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The

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

GOD IN A COAL PIT.

THE Morfa disaster will of course be inquired into and we have no desire to anticipate the result of the investigation. Nor will any proceedings bring the dead to life again and repair the ruin of scores of homes. The butcher's bill of the catastrophe is appalling. It brings home to us the fact that the miner's occupation is more dangerous than that of the soldier. Only now and then are military men called upon to face the death-dealing cannon and rifles of an enemy, but the brave fellows who dig in the bowels of the earth for one of the prime necessities of our civilisation are always in peril. They go down into the mine, carrying their lives in their hands, to earn the daily bread for their wives and families. Yet their simple, unostentatious courage is overlooked by the poets, who celebrate in glowing strains the hectic courage of battlefields. The epic of war has been sung, but when shall we have the grander epic of battle with the forces of nature for the well-being of man?

It is impossible to rate too highly the heroism of the relief parties who risked death for the mere chance of rescuing their comrades. One gallant fellow fell a martyr to the enterprise. Godly men and women were praying at the pit's mouth, but the cruel gas is no respecter of persons or beliefs, and it slew a hero who died to save his fellows in a more real sense than some of those whose names are on the lips of religionists. No aid was vouchsafed from heaven. The prayers of faith fell upon the deaf ears of the great Sphinx. Yet that was an occasion when help might have been expected. The veriest Devil might have stretched out a hand to save one who, as truly as Hercules in the grand old Greek story, was filled with unselfish love, and fighting with Death for the sake of those who had stirred the pity of his heroic heart.

Saturday witnessed the burial of many of the victims of the explosion, and there were heart-rending scenes at the grave-sides. Women and children cried and wailed, and strong men melted with grief. The fine promises of the officiating ministers were powerless to staunch those bleeding hearts. Heaven was so dim and distant, the future meeting to part no more was so shadowy. The poor mourners yearned for the touch of the vanished hand and the sound of the voice that was still. They wanted their loved ones by their side again. Their sorrow was not to be assuaged by priestly words. In the grim presence of death they felt the reality of their loss. They grieved for their dead like Atheists, and every sob and tear belied the teachings of their creed.

During Sunday the preachers in the many churches and chapels of the district were engaged in justifying the ways of God to man. They are in the habit of talking freely about Providence, and the occasion demanded a little explanation. We have waded through several columns of their eloquence, and the upshot seems to be this. The survivors of the

catastrophe are congratulated on their escape, while those who perished are said to have gained by the transaction. In short, it was a mercy either way! Of course the logic of the argument is beneath contempt, but it serves its purpose all the same. Religion is not a matter of reason, but a matter of feeling. The survivors feel they are lucky, and the ministers assure them that the dead are in God's good keeping; so "all's well that ends well," and the men of God pull through the difficulty on the famous old plan of "Heads we win and tails you lose."

Judging by the reports, every one of the preachers took it for granted that God allowed the explosion to happen; that is, he could have helped it, but did not. According to the principles of English law he is responsible for the disaster. Yet he is a God of love. How, then, is the contradiction to be explained? Finite men, full of brave compassion, tried to save their fellows; and infinite God, whose love is boundless and unspeakable, winked at the slaughter. No wonder that the lines of Cowper were quoted—

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

But the same preacher told his hearers that God "doeth all things well." He did not see, however, in that case, that the rescuers were presumptuously trying to frustrate God's purposes. If Almighty Wisdom caused the explosion, the poor fellows in the pit should have been left to their fate. But the logic of theology is too hard for flesh and blood. God's worshippers did their utmost to minimise the effects of his act of providence, and bowed their heads submissively when they could do no more to check his "tender mercies."

Perhaps the most thorough-going theologian was a Baptist preacher, the Rev. J. Dyfan Davies. Seeing the Lord's hand in everything, he discerned a moral significance in the Morfa disaster. The Bible said "Let the people tremble." God liked them to tremble; he expected it of them, and would not stand a disappointment. But the people were very firm nowadays; they had strong nerves; and some "extraordinary vibration" was needed to startle them. God therefore sent his "special servants" sometimes "to rouse up and shake their neighborhoods"; and when people went "after their own devices" he "startled them into solemnity by disasters." It would appear, then, that the Lord deliberately got up the Morfa explosion to show the people of England that he has his eye upon them; although he might have demonstrated the fact far better, and more beneficially, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and healing the diseased. Were he to suddenly cure, in the selfsame night, all the patients in our hospitals, he would arrest our attention as surely as if he burnt down a city or decimated the population with pestilence. Nay, more surely; for we are used to accidents and disasters, and a slice of good luck from above would be unusual, and would set everybody thinking.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

(Concluded from p. 122.)

SOME reptiles take a deal of killing. The cohorts of Jesus are of this order. They have defied Cromwell and Gustavus, Pombal and Pascal, Bismarck and Bert. They are now as numerous, as powerful, and as unscrupulous as ever. Their web-like meshes extend in all directions, and their ability to focus all their forces at once with unerring accuracy upon any given point gives them power out of all proportion to their numbers. Their system crushes out individuality, and few individuals of eminence are to be found among them. It is said they rejected Cardinal Newman when, many years ago, he applied for admission to the order. If this is true—and the statement was made in the *Quarterly Review*—the decision was doubtless a wise one. The subtle and original mind of Newman could not be easily enough manipulated by Jesuit casuistry. Men of marked ability cannot be expected to submit to the relentless crushing out of their individuality which is the essence of the Jesuit novitiate. But training and discipline give them cunning and ability, if not wisdom.

Little as individuals, their corporate power is great. Jesuits have instead of individual ambition an intense *esprit de corps*. They believe themselves to be the salt of the earth, destined to redeem it. Devoted *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, to God's greater glory, they esteem themselves the true soldiers of Jesus, having, in obedience to his orders, given up friends, family, and home to establish his kingdom; and they declare that "His honor is concerned in the Society called by His name." They believe their order to be as lasting as religion itself. "That which is risen from the dead is immortal," said Father Burke, one of their great orators. Many thought the brief of Clement XIV., suppressing the order in 1773, had killed Jesuitism for ever. Clement died, whether from poison or remorse, soon after. But as Redemptionists, the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fathers of the Faith, and under other titles, the Jesuits lived on. If the order died in 1773, it rose from the dead in 1814, and ascended into power in 1886. It now sits on the right hand of the Pope, whose brother, Cardinal Pecci, in dying recently, left all his money to the Jesuits, by whom he had been educated.

In England they have more collegiate establishments than ever before. Forty years ago Carlyle wrote: "The Jesuits proper have long since got their final mitimus from England." Jesuits proper never laugh, but a semblance of a snigger must appear on their faces at Stonyhurst and Windsor when they read this passage.

The expulsion of the order from Germany in 1872, and from France in 1880, largely increased their ranks in England as well as in Ireland and America. The brief of the Pope in their favor dated July 13th, 1886,* has given them new standing. This was followed by the beatification, as religious martyrs, of Jesuits imprisoned and executed in England as political traitors convicted of conspiring against the life of Elizabeth and asserting the deposing power of the Pope. English is taught in all their schools, and there are abundant signs that the reconversion of England is the subject of their earliest orisons and their latest vespers. As we pointed out recently, three divisions of "Ransomers" are being trained to operate on High, Low and Broad Church. Although it is certain that Disestablishment would lead many to embrace Romanism, the Establishment is to be defended as against Dissenters, with the view of ultimately making it their own. Their aim is, in the

words of Cardinal Manning, "to subjugate and rule an imperial race," and their boast is that they alone are able to do it. Ridiculous enough it may seem if we compare the paucity of their numbers with the grandeur of their aims, but it would be more ridiculous were not so many High Churchmen playing into the Jesuits hands, and had we not historical examples of what the order have been able to effect in other countries.

