest, he ought not to lecture at all in the winter.

BY the way, there was a queer mistake in Mr. Forder's official report of the last N. S. S. Executive meeting, and Mr. Foote has desired him to correct it immediately in the *National Reformer*. The seconder of the resolution on Mrs. Besant's letter was not Mr. Foote but Mr. Truelove. Presidents are not in the habit of seconding resolutions.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—D. Baker £1; Collected at Camberwell after Mr. Foote's lecture £1 7s 0d.

SWEDISH PRISONER'S FUND.—This fund will be closed on March 31. Friends having money to remit are requested to do so before that date. Twenty-five pounds have been forwarded to Sweden and the balance will be sent on April 1. I have to acknowledge the following sums:—R. Green, 5s.; W. Dexter, 1s.; W. Murton, 1s.; W. Putz, 1s.; J. Unsworth, 2s. 6d.; R. B. M., £1.—R. Forder, Secretary.

"WE have received from J. M. Wheeler, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., England, a copy of his *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, just out. It is a handsome cloth bound volume, costing about 1.50 dols., or 1.25 dols., for we never could readily reduce Brother Bull's pounds and shillings into good sound understandable money of the U.S. of A. The book fills a long-felt want, and every unbeliever wants it, and wants it bad and now. So write a letter to the above address and find out all about it."—*Ironclad Age*.

"J. M. WHEELER, associate editor of the London *Freethinker*, has done a good work in compiling and publishing a *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. The book will, as the author hopes, "do something to show how many of the world's worthiest men and women have been Freethinkers." With the exception that many Freethinkers who combined Spiritualism with Freethought are omitted, the book is as inclusive as could be desired. The price of the Dictionary in England is about \$2, but the United

States puts a tariff of 25 cents on each copy, presumably to encourage its republication in this country."—*Freethought*.

NEXT Sunday (March 23) the Battersea Branch will have a Tea and Soiree after the quarterly meeting. The tea will begin at 5.30, and it is hoped there will be a large muster.

A SPECIAL meeting of the Swindon Branch takes place to-day (March 16) at the Golden Lion, Bridge Street, at 7 o'clock. Members and friends are earnestly invited to attend.

A SPECIAL meeting of the Three Towns' Branch will be held this evening (March 16) at 7, at 100 Union Street, Plymouth. Very important business has to be transacted, and every member should attend.

THE Bethnal Green Branch is raising a little assistance for John Dell, a Freethinker eighty years of age, who is unable to earn anything. For fifty years he has been a helper of good causes, and now he needs a friendly hand. The secretary's address is Mr. J. Neate, 385 Bethnal Green Road, E. Donations will be thankfully received.

OUR veteran friend, Mr. Daniel Baker of Birmingham, has just celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday in an original manner which we should like to see become common. He sends us £5 to be divided amongst three Funds—the *Freethinker*, the Benevolent, and the Swedish Prisoner—in the proportions indicated elsewhere. Mr. Baker calls it a thank-offering. We presume he is grateful to Freethought for giving him a vivid interest in life at such an advanced age. May the snows fall gently on his honored head.

The Hindu, a large-sized journal published at Madras, prints a letter from its London correspondent on the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and his comments on the educational part of the missionary movement in India. Incidentally the "converted Atheist shoe-maker" is referred to. The writer says he knows a gentleman who is neither a Wesleyan nor a Secularist, and who, after reading Mr. Foote's pamphlet, said: "Mr. Foote has the best of it. Mr. Hughes is nowhere."

WE are pleased to notice signs of increased activity among the Freethinkers of Paris. M. Clemetshaw of *La Verité* sends us papers announcing various reunions, among which we notice discourses by citizen Schacre and Julien Vinson. Anti-clerical banquets for Good Friday are also being organised.

THE proposal to have Sunday concerts at Norwich has led to a wordy warfare in the columns of the papers, and people's eyes are being opened to see that the clerical opposition is just an attempt to prevent any rivalry to their own trade. At Swindon also the Sunday question is arousing attention, and letters from Freethinkers have been inserted in the local *Advertiser*.

