

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—X.

### "THE FEAR OF GOD."

To the Rev. George Matheson, D.D.

"Primus in orbe deos fecit timor."—PROPERTIUS.

"Almighty Fear, the Fiend-God."—SHELLEY.

SIR,—I propose in this letter to criticise your paper on "The Fear of God" in the April number of *Good Words*. The subject is all-important from a religious point of view. If the fear of God is not the beginning of wisdom, it is at least the beginning of religion. According to the Roman poet it was fear that first created gods in the world, and the same view is expressed by a later English poet whose words I have also cited. I believe it is no less true that fear is generally, if not invariably, commensurate with ignorance. Man trembles before the unknown. His want of knowledge makes him the slave of his imagination. A danger which is understood loses half its terror, while a danger which is shrouded in mystery is so magnified by fancy as to paralyse the faculties. Under this glamor the bravest shrink into cowards. Were a couple of hardened duellists to be ordered to fight a duel in a darkened room, it is doubtful if either would have the courage to begin the engagement. Now savages, among whom religion originates, are always fighting in the dark against the forces of nature. Hence they are frightened in situations in which the civilised man preserves his composure. When, for instance, the lightning flashes and the thunder roars, they crouch in abject terror, precisely as a herd of cows will huddle together in a storm. But the civilised man understands the phenomena, he is acquainted with their causes, he estimates the infinitesimal amount of the danger to himself, and frequently, instead of being alarmed, his whole being dilates with the tempest, and he revels in the enjoyment of a magnificent spectacle.

The difference in this respect between the savage and the civilised is the difference between ignorance and knowledge, religion and science. The poor victim of superstition—and religion is only the superstition in fashion—is smitten upon his knees or even upon his face. But the votary of science stands erect and unalarmed. The one trembles, the other is equable; the one prays, the other observes; the one worships, the other reflects.

Out of the terror of ignorance sprang the first gods of superstition. Accordingly the earliest cultus is the worship of malignant powers. A benevolent God is the growth of a later age. Even then, however, the ritual of religion bears traces of the older strata of belief and sentiment. While prayer against plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, murder, and sudden death, survives in the Christian liturgy, we have visible evidence that religion retains sufficient relics of its older form to indicate to the student the ideas in which it originated and the essential character of its influence.

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You are far from denying the historic or evolutionary truth of this survey. "It is a favorite argument of the sceptic," you say, "that religion is the product of fear. Little does he know what a compliment he is paying to religion when he makes the statement." I agree with you that the sceptic does not know that he is paying religion a compliment in ascribing its origin to fear, but you are the best judge of what is a compliment to your faith. I do not envy you, and I am reluctant to disturb your enjoyment. I must, however, question the argument you advance to excuse what appears like fatuity. You discover something excellent in fear, although it is a sign of weakness, and it is difficult to see how weakness can be anything but a misfortune. You contend that "fear in its essential nature is something peculiar to man, something which marks out man from the beast of the field." I believe the assertion will astonish those who have any acquaintance with the lower animals. Nothing is more *animal* than the human expression of fear. We differ from the lower orders of life far more in the expression of our joy. And the explanation is obvious. Joy, unless it be excessive, stimulates us; it heightens our vitality, and gives free play to our faculties. But fear represses and disorders. It strikes reason torpid and paralyses the will, it throws us back upon the law of self-preservation, and leaves us to the mere instincts of our animal nature.

But while I dissent from your assertion that fear is in any sense peculiar to man, I equally dissent from your assertion that "man is the least courageous creature in the world." To affirm this of civilised man is absolutely grotesque. He digs into the bowels of the earth for treasure, and climbs the mountains for sport. He faces the mightiest tempests at sea, and in pursuit of all sorts of objects he laughs at the fear of death. He tames even lions and tigers, and makes them leap at his will, standing the while within reach of their terrible claws and fangs. There is nothing he will not attempt if he sets his heart upon it. Physical courage is indeed so cheap, that multitudes of men will join a mercenary army, and stand to be shot at for a shilling a day; and it is pretty well established that the men of all nations will fight courageously if they are properly commanded. Nor is your assertion true of primitive man. With little knowledge, and slender appliances, he subdued the wild wolf and domesticated it into the dog. He captured and tamed the wild buffalo and bred from it the useful ox. He flung himself upon the back of the wild horse and broke the creature's pride. He defended himself against infinitely more powerful animals, and took his life in his hands when he hunted the food for his wife and child. It appears to me that man is the bravest denizen of this planet. He does not fight the lion with his teeth or the elephant with his hands, but this does not show his want of courage, it only shows his possession of sense.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## WORLDLINESS.

IN the cant phrase of the conventicles worldliness is a very heinous sin. There is an absolute incompatibility between devotion to God and attention to the things of this world. Whatever is given to the one is taken from the other. Worldliness is a kind of blasphemy, a disregarding of those interests which God has declared paramount; a setting aside of his authority in favor of other interests. If religion is true, and the eternal destiny of most of us will be unending torment, then

There's nothing worth a thought beneath,  
But how we may escape the death  
That never never dies.

But if this view is false, and the practical life of men show that they act as though they thought so, an indictment lies against religion for seeking to warp mankind from their most profitable pursuits by bribes of heaven or threats of hell.

If we reckon up simply the cost of religion, the millions spent on ministers, churches, and missions, who does not see that the same sum expended on the tangible amelioration of the lot of humanity in this world would produce far more beneficent results? Take only the annual income of the Established Church of England. The sum would amply suffice for the purposes of free education, or to start co-operative establishments which might solve the questions in dispute between capital and labor.

Then again, consider the loss involved in dedicating one special day to the service of God, a day on which the much needed opportunities of instruction, amusement and healthy recreation are as far as possible denied to the workers in the name of religion. Were but Sunday understood as a day to be devoted to the service of man what a change would be at once effected?

Christianity tends to weaken human interest in temporal and social amelioration by its substitute of bliss hereafter. As in a recent instance parricide may even be a speedy means of arriving at this end. The end itself is so all important that everything must be subordinated to it.

The genuine religionist lives in two worlds at once. He is in the world of struggle, action and progress, but he is of the world above, where all is calm and there is nothing more to be gained. It is true one has to work and eat—at any rate to eat—but these are not his real concerns. Religion places God first, and declares that you cannot serve God and Mammon. No one has expressed more strongly than Jesus the necessity of hating the world and everything in it—father and mother, and wife and children, brothers and sisters, yea and one's own life also—if you would be his disciple (Luke xiv., 26). "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," says the apostle John (1 Ep. ii., 15). Modern Christianity, seeking to compound Christianity with Secularism now the theological dose is found too nauseous if administered alone, leaves out of sight as far as possible the ascetic and monkish principles of Christianity, which it cannot, however, expunge either from its books or from the history of its faith.

Wherever Christianity has been adopted in earnest it has tended to destroy man's interest in temporal and social improvement, and taught him to sacrifice the tangible objects of worldliness to otherworldliness, the equally if not more selfish pursuit of a visionary happiness in another and hypothetical existence. By attracting his desires and diverting his efforts towards another world, it has sought to minimise his attention to this. And this position is a logical one, far more so than that of the gentlemen who sit on two stools and seek to make the best of both worlds. If we are eternal beings, this life is truly an insignificant affair. Heaven and hell dwarf this world into comparative nothingness. Only when

we see that all there is of worth in life must be gathered here and now do we see the true importance of daily duties.

The men who have done most good to humanity, like Harvey, Spinoza, Voltaire, Priestley, Paine, Watt, Beethoven, Owen, Goethe, Darwin, Stephenson and Edison, are justly esteemed because they loved the world and the things connected with it. Had they been engrossed with religion and their supposed interests in some other world, they could not have benefited the world as they did. Those who have most busied themselves with God's business, priests and monks and Inquisitors, have invariably been the greatest scourges to humanity. Let us then gladly confess we are worldly, and that this world at once affords sufficient motives for our aspirations and scope for our energies.