Certain it is that the Jesuits have made the Catholic Church Ultramontane, and now have their reward in being received into the bosom of the Papacy. We may expect, as the result of their re-establishment, to find the Vatican more astute and more political. The Pope, indeed, is little more than the puppet of the Jesuits. If they no longer stand behind thrones and use the confessional of kings as an instrument of their order, they find that plutocrats now serve their turn, and the confessional is as ever the key of the money-chest.

Is it not monstrous that a secret society, whose advent in every country has been attended by conspiracies and disasters, who have been expelled for proved crimes from almost every civilised state, may by death-bed terrifying, receive endowments of land and money, while any bequest to a Freethought Society or the endowment of a hall where Freethought is propagated is at once nullified? Does it not show that almost anything can be done in the name of religion? We are not of those who wish to suppress the Jesuits. We seek to meet these hereditary enemies of liberty with no other weapons those supplied by liberty itself. Freethinkers are the natural opponents of Jesuitism. Give us fair play. Place us on an equality before the law, permit our propaganda to receive bequests and endowments, and we undertake that Jesuit efforts for the reconversion of England shall be fruitless. J. M. WHEELER

"BEAUTY LIVES WITH KINDNESS."

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

From the "Twentieth Century."

EVEN Shakespeare never compacted more sturdy truth and wholesome sentiment into four words than when he wrote: "Beauty lives with kindness." Justness and right doing are the foundation of social amenity and civilised happiness; but kindness is the superstructure. Goodness is the root of character, but kindness is the stem and flower. Kindness can never take the place of justice, right and goodness, nor do the work that must and can only be done by these alone; but it can wonderfully smooth the way for the accomplishment of that work.

I like this word kindness. I am glad Shakespeare did not say: "Beauty lives with love." Love means so many different things. One must always be defining it. What do we mean by love? Almost everyone has a definition of his own. What does Paul mean when he says: "There are faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love"? What does Jesus mean when he says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself"? What did he mean when he said: "Thou shalt love thine enemy"? In what way are we to love our enemies and where are we to draw the line? Are we to love the Devil? And how can we love neighbors whom we do not like?

I know all sorts of answers are given to these questions, no two of which are alike. That is what I say. When you speak of love you have to explain what you mean, and in many instances nobody knows what you mean after you have explained. Did any one ever explain to your satisfaction how you can love your enemy? Or even how can you perform

* Issued after a severe illness said to have been due to poison.

the duty of loving anybody that you do not happen to even like?

Can we learn what this Pauline and Jesus-taught love is by watching the practice of the Church or the majority of individual Christians? It looks to me as if the Christian world had given up the problem as to what love means as a hopeless conundrum, and were trying to make it quite plain that they know how to practice what it does not mean. I am sure it does not mean anything that calls for such a large use of guns and locust clubs and hempen ropes as we are accustomed to, nor such contempt for the poor; but I do not pretend to know what it does mean, except in a general way.

The apostle John says: "God is love." What does it mean? Are cancers and poverty, and floods and famines, and a Presbyterian hell the expressions of his love? When I consider that God is almighty, which means that he can do just as he likes and have things just as he wants them, and look abroad upon the way he has fixed things, I can see plenty of evidence of hate, and if God hates he cannot be, in his essence, love. I can believe anything about God except that he is love. I can believe that he is bad, or that he is weak and that some other power gets the best of him. But in that case he is not God. I do not know what is meant when it is said that God is love.

I am glad that Shakespeare said kindness and not love. It is easy to understand what kindness means. It is easy to be kind to people whom we do not love. I know how to treat my neighbor or even my enemy kindly, though I do not always know how to love either of them. There is not a relation in life wherein kindness is not a duty and is not possible. And there is nothing that oils the machinery of society like kindness. Whoever is kind is handsome. Whoever is kind is lovely. For "beauty lives with kindness."

It is barely possible that some of you who are accustomed to hear me speak always upon questions of public interest wonder why I have chosen such a theme as this, a theme that leads the mind so directly to our personal relation with each other. I will tell you. When I look at you from week to week I think of you in your home life, in your friendships, in your stores and workshops. And I wonder how you live in these relations. And I fain would say something that may be of use to you in working out your problem of personal happiness.

We are interested in great public questions of religious and social regeneration. I am convinced that personal character depends for most persons more largely upon the conditions under which they live than upon hereditary or any other influence in life. But it may be very long before the minds of all the people are free from degrading religious and political superstitions and the bodies of all the people are free from industrial bondage. It is possible, however, for very many of us to largely solve the problem of our personal goodness and happiness under our present uncivilised conditions, and to this end I have introduced this personal subject. The key to the mansion of personal happiness under any conditions is kindness.

We rub against our fellows everywhere—in the streets, horse cars, railroad trains, ferry boats, places of assembly. Two courses of conduct are always possible for us. We may be ill-natured, grumpy, always out of temper; or we may be kind. We are always bumping into one another, stepping on each others' corns, pushing for an advantage, and whether you get home or to your place of business in a happy frame of mind will largely depend upon how you have behaved yourself on the way. If you have been kind on the way you will be beautiful when you get home or to your place of business. If you have been surly, standing punctiliously upon all your petty rights,

you will be a nuisance to all your companions when you reach the end of your daily journey.

We are always having small squabbles and misunderstandings with persons with whom we do business. It is possible to magnify these mole hills into mountains by irritation and small pride and vindictiveness. It is also possible to smooth out such difficulties by kindness that costs no loss of self-respect—that adds, rather, to one's wealth of self-respect.

There are persons who pooh-poo the idea that we can go through this world without fighting for our rights, without demanding an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I know from constant daily experience that if some one smites you upon the right cheek without you having deserved to be smitten, the surest way to avoid being smitten on the left cheek is to turn it to the smiter. People say that if you do not stand up, pugaciously, for your rights you will be run over and trampled under foot. That is true if you have a craven spirit and bow before injustice with slave-like humiliation, but it is not true if you are brave enough to clearly point out wherein you have been wronged and also brave enough not to fight for your rights except with arguments tempered and made strong by kindness.

Three times have editors of daily papers retracted false statements about me (almost a miracle), one of them writing me a personal apology (quite a miracle), because I simply pointed out to them wherein they had wronged me, but made no bullying threats nor bombastic demands.

(To be concluded.)

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.

A SCEPTIC'S VIEW OF THE CREATION,

AS GIVEN IN GENESIS.

A God awoke in darkness
Six thousand years ago,
And looked around on nothing,
To see what he could do.

He'd never had beginning—
Not born like you and me,
But always had existed
From all eternity.

But what he had been doing
Through all these countless years
No priest has ever told us,
It in no book appears.

Perhaps he had been sleeping
With nothing for a bed,
With nothing for a pillow
And nothing in his head.

With nothing for companion
Through all that dreary night,
And only boundless nothing
On which to feast his sight.

He now arose to action
Like one aroused from sleep,
But of his six day's labor
The tale is rather steep.

He took a pinch of nothing
And made this glorious earth;
Another pinch of nothing
And oceans had their birth.

A little lump of nothing
Produced the powerful sun,
And so he worked on nothing
Till sky and stars were done.

And when the world was finished,
Of dust he made a man,
By mixing it with nothing
On some mysterious plan;

Then took a rib from Adam,
With nothing for a knife,
And, mixing it with nothing,
He made a full-grown wife.

ACID DROPS.

Providence has been multiplying the rats in Lincolnshire, and they have become a perfect pest. Farmers are killing them by hundreds, but the cry is "still they come." They are actually running over the patients lying in the fever wards at Spalding. Several were seen the other evening in the Exchange Hall while Canon Barker was addressing a temperance meeting. There is evidently room for a little temperance on the part of Providence in the production of rats.