SUNDAY football is being played in a field near "The Pig and Whistle," in the parish of High Laver. A correspondent of the *Essex County Chronicle* draws attention to this abominable outrage, and hopes it will be put a stop to. We fear it will take a very large quantity of hope to stop the ball from rolling. Another correspondent states that the clergyman of the parish church was hooted and groaned at for denouncing Sunday football in the name of the Lord. How dreadful! Poor old England is going to the dogs.

A SELECTION of the writings of Karl Heinzen, will be published at the *Freidenker* office, Milwaukee, under the title "German Radicalism in America."

A MISSIONARY states that in Japan only 7,000 children go to school where religious knowledge is part of the curriculum, but over 3,000,000 attend where the teaching is purely agnostic.

A JOURNAL for Freethinking women has been started in America by Matilda Joslyn Gage. It is entitled the *Liberal Thinker* and published by Josephine Cables Aldrich, Syracuse, New York.

THE *Freethinkers' Magazine* for March is to hand. In addition to its usual varied contents it gives a portrait of A. T. Lilly, who has recently died, and a view of an institution which he has founded at Northampton, Mass., for teaching science to women without superstition.

MRS. LUCY COLMAN'S Reminiscences, which have been coming out in the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, are to be published in book-form.

A NEW Freethinker's Union has been established at Breslau in Germany.

THE *Truthseeker* gives its readers a cartoon, "Marriage as a Sacrament." A man with a whip is chained by the neck, with a big padlock, to a woman he is ill-using. The priest stands by with a key labelled "whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S admirers will be glad to learn that a new novel from his pen may soon be expected.

THE Edmonton Liberal and Radical Club, which in 1886 refused the *Freethinker* admission to its reading-room, has by a full committee rescinded that resolution.

A PIOUS DODGE.

CHARLES HILL, of 13 Bedford Row, London, W.C., is the paid Secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. How many working men the Society boasts we are unable to say, but not a single one is to be found in the printed list of Vice-Presidents, who are all baronets, M.Ps., or esquires. Anyhow Mr. Hill has to earn his living, and to do this he must kick up a fuss. We are not aware that he has instituted any prosecution against the Gas Companies or other concerns that employ Sunday labor, although one would think it fell within the scope of his Society's action. But, on the other hand, Mr. Hill appears to be very anxious about Freethought meetings. Perhaps he deplores that working men should desecrate the Sabbath by walking to a Secular hall. May be he thinks it a violation of the "day of rest" to deliver a lecture or take part in a discussion, although preaching and praying fall into a different category. Whatever the reason, the fact is certain, that Mr. Hill is anxious about Freethought meetings. Still, he knows that Freethinkers are not easily frightened. Accordingly he tries a little judicious pressure on the proprietors of meeting-places. Here is a case in point.

The Woolwich Branch of the N. S. S. was started last summer after one of Mr. Foote's open-air lectures. Now it numbers nearly fifty members. Its Sunday evening meetings are held at the Assembly Rooms connected with the "Sussex Arms." A modest charge is made for admission to cover the expenses, the costliest seat being obtainable for threepence. The proceedings have been orderly, not even the timidest inhabitant has complained, and the Branch would, if left alone, go on quietly spreading its principles by the force of persuasion. But the soul of Mr. Hill is perturbed. He lives six miles or so away, but his piety (or his bigotry) is far-reaching, and he has addressed the following letter to the proprietor of the Assembly Rooms:—

Sir,—A copy of a bill has been sent to me announcing lectures at the Sussex Arms on Sundays to which a charge of 2d. for admission is made. Allow me to inform you that such Lectures are illegal under heavy penalties and that you incur risk of prosecution. The statute under which the charges are illegal is 21 George III. c. 49. Several companies have incurred heavy pecuniary losses under the statute, and you would be wise to consult a respectable solicitor on the subject. The Act is by no means dead.—I am, sir, your obedient servant, CHARLES HILL.

The Act in question certainly exists, but the rest of Mr. Hill's statements are imagination or dogmatism. It is impossible to say what view the judges would take if some common informer—say Mr. Hill—were to set the Act in motion. Anyhow, if Mr. Hill's

Sabbatarian soul is exercised about Sunday meetings, it is difficult to see why he should bestow his attentions upon Woolwich. There are Freethought meeting-places like the Hall of Science that are far more notorious. They have existed for years, and the old Act of George III. is defied in them every Sunday. Mr. Hill does not seem to mean business. His letter is probably an attempt to put an end to a series of Freethought meetings by frightening the proprietor of the building in which they are held.

