

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. X.—No. 19.]

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1890.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MR. GLADSTONE ON THE CREATION STORY.

[CONTINUED.]

MR. GLADSTONE makes the extraordinary assertion that "no moral mischief ensues because some have supposed the days of creation to be pure solar days of twenty-four hours." Certainly the belief in a literal six-days' creation does not prompt a man to pick pockets or commit adultery. But is there no "moral mischief" in hindering the progress of science, upon which so much of our well-being depends? Is there no moral mischief in the persecution of those who are afterwards seen to be our benefactors? Was there no moral mischief in the intimidation of Galileo? Was there no moral mischief in the murder of Giordano Bruno? Was there no moral mischief in the early prejudices of Sir Charles Lyell against what he subsequently recognised as truth, or in the insults heaped upon him when he proclaimed it to the world? Was there no moral mischief in the bigotry with which the clergy as well as their fanatical dupes treated the teachings of Darwin? Is there no moral mischief in wasting the working man's precious day of leisure, every week, in obedience to a Sabbatarian law which is founded on the literal Story of Creation?

We would also observe that Mr. Gladstone is extremely vague, and, in so far as he is clear, inaccurate, in his remarks on the Sabbath. "It seems also probable," he says, continuing his *lessons* of the Mosaicist, "that the Creation Story was intended to have a special bearing on the great institution of the day of rest, or Sabbath, by exhibiting it in the manner of an object lesson." Now in the whole of the early Jewish history there is no trace of a Sabbath. We find it in the Mosaic Law, which is a post-exile concoction, but not in the annals of the Judges and Kings. Indeed, the very reference in the Fourth Commandment to "the stranger within thy gates," shows that it was not delivered to desert nomads, but to a people settled down in Palestine and dwelling in walled and fortified cities. For these reasons, or partly for these reasons, Paley maintains that God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" by a sort of historical anticipation. But Mr. Gladstone would have us believe that "Assyrian researches" have revealed traces of some primitive "institution or command." This is, however, the veriest perverseness. What Assyrian researches have shown is that the number seven was held sacred by the masters of the Jews, and that they had a Sabbath, or day of rest, long before the chosen people. Here again the Jews were not inventors, but borrowers; and the primeval sanctification of the Sabbath is one of the many impostures of their priestly annalists.

The Egyptians had a periodic day of rest; namely, one day in every ten; but it appears that they were

also acquainted with the seven-days division of time. The Assyrians, the Romans, and other ancient nations had likewise their periods of rest and work. And why? For the simple reason that the leaders of a civilisation based upon slavery discovered the necessity of a periodic rest to the laborer. Without it his energies decayed. And that the time of rest, whatever it was, should be associated with mythical events, was only natural in a society in which every part of life was under a religious sanction.

It is also clear that the sacredness of the number seven, in Assyria as in scores of other parts of the world, sprang out of natural reasons. Moon worship precedes sun worship because man's attention is excited by the changeable rather than the regular. It was discovered that the full lunation occupied twenty-eight days. That number was halved, and the result was fourteen. That number was halved again, and the result was seven. But this number could not be halved, or divided in any way; it was indivisible and mysterious, and therefore sacred. Then there were the seven planets, from which the days were named, and this not only doubled but squared the sacredness of the number seven. But behind this there is something older and more vital. The covering of the generative organs is often neglected by the males among savages, but scarcely ever among the females. That covering was the beginning of decency, and it rose from the fact of menstruation. Now the sexual periodicities throughout the whole animal world, including the human race, run in seven days or multiples of seven days. Let this truth, therefore, be connected with the indivisible quarter of the moon's total phases, and the number of the planets, and you have an importance, a mystery, and therefore a sacredness attaching to the number seven, which could never attach to another number. This is the reason why the number seven appears and reappears in all religious systems. It is found among savages, and it asserts its ancient and august claims in the teachings of Theosophy, which talks learnedly, but after all superstitiously, of the seven-fold nature of man. Thus religion is like the mythical snake of eternity. Extremes meet, and the head and the tail are united.

There is still another aspect of the question. It is shrewdly observed by Rénan, in his *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, that the Sabbath could not have arisen among nomads. Except when they shift their tents, and travel to fresh pastures, they have nothing to do but to sit and watch their flocks and herds. One day is exactly like another, and a day of rest would be unintelligible. It is obvious, therefore, that the story of the primeval sanctification of the Sabbath, and its injunction in the Mosaic Law, belong to a much later period than the Exodus. They belong, in short, to the post-exile period. Every fact supports this theory, and there is not a single fact which contradicts it.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

THE BOOK OF ENOCH.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."—Jude 14-15.

THE work appealed to as a supernatural prophecy by "the seventh from Adam," though it had the fate of being lost to Europe for a thousand years is still in existence, and of late has had considerable attention drawn to it, though it is by no means as well-known as it should be to all students of early Christianity. The Book of Enoch has had a curious fate. It was much used by the Christian writers of the first five centuries, and the earlier ones certainly regarded it as of divine authority. As the doctrine of the coming of Christ to judge the world fell into the background, or from some other cause, the work was neglected and, after the decline of literature consequent on the triumph of the Church, remained unknown till 1773, when Bruce the Abyssinian explorer brought back three copies from that country, where it forms part of the Sacred Canon standing immediately before the book of Job. He deposited a copy at Oxford, but it remained untranslated till 1821, when it was published by Dr. R. Laurence, afterwards Archbishop of Cashel whose work has been republished with an important introduction by Mr. Charles Gill, author of *The Evolution of Christianity*.* Irenaeus, the first father who mentions the Four Gospels, and who indeed founds the reason of their being four on the cosmology given in the book of Enoch, affirms that Enoch although a man filled the office of God's messenger to the angels (Against Heresies iv., 19.) See Enoch xv.