Price's Patent Candle Company maintains a gospel-shop for its employees. At the last meeting of the Company the Chairman moved that £565 should be voted to pay the balance of the cost of erection. It would be interesting to know if the men are properly grateful to the Company for its solicitude about their immortal souls. For our part, we venture to think it probable that they would prefer to receive the Company's philanthropy in the form of increased wages.

Is it true that attendance at the Candle Company's gospel-shop is compulsory? Or has it ever been so? And have boys been fined sixpence for not gracing the place with their presence?

What a lot of humbug is talked on British platforms about the noble way in which Christianity liberated the negro slaves in America. That the slaves were liberated we know, but the act was a strategic move in the midst of the civil war between the North and South. And what has been the result? Ever since the "emancipation" the Christian whites have treated the blacks with insult and injustice. So flagrant has the infamy become—the very Young Men's Christian Associations refusing to admit a colored member—that the negro Bishop of Georgia, the Rt. Rev. H. M. Turner, has written a letter advocating the adoption of Senator Butler's Bill for sending the American negroes to Africa. "No court in America," he says, "has given a decision in favor of a negro in twelve years. The Supreme Court is an organised mob against him." He predicts that Africa, leavened by the American negroes, will become "the sanitary, commercial, and evangelical heart of the globe." And the last part of the prediction may be realised, unless Mohammedanism forestalls Christianity, for the religion of the Bible is more suitable to Africans than to Europeans.

Dean Lefroy is a fine, ripe bigot. The other evening he addressed the Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall, and he pathetically warned them against scepticism.

He said he had been thirty years a minister, and he had come to the conclusion that the cause of scepticism was more moral than intellectual. Yes, scepticism was a defect in the morals! Thus the great Lefroy drivelled on, and the report says that he created a "profound impression," which we can well believe when we remember the audience he was addressing.

David said that all sceptics were fools. Dean Lefroy says they are rogues. We say they are neither. It is impossible to debate the point with David, but we are willing to debate it with Dean Lefroy. We defy him to prove that scepticism, including all varieties of it, furnishes an appreciable portion of the crime and vice of England. If he accepts our challenge he may find, before we have done with him, that *one* sceptic, at least is no fool. That will dispose of David, and the discussion would probably dispose of Lefroy.

John Henry Thompson, *alias* John Henry Jones, is now serving a term of five years' penal servitude. His professional occupation was "burgling," and in pursuit of it he entered a church, lit a fire in the vestry, had a good nap, and finally went off with the communion plate. We dare say, also, he made inroads upon the bottled Blood of Christ, and, considering the awful sacrilege he committed, he should be thankful that the holy liquid did not poison and kill him after a long agony. The deity must have been in a placable mood on that occasion.

Toronto has a "godly" university, which was established in pious rivalry with the one that was recently burnt down. Its object is "the education of youth in the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion" as well as in secular matters. Thousands of pounds were collected for it in England, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge voting £3,000 at one swoop. But it appears from an article in the *Speaker* that this "godly" university resorts to very mean tricks to replenish its exchequer. It sells degrees in music for £16 a-piece. The trade is a bad one, but it pays, the proceeds being nearly all profit; and, as the *Speaker* says, "the holy men of Toronto will maintain, no doubt, that what they are doing is for the good of their Church."

Sir Edwin Arnold, in his letters from Japan, describes the Japanese woman as the most free and at the same time "the most modest and most self-respecting woman, after her own fashion, in the whole world." Christian missionaries with the Pauline gospel of woman's subjection in all things to her master, are energetically seeking to alter this, and the Pope, to be early in the field, has appointed an Archbishop of Tokio with four bishops under him.

Madame Blavatsky is very thin-skinned considering the beautiful abandon of speech in which she sometimes indulges. Tuesday's *Pall Mall Gazette* apologised for inserting "some very offensive expressions about Dr. Elliott Cones" in the report of an interview between one of its representatives and Mme. Blavatsky in October. The expressions "appeared by inadvertence in one edition."

Accuracy is not a Christian virtue. The Rev. T. Given-Wilson, vicar of Plaistow, writes an introduction to the professed recantation of James Marchant, a piece of writing which appears to have come, in whole or in part, from some other pen than that of its reputed author. According to Mr. Given-Wilson, James Marchant has returned to "the belief of his childhood." That is true enough, but other statements show less exactitude. For instance, Mr. Given-Wilson says he learned that "Mr. James Marchant, president of the West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society, had resigned his position, and renounced his infidel views." This is absolutely false. James Marchant did not resign his position. He was not at that time president of the West Ham Branch, an office which he only held for three months, and which he was not able to retain. Again, Mr. Given-Wilson writes so as to suggest that the West Ham Branch was ruined by the fall of the Cromwell Club. He says that "the old members clung together, and from time to time they have made their appearance in the neighborhood, lecturing in public-houses and debating on Plaistow Green." This is worthy of Hughes Price Hughes. The West Ham Branch has its own premises, not connected with

any public-house, and a fair-sized lecture hall, in which Sunday meetings are held regularly. We advise Mr. Given-Wilson to request the prayers of his congregation for their pastor, that he may profit by a study of Revelations xxi., 8.

The religious conscience is a curious study. Douglas Green, of the New York Stock Exchange, left his wife and eloped to Europe with Mrs. Alice Snell McCree, who insisted on first being married by a minister to Green. She had no objection to taking her husband from his lawful wife provided she could obtain the consecration of a man of God, which she did. Her scruples were as truly pious as those of the Catholic burglar who refused to steal meat because it was Friday.

There are twenty-three Jewish convicts in England, all of them being assembled at Portsea prison, where a small synagogue has been erected. No necessity has yet arisen to build a little Hall of Science in connection with some penal establishment for Secularists, Atheists and Agnostics.

By the way, the Jews furnish a much smaller percentage of criminals than the Christians, although one would think that the "new dispensation" should produce a higher morality than the "old." Judging the tree by its fruit, Christianity is anything but an improvement on Judaism, and one is at a loss to understand why the second person of the Trinity took the trouble to be crucified for such a questionable result.

The London editor of the *Detroit Free Press* has been fishing for advertisements from the leading bishops and clergy. He has sent them the following conundrum, accompanied with the opening chapter of a story of the time of Christ, by Dr. E. S. Brooks. "Ought the characters of the New Testament, including the central character, to be introduced into works of fiction?" Most of the bishops decline to commit themselves, but from the clergy the editor got a majority in the affirmative, "provided the story teller writes in a reverent spirit." A reverent spirit is always the desideratum in dealing with solemn humbug. The question we would ask is, Are not the characters of the New Testament, including the central character, themselves works of fiction?

Lecturing in a Primitive Methodist chapel at Bolton, Mr. George Harwood, M.A., remarked that "Religion had done more to civilise, purify, and regenerate the world than anything else, but they must also say that it had caused more misery, more destruction, more bloodshed, isolations and separations than all the other causes." We dissent from the first half of Mr. Harwood's remark, but we cordially endorse the second half.

Instances of clerical bigotry and intolerance towards Dissenters are continually cropping up. According to the Rev. John Luke, a Bible Christian minister, a member of his congregation, who had lost his father, desired him to be buried with his mother in the parish churchyard, and that the service should be conducted by Mr. Luke. Upon expressing this wish to the Rev. Franklin Tonkin, vicar of Madron, that worthy told the son that such a funeral was "an insult to Christ and his Church," and put every possible obstacle in the way of its being carried out as desired.

Another burial scandal has taken place at St. Erth, Cornwall, where the vicar—because the funeral party of a poor person which came a long distance was ten minutes late—went off in a huff, and the mourners were kept waiting in the churchyard for more than two hours, until a clergyman was brought from a distance of six or seven miles, who conducted the funeral rites by the light of the moon.