J. M. WHEELER.

## PRIESTS AND WORKERS.

At a time when the Labor Problem is the great question of the hour, it is interesting to observe the attitude of the Irish priests towards the Irish workers. With that policy and cunning for which they are famous, the Irish priests are endeavoring to keep as much as possible aloof from the labor struggle, or to adopt a position of neutrality if they cannot keep altogether aloof with good grace. To the impartial observer it is perfectly evident that the clergy are in fear and trembling of the consequences that might follow any pronounced interference on their part. They see that their best policy is "to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds." If they sided with the capitalists in labor disputes they might lose their hold of the workers; and, on the other hand, if they sided with the workers, they might lose the big subscriptions and the good dinners which accompany friendship with Catholic employers. Their great aim, therefore, is to effect compromises between masters and men, and to pose as the best friends of both parties, without whose interference strikes and disputes would end in ruin. This is a prudent policy. So long as it can be safely prosecuted there is little fear of their losing their hold of the body of the workers; and so well are they pleased with their own attitude that they are exceedingly jealous of anything likely to disturb it or to create a diversion.

We had a good example of this jealousy in Dublin the other day. Dr. Aveling addressed a mass meeting of the Dublin laborers, with a view to securing their co-operation with the English Laborers Union. Instantly clerical circles were perceptibly perturbed. The organ of the priests, *The Irish Catholic*, issued a solemn warning to the Catholic workers to beware of the friendship of Dr. Aveling and his kind. As to the probable results of such a friendship this pious print went into hysterics, and predicted a reign of ruin and anarchy if men with "a vile hatred of God and religion" were listened to for a moment. Catholic Ireland had Catholic priests, it said in effect, to settle all those labor questions without the aid of these foreign and irreligious interlopers. In issuing its warning *The Irish Catholic* forgot to be logical, as it usually does. It ignored the fact that the Catholic priests do not trouble themselves about the condition of the laborers until the laborers strike, and that then their "friendship" is directed towards cajoling the strikers into accepting terms which are not at all as good as justice demands. As a matter of fact, their policy is a "dog in the manger" sort of policy—they will not befriend the workers themselves, nor will they allow others to befriend them.

The most protracted strike we have had in Ireland this long time was the strike in the bacon trade in Limerick, Cork, and Waterford. In the last-named city the strikers rejected the proffered interference of a priest, and lost much public sympathy by so

doing, as interested parties raised a cry that the Catholic clergy were thereby insulted! Finally the strike was brought to a close, mainly through the instrumentality of the Bishop of Limerick. The strikers were thereupon preached to, to the effect that in all these labor struggles the workers should look to the clergy, and to the clergy alone, for support. Now, mark the sequel. In the city of Limerick the Catholic clergymen had *refused to pay taxes*, and prosecutions were instituted against them by the Corporation. After the strike had concluded the Corporation passed a resolution exempting from taxation all conventual residences in the city, excluding Protestant and other non-Catholic establishments. So that the friendship of these priestly "friends" of the poor has taken the shape in Limerick of putting on the shoulders of the workers the burden of taxation which the pious idlers have managed to shirk, through the pliant action of a too religious corporation.

The "friendship" of the Irish priests for the Irish workers amounts in the main to this: preaching from the pulpits that "blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; preaching also that the poor should be contented with their lot, because the scriptures say that "the poor we shall always have with us"; and last, and by no means least, taking from the worker's scanty earnings as many pennies as cajolery and threats can enable them to extract. Of course there are a great many Irishmen who object to this queer kind of "friendship," and who think that the clergyman should do something more than preach the uses and inevitableness of poverty. To meet the objections of such folk there is an article in the April number of *The Lyceum*, a clever magazine edited by a scholarly Jesuit. The article is evidently written with a purpose and is entitled "The Social Mission of the Church." It is to some extent meant as a reply to Mr. Stead's "Letters from the Vatican," or more correctly "The Pope and the New Era." The point of the article is that the Catholic Church was founded for the sake of souls, and not to civilise the world or to promote earthly happiness. "The aim of Christ's public life," we are told, "was wholly spiritual . . . . It was no part of his plan to provide remedies for earthly ills. And yet the political and social condition of his people gave him ample opportunity for doing so, if he would . . . . He would not act the part of a human peacemaker." This Jesuitical opinion of Christ is slightly different from Mr. Stead's idea that Christ was an exalted character and a sort of divine Socialist. The writer further explains, with delightful candor, that it is no concern of the Church whether men are slaves or freemen, learned or ignorant, poor or rich; and that it is none of its concerns either whether women are ennobled, or whether children, the poor, and the suffering are treated with tenderness provided their souls are safe. Far from troubling itself about any such considerations, the Church believes that temporal prosperity and the advance of education react unfavorably on Catholicism, and should be discountenanced rather than promoted for the sake of the welfare of "souls" and of the Church's own interests. These definitions of the Church's relations to social progress, and its attitude towards the social problem, are honestly though brutally candid. They epitomise exactly the *real* motives that are actuating the clergy of Ireland in their attitude towards the workers. The pity of it is that the Irish workers are still too priest-ridden to see through the imposition of teachings which aim at showing that happiness in a "future world" is the only happiness worth seeking for, and that the best way to secure that happiness is to suffer as much as possible here. What is more astonishing in this short-sightedness of the toilers is that very few of them take the fact into account that while the priests

preach poverty and humility, they practise the pursuit of all the enjoyments and comforts that this world affords, *and always at the deluded workers' expense.*

J. O'DONOVAN.

#### SHELLEY'S RELIGION.

ON Wednesday, April 9, the room of the Shelley Society at University College was crowded with an unusually large audience, many of them ladies, intent upon hearing what Mr. Foote had to say upon this question.

Dr. FURNIVALL, upon taking the chair, mentioned that Mr. W. M. Rossetti had expressed his regret at his unavoidable absence. He was quite sure what Mr. Foote had to say on the important subject of Shelley's Religion would be of value as coming from a close student of the poet.

Mr. FOOTE excused himself for not having prepared a paper, because he had never read one in his life, and because he had not time. The subject was one which ought to be discussed first of all by a body of experts, and presuming he was addressing such a body he should take for granted a considerable acquaintance with the prose and verse of the poet. It could not be settled by what Mr. Gladstone called a comprehensive contemplation. It was necessary to look to details, and to remember that Shelley, with his high, strong temperament, was often at the mercy of his moods. In appealing to specific passages, what Mr. Foote proposed to show was that, with just here and there an unimportant break, there was a continuity of his Freethought from his first proclamation of Atheism in "Queen Mab" until the end. He was aware there was a strong consensus of opinion against him. Robert Browning, despite his enormous intellectual power, in matters of religion had scarcely got beyond the theology of the Methodist chapel. He was mistaken as to the forged Shelley letters, and probably equally so in supposing the poet would ever have become a Christian. Mr. Rossetti thought that Shelley could not have been an Atheist because he became a Berkeleyan idealist. But, argued Mr. Foote, Berkeleyan idealism did not lead to a god. If the Materialist was debarred by the relativity of human knowledge from affirming that matter was the cause of all, so was the idealist debarred from ascribing all to mind. Then there was the Rev. Stopford Brooke, who held that Shelley was a Pantheist, but who admitted that in his ordinary moments he was not a Pantheist. The poet, said Mr. Foote, is a personifier. He endows Nature with sentiments derived from himself. Every poet assuredly must be Pantheistic to this extent, that he looks on Nature as in sympathy with himself, the process really being the reverse. But, he contended, in Shelley the philosopher spoke as well as the poet. He would first cite the testimony of Trelawny, who knew him well in his last years. Trelawny said: "The principal fault I have to find is that the Shelleyan writers, being Christians themselves, seem to think that a man of genius cannot be an Atheist, and so they strain their own faculties to disprove what Shelley asserted from the earliest stage of his career to the last day of his life. He ignored all religions as superstitions. Some years ago, one of the most learned of the English bishops questioned me regarding Shelley; he expressed both admiration and astonishment at his learning and writing. I said to the Bishop, 'You know he was an Atheist?' He said 'Yes.' I answered 'It is the key and the distinguishing quality of all he wrote.'" Mr. Foote then gave numerous extracts from both the prose writings and poems of Shelley in support of his contention. He admitted one was apt to find his own views in a favorite poet, but he had said that Shelley was an Atheist before sharing his opinions. His judgment was formed from long acquaintance with the works of a poet he held to be the poet of Atheism, as well as of political and social revolt, a beacon flinging its light across the tossing seas our bark of progress has to travel.