Tertullian, in his treatise "On Female Dress," in which he traces feminine ornamentation to the conjunction of daughters of men with fallen angels, asserts (bk. i., ch. 3) that "the Scripture of Enoch was published before the deluge," and argues that it was preserved by Noah, and is authoritative although not accepted by the Jews. He says:

"But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us; and we read that 'every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired' [see 2 Tim. iii., 16]. By the Jews it may now seem to be rejected for that very reason, just like the other portions nearly which tell of Christ. Nor, of course, is this fact wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spake of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive. To those considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude."†

Modern apologists compare the quoting of Enoch by Jude to the citation by Paul of Gentile poets (Acts xvii., 28; 1 Cor. xv., 33; Titus i., 12). Why Paul, if inspired, should quote uninspired writers, is not easy to see, but at least he describes them correctly, whereas Jude makes the mistake of saying the seventh from Adam prophesied, and indeed builds upon this prophecy his own doctrine of angelology and eschatology. The work from which he quotes is indeed a farrago of fanatical rubbish, now mainly of use as illustrating what insanity passed in the East for inspiration.

The Book of Enoch, like so many other works of the early Christian period, is a forgery. That is, it pretends to be written by Enoch the prophet, the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah, who walked with God, while in reality it was composed in the first century before the Christian era. It was quite the fashion of that time to draw attention to religious works by affixing to them the name of some noted personage. Thus we have Ecclesiastes pretending to be the utterance of "the son of David the king in Jerusalem," though Solomon was as innocent of its composition as of that of The Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha. Psalms were ascribed

to David, which were written in the Maccabean period, and another work of the same time ascribed to Daniel. New Testament literature labors under similar suspicion. An approximation to the date of the Book of Enoch can be attained from its contents. It evidently arose among devout Jews, whether Chasidim or Essenes, who longed and looked forward to the restoration of the true faith and the judgment of the righteous upon the ungodly. The citation in Jude fixes a date below which it cannot be placed, and although it may be argued that different strata are embedded in its composition, the absence of the name of Jesus or any allusion to the Roman power shows that it was all written for Jews before the Christian era, and probably from the time of the Maccabees to that of Herod.

Nevertheless the book is permeated with what we may call Christian thought. The coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints is indeed a central idea. The work reveals the source of many Christian dogmas and mysteries and it especially shows that Jesus in his predictions of the end of the world and cranky John of Patmos in his mad description of the same in the Apocalypse, were neither of them as original as usually supposed. This statement is scarcely so strong as that made in a paper prepared for the Church Congress of 1888 by the Rev. Sir George William Cox, and read by the Rev. R. Healey at Manchester that year. Sir G. W. Cox contended that the eschatological matters in the epistles bearing the name of Jude and Peter was obtained from the Book of Enoch—that the imagery of the Apocalypse and the matter of the discourses in Matt. xxiv. and xxv. was obtained from the same source, and that these discourses were therefore not uttered as given to us, and were probably not uttered at all. This statement was greeted with loud hisses at the Manchester Church Congress, but all the clerical cackle in Christendom could not now remove the evidences that the New Testament is honey-combed with ideas and phrases founded on a work admittedly spurious.

In proof of this assertion we can only afford space for a few extracts, followed by New Testament references, both of which might be largely multiplied.

Enoch xlv. 4: "And a voice was heard from heaven."—See Matt. iii. 17.

En. vi. 9: "The elect shall possess light, joy and peace, and they shall inherit the earth."—Matt. v. 5.

En. xevi. 6, 7, 25: "Woe unto you, sinners, who say, 'We are rich, possess wealth, and have acquired everything which we can desire. Now then will we do whatsoever we are disposed to do whatsoever we are disposed to do; for we have amassed silver; our barns are full.' . . . They shall surely die suddenly."—Luke xii.

En. xlvi. 2: "This is the Son of man . . . who will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed."—Col. ii., 3.

En. ix., 3, 4: "Then they said to their Lord, the King: Thou art Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings. The throne of thy glory is for ever and ever, and for ever and ever is thy name sanctified and glorified. Thou hast made all things; thou possessest power over all things; and all things are open and manifest before thee. Thou beholdest all things, and nothing can be concealed from thee."—Rev. iv. 11.

En. lxxix.: "In the days of sinners the years shall be shortened, . . . and every thing done on earth shall be subverted and disappear in its season. . . . In those days the fruits of the earth shall not flourish in their season, . . . heaven shall stand still. The moon shall change its laws, and not be seen at its proper period, . . . and all the classes of the stars shall be shut up against sinners."

En. lxi., 9: "And trouble shall seize them when they shall behold this Son of woman sitting upon the throne of his glory."—Matt. xxiv. 7, 21, 22, 29, 30.

En. cii. 17: "The former heaven shall depart and pass away, a new heaven shall appear."—Rev. xxii. 1.

The phrase applied to Judas by Jesus, "it were better that man had never been born," is taken literally from Enoch. For numerous other instances of how far the New Testament compilers were indebted to this uninspired writer who flourished before the world had heard of Christianity, we refer our readers to the work itself and its Introduction by Mr. Gill.

J. M. WHEELER.

* Published by Kegan Paul, Trübner and Co.
† P. 308 Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol. xi.

RELIGION AND VIRTUE IN IRELAND.

WHENEVER I assert, in conversation with my Christian acquaintances, that men and women would live much happier and better and more useful lives if there were no such things as priests and churches, I am always met by the argument that but for the restraints of religion, and the fears of hell, the bulk of the people "would go to the dogs" from the point of view of morality. They point with triumph to the great virtue of the Irish women as an instance of the influence of religion, and they say that but for the confessional matters would be very different indeed. These are the stock arguments of the religious folk, and there are people who go so far as to say that even if religion is all humbug, it is very much better that men and women should believe pious lies than they should believe secular truths and act up to them.

There is no doubt but that the women of Ireland are very virtuous, and that the confessional exercises a very great influence over their conduct. There is no denying that there are fewer illegitimate children in Catholic Ireland than there are in non-Catholic Ireland. This fact is a continual boast of the priests, who say that it is all due to their teachings and the teachings of the Church. Admitting all this without reserve, the fact still remains that this boasted virtue must be very artificial when it is unable to subsist except under threats of the most awful torture in a future world.