Hospitals invariably, and most properly, invite subscriptions from all sections of the community, yet it is by no means unusual to find that the nurses are chosen only from the Church of England. An advertisement of the Royal United Hospital, Bath, for a Lady Superintendent enumerates among other qualifications "member of the Church of England." A few years ago a hospital at York issued a similar advertisement, and the result was a local agitation and indignation meeting of subscribers.

The superintendent of the Christian Lads' Society, Finsbury Park, has been committed for trial on the charge mentioned in our last. The prisoner asked a lad who appeared as witness against him why he did not complain to Mr. Stone, saying, "You and I have always rested on his teaching of the Bible." Probably the sacred volume was the means used of debauching the minds of these Christian lads.

The result of the German election being that the Government requires the support of the Catholic party, it is said they will demand, as one of their conditions, that the Jesuits be permitted to return to Germany. To this, it is believed, the young Emperor will never accede.

Dr. Pigou, Dean of Chichester, preaching on Sunday in Rochester Cathedral, made some curious observations. He referred, for instance, to the telescope which enables us to see distant objects, and from which he derived "a fine argument for a future state, which he did not think an Atheist would attempt to falsify." Unfortunately Dr. Pigou did not work out the argument, and we are therefore unable to "falsify" it. Our intellect is not subtle enough to find the connexion between telescopes and immortality.

Dr. Pigou said he "remembered once speaking to a celebrated controversialist whom Bradlaugh would not meet." Name, please. We should like to see the controversialist whom "Bradlaugh" would not meet. It looks as though Hugh Price Hughesism were spreading.

At the New York congress of Presbyterians on the subject of the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Dr. McIlvaine said: "I say here solemnly that if God is as he is here represented I will take refuge in materialism, and there is no other help for me." This statement made a sensation which was intensified by what he related subsequently. He said he knew of a young lady who had been taken to a lunatic asylum, being afflicted with religious mania. "Does she belong to the Presbyterian Church?" inquired the doctor. She did; and then the doctor said they had more patients laboring under that form of mental disease from the Presbyterian Church than from all the other churches put together.

Dr. McIlvaine may well be ashamed of the creed of which he is a sworn defender. But after all, the Westminster Confession of Faith, with its doctrines of election and reprobation, is founded on the Bible, and is the logical result of Theism. It is Paul who says we are as clay in the hands of a potter, and that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy. If there is an almighty omniscient God he must have foreseen and foreordained the fate of everyone who frizzles in the everlasting bonfire.

The *Rock* says of the Elsemerian Institute promoted by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the Rev. Stopford Brooke and others—"This new anti-Christian sect is too like existing bodies to be dangerous." Religionists are not afraid of half and half measures that appeal only to the respectable and treat humbug with reverence. A West-end Hall of Science would stir them more than any amount of vague Christian Theism.

H. L. Hastings, the Yankee infidel-slayer, who is now wooing Fortune in England, seems to be completely pumped out. Every now and then we receive a fresh pamphlet from his pen, but although the title varies we always find on looking within that it is the good old "Is the Bible Inspired?" in a new cover. Then it goes into the wastebasket.

Professor Blackie says that the Atheists are "mostly crotchet-mongers." This is very much like painting his own portrait.

The Rev. James Brighton, rector of North Piddle, has been paying insufficient attention to the Sermon on the Mount. He lodged at the house of Mrs. Jane Newman, who had to sue him for the balance of rent, obtaining judgment for £6. Thereupon the reverend gentleman wrote a letter, describing her claim as unjust, and accusing her of perjury; and as this libel prevented Mrs. Newman from letting her rooms, she brought another action against

him for slander, and obtained a verdict for £15 damages, with costs. Poor Parson Brighton! How are the godly persecuted!

D. M. Ross—whoever he may be—is writing a series of letters to a Scotch paper on “Life in Australia.” He appears to have seen Joseph Symes on board a steamer. Who else, indeed, can be the “notorious infidel lecturer of Melbourne”? D. M. Ross seems to be a sky-pilot, and he very naturally chuckles over the fact that the infidel was treated with violence at Launceston. Just as naturally he refers to Joseph Symes’s “propaganda of infidelity and dirt.” What a beautiful thing Christian charity is, to be sure, especially when it gets a chance of displaying itself to “infidels.” St. Paul said that charity “thinketh no evil.” “Bah!” says the noble Ross. “charity, as I understand it, is best shown in blackguarding sceptics.”

The Clericals in Austria, as in England, have attempted a reaction upon the education question. A Commission of High Churchmen was appointed to discuss the principles of instruction in national schools, and their protocol, signed by three archbishops, seeks to recall the condition of schools two hundred years ago. It demands the establishment of purely Catholic schools, so that Catholic children shall not be “contaminated” by intercourse with children of other confessions; the children must be taught by the principles of their faith alone; all teachers at Catholic schools must belong to the Catholic faith; the appointment of teachers must be ratified by the Church; the plans of instruction books and other materials for instruction must not contain a word that offends the Catholic faith; and finally, the schools must be placed under the control and supervision of the Catholic Church and its organs. This is what the clericals seek everywhere, but they are too wary in this country to ask for it all at once.

The vicar of Blackpool convened a meeting to establish a Branch of the Protestant League. He was told by Dr. Kingsbury that the Catholics were succeeding because he, the vicar, neglected his duty of visiting his parishioners.

The Baptists, too, at Blackpool, have been having a split, and their late minister, the Rev. Mr. Pilling, characterises those in his church as “treacherous sneaks” whom not so long ago he described as good angels. Christian charity soon flies to the winds in the event of a dispute.

Canon Liddon is down on the *Lux Mundi* volume. Mr. Gore, the head of Pusey House and the chief of the little band of writers in that volume, supposes that Deuteronomy is a republication of the law “put dramatically” into the mouth of Moses. But Canon Liddon declares that “such a representation is irreconcilable with the veracity of the book.” Mr. Gore judiciously looks upon the books of Jonah and Daniel “as dramatic compositions.” But Canon Liddon remarks that “our Lord Jesus Christ set the seal of his infallible sanction” on both those Hebrew romances. Thus the battle goes on, *inside* the Church now as well as outside; and Rationalists may expect the clergy to imitate the performance of the Kilkenny cats; only the last parson need not devour himself, for there will be a Freethinker ready to save him the trouble.

Canon Shuttleworth held forth the other evening at the National Liberal Club on the blessings of a State Church. He wishes to see the clergyman elected by the parishioners, and the only qualification should be that he is a Christian. This of course excludes all Freethinkers and Jews, but as the Christians are in the majority they are entitled to have their own way, and apparently to use the money of the minority to propagate what is hostile to their convictions. Such is Christian Socialism as understood by a prominent member of the Guild of St. Matthew.

Under the Canon’s “democratic” scheme the clergy would be “a teaching body, holding up to men standards of truth and morality for the guidance of human life.” What a pretty picture! But is a white-chokered gentleman elected by the parish, after a heated contest, likely to have any special standard of truth or any special guidance for his fellow mortals? Is not the scheme, at bottom, an ingenious little device for sharing the Church funds with Dissenters rather than losing them altogether?

Canon Shuttleworth seems to have no idea of the strength of other people’s convictions. He starts the ridiculous theory that as the State runs a parcel post, it may as well run a religion. Surely this is confounding convenience and principle. The State may carry our parcels and letters, more or less efficiently, but it has no qualification for deciding the battle of ideas in religion and ethics. Besides, as Leopardi points out, while the majority is nearly always right in practical matters, it is nearly always wrong in matters of speculation.

Succi has started on his forty days’ fast (why forty if not in emulation of J. C.?) at the Aquarium. He took in a good cargo of provender before commencing, not expecting any angels to minister unto him after the trial is over.

The Sultan has only given permission to the Palestine Exploration Fund to go on digging on the express condition that all objects found during the excavations shall be transmitted to the Imperial Museum at Constantinople. Should they discover the tomb of Moses or the cross of Jesus Christ himself, it will have to be handed over to Mohammedan keeping.