Dr. FURNIVALL, in opening the discussion thought Mr. Foote had done injustice to Browning in describing his theology as that of a Methodist. He did not believe

in damnation, and said frankly, What is red to me is green to you. Dr. Furnivall thought Shelley objected mainly to the evil done in the name of God. The religious people owed a debt to Shelley because he freed them from their dogmatic superstition. He (Dr. Furnivall) was an Agnostic himself, but he thought there was development in Shelley's writings, and that at the end although he hated all this blasphemous stuff called Christianity, this devil called God, he believed in something more than the immortality of fame.

Mr. SALT thought the most important point was the definition of Atheism. If it meant the denial of a personal God, Shelley was an Atheist; if it meant the denial of any spirit running through the universe, he was not. His Pantheism was the positive side of his religion. He did not believe there was any change in the direction of Shelley becoming Christian, and it was a happy thing that none of the usual death-bed stories could be circulated in regard to him.

Mr. G. BERNARD-SHAW said he was always happy to call himself an Atheist. A personal being was practically the meaning of the word "God." If you make it known you are an Atheist you do people a deal of good by their discovering that you say this and are not struck dead immediately. Your crude Materialist forgets that in many things we are in the metaphysical stage, and when he discovers that consciousness and will are not fully accounted for, plunges back again into Theism. We had a recent example in Mrs. Besant. Mr. Shaw then promoted some hilarity by describing the consternation he had some years ago caused the Shelley Society by declaring that he was, like Shelley, an Atheist, a Socialist, and a Vegetarian.

Mr. MASSINGHAM, of the *Star*, continued the discussion from a Theistic standpoint. He thought Shelley was more favorable to Christianity than Mr. Foote supposed.

Mr. FOOTE, in replying, urged that Shelley as an ideal poet was a personifier when he spoke of the spirit of the universe. Mankind, as a whole, never accepted any god save a personal one. Religion was worship, and Shelley wanted every man to stand erect and free without awe and without worship. He agreed that Shelley developed the poet more and sank the critic. Agnosticism was only a name to cover a respectable form of scepticism. One who rejects a personal God is practically an Atheist.

Mr. Bishop has been contending, in the *English Churchman*, that Jonah's whale was a whale as affirmed by Jesus, that, moreover, whales are occasionally found in the Mediterranean, and that Jonah was not taken down the gullet but remained in the whale's mouth. "All would go well," says Mr. Bishop, "as long as the whale floated on the surface of the sea." A Mr. Carwell points out that this also appeals to faith, and prefers to believe that it was "a large fish with a capacious stomach so formed that Johah—under divine protection—could dwell therein." A sort of chamber fitted up with air tubes, praying cushions, a dining table, and other appurtenances, we presume.

Some correspondents of the *Church Times* call attention to a superstition still to be found in the country in regard to bread baked on Good Friday. It is believed that it will cure stomachic disorders and never grow mouldy. If it does not turn out as expected, there has been some fault in the baking. This is one of the beautiful legacies of superstition left from the ages of faith.

There are two important rival societies for distributing the Bible: the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Trinitarian Bible Society. For about sixty years these societies have been at loggerheads in their claims upon the subscriptions of the faithful, and again the feud has broken out by the Trinitarian Society, circulating among the subscribers to the former, damaging statements in regard to its rival. The British and Foreign Society has retorted that in the attack there is some suppression of the true if not some suggestion of the false. It is altogether a very pretty quarrel as it stands.

### THREE JOLLY JUGGLERS.

Tune—"Of a' the airts that wind can blaw."

OF all the writers e'er I read,  
I dearly love old Mo,  
He spins such rare side-splitting yarns  
'Bout I am, Self and Co.  
Old Gulliver's tours and 'Rabian Nights  
Are nowhere in the race,  
And bold Munchausen's wildest flights  
Must e'en take second place.

On Pharaoh, the Egyptian king,  
They played full many a trick;  
They swarmed his land with frogs and lice  
Through conjuring with a stick;  
O'er all the waters in the land  
They stretched their magic rod,  
And all the streams at Mo's command  
Were straightway turned to blood.

King Pharaoh's jugglers bravely strove  
With Aaron to compete,  
They turned the waters into blood,  
Made snakes and frogs complete;  
But when it came to raising lice  
They had to yield the stakes,  
And Aaron's serpent in a trice  
Devoured their wriggling snakes.

Mo cursed the whole of Egypt's stock  
From cattle-plague to die;  
And locusts brought in multitudes  
That darkened all the sky.  
And each time Pharaoh's heart grew soft  
To let the children go,  
Old Moses telegraphed aloft  
"We want more tricks to show."

The senior partner of the firm  
Then hardened Pharaoh's heart,  
And made him swear by all his gods  
No Hebrew should depart;  
But Moses, after some more tricks,  
With all the Jews marched out,  
And landed Pharaoh in a fix  
Among the Red Sea trout. T. CLARK.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### A NOTE FROM MRS. BESANT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last issue you think it worth while to quote a statement as to my being a speaker at Spiritualist meetings, from a Mr. Aston, a person notoriously untruthful in his attacks on Freethinkers. The only foundation for the falsehood is the fact that I have given one lecture, showing my reasons for not accepting the Spiritualist explanation of certain observed phenomena.

Permit me to add that if the *Freethinker* finds it useful to print Christian falsehoods about me, while I shall regret its policy, I shall trouble it with no further contradictions. I can only hope that no one whose opinion I value will accept as mine the opinions or actions ascribed to me in its columns.

ANNIE BESANT.

[Mrs. Besant makes a mountain of a mole-hill. We certainly did quote from Mr. Aston, but it was in "Acid Drops," and we quoted from him only to ridicule him. We put Mr. Aston's words in quotation marks, and we are only responsible for our own comments. We never said that Mrs. Besant was a Spiritualist, and we don't understand her annoyance. The suggestion that we are in the habit of printing "Christian falsehoods" about her may be left to the judgment of our readers.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

OBITUARY.—Died at Woolwich on the 8th inst., Henry Augustus Leisten. Although a most staunch Secularist, he had not become a member of any Freethought Society, owing to long continued sickness. While preferring a secular burial, he at his parents' desire consented to Christian rites being performed. By his own desire I write this notice for publication in the *Freethinker*.—H. W. Leisten.

## ACID DROPS.

Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the honorary treasurer of the National Secular Society, applied for the use of the large hall of the Hatcham Liberal Club for a Freethought lecture, of course on the usual business terms. Mr. W. Wood, the Club secretary, replied, "I am directed by my committee to inform you that, it being contrary to the rule of the Club to allow discussion on religion, they regret your request cannot be acceded to." Well now, that *is* rich. The Club has actually *itself*, openly, deliberately, officially had lectures by Colonel Olcott and Mrs. Besant on Theosophy, and these lectures were followed by discussion. Perhaps the committee would say "Oh, Theosophy is not a religion." But that is simply humbug. The real fact, we take it, is this, that a line is drawn between the utter scepticism of the National Secular Society and the views of people who have some sort of a God and some sort of a future life. Any sort will do; but it must be some sort, and then you are respectable. The Hatcham Liberals are too squeamish to let naked Reason enter their Club.

The Hatcham Liberals, however, were very glad to receive aid from Secularists when they were establishing their club. At the very least £40 or £50 was subscribed by Secularists out of the £300 raised on debenture bonds. But the Club is prosperous now, and gratitude, of course, is a lively sense of favors *to come*.

The *Christian World* shies at Richard Davies's pious ejaculations before emigrating to heaven *via* the gallows. "The religious portions of the letter," it says, "seem un-speakably unpleasant. There is not one word of regret or repentance, nothing of humble reliance on an infinitely merciful Judge, but much of an almost self-righteous assurance of salvation." *Not one word of regret or repentance!* That is exactly what *we* said. The young murderer only thought of himself.

Tilehurst Congregation Chapel, Reading, has just held its first anniversary services. It was a great occasion, and the Rev. S. McComb rose to its full height. In a characteristic passage of a sublime discourse, he said that "a certain light in sceptical quarters, by name Mr. Foote, had *footed* down to Reading." This brilliant and original witticism threw the congregation into positive convulsions, and many of them are still suffering from the shock. It is really hard to conceive why this Goliath of Christianity, who wields such powerful and pointed weapons, does not accept the challenge of the poor little David of Secularism.