If it is true that morality in Ireland would be shattered by the overthrow of religion, then there are two conclusions that must inevitably be come to. One is that the virtue that now prevails is not genuine, as it cannot stand the test of freedom from imaginary terrors; and the other is that the teachings of the Catholic clergy for centuries must have exceedingly empty when they have resulted in nothing better than this knock-kneed morality that depends for its existence upon fears of punishment and hopes of reward. Both of these conclusions are valid in every way.

Virtue in Ireland is a negative sort of thing. People are not virtuous because it is good to be virtuous, but because they *fear* to be otherwise. In reality I do not think that we are much better than our neighbors. From what the priests themselves say, it is perfectly plain that the people, if left to themselves, would conduct themselves very differently from what they do at present. They are *inclined* to break certain commandments, we are told; they *desire* to ignore certain codes of conduct laid down by the Church; and they merely stop short of carrying out their inclinations and their desires through fear of the consequences in another world. This is all that religion has done for virtue in Ireland; it has done everything for making people virtuous *in act*, but it has done nothing at all to raise the minds of the people to that level whose standard is, that true virtue is its own reward and its violation its own punishment.

I am not to be taken, for a moment, as meaning that I would look with unconcern at anything like a lowering of the present standard of female virtue in Ireland, even though that standard is far and away more artificial than real. But at the same time I can see clearly that while the present state of things last there will be no true progress, and no genuine advance in civilisation in Ireland. The Irish are not natural enough. Their civilisation is a cast-iron sort of affair, incapable of much alteration or improvement. They regard the teachings of their Church as the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and that for all practical purposes the last word has been spoken about what it is right to believe and disbelieve. As long as they remain in this stick-in-the-mud condition their mental and moral development will be sadly

hampered. And if the priests can manage it, in this condition they will remain for all time.

I have just said that the Irish are virtuous *in act*, if in no other way. But the bulk of them have really no true ideas of sexual virtue at all. They have a horror of civil marriages, and would as soon think of committing murder as of getting married at a registry office. Yet their notions of marriage, in the great majority of instances, do not rise above carnal or mercenary motives. Amongst the peasantry marriages are a mere matter of barter, and anything like marriage for love is hardly ever heard of. The priests foster this degrading state of affairs. Mercenary alliances bring fat fees into the priestly till, and *that* is what the priests want. As to young men and young women choosing mates for themselves, the thing is never dreamt of. But to protect them from wishing so to choose, all merry-making in country places is discountenanced, and there are instances even where priests will not allow young men and young women to talk to each other in the village street in broad noon-day. For anybody with genuine respect for woman, the summary manner in which she is disposed of in rural Ireland is at once disgusting and disheartening.

In the cities the cry of the priests to young men is "Get married." They preach incessantly the enormity of the crime of "keeping company" with young women. How decent Catholic young men tolerate the way they are preached to is simply amazing. It is no unusual thing to hear preachers state that it is little short of a "mortal sin" for a man to take a walk into the country in company with a woman. To the man who does so they address fervent appeals to get married. These teachings are followed by evil results. Under them marriage is too often but a mere licence for immorality, and the boasted virtue anything but virtue. I fear that too many people follow the priest's advice and marry for no better reason than to satisfy their passions. But they are told and believe that the mumblings of a priest make matters all right and constitute them highly virtuous and moral folk.

While there are no higher ideas of marriage than these, it must be expected that the Irish as a people can never reach that standard of moral and manly excellence of which they are capable. Where such marriage customs hold good, the home-life can never offer such healthy examples to the young as if marriage was free and regulated by choice, instead of being regulated by the priests' desire for money and by their notions of what constitutes morality. Outwardly the Irish home may be an example of happiness, while the reality too often is that a "cat and dog life" prevails. Men and women are driven to marry, and no matter how they may come to hate each other, there is no hope for anything like a divorce. The intercourse of such people may be called "virtue," but if it is, virtue loses its beauty in my eyes.

If the restraints of religion were removed there might be some falling off in the decorous conduct observable in Ireland. But it would be well at any rate to have the people natural, as then we might expect them to progress, the ambition for which is in the nature of man when he is not under unnatural restraint. As matters now are there can be no progress and no appreciable advance in civilisation. Religion in Ireland and the virtue it enjoins are insuperable bars to that development which the natural intelligence of Irishmen would, under happier circumstances, impel them to attain.

J. O'DONOVAN.

A little girl in church, after the contribution plate had been passed, complacently and audibly said, "I paid for four, mamma; was that right?"

Teacher: "Tommy, what did our Savior mean when he said to Peter, 'from henceforth thou shalt catch men'?" Tommy: "I suppose he meant Peter was going to be a policeman."

THE MAGIC FIGHT.

Tune—"The Enniskillen Dragoon."

THE Jews had pitched at Kephidim
While on their famous tramp,
When there arose a mighty king
To pulverise their camp.
Said Moses unto Joshua,
"Go fight him in the plain,
And I will to yon hill repair
Your valor to sustain."

Then Josh and all his men marched out
The enemy to kill,
While Moses, Hur, and Aaron
Climbed up a neighboring hill;
And when Mo held his stick aloft
The Israelites prevailed;
But when he let his hand go down
They just as sadly failed.

Then Aaron hunted up a stone
Whereon good Moses sat,
And Hur stood on this side of him,
While Aaron stood on that,
And steadied up his heavy hands
That Josh might win the fight;
And in that queer position
Remained till it was night.

No doubt they found it tiring work
To keep his elbows straight;
For we are told in "Holy Writ"
His hands were no light weight.
And then, suppose the merry louse
At work among their thatch,
How could they, with both hands engaged,
Perform the needful scratch?

By that time General Joshua
Had vanquished all his foes;
Then Moses dropped his weary hands
And from his rock arose,
And built an altar to the Lord
For bringing them such luck,
And giving to the Jewish troops
The right amount of pluck.