Should Mr. Hill, however, really mean business, we shall have to do two things. *First*—waiving the question of what the Woolwich meetings have to do with Sunday labor—we shall have to ask some of the Vice-Presidents of Mr. Hill's Society whether they approve of this underhand way of trying to suppress Freethought. There is Mr. Arnold Morley, the Liberal whip; there is Mr. W. Abraham, the representative of the Welsh miners; there is Mr. Benjamin Picard, another labor member of Parliament. These gentlemen will have to be tackled upon the subject, and compelled to hold their Secretary in check, or else to take the responsibility of his bigotry. *Secondly*, the Secular party will have to take steps to defend its very right of existence. For the old Act of George III.—if not obsolete, as it has been called in the House of Commons—applies to every Sunday lecture-room in the country, where money is taken, either by charge or collection, and where any questions are debated.

Meanwhile we wait to see the result of Mr. Hill's bombastic letter. If it leads to anything serious, the agitation it will give rise to will involve a good many more things than the old Act of George III.

G. W. FOOTE.

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- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
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- (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.

HEATHEN JAPAN AND CHRISTIAN ENGLAND.

Mr. H. W. Hawkes, who is sojourning in Japan, has sent to our contemporary, *The Inquirer*, a remarkable description of his impressions of life as seen in the streets of the capital city of Tokyo, where the children everywhere look happy and well cared for, and are clean and mannerly, and "the frightful contrasts between rich and poor" which we are accustomed to, are "nowhere to be seen." Mr. Hawkes finds himself constantly asking "Where are the street-corner roughts, and where the droves of ragged boys and girls, wolfish of face, begging under pretence of selling matches and papers; and where "the bloodless, starved, cowed, disheartened wrecks of humanity which daily confront one in our large cities?" The absence of anything corresponding to our flaring gin palaces is also noteworthy. As to the drunkard reeling home to abuse his wife and curse his children, "Japan knows him not." Let us hope the jolly Japanese in their passion for absorbing occidental civilisation will not take to beer and Bible or gin and Gospel.

"What is the greatest miracle in the Bible?" Saphir asked a young lady at a party. Without giving her time to reply, a forward coxcomb answered: "That Elijah was not burned when he went to Heaven in a chariot of fire." "No," returned Saphir: "That Balaam's ass spoke before it was questioned."

GOD'S CURSE.

ONE cold winter evening, as I was comfortably seated before a blazing fire, trying to forget the discomfort outdoors, a knock came to my door. In a minute the jovial, burly form of my friend Doctor C— appeared in my sanctum, shaking the frozen snow off his overcoat like some big retriever dog. Having removed his wraps, and seated himself by the fireside, he, after some preliminary conversation, began telling me about a most distressing case he had just come from.

"You know," he began, "that most of my practice lies among the poorer part of the population of our city, so I was not surprised when, last evening, I received a call from a patient who was lying in the 'Traveller's Rest,' one of the lowest of our common lodging-houses in the Grassmarket. Speedily I made my way there, and, in one of the darkest corners of a most wretched room, I saw, stretched upon a shake-down, a man, or rather the mere semblance of one, who, I afterward learned, had held a high position in this, our Modern Athens.

"Are you the doctor?" he asked, in almost a whisper, as I approached his bedside.

"I replied in the affirmative, when, he continued, I did not want to send for you, knowing that I was past all medical aid, but the people of the house desired it—I suppose, to save them the trouble of a coroner's unwelcome visit. But since you are here I should like to tell you my tale—I will be dead ere morning—a curious tale, from which, since you are a doctor, you may draw a moral that may prove of some benefit to the people." Here a fit of coughing intervened, so violent that it seemed to rend his frame in twain.

"His disease was simply alcoholism—a frame weakened by excessive drinking and insufficient food to such an extent that recovery seemed impossible.

"Having recovered himself from his fit of coughing, he turned his large, dark eyes upon me and said, 'Doctor, do you believe in heredity?'

"As I had never given the subject much thought, I simply replied, 'Sometimes.'