A lively scene was witnessed at a prayer-meeting in a British church at Springfield, Ohio. Mrs. Mary Higgins and Miss Jerry Taylor, two leading members, became involved in a fuss over some matter, and so far forgot themselves that they engaged in a hair-pulling scuffle before the whole congregation. The belligerent females were separated, and next morning Miss Taylor had Mrs. Higgins arrested, charging her with assault and battery.

St. James's Church, Taxal, Whaley Bridge, has been the scene of a squabble between Parson Evans and his churchwarden, Lieutenant-Colonel Hall. The parson is alleged to have assaulted the churchwarden in the very house of God, during divine service, and it is believed that legal proceedings will follow. Let us pray.

More religious love! This time in Hoyerswerda, a little town in Prussian Silesia. The Protestants attacked the Catholic church, broke all the windows, cut the pictures to pieces, and battered all the holy utensils on the altar. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen!

The German American Christ, who rejoices in the name of Schwenfurth, has been holding a convention of his followers at Rockford, Illinois. He repeated his claims to the Messiahship, and finds quite a number to bear their testimony in his favor.

The Protestant missionaries of Madras allege that in their part of India the Salvation Army "has not been successful." The S.A., they say, "have only labored where other missions have planted themselves." The Army swells

its ranks only "from the converts of other churches." They moreover assert that the number of deaths among its agents and of those disabled by sickness is exceptionally large.

The Christian Mission at Highbury is situated at the house of a gentleman who attends to the soles and toes of the populace. The inscriptions on the windows read "Mr. So-and-so, Chiropodist." "This man receiveth sinners," "What think ye of Christ?" "Corns extracted without pain."

The belief in witchcraft still survives in Suffolk, as in many other country places. At an inquest held on a child at Fressingfield, both the father and mother stated they believed the death was due to the witchcraft of the child's step grandmother, who died a few hours before the child. This woman's husband also stated that he was of opinion his late wife had the powers of a witch, but he seems to have let out the real secret when he added that he always tried to do what she wanted in consequence.

Zelie Bourion, the French fasting woman, has been dismissed from the Dordogne hospital. Dr. Lafon saw signs of inanition and would not let the ordeal be prolonged. Some of the Sisters of Charity believe that Zelie is possessed, but the doctors know better.

A serious affray has taken place at Belgaum, India, between Mohammedans and Hindoos. Over a thousand persons were engaged in a religious riot, and three followers of Mohammed and one Hindoo were killed and many more injured.

Religious bigotry came into play during the late riots in Vienna. Only the Jews' shops were plundered, and on the following days such inscriptions as "Christian old clothes shop," "Christian brandy shop," everywhere met the eye. One woman was stoned as a Jewess and narrowly escaped being burnt alive.

No doubt there are some social reasons for the odium incurred by the Jews, but this is everywhere intensified by religious bigotry. The curse of God is supposed to be upon them, and nothing can be too bad to inflict on the race who crucified the blessed Savior.

The Rev. B. J. Snell has been to Jerusalem and seen the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where rival Christians have to be kept in order by the "infidels." Mr. Snell says, "It is not lovely to see how Christians of different Churches worship under one roof, and that roof, by all their accepted signs, the most sacred roof in the world. They would fight again, as they have fought before, wildly, like beasts, but that the precaution is taken of having a hundred stacks of arms in the courtyard, with Mussulman soldiers behind the stacks. Soldiers swarm in all quarters of the church, soldiers stand on guard before every shrine, soldiers clear the space before every procession—Moslem soldiers, to restrain these Christians from actions marked by zeal without knowledge." Mr. Snell adds that even "the howling dervishes of Cairo manage without soldiers."

Hugh Price Hughes has begun a series of addresses at St. James's Hall on "Why am I a Christian?" Why not begin a series on "Why am I a Liar?" It would draw.

The Wesleyan Methodists, who are certainly the most active of the dissenting sects, only claim 423,701 members in Great Britain. This is not a very grand show after one hundred and fifty years' active propaganda, with the Lord of Hosts to back them up.

The Methodists are not to have the monopoly of the "forward" movement. The Presbyterians in London, most of whom are Scotch, have sounded the pibroch, and there has been a gathering of the clans. Bawbees have been shelled out, and the Rev. John McNeill has been commissioned to hold the fort on Sunday afternoons at the Central Hall, Holborn, a building capable of seating about 4,000 people.

We intended to address one of our "Letters to the Clergy" to the Rev. John McNeill, but after reading two or three of his sermons we found nothing to write about.

Such poverty of matter is really extraordinary in a man of such reputation.

A leader writer in the *Daily News*, we believe Mr. Andrew Lang, tells us that "In Loch Leven when the trout do not rise to fly, they are trolled for with angels, or even with the natural minnow, so hard are the hearts of the Caledonian race." We are not great on Scotch angling, but we never thought they were so hard hearted as to use angels for trolling.

A correspondent of the *Christian World* inveighs against the Victoria authorities, not only for excluding the Bible from public schools, but for keeping the very name of Christ out of the school books. We are glad to hear the gentleman has such a grievance. It is good to see the Christians wailing because they cannot tyrannise over their neighbors and their neighbors' children.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam states in the *Church Reformer* that the London School Board, besides establishing and endowing that Protestantism which makes the "Bible and the Bible only" its religion, also in one little corner of its domain has established and endowed the Jewish religion. In about half-a-dozen schools, several Jewish teachers are specially appointed: special religious instruction is arranged for: the holidays are given at the suggestion of the chief Rabbi, and alteration in the ordinary school session is allowed on Fridays: and those members of the Board, who are most particular about insisting on what they call the training of teachers, which means a residence at one of the Training Colleges, appoint without a murmur "untrained" Jewish teachers.

The Rev. Walter Walsh's lecture at Newcastle on "Is there a God?" drew a big house. His friends cheered his points, but, according to the *Leader*, he did not make "much impression upon the Secularists." Judging from the report, the Secularists must have wondered how any rational man could expect to convince his opponents by such flimsy arguments. It says much for their patience that they gave him a courteous hearing. When a Theist invites Atheists to hear him, and then tells them that a belief in God is natural to man, he is wasting their time as well as his own. The belief is not natural to *them*, and they want it proved by other arguments than one which represents them as monstrosities.

Dr. Pressensé, a French Protestant, is among the prophets. "The final utterance of our Latin races," he says, "shall neither be Atheism nor Ultramontism." We should offer him ten to one it will be one or the other, and the odds are in favor of Atheism, for the brain of France is becoming more and more irreligious.

Cannon Liddon says, "Disprove the Resurrection, and Christianity will fade away into thin air as a graceful but discredited illusion." We say it is the Christian's duty to *prove* the Resurrection. It has never been proved yet, and all the evidence it can boast would be laughed at in any court of law. Is there any Christian champion willing to discuss the Resurrection with a leading Freethinker?

The Rev. Alfred Rowland, who delivered the Merchants' Lecture last week, said it was the duty of the legislature to enforce the day of rest by closing every place but churches and chapels. But why not have a complete day of rest? Why not stop Mr. Rowland's tongue from wagging on the Sabbath? It might be a great loss to the world, but the world would survive it.

Archdeacon Denison is now joined by the Bishop of Lichfield. This right reverend father in God protests against *Lux Mundi*, the new High Church volume which, written by Oxford clergymen, admits some of the best established conclusions of German criticism. The Bishop of Lichfield and other protestors regard this as a scandal, as in a certain sense it is, for men who cannot preach the doctrines of their Church should go out of it. Even if they contracted to prove that the moon is made of green cheese, they should go on preaching it, or else throw up their positions and salaries.

According to the *Temps* the tiger is almost a divinity in Annam. Pagodas have been consecrated to him, and he has had conferred upon him titles of nobility. Such is the influence of fear on superstitious minds. Yet the law of self-preservation asserts itself, and the people try to kill the tigers who are as numerous as themselves. They entice them into pits and then destroy them.

"I have often," said General Gordon, executed men, but never without the direct sanction of the Almighty. I placed the Bible on my knees, and I prayed that if he saw fit to reverse my sentence he would signify it to me. On no single occasion was my decision reversed." Of course not. What God tells a man is what he tells himself. Now, however, Gordon is himself "executed" by the Madhi, who is quite sure that he likewise obeyed the will of God in di-patching the "infidel."