The article on “Benighted Ireland,” from the pen of an Irish patriot, which we print in another column, throws light on a phase of the Irish question which is often overlooked. Unjust legislation is responsible for many of the woes of Ireland, but while the priest, whose interest lies in the ignorance of the people, is all-powerful, even just legislation will be unable to raise Ireland to the rank of nations where mental liberty prevails.

“The Evil Eye” was the subject of a paper read before the Scottish Antiquarian Society at Edinburgh by the Rev. Dr. Stewart. The reverend gentleman gave some interesting stories of this superstition, which still lurks in sequestered parts of Scotland. He does not appear to have added, however, that the evil eye is a part of witchcraft, and that witchcraft is taught as an actuality in the Bible.

Mr. Labouchere paid the Almighty a strange compliment in addressing an Irish audience on St. Patrick’s Day in the Birmingham Town Hall. Dealing with the Tory friends of the late lamented Pigot, the senior member for Northampton said he would not be too hard upon them, for they were no doubt as God had made them, selfish, callous and unscrupulous. This is rather rough on God.

Truths to Live by is the title of Archdeacon Farrar’s new book. Substitute “doctrines” for “truths,” and the volume need comprise no more than the Thirty-Nine Articles. And instead of “Finis” the volume might end with the text (Revised Version)—“For the man of God doth not live by bread alone, but by every yellow-boy that cometh out of the pocket of John Bull.”

In 1836 Essex made a bargain to pay a tithe rent charge of £250,278, to have in return the monopoly of the corn trade of the district. By the abolition of the Corn Laws Essex lost this monopoly, but still has to pay the same tithe, which exceeds even that of Yorkshire.

Lord Bramwell, dealing in the *Nineteenth Century* with the familiar assertion of Henry George that God made the land for all, asks the pertinent question, “Are the landlords too much for Him?”

GROWTH OF CATHOLICISM IN ENGLAND.

The following figures illustrate Mr. Wheeler’s recent article on this subject:

	1845.	1851.	1870.	1890.
Priests	776	958	1727	2811
Churches.....	622	683	1354	1651
Nunneries	8	17	69	231
Religious Houses...	34	53	233	447
Colleges	2	12	20	35

The total number of Catholics in England and Wales is close on 1,500,000.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 23, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, at 7, "Good without God."

March 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.

A HEARER.—You should bear a little with the infirmity of our Christian opponents. No doubt the speaker wandered a good deal from the point, but he spoke courteously, and it was best to let him use the time in his own way.

H. J. RICHARDSON.—We can quite understand why the Rev. J. J. Goundrig does not mean to "debate with the infidel." He finds discretion the better part of valor, and makes a virtue of necessity.

S. S.—We dealt with the Rev. Sutton Patterson's circular a fortnight ago. Glad to hear you sent him a copy of our letter to the Archbishop. Thanks for the enclosure. Mr. Foote intends to take a brief holiday as soon as he has cleared off his arrears of work.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Cuttings received with thanks.

E. ANDERSON.—See "Sugar Plums." Thanks for your good wishes.

L. C.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

L. STANLEY.—Cuttings are always welcome

W. H. TAYLOR.—We are obliged for your report as to the results of leaving the *Freethinker* in public places. Evidently a great deal of good is done in this way.

J. NEATE.—Mr. Foote acknowledges the "heartly congratulations" of the Bethnal Green Branch.

H. BROOKSBANK, 40 Drewton Street, Bradford, will be glad to hear from any persons wishing to join the National Secular Society in that town.

T. BIRTLEY.—Pleased to hear you think the *Freethinker* is improving every week. There is a lot of work put into it anyhow. Our compliments and thanks to the Branch.

FREISINNIGER.—The reverend gentleman blows his own trumpet very lustily, but we don't feel inclined to procure him an audience. Shall be glad to receive the document you refer to.

G. DICKINSON.—Always glad of cuttings.

R. FENN, 109 Commercial Road, E., would like to meet or correspond with a Freethinker who understands plain sugar boiling.

BUDDHIST PROPAGATION SOCIETY.—We cannot see our way to insert your meetings in our Guide.

A. HUBBARD. Thanks for the cuttings. Our circulation is slowly but surely improving.

HARRY BENSON.—You take no "liberty" in writing to us. We are always pleased to be able to assist our readers in their studies. Glad to hear you have found *Darwin on God* so useful. Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* are 7s. 6d. We cannot say where you could get second-hand copies of the works of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. You would find Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* very interesting and serviceable.

JOHN CHICK sends us 7s. 6d. for the "Freethinker" Circulation Fund; 7s. 6d. for the Benevolent Fund; 3s. for the Swedish Prisoner Fund; and 3s. for the John Dell Fund.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Lucifer—Open Court—Bulletin des Somaines—Secular Thought—Cornish Telegraph—Freethought—Islington Gazette Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt—Boston Investigator—Newsagent—Lambert's Monthly—South American Journal—Freidenker—Progressive Thinker—Evening Standard—Echo—Rochester and Chatham Journal—Argonant—Sheldrake's Aldershot and Sandhurst Military Gazette—Fritankaren—Ironclad Age—Freedom—

Blackpool Herald—Liberator—La Verité—La Lanterne—L'Estafette.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish our attention directed.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the London Hall of Science this evening (March 23) on a new subject, "Good without God."

THE *South Wales Daily News* gave a brief report of Mr. Foote's lectures at Cardiff on Sunday. The morning audience was excellent, and promised well for the day, but the rain poured down spitefully after dinner and interfered with the success of the other two meetings. Those who did brave the weather were very enthusiastic. Freethought is being reorganised in Cardiff, and the movement is fortunate in possessing some active new blood. Mr. F. Morris is a very capable secretary. We look for good things from Cardiff.

THE concluding lecture of the free course at the London Hall of Science was delivered by Mr. Foote to a magnificent audience. Opposition was offered in two speeches by the Rev. C. L. Engstrom, secretary to the Christian Evidence Society. The meeting broke up soon after ten o'clock, but groups remained for sometime discussing. There can be no doubt as to the success of the experiment, and it is gratifying to know that the sale of a few reserved seat tickets and the box collections have nearly covered the expenses.

At a Council meeting on Friday, March 14, the London Secular Federation decided to have a course of free lectures with discussion at Camberwell on Fridays, April 11, 18, 25 and May 2; also another course at Milton Hall on Tuesdays, April 15, 22, 29 and May 6. It was likewise resolved to have a course of free lectures in the East-end of London. Metropolitan Freethinkers with a little cash to spare might send a subscription in aid of this good work.

STIMULATED by the examples of the L.S.F., the Christian Evidence Society hurriedly arranged for two Thursday evening free lectures at the Hall of Science, the dates being March 20 and 27. Just as hurriedly, of course, the L.S.F., was invited to send representatives to oppose. Arrangements were made at the Council meeting for Mr. J. M. Robertson to oppose Mr. Engstrom on March 20 and Mr. A. B. Moss on March 27.

A PUBLIC debate will take place at the London Hall of Science on Thursday, April 3. The disputants are to be Mr. Robertson and the Rev. J. Tinling. The subject is a curious one at this time a day—"Did Moses write the Pentateuch?"

MR. T. BIRTLEY, of Chester-le-Street, writes as follows:—"I was the first to get the *Freethinker* here. The other night when I inquired of my newsagent I found that he now sells twenty copies weekly. There are other newsagents in the town and district who sell a good quantity. Our Branch posts the weekly contents-sheet in prominent places." This is excellent news, and we should like to hear a similar report from scores of other places. A little judicious pushing on the part of our friends would greatly increase our circulation.