'Tis strange no ancient artist
Has portrayed this battle scene,
With Moses perched upon a hill
Two godly priests between,
'Twould be a grand attraction
In a gallery of art,
And bring the Jews from far and near,
Their golden "quids" to part.

T. CLARK.

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.

Johnny: "Pa, what do they ring church bells for?" Pa: "To make people believe there's a fire in another world my son."

Johnny: "Is God Irish?" Sunday-school Teacher: "Why no, my dear. Why do you ask such a question?" Johnny: "Coz, he always says 'ye.'"

ACID DROPS.

The blessed May Meetings are in full swing. We don't refer to the Labor demonstrations, but to the meetings of the Black Army who swarm in London and plot and plan in the interest of superstition. Anyone who bought a list of these assemblies at the *Christian World* office, and attended them all, except when two or more took place at the same hour, would be fit for a lunatic asylum at the finish. Only a miraculously strong head could possibly stand such a dose of unction, cant, snuffing, lies, and hypocrisy. For our part, we think it would be politic on the part of the Christians to concentrate their forces. Church and chapel might be kept separate, but they might form two great divisions. One might be presided over by the weeping Bishop of London, the other by the oily and unscrupulous Hugh Price Hughes. Nay, the two leaders might co-operate in producing a novel, or a drama. Temple might supply the *pathos*, and Hughes the *invention*. For a title we suggest "The Christian Mother and her Atheist Son."

A Methodist correspondent of the *Echo* says "Methodists need to be rich people. The fancy pet West-end scheme [of Hugh Price Hughes] is crippling finances in all our country circuits." The Wesleyan Missionary Society, like its other organisation, is in an unsatisfactory condition. It began the year with a debt of £9000 and the year's contributions were £10,000 less than in 1888.

The clerical majority on the Plymouth School Board are doing their best in favor of denominational education, in direct opposition to the spirit of the Education Act. They have put out an innocent-looking circular, asking pupil teachers, etc., to join religious instruction classes. Although this circular is signed by the Archdeacon of Totnes and others, it is distributed by the Church representatives on the School Board. Pupil teachers, who have enough to do to be proficient in the secular subjects included in the Code, should leave these religious instruction classes severely alone.

Who is "Horace Courtney," hailing from Clapham, who writes a curious letter to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*? We suspect he is a Christian masquerading as a Freethinker. He "ventures to say" that there is not a single Freethinker of culture and intelligence who has the least sympathy with the vile stuff purveyed by Mr. Foote under the fair name of Freethought." Well, we don't pretend that any of our readers possess the colossal "culture and intelligence" of Horace Courtney, but some of the best friends of this journal are doctors, solicitors, schoolmasters and university men. More than one professor takes the *Freethinker* weekly, and some of our correspondents, whose names we are not free to publish, are famous in the world of letters.

"Horace Courtenay" is evidently very ignorant of current Freethought literature. He writes as though Comic Bible Sketches were still appearing in the *Freethinker*. He also says that the party we "supply" is "rapidly dying out," in face of the fact of our increasing circulation.

Disestablishment is bound to come in Scotland. Even the Grand Old Man is a convert at last. There are twelve parishes in the Highlands, with a total population of 13,353; each parish has a church and a minister, and the total number of communicants is 63, an average of five and a quarter for each church.

The Rev. James Owen, the new president of the Baptist Union, in his opening address to the Spring Assembly, admitted that the Christian ministry did not exercise a dominant—if indeed any influence over either the leaders in society and literature or the laboring populations in large towns. Yet he has faith that all will yet go well. Faith is here the evidence of things not seen.

Political men marry for love, but they generally like a pile of money as well. Mr. O'Brien, it is reported, is going to marry the rich Miss Raffalovitch. She has plenty of cash and is a Home Ruler, two desiderata to begin with. But, according to the *Star*, she has another qualification besides these, and besides her mental gifts. She has a most accommodating disposition. "It is significant," says the

Star, "of the completeness with which Miss Raffalovitch identifies herself with her bridegroom that she will adopt Mr. O'Brien's religion." Really, it is enough to make a Freethinker split his sides with laughter. The lady puts on a new religion with her wedding dress. It is to be hoped she will change again if Mr. O'Brien should turn Protestant.

If the *Kentish Mercury's* report of the Rev. Hugh R. Baker's reply to Mr. Foote's lectures at Woolwich is accurate, it was a very unsatisfactory reply indeed. Mr. Baker said he "wanted to show in a general way that Mr. Foote's statements were not truthful." He singled out the statement that the God of the Old Testament was a national one. What then does the phrase the God of Israel mean? In Judges xi. 24, Jehovah is distinctly compared with Chemosh, another national God.

Mr. Baker is reported as saying that Mr. Foote "spoke in glowing terms of Apollo, Juno, Diana, Venus and Cupid as good examples which might be followed." Mr. Foote is in the north of England, but without consultation the sub-editor will venture to characterise this statement as untruthful. Those who know Mr. Foote know he is not so ready to expose himself to Christian gibes. Then Mr. Baker spoke of prayer. He "considered the primary object of prayer was to converse with the Almighty and not necessarily to ask for blessings." Yet the Lord's Prayer asks for daily bread.

Mr. Baker founds another charge on the statement that religion was founded on fear. This, said the man of God, was a slander, distinctly opposed to the teaching of the Bible, which was that of love. We fancied we had read a good deal about the fear of the Lord in the old book, but its teachings after all have little to do with the original foundations of religion, which are far older and go much deeper than any written documents.

"Stanhope" signs a long, old-fashioned screed in the *Consell Guardian* against Atheism in general and Mr. Bradlaugh in particular. When we state that he writes, "the death-bed of the infidel is anything but nice," we have said enough to show that he is beneath contempt. "Stanhope" must rise to the level of the age—not, perhaps, a very lofty one, after all—if he wishes to be listened to. Fantastic lies are played out in the controversy.