Several of the religious papers are angry with Sir George Stokes for denying that the doctrine of immortality is part of the Christian faith, and do not understand how bishops who recite the creed that they believe in the life everlasting and declare that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light can endorse him. But we suppose Sir G. Stokes and the bishops he cites in his favor want to get away from the absurdities of the resurrection of the body.

Of course J. C. didn't bring life and immortality to life. Apart from the fact that we are as much in the dark about it as ever, the Egyptians notoriously taught the doctrine of immortality ages before Moses forgot to learn that doctrine, together with all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

It is curious that while many Theists like Mr. Francis Newman give up the immortality of the soul, there are also a few spiritists—we believe Hudson Tuttle, St. George Stock and George Barlow of the number—who believe in the immortality of the soul while denying the existence of any personal God.

The High Church papers rejoice that more churches than ever went in for elaborate ritual at Easter. The Low Church *English Churchman* calls the Ritualistic churches "Flower Shows and Music Halls." Yet this is what attracts. It won't do to rely on the Blessed Trinity nowadays.

Dr. Lightfoot, the late Bishop of Durham, left by his will £23,622 17s. 9d.—not so much for the bishop of a wealthy see, but pretty good for a follower of the meek and lowly, who had not where to lay his head.

Earl Compton brings forward in Parliament a bill to prevent the appropriation of seats in church, and to practically make all seats free. Does the Church hope to stave off disestablishment by becoming democratic? It will find in the long run that the democracy mean not only to have the seats but the churches.

According to the Brazil correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, the Brazilians hail with joy the establishment of religious equality. They have long been disgusted with the character of the priesthood. He says "Some of the most active politicians here are known to be sons of priests." Celibacy is too often only a cloak for immorality.

This is equally the case in England and Ireland, if we can credit the revelations just published by Miss Cusack, who was formerly known as "The Nun of Kenmare," in her work *Life inside the Church of Rome*. The lady had full experience of what she tells, and she affirms that the Roman Catholic priests are not only unchaste, but drunken and unscrupulous.

The latest figures given of the tithe rent charge are those for 1887. The sum amounts to £4,054,403, more than enough to defray the cost of free education.

He who would follow Christ must share Christ's experiences, says Dr. Marcus Dods. Prof. Succi, the fasting man, seems to be acting on this motto, which we hope won't lead to any one being crucified.

**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

Sunday, April 20, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.; at 7, "Is the Bible Fit for Children?"

April 27, Hall of Science.  
 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.

E. WALLER.—Mr. Touzeau Parris has not written any account of his conversion to Freethought for our columns. We should be glad if he would do so. We recently announced a lecture by Mr. Parris on this subject which is perhaps what your friend refers to.

J. C. H.—Hardly up to the mark, and scarcely in our way.

H. BORLAND (Dum Dum)—Thanks for the "hearty congratulations" of your little band of Freethinkers. We believe the characters you refer to are meant for Shelley and Byron.

W. WESTERMAN.—Glad to hear from you as, in a sense, one of our converts. Your letter is extremely interesting. It is evident that Christianity has not made a paradise of the West Indies.

H. S. FRIZELLE.—Mr. Forder will write you. We hope there will be a good Branch in Dublin.

J. HARRIS.—Newsagents often tell lies to hide their bigotry. They can all supply the *Freethinker* if they wish to. There are, as you say, many small towns in which our propaganda might be introduced. Something is being attempted in the South.

B. W.—A Branch that has no copies of the Freethought papers on sale at its lectures is neglecting its duty. There is no excuse with respect to the *Freethinker*, which is supplied on sale or return.

MR. FORDER desires us to say that his name was placed on the *Freethought Record* without any communication with him before it was printed and issued.

J. S.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. J. FIELD is just joining the National Secular Society with six of his friends. Many other readers of the *Freethinker* have written us to a similar effect during the last week or two. Our correspondent sends a subscription, at the same time, in response to our appeal.

S. A. GIMSON.—Your letter arrived too late for this week's *Freethinker*. It shall appear in our next.

W. T. LEEKEY.—The reverend gentleman is like many of his cloth, a keen and unscrupulous advertiser.

G. HALL (Chester-le-Street)—We are pleased to hear good reports of Mr. J. Clarke's work in your district.

C.—We have always understood that Florence Nightingale was a professed Christian, but unsound on the dogma of future punishment.

W. CABELL.—It was a slip. Lenten fare only lasts from Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday.

E. BOYS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

W. H. COWSHILL.—It makes no difference.

E. BUCKLE.—We prefer light, satirical or comic verse. Serious verse is judged by a higher standard. Glad to hear you have gained us some fresh subscribers.

J. KEAST.—Thanks. See reply to J. A. Williams.

H. NICHOLSON.—Temperate, well-reasoned letters in the local press do the cause a great deal of good. You do right in leaving the Christians a monopoly of personalities.

C. JUNGE.—We are obliged. It may be useful.

TOLEMAN GARNER notifies Branches that he is booked right through the summer season.

J. DEAN.—Ten shillings is a handsome yearly subscription from a shop assistant. We hope your example will prove contagious.

J. READ suggests that we should open a column for brief accounts by Freethinkers of how they were converted from Christianity, as a reply to the Hugh Price Hughes species. We will think it over.

W. K.—Thanks for the cuttings. The Bishop of Liverpool may well judge Christianity by its *fruits*. It yields him a very handsome salary, which he would never earn in any honest occupation.

J. W. RUSH.—A great deal too long for our columns. The matter shall be laid before the Federation or the Organization Committee.

J. A. WILLIAMS (Bristol).—We thought it was an idle boast. Mr. Parsons seems to have a fertile imagination. With more brains he might be a poet.

A. SPENCER.—Mr. Wilks is in error or he has inadvertently misled you. The *Freethinker* is always sent out from our office on sale or return.

T. CRISFIELD.—Sorry to hear the Brighton Branch is doing so badly. No doubt such a town is very hard to work. We print your address for communications and subscriptions—8 Rose Hill Terrace. Could you get a good hall if Mr. Foote paid you a visit?

A. GUEST.—Shall appear.

BIRCH, newsagent, 25 Queen's Road, Peckham, supplies this journal and other Freethought publications.

PERSHORE STREET, Birmingham.—Your name was mutilated in opening your letter. The Society at Baskerville Hall will be pleased to see you. Ask for the secretary, and introduce yourself.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Menschentum—Progressive Thinker—Fair Play—Freidenker—Freethought—Birmingham Daily Gazette—Reading Observer—Consett Guardian—Rochdale Observer—Open Court—Evening Standard—Liberal Thinker—Washington Critic—Hull Daily News—Secular Thought—Nation—Scarborough News—Newcastle Daily Leader—Weekly Times and Echo—Kettering Observer—Lyceum—Chatham and Rochester News—Referee.

**THE FREETHOUGHT FUND.**

Mr. FOOTE'S appeal, as President of the National Secular Society, for funds to make up the recent loss of income, and to extend the Society's work, is being responded to by friends in various parts of the country. Some of the subscribers promise to remit annually as much as they can afford; others, who can only send a little at a time, promise to remit half-yearly or quarterly. As soon as possible a list of intending subscribers will be prepared. Meanwhile the following subscriptions are acknowledged as actually received by Mr. Foote or Mr. Forder.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
D. Baker	10	0	0	A. J. Field	0	10	0
W. H. S.	1	0	0	J. Dean, Jr.	0	10	0
E. Truelove	1	0	0	Hubert Richardson	1	0	0
G. R.	1	0	0	Alexander White	0	10	0
W. H. Morrish	1	0	0	S. R. Stephenson	1	1	0
Mrs. Stevens	0	5	0	E. Sims	1	0	0
A. C. G.	0	0	6	One (quarterly)	0	1	3

It is to be hoped that this first list will soon be followed by a second. Members of the N. S. S., or unattached friends of the movement, should bestir themselves. Let the President and his colleagues on the Executive be supplied, as they should be, with the sinews of war, and they will carry on the battle of Freethought with vigor, and they hope with success.