"MR. WHEELER deserves the thanks and support of every Freethinker and Secularist for undertaking the heavy task involved in the production of this volume. When we find orthodox champions of to-day attempting to steal the name of such a man as Darwin as a believer in revelation, it shows how easy it may be for them to confound their opponents with the great names of a generation or two ago, about whom comparatively little is generally known. Mr. Wheeler's work places it in the power of Liberals to answer most of the claims of this sort. The work is the most valuable contribution to Freethought literature of recent years. It is not a mere dry list of names and dates, but contains sufficient facts to substantiate the right to place all the names inserted in the book in the ranks of the Freethought army. Every Freethinker should possess this work."—*Secular Thought*.

— THE West Ham Branch inaugurates a new departure this morning (March 23) in the shape of a Children's Service. Secular Hymns will be sung, and Mr. G. Cave-Hill will address the children on "Little Things," which he will illustrate with the microscope. We wish the experiment success, and we shall watch the result with interest.

— THE Hull Branch had a very successful social gathering on Wednesday, March 12. The proceedings included a tea, concert, and ball, with speeches by Mr. S. Thompson and Mr. N. B. Billany. All who took part in the concert were Secularists, and the financial result was highly gratifying. The Hull Branch will repeat the experiment at the earliest opportunity.

— MR. FOOTE and Mr. Forder intend to visit Bristol shortly to establish a Branch of the National Secular Society. Meanwhile Mr. Forder will be glad to hear from any friends in the city who are willing to carry out the local arrangements for a meeting of Freethinkers.

— THE Newcastle Branch has done good work in starting and promoting the Sunday Music League. The question of Sunday music in the Public Parks is now being made a test for the approaching elections in three of the wards. The League is issuing addresses to the electors, interviewing candidates, pushing the interests of those who are considered sound, and strenuously opposing the return of the other candidates.

— THE Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse Branch of the N. S. S. held a largely attended meeting of members on Sunday evening. It was decided to rent and furnish two large rooms at 100 Union Street. The sum of £4 6s. was collected on the spot, and the members resolved to raise the necessary balance as quickly as possible. The rooms will be used for club purposes as well as for meetings.

— *Lippincott's Magazine* contains a chatty article on the salons of New York, and enumerates certain well-known entertainers of the metropolis who are famous for their success in attracting the intellectual element—now rapidly growing to large dimensions—to their receptions. Among the number the writer includes Colonel Ingersoll. He says: "Many people, too, can testify to the attractiveness of the Sunday evening receptions of Robert Ingersoll, whether it be due to the genial magnetism of the host or to the grace and—one must say it—the beauty of his daughters." The writer also gives a favorable notice of the work of the "Nineteenth Century Club," describing it as "enterprising, aggressive and cosmopolitan."

— COLONEL INGERSOLL denies that he is out with President Harrison. "No; oh, no!" he explains. "I am about like the woman at the revival meeting. She sat there, prim and demure, with her little handkerchief folded up and laying in her lap, when some one came up to her and said: 'Sister, do you love Jesus?' She straightened up a little, and after a minute replied: 'Well, that's a strong expression to use, but I can say this—I've nothing ag'in him.'"

— WE are glad to see that a fund of three thousand dollars is being raised to recoup Mr. J. D. Shaw for his loss by the burning of Liberal Hall at Waco, Texas, and to enable him to continue his Freethought monthly, the *Independent Pulpit*. Mr. Shaw, a converted minister, has been a good worker, and his *Pulpit* is an excellent magazine, well deserving of support.

— MRS. E. D. SLENKER, who has long conducted the Children's Corner of the *Truthseeker*, is now also editing a new paper called the *Plaindealer*, of Hastings, Michigan.

— THE Grand Orient of Italian Freemasons, presided over by the Grand Master, Adriano Lemmi, has determined to raise a sum of twenty thousand lire to erect a monument to Mazzini at Rome. The *Tablet* sneeringly says it is fitting that the arch-rebel of modern Italy should go beside the arch-heretic of the Renaissance, Bruno. Catholics evidently do not relish the proposed further "desecration" of the Holy City.

— A CONFERENCE for the organisation of the French Freethought Federation will be held at Paris on April 20.

— DESPITE the counterblast of the Archbishop of Paris and the sentimental objections of M. Rónan, cremation is making progress in France. Altogether 735 bodies were cremated at Père la Chaise up to the end of last year. The Cremation Society includes men like Victor Schoelcher, Yves Guyot and Dr. Chassaizu, and these proposed to establish crematories in all the large provincial towns of France.

— THE Svea Salen, one of the finest halls in Stockholm, was filled on Sunday March 9th, by a gathering of over 1,500 persons who attended to protest against the imprisonment of Mr. V. E. Lennstrand, and to vindicate the right of free speech and free assembly attacked in his person and that of the Socialist leaders in Sweden. The meeting was addressed by Dr. Nils Holst, an eminent geologist, by Dr. Anton Nystrom, author of an able History of Civilisation, and by our good friend Captain Thomson, whose warm attack on the bigots was well received. Many petitions asking for Mr. Lennstrand's release are being forwarded to the King of Sweden. Is that Monarch so under the clericals that he is indifferent to the opinion of civilised Europe and to the most enlightened of his own countrymen?

— *Fritankaren* is now excellently printed, and is a credit to the Freethinkers of Sweden. No. 6 which lies before us gives a report of the election of Mr. Foote to the presidency of the N.S.S., and also notices of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary*, which it describes as a most valuable work.

— THE Republic of Brazil has not only decreed the separation of Church and State, but has ordered that civil marriage shall in every case precede or succeed the religious ceremony, which is left optional.

— THE *Transvaal Daily News*, which is sent to us from Johannesburg by Mr. E. B. Rose, shows there is considerable freethought in South Africa. One of its own leaders is entitled "The Sky Pilot Again," and its remarks on that "critter" are pretty severe.

— OVER a thousand dollars have been already raised for a memorial to Horace Seaver, and it is now proposed that, in addition to a granite monument to be placed over his grave, there shall be a Horace Seaver fund for the support of free lectures in the Paine Memorial Hall, Boston.

— THE good old *Boston Investigator*, founded by Abner Kneeland and edited for so many years by Horace Seaver, enters upon its sixtieth volume. Under the conduct of Mr. L. K. Washburn, it upholds the cause of Universal Mental Liberty in the same strenuous fashion it has done for so many years.

— *Freedom* publishes a portrait of its editor. It is not well printed, but it serves to show that Mr. Collins has not lost his good looks. The same number of *Freedom* contains a full report of the laying of the foundation stone of the new Secular Hall at Sydney. There was a very large gathering, and Mr. Collins received an ovation. Mr. Symes was over from Melbourne to assist at the ceremony, and met with a most enthusiastic reception. Amongst the other speakers was Mr. Llorando Jones, the last prisoner for blasphemy in the southern hemisphere.

— DR. CARSON, the leader of the Liverpool Positivists, who died recently, was buried by Dr. Congreve with the rites of the Church of humanity. Every non-Christian funeral is an eye-opener to the orthodox.

— MR. BRADLAUGH is active with his pen. He has lately contributed political articles to some of the magazines, and an article of his appeared in the last number of the *Speaker* on "Judgments of the House of Commons."

AN EASY TIME OF IT.

"It seems to me," observed Jo Cose, "that the recording angel must have a pretty easy time of it now-a-days."

"Why so?" asked his wife.

"Simply because if a man does anything good or bad it gets into the newspapers."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, all the angel has to do is to go over his exchanges with a pair of shears."

BENIGHTED IRELAND.