The Rochester Diocesan Conference pronounced against Sunday bands, Sunday papers and Sunday dinners. It was a fine old clerical Protectionist meeting, but it will not affect the progress of Free Trade in religion as well as in commerce.

Marcus T. Bergman, a missionary to the Jews, calls for a Bible in Judeo-Polish or Hebrew-German. He is especially anxious that the East-end Jews shall not continue to get their ideas of Jesus Christ from the "blasphemous" *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu*, which he wrongly refers to as "in the Talmud." Those who would like to see the real facts about this work should read the *Jewish Life of Christ*, edited by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler.

Mr. Spurgeon says that "a man with a mind must have a creed." True. But a man with any mind worth speaking of must have a better creed than Spurgeon's.

Mr. Spurgeon puts in a fresh word for Calvin. Jack of Geneva, it seems, when he cremated Servetus, was only doing what any other person in his position would have done. Mr. Spurgeon's excuse is that "they all did it." But this is not held to be an excuse for those guilty of the ordinary frailties of human nature, whom Mr. Spurgeon damns to hell without the slightest compunction. Jack's excuse for murder won't hold good for Tom, Dick, and Harry's peccadilloes.

Richard Weaver has been advertised as a great attraction at Wood Green. "Scribo," in the *North London Echo*, wonders whether Richard's "past life at Macclesfield and Stockport is like a forgotten dream," and suggests that the place for "broken-kneed" Christians is not the pulpit but the pew.

A Liverpool paper is severe upon "the London begging gang" who run philanthropic institutes on Gospel lines and

cadge right and left, making the most piteous, and often whining, appeals for help "by return." It gives an extract from the begging letter of a London Cottage Mission, in which it is stated that the landlord is going to di-train (hard-hearted man!), and the poor "little ones" will be turned out in the streets unless six subscribers send £5 each "by return of post." As all these beggars believe in prayer, it is wonderful that they don't ask God to soften the landlord, instead of investing in postage stamps.

Dr. Parker "hates" the Calvinism of Mr. Spurgeon as he "hates self-hness and blasphemy." He calls it "leering, slaving, and sly-winking," and says he would not condescend to kick it. Yet this same Dr. Parker thinks the Blasphemy Laws should be maintained to make Freethinkers polite in criticising Christianity. It is the old, old story of the beam and the mote.

A very curious case was that of *Lampard v. Buck*, tried before the Queen's Bench Court last week. Lampard is a tea merchant, intimately connected with the Salvation Army, of which Buck has been a staff captain. Buck, however left, and threatened to lecture against the Army and write a book exposing "the headquarters of the army as a house of ill-fame and a den of thieves." He obtained £50 from Mr. Lampard, which he afterwards advertised as "hush money." It was however decided by the court that the money was a loan, which must be refunded.

In a Government Commission on the number of persons in the Russian empire without visible means of existence, out of a total of 293,445 beggars 3,491 were clergymen. This large number is probably accounted for not by their adherence to the command of Jesus to give all to the poor, but by the custom which deprives the parson of his living when his wife dies.

The Rev. A. J. Johnson, vicar of Toftries, near Fakenham, the clergyman who wandered from home in the winter and was discovered frost-bitten and starving, has died in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital after having his feet amputated.

The cranks who believed in the prophesy that San Francisco and other cities would be destroyed on April 14 had the sense to hedge. They prayed that the disaster might be averted, and now claim that their prayers were answered. But what is the use of the Lord inspiring prophets when his purposes can be turned aside by prayer?

The inspired prophets who predict the end of the world and the destruction of cities are, like the religious maniacs, instructive examples. As the fossils found in geological strata show us the kind of life which once existed on the earth, so these survivals show us what the old prophets actually were and what a curse was their superstition.

While the trembling believers waited last Monday for the earthquake which was to destroy the city, there came over the wires from the observatory on Mount Hamilton these words: "No earthquake tremor, however slight, registered on the delicate seismometers of the Lick Observatory." It was like the voice of the Freethinker James Lick rebuking the cowardice of the Christian community.—*Freethought*.

Prophet Baxter has two assistants, Messrs. Jaye and Osborne, who are zealously propagating the end of the world delusion at Brighton. It is a money-making game. Induce people to think the end of all things is at hand, and they will surely contribute well to God's elect. Like all other Christian humbug, this variety thrives well in the rank soil of Bibliolatry.

In the report of the British Commissioners of Lunacy, "religious excitement" is credited with 3,769 cases of insanity. This is a more potent cause even than love affairs, which are credited with 2,224, while "over-exertion" is responsible for 761. "Mental anxiety," the chief cause, occasions 25,897 cases, and of these we suspect religious anxiety has a considerable place, for it may not always develop into decided recognisable religious mania.

Count Tolstoi's *Kreutzen Sonata* is to be translated into

English and published by Mr. Walter Scott. It is reported to be a Zolaesque novel, and it will no doubt excite a great deal of interest, particularly as Tolstoi means it as a social study from the standpoint of the Sermon on the Mount.

The great Russian novelist has devoted much of his leisure of late years to expounding his social and religious views in the direct form of essays. He writes as an uncompromising Christian of the Quaker type, or rather, perhaps, of the type of George Fox and William Law rolled into one. He takes the commandments of Christ literally, and he is, in that sense, one of the very few real Christians on this planet. Whether his philosophy could be practised in actual life is quite another matter. We hope to give a fuller account of it some day, for a man like Tolstoi is better worth attention than the gentlemen who preach the Gospel for as much as they can get.

Under the Christian king, Mwanga, the followers of Jesus have fought and beaten the followers of Mohammed. According to the London *Chronicle*, "the reconquest of the country appears to have been followed by a division of the spoil, the land being parcelled out among the victors, while very little is left to the 'heathen.'" The earth is the Lord's, and he has given it to the saints—white or black.

The world *does* move. The *Christian Commonwealth* steps in front of Jesus Christ, and declares that "no law, human or divine, can morally compel two human creatures to be bound together for life when one of them proves himself to be a brute, or a sot, or a drunkard."