G. W. FOOTE.

**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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's lectures at Portsmouth on Sunday were well attended. The advertising was exceptionally thorough, and the result was a considerable increase in the audiences. The afternoon lecture on "Why I am an Atheist," brought two opponents on the platform. The first was a very self-complacent gentleman, apparently an amateur local preacher, who declared with a smug smile that he was going to heaven, and talked generally as if he were taking part in an experience meeting. The second was the well-known Mr. Millet. This gentleman began by blowing his own trumpet. After giving himself a first-rate character, he proceeded to do a little forgery. He read out curious Theistic declarations from Darwin, Spencer and other writers. "Will you give me the references, please?" asked Mr. Foote. No, Millet couldn't; he had the passages copied out, and that was all. But he did, unfortunately, bring with him a copy of Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, and from this volume he triumphantly read out a sentence to the effect that man's mind must have come from an infinite mind. Now Mr. Foote knew this was a fraud, so he asked Mr. Millet for the loan of the book. It was granted, and Mr. Foote showed the audience that the noble Millet had deliberately left out three words, "it is said," from the middle of the sentence, in which Mill merely stated an argument which he immediately rebutted. The Christian sat convicted and ashamed, but far from repentant. He was only angry at being found out. He came again in the evening and tried to create disorder, but failed ignominiously. Happily there was another and a better representative of Christianity. Major-General Synge spoke for ten minutes like a gentleman, and was suitably answered.

Two young men came down to Portsmouth from Poole, a distance of over fifty miles, which they covered on bicycles. They arrived in time to hear the fag end of the morning lecture, and, after hearing the afternoon lecture and the discussion, they mounted their machines to ride back to Poole.

The Portsmouth Branch is organising some summer excursions, and the experiment might be imitated by other Branches. These excursions are thoroughly enjoyed, and they yield a profit to the Branch funds.

The many friends of that Portsmouth veteran, Mr. J. Brumage, will be glad to hear that he is nearly recovered from his recent illness, and is beginning to look his old self again.

The special Executive meeting of the National Secular Society, held at the Hall of Science on Thursday, April 10, unanimously endorsed the President's action in fixing the Conference at Manchester, and decided to keep the Agenda open for resolutions until the end of the month. The matter is now in the hands of the party, and we hope no effort will be spared to make the Conference a representative one. Even Glasgow and Edinburgh could send delegates to Manchester. Distance will be no difficulty to the Branches included in the North Eastern Secular Federation. Yorkshire and Lancashire should be represented strongly. The Midlands, including Birmingham—from which we hope to see Mr. Daniel Baker—will also be able to send delegates at a moderate expense. London, of course, will remember that it owes the provinces a debt of courtesy. The South of England ought to be represented by Plymouth, Southampton, Portsmouth, and Reading. We should also like to see delegates from Grimsby in the East, and Cardiff in the West. Then there is Ireland. The Belfast Branch ought to be represented, and it would be very pleasant to see a delegate from the Dublin Branch, which is just being established.

Since the last Conference was held at Manchester, in 1873, during Mr. Foote's imprisonment, the Manchester Secularists have obtained a hall of their own. It was once a chapel and is now turned to a better use. No doubt this will attract Freethinkers from other localities, who will be able to talk with the Manchester friends and find out how the thing was done.

Mr. Foote will have some important proposals to make as to the future organisation of the party. New conditions call for new measures, and it is well that such proposals should be thoroughly discussed before being adopted.

Freethinkers residing in Battersea, Wandsworth, or Clapham should at once join the Battersea Branch of the N. S. S.; its meeting place is at present at the Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, Battersea Park, but the members hope soon to take a larger hall. This Branch intends conducting a vigorous campaign during the outdoor season. All the work as well as the expense now falls on the shoulders of a few earnest men. Freethinkers should rally round and help in the good cause.

Mr. Foote's lectures on the Religious Views of Shelley will be written out by and bye for publication. Many friends have expressed a wish to have it in print.

We have just printed and sent to the binders a remarkable work by a great German Atheist, Ludwig Feuerbach. It is rather tough reading, being as full of thought as an egg is full of meat, but every serious Freethinker should read it carefully. It is entitled *The Essence of Religion*. Feuerbach uses the psychological method, and shows how religion springs up and develops in the mind of pre-scientific man; that is, he goes to the root of the whole matter.

"The *Freethinker*, of London, England, edited by that able writer, G. W. Foote, ought to have a very large circulation in this country. We advise each of our readers to send a five-cent silver piece for a sample copy. No number is worth less than five times that sum."—*Freethinker's Magazine* (Buffalo).

In a review of Professor Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* in the *Westminster Review* for April, Mr. Walter Lloyd says: "Whatever transmutations the practice and idea of sacrifice have undergone, they are traced back originally to essentially heathen and idolatrous customs. These were at first common to the Israelites and all the Semitic tribes; they underwent various modifications in the course of time, were essentially altered in Judaism after the exile, and a whole mass of ideas which had become associated with them were most disastrously carried over into Christianity by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and finally adopted in scholastic and Calvinistic theology."

The Chatham Secular Society challenges the local clergy in the advertisement pages of the *News*. If any minister of Christ is willing to debate "What has Christianity Done?" the Society will put forward Mr. Foote as a representative. Up to the present the Secretary has not been deluged with replies.

We had the pleasure of listening to the debate between Mr. J. M. Robertson and the Rev. J. Tinsling. The reverend gentleman did far better than we expected. Mr. Engstrom publicly threw him over as incompetent, but in our judgment he could give Mr. Engstrom points as a debater. He was overweighted with a very bad case, but he pressed his own strongest points, and said as little as possible about his opponent's strong points, which is a degree of dexterity to which Mr. Engstrom has never to our knowledge attained.

Mr. Robertson did excellently. He was quick and adroit, and never at a loss for a neat reply. Since we first heard him speak in public he has wonderfully improved. He is acquiring a good platform style, and by and bye, when he conquers his tendency to too rapid speech, makes his points with greater deliberation, and crowns his arguments with a forceful peroration, there is no reason why he should not take a high position on the Freethought platform. Oratory, of course, is an art. A man must have a faculty for it to succeed, but the faculty must be cultivated, and that involves long and varied practice. Mr. Robertson has the ability, the knowledge and the earnestness. We hope he will persevere in his effort to master the art of public speech, and thus make his fine gifts of the utmost service to the cause he loves.

Some day or other Freethought will attract more men of Mr. Robertson's stamp. If young men would only be content with simplicity of living, and work hard in our party until their merits were recognised, they would find the battle worth fighting. Other terms are at present out of the question. The knight of Freethought must be content to forego the world's prizes. He must work hard, read and think much, and feel a passion for the cause; and eventually he will find



in influence and respect a better reward than Bumble and Mrs. Grundy can offer.

It is sometimes said that Brahmanism is not a missionary religion, though Sir A. Lyall has given evidence that at the present day it is converting aboriginal tribes Christianity has not got hold of. A paragraph now reports that in one Hindoo meeting held in Benares, India, over 3,000 dols. were subscribed for missionary purposes in Australia.

A Brahman of high rank had visited that country and noted the intemperance there prevailing, and he believed the best way to save these poor Christian drunkards would be to convert them to Brahmanism. Several Brahmans of rank have declared themselves willing to go as missionaries, and translations of suitable passages from Hindoo religious books have been begun.

The Report of the debate in Parliament upon Mr. Acland's resolution in favor of Free Education, when 163 voted in favor of the principle and 223 against, is now published by the Hansard Publishing Union, Limited.

*The Freethought Record* is a penny monthly, started in the interest, apparently, of the Yorkshire Secular Federation. Its editor is J. Greeves Fisher, and its sub-editor John Grange. We wish it every success, and it shows signs of life. But the editorial announcement is rather wide. It is hardly the duty of Freethought (at present) to take up spelling reform, or to advocate everything on the extreme lines of Mr. Fisher. We hope he will pardon us for saying that Freethought is a speciality, and that while every Freethinker has a right to advocate, in his individual capacity, a thousand real or imaginary reforms, it is a grave impropriety to urge them as if they were a part of our propaganda.

Mrs. E. Lynn Linton, the popular authoress of *Under Which Lord?* has been studying the Irish Question in Ireland. She makes the following remarks on the influence of the priesthood: "The Church uses up its influence for everything but the practical purposes of work-a-day life. It teaches obedience to its ordinances, but not civic virtues. It encourages boys and girls to marry at an age when they neither understand the responsibilities of life nor can support a family; but in its regard for the sacrament it forgets the pauperisation of the nation. It enforces chastity, but it winks at murder; it demands money for masses for the souls of the dead, but it leaves on one side the homes and bodies of the living; it breeds a race of paupers to drag the country lower and lower into the depths of poverty, and thinks it has done a meritorious work, and one that calls for praise because of the paucity of numbers in the percentage of illegitimate births."