In the world of Freethought, as in the world of politics, Ireland "blocks the way" to the utmost limit of her ability. Freethought has invaded every civilised land; but in Celtic Ireland militant Freethought can scarcely be said to have an existence. It is the invariable boast of clergymen of all denominations that infidelity has never made its appearance in their happy hunting ground of disunited and benighted Ireland. The absence of infidelity has left our numerous clerics ample time for abusing each other, and full opportunity for hating each other without interruption, in the name of Christ. The common people, equally with their self-elected "spiritual directors," think that the absence of anything like Atheism is the greatest of blessings, while only the very few think that this so-called blessing is in reality a curse, and these few have hitherto been either unwilling or afraid to openly declare their beliefs, or rather disbeliefs.

The Irishman, educated or ignorant, is a willing mental slave. Paradoxical as it may seem, he is passionately fond of political freedom, while he detests religious freedom, and actually loves his mental slavery. Impulsive and unreasoning, he blindly adheres to the faith of his ancestors, and looks upon it as the greatest of disgraces to depart from it. Argument and reason do not sway him as they do the children of other countries. His poetic Celtic spirit delights in the marvellous and the miraculous, and distorts the most degrading superstitions into the highest forms of truth. The descendant of a race which practised the art of god-making in olden times, and which turned its dead chiefs into deities, by the process of evolution the Irishman's mind has become hopelessly clouded, and from the religious point of view no absurdity and no superstition is too much for him. He wallows in religious ignorance, and, like a pig wallowing in the mire, he delights in it. Old institutions die hard in Ireland—superstition will live there when it has disappeared for ever from every civilised land.

To this mental slavery the misery and the poverty of Ireland can be traced. History and experience tells us so much, at any rate, and teach us that Colonel Ingersoll spoke the truth when he attributed Irish wretchedness to the influence of the priests. For seven hundred years Ireland has been a scene of bickering, of war, and of bloodshed. Her sons have waded knee-deep in blood, all for the sake of the Lord! The steadfast faithfulness and obstinacy of the Irish—for which even as a Freethinker I cannot help having a slight feeling of admiration—kept persecution alive long after it had died out in England. Both sides in the struggle were fanatics; but the manliness and the steadfastness was unquestionably on the side of the Celt. But when persecution died out from pure shame, Ireland found herself so deeply sunk in the mire of religious slavery that the task of throwing off the shackles was hopeless. The priests who supported the people through the struggle in the name of "liberty of conscience," labored for "liberty of conscience" from the tyranny of everybody but their own.

When persecution died the priests were no longer the ardent patriots they were previously. They got what they wanted—liberty to tyrannise over their dupes without interference. That was a liberty they have upheld these hundred years, jealously and successfully. They have practised a milk-and-water patriotism, which has saved them from the reproach of being enemies to their fatherland, and at the same time hindered the people from breaking loose from their control and influence. At the time of the Union they deliberately sold their country to England for a promise of fuller emancipation than they then enjoyed. The significance of this fact has never been insisted on strongly enough. After the Union, when the revolutionary spirit was abroad in Ireland, and when there were fair enough chances of ameliorating the unhappy lot of the country by a fair, stand-up fight, the priests succeeded in killing the manly spirit that had taken possession of the people's hearts. They feared to allow the people to do anything without themselves, knowing very well that if it was seen that things could be done without priestly aid, the day of their tyranny would soon be over. In 1848, when the people had done enough of dying on their hill-sides, in fighting against the power that produced starvation—landlord ascendancy—the priests told them that any of them who shot down soldiers in the projected insurrection would go straight to hell if they fell in the struggle! The poor hungry wretches believed this, and as John Mitchell put it, they went home "to save their paltry old souls" and left the

rebel leaders to their fate. In Fenian times the very same thing happened. Every Fenian was excommunicated and promised a very warm place hereafter for daring to love his country better than his priest.

At this day Ireland is as priest-ridden as ever it was. Nobody dares do anything that the priests oppose. The man who opposes the clergy is held up to execration, and ruin awaits him in business. Not long ago I was on a visit to a city in the south of Ireland. I observed a magnificent hotel lying idle, and inquiring the cause, I was informed that the hotel-proprietor was compelled to leave the town for allowing her Catholic daughter to marry a Protestant! The hotel was a favorite resort of Catholics, lay and clerical; and when the Bishop denounced the "mixed marriage" the place was boycotted.

Over three-fourths of Ireland the priest is all-powerful. He can do just as he pleases. His support of all persons seeking office—such as Parliamentary candidates, and candidates for municipal and poor law offices—means success, while his opposition means defeat. To people unaccustomed to priestly tyranny this may seem strange; but it is a very stern fact. People dare not oppose the priest. The man who does is looked upon by ninety-nine out of every hundred Catholics to be a scoundrel and a criminal. Nor is this strange when we know how the priests are regarded by the people. All Catholics must believe that priests have supernatural power, and they do believe it implicitly. I know plenty of Catholics in the country who believe that priests have power to kill their cattle or to destroy their crops, and with this fear before them they would not dream of opposing the "clergy." The priests, by hints and vague threats, endeavor to make the people understand that they possess supernatural power. I know of a bishop who announced from the pulpit that "he shook the dust off his feet" at a local paper, which said some plain things, politically, about him. The people thought that this meant something awful, and ceased buying the contumacious rag. I could fill the *Freethinker* with somewhat similar instances of which I have personal experience.

In the eyes of an Irish Catholic a priest is divinely inspired and infallible. The peasant boy who leaves the plough, ceases making love to his neighbour's daughter, and goes to college, becomes at once a man of great importance, and when he has a few words mumbled over him, and is sprinkled with a mixture of salt and water in the ceremony called "Ordination," he is henceforth an "Inspired" being with a license to lord it over every man and woman who is a Catholic. He sees nothing wrong in acting as slave-master over the minds of his flock, for he himself is a mental slave to the powers of Rome. This does not so much matter, however, while it pays so well to be a "devil dodger." Ireland may be poor, but the priest never knows what want is. During his "holy mission" he lives like a prince, he amasses a fortune, he portions his sisters, his cousins and aunts, he has shares in joint-stock companies, and he dies leaving behind him many legacies to pay for prayers for his soul, even though that soul was supposed to be "inspired"! To give him his due, however, he rarely does anything more scandalous than to get drunk. As to his living he has "gospel authority" to justify his sponging on the toil of others, and it is taught by Rome that it is a "mortal sin" to refuse paying him his "dues."

When I say that Irishmen are mental slaves and the dupes of superstition, and of money grabbing priests, I say nothing that is not perfectly true. I do not say so for the purpose of reviling my countrymen, for I love my country, and some of those mental slaves are my dearest friends, though many of them may have less tolerance for my Atheism than I have for their superstition. I cannot despise them for their benighted condition; but I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and wish for nothing more strongly than to see them emancipated. For the poor slaves I have nothing but compassion while I despise and abhor the surpliced impostors who have managed to keep the country in ignorance and poverty, while the world has been progressing. They preach the utility of poverty, and live in luxury and ease. They preach charity and forgiveness and practise them only when it suits them? They preach equality, and are themselves more implacable tyrants than Russian despots. In short, they pose as ministers of light, while they are in reality messengers of darkness and living obstacles to their unfortunate country's freedom and progress.

J. O'DONOVAN.

THE PARSON AND THE ASS:

OR, THE DONKEY THAT PRAISED THE LORD.

TIME: a sultry Sabbath noon; All creation Seems to swoon.	Coster whistles— "Think we'll hook"; Sentimental's Donkey's look.
Scene: a country House of prayer; All good people Gathered there.	"Oh that we had Asses' eyes," In his fervor Parson cries.
Parson preaching, Doors flung wide— Man and donkey Just outside.	"Asses' eyes and Asses' ears"; Moke outside his Tail uprears.
Coster stretched on Load of greens, Donkey munching Heap of beans.	Waxing warmer, Parson bawls, "Be we asses!"— Moke hee-haws.
Parson's subject: Balaam's ass, And the angels In the pass.	Wildly parson's Accents ring, As he shouteth "Let us sing."
Coster listens, So does moke; Plainly heard is Each word spoke.	Meeting rises, Organ peals, Coster's donkey Kicks up heels.
Says the parson, "O, my friends, Humblest vessels Serve God's ends.	Shouts the parson, "Happy day. Now, dear brethren —" Moke does bray.
"Even an ass can Praise the Lord." All assent with Sweet accord.	Parson gasps and Stands aghast; Voice is heard to Say, "Avast!"
"Once an ass an Angel saw." Coster's donkey Says "Hee-haw."	Congregation Shakes with dread; Hoarse voice roareth, "Gee woa, Ned."
"And at once her Lord she knew. Oh, that we were Asses too!"	ALFRED LOVETT.