Prof. D. G. Porter's long paper on "The Agnostic Controversy" is running through the *Christian Commonwealth*. He lauds the Rev. Dr. Wace to the skies, damns Huxley with faint praise, and says that Ingersoll's reply to Gladstone "does not require any consideration." This is the famous old trick of the ostrich. But it doesn't pay.

Handbills have reached us of four public discussions at Swindon between Pastor King and Mr. H. Jones, who is described as "a Secularist." The subjects are rather curiously worded, and one evening's discussion is to be on Bible Morality "for men only." This is a condition which we have always regarded as objectionable. Secular Societies do not recognise any distinction of sex, and if women cannot be admitted at any meeting, either the subject is not one for public treatment, or it is very badly handled. Let the Christians lecture "for men only." Freethinkers should avoid it as foolish or prurient.

A Bedfordshire correspondent mentions that at Sewell in that county he heard of some badgers who had made their abode in a disused Quaker's burial ground, and had also made very free with the remains of departed Friends there. He thinks the fact may be adduced as "an additional reason in favor of incineration," and adds, "it's bad enough for some of us to be badgered whilst living."

The Rev. J. V. Sutton, presiding at the Chester-le-Street meeting of the Religious Tract Society, said that "a certain paper called the *Freethinker* had lately lamented the powerful influence of the society." We do not remember our lamentation. Possibly it is just as true as the story which immediately follows, of "the conversion of a young man who pretended to be an infidel" by means of one of the society's tracts.

The *Church Times* defends the empty City churches on the ground that they offer the mute witness of their consecrated walls to people apt to be lost in worldliness. We should fancy a few consecrated hoardings might be even more useful.

The wave of secession to Rome continues to roll on. According to the *English Churchman*, the principal of the Oxford University Mission at Calcutta has followed the example of the head of a similar mission at Bombay, and joined the Papists, who have also received the Revs. W. Tatlock, R. Beasley and G. Clark, besides numerous lay converts, those converted at Brighton being estimated at five hundred.

"Nebuchadnezzar" is the title of an oratorio performed this week at St. James's Hall. We presume there will be a pastoral symphony descriptive of the king grazing, and some firework fugues representing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

The South Wales *Echo* sees nothing startling in some of the Welsh Wesleyan Methodists asking Cardinal Manning and the Marquis of Bute to subscribe to the building of a Methodist chapel. It says, "Christians are everywhere showing a desire to come nearer to one another whenever possible, especially in the face of Giant's Doubt and Despair that threaten the stronghold from without." That's it—Whatever semblance of unity there is comes upon compulsion, but when the Catholic lion lies down with the Wesleyan lamb the Methodist will be inside.

Charles Wells, a Staffordshire magistrate, and an iron-master in a large way of business at Wolverhampton, shot himself through the head in the Queen's Hotel, Coventry. He left a letter for his solicitor, concluding with the words, "May God bless and prosper you and yours." The poor man's head was turned by financial losses, though he was not reduced to want. We merely mention the case as another fact for Talmage.

Sir Edwin Arnold has poetised the Life of Buddha in Tennysonian blank verse, and the volume has had a considerable sale. Its well-known title is *The Light of Asia*. He is now writing *The Light of the World*—that is of the fourth part of the world which possesses Christianity. Its subject will be the Life of Jesus, and we daresay it will be written from a *Daily Telegraph* point of view. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are evidently played out.

The conference of the African M. E. Church expelled the Rev. G. H. Smith on the remarkable charge of being a thief, a fugitive from justice, and a conjuror.

Some American holy humbugs appropriately chose April 1 for a Convention at Washington of those who want to insert God into the Constitution of the United States. Joe Cook was the leading spirit. If the Americans are wise his wind will be wasted.

Stewart Headlam asked the London School Board to banish Bible reading and explaining from its schools. Copeland Bowie seconded the motion. Both these gentlemen are "reverends." The motion was supported by Mrs. Besant. Apparently it had no other friend, which is somewhat surprising. The opposition was led by the Hon. Lyulph Stanley and Professor Gladstone. The former cited the authority of "the late Arthur Arnold"—we suppose it means Matthew Arnold—as to the beneficial effect of Bible teaching; but he forgets to say that the same Mr. Arnold had likened the Christian Trinity to three Lord Shaftesburys. The Grand Old Man's kinsman soared on the wings of prophecy. He predicted that "candidates for the Board who proposed to exclude the Bible from the schools would have very little chance of being elected." Well, we shall see. A few Secular Education candidates were returned at the last and next time we may do still better.

Ultimately the "friends of the Bible"—that is, the folk who force it down the mental throats of children without mastication or saliva—burked the motion by passing "the previous question," the *Star* says by thirty-six votes to two. But where was the third vote? There should at least have been three.

The *Age*, a Melbourne paper of March 22, reports "An important seizure of blasphemous literature was made by the Customs authorities yesterday in the shape of the Christmas number of a freethought publication. The contents of this particular number were exceedingly coarse and ribald, and very little consideration was required, after a glance at them, to cause them to be pronounced unfit for circulation. The parcel, which came by mail from Sydney, was, therefore, taken possession of by the Customs officers and burned." No further particulars have yet come to hand, but we hope soon to obtain further information from our Australian friends.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 11, Free Library, South Shields; at 11, "Shelley, the Poet of Atheism"; at 3, "Mr. Gladstone's Defence of the Bible"; at 7, "Is there a Future Life?"

May 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; 15, Manchester; 22, Liverpool; 29, Reading.

July 13, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.

August 31, Birmingham.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

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

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

L. STANLEY's subscription of 2s. 6d. should have been acknowledged as from him and F. Zambia.

A. TARN.—We are overcrowded with copy at present.

G. H.—Hardly a profane joke. Thanks, however. It may be worked in later on.

A. GUEST.—Presently.

H. BEE.—(1) Among his miscellaneous verses. (2) Thackeray's *Four Georges*, the Greville Memoirs, and Walpole's Letters. The first is a cheap book, the others are dear.