We learn from the *Liberator* that a Freethought paper has been issued at Brisbane, Queensland, with the very Australian title of the *Stockwhip*. It is, we gather, conducted by Mr. Wallace Nelson, formerly of Sheffield. We expect the *Stockwhip* will make the orthodox smart.

A few years ago, says an exchange, Ingersoll was passing through Cincinnati, and at his hotel he was accosted by a working man, who addressed him as follows: "Mr. Ingersoll, I am a poor, hard-working man, having a family to support, and I want a favor." "Well," said Robert, "what can I do for you?" "I want to call a brand of my cigars after you, and permission to use your photograph," answered the man. "Certainly, my man, and I will give you a motto, if you desire." "I would thank you if you would," responded the man. Colonel Ingersoll gave it to him as follows: "We shall smoke in this world, but not in the next." Some months afterward, while passing through Cincinnati, Colonel Ingersoll was informed that the man made 9,000 dols. off the brand of cigars in less than a year.

An American judge of Philadelphia decided that a witness need not kiss the Bible. The lawyer having objected to a lady's evidence on this ground, Judge Arundel said "I am not surprised that this witness did not kiss the book. I would not do it either—a dirty book like that. This custom is a relic of idolatry, and the sooner it is abolished the better it will be. I don't think this witness objected to kissing the book because she intended to lie, but because it is a dirty book. I respect her regard for her person and her health." Such straws show

the way the wind blows. Secular considerations take precedence of theological customs.

The charge of blasphemy brought against Mr. Walker of Lancaster, Tasmania, has been abandoned, and he is now charged with using language calculated to promote a breach of the peace. This shows that even in that backward spot they are afraid they cannot obtain a conviction for blasphemy.

Dr. Remigius Stölzle, Professor of Philosophy at Würzburg, has discovered some MSS. by Giordano Bruno in the library at Augsburg. They are commentaries on Aristotelean works and will be published with Bruno's complete works by Signor Tocco.

Mr. J. D. Shaw has purchased a corner lot in Waco, Texas, and proposes to rebuild a Freethought Hall and establish an Independent Pulpit Publishing House. We wish him success.

#### DID MOSES WRITE THE PENTATEUCH?

THE debate on this subject between Mr. J. M. Robertson and the Rev. Mr. Tinling, which took place at the Hall of Science on Thursday, April 10, was fully as lively as could be expected, and was very well attended. The debate arose out of a challenge thrown down by Mr. Tinling, who attended on behalf of the Christian Evidence Society at a lecture on "Freethought and the Bible" delivered by Mr. Robertson on behalf of the London Secular Federation.

The chair was taken by the Rev. Mr. Matthews, who exhorted the hearers to recognise all the facts and preserve an unbiased judgment.

Mr. ROBERTSON, in his opening speech, alluded to the tendency, even of Church scholarship, to give up the Mosaic authorship of the five books placed first in our Bible. In confirmation he cited Canon Driver, the Rev. Stanley Leathes, Dr. S. Davidson, and the Rev. Mr. Oxford. On the face of it only certain parts pretend to have come from Moses. There were others he could not have written. In the time of the Second Temple the Sadducees held that Moses only wrote the Ten Commandments. Even Jerome thought Ezra might have written the law. For the orthodox side there was only tradition, and to show what that was worth Mr. Robertson mentioned that the Rabbis in the Talmud held that Moses wrote the book of Job. Tradition was of no critical value. He then referred to 2 Kings xxii., which tells how the book of law was found in the reign of King Josiah. This was the first mention of any such work, and there was no reason to believe that it was known in the days of Hezekiah, Solomon or David. Go further back to the Book of Judges, within measurable distance of the Mosaic period, and there was no trace of the law. They offered up sacrifice at local shrines in direct opposition to it, and the historic writers never say they broke the law. The law ascribed to Moses set up a vast sacerdotal system, a large tabernacle with much upholstery, elaborate service and 22,000 Levites. How could all this have been set up in the wilderness and then utterly disappear? In Judges we found no king, no high priest, no sacerdotalism, no organised nation, but half-civilised tribes, who occasionally united under leaders of ability like Gideon. In Samuel the centre of worship, a little ark on a cart, was put in the hands of a private person. Judges showed there could have been no such numbers as stated in Exodus, 600,000 fighting men, or a nation of two and a half millions in a wilderness, without water, living on manna, killing an enormous number of lambs a male lamb of the first year for every family, implying two million sheep, who would need 400,000 acres of grazing ground. For the tabernacle there was metal work; yet in the reign of Saul there was no smith in Israel, and Solomon had to send abroad for workmen to build his temple. Mr. Robertson dwelt on the preposterous details of the Jews' forty years in the wilderness, and contended that everything could be explained by the books having been composed by the priests after their return from the captivity, when the hierarchy in the place of the king controlled Israel after a small remnant of the people returned from Babylon.

Mr. TINLING thanked Mr. Robertson for his courtesy in opening the debate, although the challenge had been given by Mr. Tinling. He devoted most of his half-hour to showing that the critics disagreed among themselves. Disregarding Spinoza, he said criticism had been going on since 1753, and reviewing it, we were struck with the disagreement of the critics. All allowed that Deuteronomy was the great battle-

ground. Wellhausen contends the Book of Deuteronomy was written first, and Leviticus after, but one of these great scholars, Dr. Bleek, held it certain that Deuteronomy was written to supplement the Levitical law. Professor Rawlinson wrote thirty years ago that there were twenty different theories, each more complicated than the last, as to the origin of the Pentateuch, so you may guess how many there are to-day. Some said the Book of the Covenant was written by a Jehovist, others by an Elohist. One says one thing and another, another. One said the Jehovist was first. "No, no," say the other critics, "the Elohist was first." Why? Because their theories required it. Wellhausen, the apostle of the new school, thinks he can trace three documents and three editions. Ewald says there are seven. Others say it is a mass of fragments. You will find them flatly contradicting each other with equal scholarship. Those are facts. Delitzsch, the great Hebrew scholar who has just died, says the style of Deuteronomy marks it as unique and in one mould, but d'Eichthal says Deuteronomy was a lot of fragments. We don't know where they are or what they will say next. If you take one you must sacrifice all the rest. Wellhausen had come at last to the opinion that only on the ground of antiquities could the matter be settled. If we could get on the ground on antiquities he had strong hopes Mr. Robertson would be on his side. Where were these books to be put? In the time of Ezra, said the critics. Why? Because they cannot be put any lower. They don't fit anywhere but in the time of Moses. There are things in the time of Ezra not in Leviticus. The time of Ezra was the beginning of the synagogue, an opposite movement to the Levitical system, which centralised all at the capital. He held that the historical books and the Psalms were full of the law. But the critics say the passages are late or interpolated. Why? Because it conflicts with their theories. The Psalms was chokeful of the law of the Lord, so they would have that none of the Psalms were written by David. But the superscriptions at the head of the Psalms was part and parcel of the Psalms themselves. Then there was Jesus Christ, who said "if they do not believe in Moses, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead." After his crucifixion he again referred to Moses. (Laughter.) If the critics are divided into two camps he thought that with parties so balanced they might allow a little weight to that man Jesus, if they thought him a man, who was at any rate in touch with Judaism and nearer the scene. The evidence was flowing in that Moses was the writer of these books. In the book of Judges he found much reference to the law. The vows were binding, as is the case of Jephthah; there was circumcision, clean and unclean meats, the Nazarite as in Samson, burnt and peace offerings and trumpets. One of the boldest critics, Hartmann, said the arranger of Judges was well acquainted with the Pentateuch. In many passages in the historical books the prophets showed they were seeking to bring the people back to the same God and the same system of his servant Moses. (Applause.)