TRADITIONS OF PALESTINE.

THESE gifted Latin monks never do anything by halves. If they were to show you the Brazen Serpent that was elevated in the wilderness, you could depend upon it that they had on hand the pole it was elevated on also, and even the hole it stood in. They have got the "Grotto" of the Annunciation here; and just as convenient to it as one's throat is to his mouth, they have also the Virgin's kitchen, and even her sitting-room, where she and Joseph watched the infant Savior play with Hebrew toys eighteen hundred years ago. All under one roof, and all clean, spacious, comfortable "grottoes." It seems curious that personages intimately connected with the Holy Family always lived in grottoes—in Nazareth, in Bethlehem, in imperial Ephesus—and yet nobody else in their day and generation thought of doing anything of the kind. If they ever did, their grottoes are all gone, and I suppose we ought to wonder at the peculiar marvel of the preservation of these I speak of. When the Virgin fled from Herod's wrath she hid in a grotto in Bethlehem, and the same is there to this day. The slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem was done in a grotto; the Savior was born in a grotto—both are shown to pilgrims yet. It is exceedingly strange that these tremendous events all happened in grottoes—and exceedingly fortunate, likewise, because the strongest houses must crumble to ruin in time, but a grotto in the living rock will last for ever. It is an imposture—this grotto stuff—but it is one that all men ought to thank the Catholics for. Wherever they ferret out a lost locality made holy by some Scriptural event, they

straightway build a massive—almost imperishable—Church there, and preserve the memory of that locality for the gratification of future generations. If it had been left to Protestants to do this most worthy work, we would not even know where Jerusalem is to-day, and the man who could go and put his finger on Nazareth would be wise for this world. The world owes the Catholics its goodwill even for the happy rascality of hewing out these bogus grottoes in the rock; for it is infinitely more satisfactory to look at a grotto, where people have faithfully believed for centuries that the Virgin once lived, than to have to imagine a dwelling-place for her somewhere, anywhere, nowhere, loose and at large all over this town of Nazareth. There is too large a scope of country. The imagination cannot work. There is no one particular spot to chain your eye, rivet your interest, and make you think. The memory of the Pilgrims cannot perish while Plymouth Rock remains to us. The old monks are wise. They know how to drive a stake through a pleasant tradition that will hold it to its place for ever.

Mark Twain's "New Pilgrim's Progress."

WILL THE HEATHEN BE SAVED?

EVIDENTLY not if we take the words of Scripture. He that believeth not shall be damned. For there is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. Christians are slowly becoming too humane to hold this view of the perdition of the heathen, which was held by all Christians in the palmy days of Christianity, and as a consequence missionary fervor is dying. The Rev. Principal Simon preaching at Edinburgh declared that interest in foreign missions was no longer what it should be. It was spoilt by the modern views of "the larger hope." Within the memory of most of them it was customary, almost imperative, for those who advocated missions to lay emphasis on the eternal ruin, the quenchless fires, towards which the heathen were passing every day. Nowadays it was becoming the opinion that all men would ultimately be saved. Principal Simon deprecated the effect this view has on missions. But if the heathen can be saved without Christianity why should it be sent to them at great trouble and expense? This is only giving them a better chance of damnation by rejecting the Blessed Gospel. For they do reject it.

PROUD OF HIS WIFE'S PIETY.

I HAVE a friend who doesn't go to church himself, but sends his wife regularly. I dined with him last Sunday, and he took advantage of the circumstances to display her devotional tendencies before company.

"What was the text, Sue?" he asked.

"Oh, something somewhere in Generations; I've forgotten the chapter and verse. Mrs. Hughes sat right in front of me, wearing the worst looking bonnet I ever saw on a woman's head."

"How did you like the new minister?"

"Oh, he was simply superb! And Kate Selwin was there in a sealskin that never cost a cent less than 100 dols."

"Did he say anything about the new mission fund?"

"No; and the Jones girls were rigged out in their old silks made over. You would have died laughing to have seen them."

"It seems to me you didn't hear much of the sermon."

"The fact is, George, the new minister has a lovely voice; it almost put me to sleep."

A long silence followed, during which George absently helped me to pickles and mustard, while his wife sat looking as demure as a saint at a circus. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"There! I knew I'd forgot to tell you something! The fringe on Mrs. Brown's cape is an inch deeper than mine, and twice as heavy!"

My friend changed the conversation to the last new novel.

Infidel: "Well, what did you have for dinner Christmas?"
Baptist: "I had a cold duck."

"Papa, how old was Methuselah when he died?"

"Nine hundred sixty-nine years, Rollo."

"And what was his business?"

"Boy preacher."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7 Mrs. Thornton Smith, "And yet it Moves."
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 11.15, Mr. Heaford, "Intellectual Difficulties of Christianity"; 5.30, Tea and Soiree.
 Bethnal Green—2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road (temporary premises), 3.16, adjourned members' meeting.
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. T. Parris, "How I Became a Freethinker."
 Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville Road, N., at 7, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Gospel Myths."
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Good Without God."
 Hyde Park, near Marble Arch; 11.15, Mr. E. Calvert, "History of the New Testament Canon."
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Shams and Delusions of Theology."
 New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11, Mr. S. Standring, "What was the Use of Christ's Coming?"
 Old Southgate—Opposite Cherry Tree, 7, Sam Standring, "Satan, God and Man's Best Friend."
 West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, children's service, address by Mr. G. Cave-Hill on "Little Things"; 7, Mr. P. Coppock, A.N.U.C., "Evolution in the Domain of Chemistry."
 Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "Miracles of the Bible: Are they True?"
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, Socialist speakers.
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Masey Road), 7.30, Mr. Toleman-Garner, "God's Word."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. H. Mutch, "Nature and the Idea of God."
 Glasgow Secular Society and Branch of N. S. S., 122 Ingram Street.—6.30, Mr. William Cassels, "Free Trade."
 Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upperhead Row, 6.30, special meeting; members' subscriptions are now due.
 Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—at 3, discussion class; 7, Mr. W. A. Newcomb, "Imperial Federation."
 Heckmondwike—at Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a meeting.
 Hull Branch—No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, Mr. G. Vickers, "The Bible and its Authors."
 Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 3, annual meeting of members; 6.30, Mr. Joseph Spencer (of Rochdale), Selection of humorous and Dramatic Recitals. Free.
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30, meeting of Sunday Music League; 7.30, monthly business meeting of members.
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, Mr. Frederick Millar, 11, "Individualism and Property"; 7, "The Politics of Individualism."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, at 3, Mr. Robert Law, F.G.S., "The Birth and Death of Worlds"; 7, "How the Rocks which Contain Coal were Formed."
 South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street; at 7, business meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden Road, London, S.E.—March 23, Milton Hall; 30, Woolwich. April 6 (morning), Kingsland Green (evening), Ball's Pond; 13, (morning) Pimlico. (evening) Camberwell. May 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25, (afternoon) Regent's Park. June 1 (morning), Pimlico; 15, Ball's Pond; 29, Mile End. July 13, Mile End.
 TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—March 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), Clerkenwell Green.
 JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—April 13, Nottingham.
 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; 13, Manchester. May 4, Birmingham.

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