F. ABLARD.—The Second Series of *Bible Heroes* were delayed by an accident, and Mr. Foote has been too busy since to remedy it. But the volume will be ready before the end of this month, and Mr. Forder will then execute your order with others.

A. E. HINE.—The card arrived too late to be of service.

K. FIELD.—We don't doubt a word of your letter, but we cannot afford to fight a libel case against a big hospital. Thanks for the cutting.

W. R.—We will see if there is substance enough in the Scottish Spurgeon's deliverances to found a Letter upon. See "Acid Drops."

JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec. North Eastern Secular Federation, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne, acknowledges the following subscriptions:—E. Elcoat, 5s.; Stockton Branch, £1 0s. 7d.; a Friend, 1s.; Mr. Greenwell, 2s. 6d.; West Hartlepool Branch, 17s.; Darlington Branch, 7s. 6d.; Chester-le-Street Branch, 10s.; West Auckland Branch, 6s. 9d.; Oxhill Branch, 10s.; Newcastle Branch, 9s.; Samuel Seal, towards Mr. Foote's tour, £3.

J. N.—Mr. Forder has issued a catalogue, which he will supply on application.

J. WEBB.—The manuscript is under consideration. You will hear from us shortly.

SENEC.—The President of the National Secular Society has no more control over the Hall of Science platform than you have. It is a matter, therefore, in which he cannot possibly interfere. He has already given his opinion as to the policy of the Secular platform being used for the advocacy of what ninety-nine (at least) out of every hundred Secularists are opposed to, and what most of them regard as rank superstition.

R. S. BRANSBY.—We cannot be supposed to have a personal knowledge of every member of the party. If Mr. Ridgway and Mr. Daniel Baker will stand sponsors it shall be inserted. Everyone must see that there must be some conditions of publicity.

IN consequence of Mr. Foote's absence many correspondents remain unanswered this week.

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—Boston Investigator—Fritankeren—Twentieth Century—Freedom—Citizen—Transvaal Standard—Kentish Mercury—Chester-le-Street Advertiser—La Lanterne—Mot d'Ordre—L'Etoile—La Rennovator—La Verité—Newcastle Leader—Newcastle Chronicle—Sussex Daily News—El Radical—Northern Daily Telegraph—Liberty.

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

THE FREETHOUGHT FUND.

MR. FOOTE'S appeal, as President of the National Secular Society, for funds 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.

Fourth List.

£ s. d.		£ s. d.	
James Fisher	1 0 0	H. J. Putz	0 5 0
H. M. Ridgway	0 3 0	W. Anderson	0 5 0
Peter Weston	1 0 0	J. G. Barnes	0 2 6
G. Anderson	2 2 0	A. Carter	1 1 0
H. S. Ashford	0 5 0	J. H. E.	0 10 0
C. H. B. (per R. O. Smith)	1 0 0	W. Stewart	0 5 0

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

AGENDA.

- Minutes of last Conference.
- Report of Executive.
- Treasurer's Report.
- Election of President. Motion by Finsbury Branch:— That Mr. G. W. Foote be President for 1890-1.
- Election of Vice-Presidents.

[The following are nominated by Executive.]

G. Anderson.	Dr. E. Schlaeger.
Daniel Baker.	Thos. Slater.
Hypatia Bradlaugh-Bonner.	R. O. Smith.
Prof. Ludwig Büchner.	Joseph Symes.
W. W. Collins.	Geo. Styring.
P. A. V. Le Lubez.	J. Swaagman.
J. Pratt.	E. Truelove.
W. H. Reynolds.	

- 5a. Motion by Finsbury Branch:— That Mr. J. M. Wheeler be elected a Vice-President.

6. Election of Treasurer.
7. Election of Auditors.
8. Election of Secretary.
9. Announcement relating to certain shares.
10. Notice of motion by G. W. Foote:—

(1) That the yearly subscription of membership be altered to a minimum of one shilling, each member being allowed to fix his subscription in excess of that amount according to his means and inclination.

(2) That Branches shall henceforth pay to the central fund the sum of sixpence per year for each member.

(3) That the Propagandist and General funds be henceforth merged into one.

(4) That it is advisable to consolidate and centralise the lecturing system except in cases where the lecturers work on the plan of taking the surplus of proceeds; and that (2) an attempt should at once be made to send lecturers on tour at the expense of the central fund, the Branches being expected to bear the necessary local expenses; and that (3), when a charge for admission is made at such lectures, the Branches shall forward to the General Secretary a statement of receipts and expenditure, and remit to him one-half of any balance that may remain in hand.

(5) That instead of a special collection for the Propagandist Fund, every branch shall make at least one annual collection for the general purposes of the Society, and remit the same within a fortnight to the General Secretary.

11. Notice of motion by Birmingham Branch:— That in future no person shall hold the office of President for more than three years in succession.

12. Notice of motion by Newcastle Branch:—

That the Conference instruct the Executive to take active steps to bring about the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and exhort all Freethinkers in the United Kingdom to bring pressure to bear wherever possible upon Parliamentary candidates.

13. Notice of motion by Liverpool Branch:—

That it is desirable that the Annual Conferences should be held only in towns affording facilities for access, and that the expenses attending them should in part at least be defrayed from the general fund.

14. Any other business.

After the above business is concluded, the Conference will be thrown open and all Freethinkers can then take part therein; but on the above business none but members of the National Secular Society can speak or vote.

The morning sitting will open at 10.30 and close at 12.30; the afternoon sitting will open at 2.30, closing at 4.30; the evening sitting opening at 7.

The Conference will be held at the SECULAR HALL, RUSHOLME STREET, MANCHESTER.

At the Public Meeting in the evening addresses will be given by G. W. Foote, J. M. Robertson, Arthur B. Moss, R. Forder, and others.