"I do," returned he almost savagely, 'and that the vices of our parents more often descend to us than their virtues. Why, I cannot say, only that vice is a most infectious disease. At least, it was proved so in my case, for all that my father bequeathed me was an inordinate desire for liquor. Nor could that desire be satiated. I prayed and struggled and fought against the black demon without avail. My prayer was unheard, or if heard, the comedy was too good, too pleasing to that loving God to end so soon. Yet, I ought to have known that one might as well have cried to the purring wind as to have addressed his supplications to that almighty fiend. But I was a Christian then and thought God was the loving father the priests described him to be. How easily men are gulled!

"Then in my misery, I came to the conclusion that God could not exist, else he could not be so cruel as to punish me in such a manner for the fancied slight put upon his name by some of my ancestors. Why should I be punished for my father's sins? Is it only to satisfy an innate fiendishness in the almighty's nature? If so, he is the devil masquerading in the good God's robes. Can there be any love in the nature of a God who damns the better portion of his children to eternal torment only to enjoy their agony? O God of stone! I have worn my knees in prayer, I have pleaded, and rent the air with my cries for help, all in vain. He cared not nor answered.

"O beneficent father, divest thyself of thy sheep's clothing and appear to the world in thy true form. I have said enough. Speaking hurts me. But I detest that God who, though he could, would not save me.' He sank back on his pillow exhausted. I watched by him until early this morning, when, about three o'clock, he opened his eyes, which shone with an unwonted brilliancy. I saw at once by his appearance that it was merely a question of minutes.

"Good-bye, doctor," he said in a low whisper, and as I shook his hand a smile came over his face as he said, 'Don't—let—God—f-o-o-l—you.' He closed his eyes again, sighing wearily, as the shadow of the angel's wings passed over him and this poor half-maddened soul crept unto the great unknown."

Such was the doctor's tale. The tale of a life wrecked amidst the breakers of dissipation, of a madman, dying, yet breathing his defiance at the supposed author of his misery.

A. BUTON.

(From the New York "Truthseeker.")

THE PERSONALLY CONDUCTED TOUR OF THE ISRAELITES IN THE DESERT.

And thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.—DEUT. VIII.

THE following interesting account of the longest walking feat on record has come into our hands, through an indefatigable member of our staff, who is digging up the whole of Palestine in his thirst for genuine, front seat, 24-carat, hall marked, records.

"THE MOUNT SINAI EXPRESS."

SPECIAL EXTRA EDITION.

From our Special Correspondent.

The forty years having elapsed, your own correspondent was on the spot to faithfully report for the paper that has the largest circulation in the world. And your readers will no doubt be affected to tears when they read the state the Israelites were in at the end of their long wandering about the sterile plains led by Moses himself, although I never could make out why he kept them prancing around that desert so long, as I in my search for news have gone across it in about ten days. But to return to our Ba Baas. I placed myself in a situation of advantage and saw the first man issue from those regions, which must have had such terrible experiences to all that host of the Israelitish people. The sight caused many manly eyes to feel damp and many a manly nose to sniff, for big, brawny men, forty-one or forty-two years of age, who had gone into that desert as babes in open-worked frocks, appeared now in the same identical clothes, fitting skin tight, not having grown quite so quickly as the human being—great muscular limbs encased in fancy drawers coming only down to the knee with soiled lace round the bottom, the colossal brown legs seeming to be about to burst from their infantile bondage.

Other Israelitish warriors, with truculent looking faces, appeared with their shock heads encased in fantastic baby caps, fitting so tightly that the wearers seemed unable to shut their eyes; others, from habit I suppose, still wore their tooth-persuaders or rubber dental pads hanging at their nose too slender waists. Great feet appeared in tender delicate wollen bootekins tied in front with neat pink bows making all us spectators think of the time when these burly warriors were thrown in the air by their fond mothers to the jubilant cry of "Ketcher Ketcher."

The babes of only a few weeks old had utilised their progenitors feeding bottles, but seemed liberal with their lacteal nourishment; ever and anon offering their swash-buckling parents a pull at the rubber nipple, thinking no doubt by the similarity of their dress that their proclivities tended that way.