Mr. ROBERTSON complained that Mr. Tinling had devoted only a tenth part of his speech to meeting his arguments. His long discourse on the critics, mostly those of from twenty to fifty years ago, only showed they disagreed as to how the documents were put together. All agreed that Moses did not write them. Even Ewald, who was largely orthodox, admitted this. Mr. Tinling said Jesus Christ lived nearer the scene, but he did not deal with his statement that the Sadducees of the second temple, who were still nearer and who were the most critical of the Jews, held that Moses only wrote the Decalogue. Mr. Tinling said there were thirty theories. There were at the start, but he should be aware that there was now a large consensus of opinion agreeing with the views of Keunen and Wellhausen. They had profited by the labors of their predecessors, and human sagacity was getting at the truth despite the forgery of the books. Mr. Robertson then alluded to the fact of the Jews being said to have shekels of the sanctuary in the wilderness. Did they coin the money or steal it from the Egyptians? In the time of Solomon they paid in corn and oil. He also mentioned other difficulties his opponent had not taken up. The references to the law of the Lord was to the old cultus not the Mosaic law, which expression never occurred until Malachi. He denied that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and equally that David wrote the Psalms. As to the superscription being part of the original there were no Hebrew MSS. of the middle ages. The synagogue movement only had regard to meetings on Sabbath, and was not antagonistic to the movement which made

Jerusalem the one central temple of Judaism. The items referred to in Judges were all common to other Semitic faiths besides Judaism.

Mr. TINLING, after citing Hartmann the second time as saying that the man who wrote (A voice: "arranged") Judges was acquainted with the Pentateuch, said Moses foresaw the Jews would have a king. There was not only the Hebrew version, but that of the Samaritans, and the translation of the Greek Jews. Here were three versions all bearing testimony to the Mosaic authorship. This was scarcely ever denied within the first four centuries of the Christian era, and then those few who said Moses did not write the books did not want his authority over them. All the Greek and Latin writers admitted Moses as the author, and he argued if the ages of the past had handed down a tradition, unless you had proofs to the contrary, you ought to accept it as a matter of course. Consider what the law was—the most burdensome ever given. Will any sane man believe that this burdensome law was imposed on the Jews when it meant tithing three times a year? The language was just what would be expected of Moses. If he did write, it was just the kind of book we might expect. Even the critics acknowledged there were archaic fragments. Note the simplicity of Genesis, the difference between Genesis and Exodus—they represent different epochs. After Exodus the books assume the character of a journal written down hastily at the places where they encamped. The Egypt of the Ramasides so corresponded with that of Moses that Egyptologists read them side by side with the monuments and find them exactly correct.

Mr. ROBERTSON denied the alleged correspondences with Egyptian monuments, and pointed out some particulars of the Jewish religion copied from the Egyptians, such as the breastplate of priests, the cherubs on side of the ark, bells and pomegranites, etc. Such correspondences as existed depended on the stability of Oriental life. The life of the Bedouin Arab to-day corresponded with that in the time of Abraham. Mr. Robertson further pointed out that the account of Moses in the bullrushes was similar to a myth in regard to Horus, and that the two mid-wives for the whole nation of Jews were really the Egyptian goddesses who presided over births. He then proceeded with his general argument that the story of the Jews in the wilderness involved a constant miracle, and that no trace of the Mosaic laws could be discovered before the time of Josiah. How could the tabernaclesystem have existed in the wilderness, and then totally disappear? He did not deny that the books preserved certain legends and customs, but the further you went back in the historical books there was the less correspondence with the priestly code. Only a few of the Jews came back from Babylon, and those the most fanatical under priestly leaders. They had an easy task. It was easy to set up the tithing system by appealing to old custom among a fanatical people. In regard to the Jubilee, Kalisch admitted there was no proof the Jubilee was ever kept. None of the kings obeyed the law. Deuteronomy said that when they came to the land they should set up a king, but Samuel, the servant of the Lord, was angry when they sought to do this. He reminded Mr. Tinling that he had not dealt with the difficulties in regard to the Jews in the wilderness.

Mr. TINLING said he believed it was an epoch in which the Creator did work miracles for the establishment of his religion. In regard to the large flocks and herds, herbage formerly grew where now none was found. We read of Moses feeding his flocks in the wilderness. Where did they get them from? They were instructed to ask for them from the Egyptians. He did not see anything wonderful in their having coins. They were led by a man who had been trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians. Mr. Tinling then in his last speech introduced much new matter, citing Mr. Stuart Poole, Sir Wm. Dawson, and Professor Palmer, to show that the accounts of Egypt and of the topography of the wilderness were correct. He concluded by observing that the matter was a most important one. If we see the connection between this question and that of Jesus and the apostles nothing could be more important. If the books ascribed to Moses were fraudulent the foundations of Christianity were vain, but if they came from God it also was divine.

A vote of thanks to the chair concluded the proceedings.

Mrs. Smith: "What do you suppose makes the new minister so undersized? He looks as if he hadn't got his growth."  
Mrs. Bascom: "I donno, but I kind o' suspect he was brought up on the Shorter Catechism."

**SUNDAY MEETINGS.**  
LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7, Mr. F. Millar, "The Evolution of Religious Ideas."  
Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30, a lecture. Park Gates, 11.15, a lecture. Social evening every Tuesday.  
Bethnal Green—Opposite "Salmon and Ball," Mr. R. Rossetti will lecture at 11.15.  
Claremont Hall, Pentonville Road, N., at 7, Mr. Sam. Standring, "Protestantism."  
Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 5.30, tea and soiree.  
East London—Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "The Beliefs of Jesus."  
Edmonton—Opposite the "Angel," 3, Mr. L. Keen, "The Last Scene."  
Finsbury Park (near the band-stand). 3.30, Mr. S. Standring, "The Westminster Confession of Faith."  
Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Is the Bible Fit for Children?"  
Hyde Park, near Marble Arch; 11.15, Mr. G. Standring, "Faith and Freethought."  
Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. Herbert Burrows, "Three Aspects of Freethought: Social, Political, and Moral."  
New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11, Mr. Sam. Standring, "Looking after Number One."  
West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, members' quarterly meeting; 7, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Is Deity Conceivable?"  
Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. Mr. F. Haslam, "Why I Remain a Freethinker."  
Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Socialist speakers.  
Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Masey Road), 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "And Yet it Moves."

**COUNTRY.**

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Mr. A. B. Moss, 11, "Man's Place in Nature"; 3, "Apostles of Freethought"; 7, "Inspired Non-sense."  
Chester-le-Street—At the house of Mrs. McLean, 6.30, special members' meeting, business very important.  
Glasgow Secular Society and Branch of N. S. S., 122 Ingram Street.—6.30, Mr. McCluskey, "The Single Tax Fallacy Reviewed."  
Heckmondwike—at Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a meeting.  
Hull Branch—No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, 6.30, Mr. H. Porter, "Christ's Parables."  
Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—11, Tontine Society; 11.30, committee meeting; 7, Mr. Gowland, "Individual and Social Evolution."  
Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, humorous and dramatic recitals by Mr. and Mrs. E. C. White. Free. Dancing class on Wednesday at 8.  
Newcastle-on-Tyne—Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, Mr. J. Clarke, 11, "The Power of Fear"; 3, "The Religion of the Future"; 7, "Anthropomorphism, or the Human Character of Gods." Tea provided in the Society's rooms after afternoon lecture.  
Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, Dr. C. B. Drysdale, 11, "Popular Medical Questions: Alcohol, Vegetarianism, and Vaccination"; 7, "Overpopulation and its Remedies."  
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Southsea, 7, Mr. Lush, "Vegetarianism, a False Ism"; several prominent vegetarians likely to attend, and good discussion will follow.  
Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rookingham Street, Mr. W. Heaford, 11, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"; 3, "Christianity and Civilisation not Friends but Foes"; 7, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."  
South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, at 7, Captain W. B. Duncan, "Theosophy."

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E.—April 20, Birmingham; 27, Reading. May 4 (morning), Westminster (evening), Woolwich; 11 (morning), Camberwell; 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25 (afternoon), Regent's Park. June 1 (morning), Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich; 8 (morning), Bethnal Green; 15 (evening), Ball's Pond; 22 (morning), Clerkenwell; 29 (morning), Mile End. July 13, Mile End.  
TOLLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—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; 22 (evening), Woolwich; 29 (morning), Bethnal Green. July 6 (morning), Hyde Park; 13 (morning), Clerkenwell Green; 27 (morning), Mile End Waste.  
JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—April 27, Hull; 28, Grimsby. May 4, Nottingham.  
T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—April 27, Hyde Park.  
H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—April 20, Rochdale. May 4, Birmingham.

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