The most heartrending sights were of those who had gone into that desert as boys in skeleton suits. The trousers buttoning over the jacket, and Jehovah having been remiss in not making the clothes grow with the same celerity as the human being. The consequence was the poor fellows looked like bloated aristocrats or human pincushions stuffed to repletion. It seemed an accident with a pin would have the same effect as an incision in an air ball.

Great big-limbed women, termagantly inclined, still in the habiliments of sweet dimpled childhood, some not having been short coated when Moses entered the desert, now appearing still wearing their first long clothes with gaudy ribbons tying up the fleecy sleeves, showing now, alas, an arm that would make the strongest husband tremble. These forty-year-old mothers, dressed in the trappings of babyhood, nursing their babies, similarly accoutred to themselves, was a sight inclined to raise a smile, were you not made sad by the looks of evident pain on the faces of those stout Jews who seemed to desire to burst from their too tight knickerbocker suits and bound along in the costume of Nature.

[Here the fragment ends, and by the ring on the manuscript, seemingly caused by a pint vessel having been placed thereon, the correspondent seems to have devoted some of his energies to producing a vacuum in the pewter.]

A certain politician holding office now in Washington comes from Gilead,—, and he is proud of his native town. It is told of him that on one occasion a visiting clergyman preached in the village church, and during the course of his remarks, he exclaimed: "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Mr. Blank jumped to his feet at once. "Of course there is," he sung out, to the horror of the congregation, "but you can't get it on Sunday."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7
 "Buddhism or Enlightenment: its Gospel and Doctrines."
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30,
 a lecture.
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary
 premises), 3.15, adjourned special members' meeting; important.
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, "The Most
 Comfortable Sacrament." Preceded by Shakesperian recital.
 Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville Road, N., at 7, Mr.
 S. Standring, "How and What did Jesus Teach?"
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. T. Parris, "Why
 I became a Freethinker."
 Hyde Park, near Marble Arch; 11.15, Mr. George Standring,
 "Christian Apologists Examined."
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant,
 "Can Christ Atoned for the Sins of Men?"
 New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11, Mr. S. Standring, "Good
 Old Satan."
 West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 10.30, committee meeting;
 at 11.30, Mr. Toleman-Garner, "Phases of Freethought—The
 Aggressive"; at 7, Mr. Heaford, "Dr. Magee v. Jesus" At 8.30,
 music, etc
 Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7,
 Mr. F. Millar, "Man in the light of Darwinism."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, various speakers.
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead
 Road, 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Salvation."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. Forder
 Cardiff—Queen Street, large hall (entrance from Working
 Street)—Mr. G. W. Foote, at 11, "After Death, what?" at 3, "The
 Gospel of Secularism"; at 6.30, "Heaven and Hell." Tickets at
 the door.
 Chester-le-Street Branch, Old Pelton; monthly meeting at
 6.30; discussion, "Secularism v. Spiritualism."
 Derby Branch, 20 Newland Street; at 6.30, members' meeting,
 important.
 Glasgow Secular Society and Branch of N. S. S., 122 Ingram
 Street.—5.30, committee meeting; 6.30, Mr. J. B. Glazier, "Prof.
 Huxley and Natural Rights."
 Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, 7, Mr. A. Hall will give
 a reading: "Mistakes of Moses," by Colonel Ingersoll.
 Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upperhead Row, 6.30,
 Mr. Owen Balmforth, MS. lecture by the Hon. Auberon Herbert,
 "A Liberty Creed."
 Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—at 3,
 discussion class, "The Comparison of Ancient and Modern Civiliza-
 tion"; at 7, "Mr Samuel Laing's Philosophy"—Mr. Doeg.
 Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, Mr. Henry,
 "The Malthusian Question."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, at 7, Mr. Lill,
 "Is the Bible a True Book?"
 South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King
 Street; at 7, business meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E.—March 23,
 Milton Hall; 20, Woolwich. April 6 (morning), Kingsland Green
 (evening), Ball's Pond; 12, 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 16 (morning), West Ham; 23, Woolwich; 30, Westminster.
 May 4 (morning), Mile End Waste; 11, Clerkenwell Green; 18
 (afternoon), Regent's Park; 25 (morning), Hyde Park. June 1
 (morning), Mile End Waste; 8 (morning), Clerkwell Green.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sncinton, Notting-
 ham.—April 13, Nottingham.

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

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

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

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