J. M. ROBERTSON, } Agenda Committee.
G. STANDING.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote had good audiences at Newcastle on Sunday. The afternoon lecture, "A Defence of Atheism," in reply to the Rev. Walter Walsh, was well reported in the next day's *Leader*, and still better in the *Chronicle*. After the evening lecture a collection was taken on behalf of the North Eastern Secular Federation. During the day the Newcastle Branch enrolled seven new members.

The Newcastle Branch is making excellent headway. It has over a hundred financial members, and a great many outside supporters and sympathisers. It is now seeking better premises for its ordinary meetings, and if it succeeds in this quest it will undoubtedly very much improve its position. Mr. Joseph Brown is an energetic leader, and he is well backed up by a strong committee. An extremely gratifying and promising feature of the Branch is the number of earnest and intelligent young men it comprises.

The sale of the *Freethinker* has largely increased in Newcastle and is still increasing. Mr. Peter Weston, in Newgate Street, began by selling a dozen or two; at the time of Mr. Foote's last visit he was selling seventy copies weekly; he is now selling a hundred. The paper is also sold by other newsagents in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Mr. Foote concluded the Camberwell course of Free Lectures on Friday last. There was a considerably improved attendance, notwithstanding the fine weather, and a large proportion of strangers. Next season, with better advertising, these Free Lectures will probably be a great success.

Despite advancing summer, the London Secular Federation has arranged for a course of Thursday evening Free Lectures in the West-end. They will be delivered in the hall of the Hammersmith Club. The lectures have been fixed for Thursday evenings, May 15, 22, 29 and June 5. Mr. Foote will deliver one of the course. The Hammersmith Club is situated at No. 1 The Grove, Broadway.

The Federation has not been able to arrange for a course of Free Lectures in the East-end. There has been a great difficulty in obtaining a suitable hall at a reasonable rent. A Church schoolroom was offered by a clergyman, but he stipulated a variety of impossible conditions. He evidently thought them perfectly just, but that only shows how the clergy are accustomed to having everything their own way. The East-end will have to wait for its Free Lectures till the fall of the year, when a strong effort will be made to carry our propaganda among that vast working population.

The immense demonstration in Hyde Park last Sunday was notable as signalling not only how rapidly social problems are coming to the front, but how entirely secular interests are displacing theological ones on the Sunday. Here were half a million of people gathered together all concerned in a matter of worldly interest and with bands and banners expressing secular sentiments. Whatever else it showed, the demonstration certainly proved that the so-called sanctity of the Sabbath has no hold on the workers of London.

The debate upon the Disestablishment of the Scotch Church was notable for two things, the division in which as many as 218 voted in favor of disestablishment and disendowment as against 256, and the declaration of the Marquis of Hartington that "in voting against the motion they were not voting that an indefinite continuance of the present state of affairs was desirable."

Despite the energies of the Church party, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill has once more passed the Commons by an increased majority, and it now remains to be seen if the law-sleeves in the Lords will again reject a measure legitimatising unions which are legitimate in all our colonies.

The *Sussex Daily News* has a very sensible leader on the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. It ridicules the idea of the bishops deciding such a matter, and says "We are governed by the common sense of the community and not by the traditions of parsons."

We admire the pluck of the Rev. Stewart Headlam and J. Copeland Bowie in bringing their motion for the abolition of Bible reading before the London School Board, though we are surprised they were not better supported by the other members of the Board. Mr. Headlam's speech is given in this month's *Church Reformer*.

The Newcastle Sunday Music League has sustained a check, which we hope, however, will only stimulate its efforts. The town's meeting, convened by the Mayor, showed a majority against Sunday freedom. But this success of the bigots was won by a hard whipping up in the churches and Sunday schools, and some characteristic rowdiness to boot. The *Daily Leader* admits that the majority against the League was "not nearly so large as anyone who watched the meeting would have suspected," and confesses that "the body of persons in the hall in favor of Sunday music was large enough to show a volume of opinion that might make itself felt."

The Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. held its annual meeting last Sunday. The balance-sheet and the report of the energetic secretary, Mr. Doeg, was adopted, and the outgoing officers re-elected. A donation of £1 from "B" was acknowledged. A committee was appointed and delegates nominated to the Manchester Conference.

At the third meeting of the Yorkshire Secular Federation, held at Laycock's Hotel, Kirkgate, Bradford, it was decided to hold a demonstration at Shipley Glen on June 8, at 3 p.m. A picnic at Highfield House, Morton, near Bingley, on the 18th of May, at 2 p.m., was also arranged for.

Our French friends keep Whit Sunday as a Feast of Flowers and Youth. This year they have an excursion to Meudon, a parish for ever celebrated since the Freethinker Rabelais was appointed curé thereof. We hope there will be a large gathering, and we are sure there will be plenty of enjoyment.

We have received a copy of a new Spanish Republican and Freethought paper entitled *El Radical*. It is edited by Odon de Buen, one of the Spanish delegates to the Freethought Conference at Paris. The first number gives a portrait of Senor Figueras, the first President of the Spanish Republic in 1873.

Mr. J. M. Robertson is having another set debate at the London Hall of Science. It comes off on Wednesday and Thursday, May 21 and 22. His opponent is the Rev. Mr. Ford, an "advanced" Christian. The subject of debate is, "Is Christianity True?"

Mr. A. B. Moss intends to do a lecturing tour during his annual holiday, from July 26 to August 16. He will be glad

to arrange for visiting South Lancashire, Tyneside, and, if possible, Ireland and Wales.

There has been a big two night's debate at the Metropolitan Temple, San Francisco, between Samuel P. Putnam and Moses Hull, on the question "Do the Phenomena of Spiritualism Demonstrate a Future Life?" Both disputants are unbelievers in Christianity. Moses Hull, who takes the affirmative, is a skilled debater, and Mr. Putnam has occupied the position of President of the American Secular Union.

Mr. Putnam, who has been both an orthodox and a Unitarian preacher, has issued a narrative of his phases of religious thought, entitled "My Religious Experience."

The *Truthseeker* has taken up the cause of the Swedish Freethinkers, and has several letters on the subject. One encloses a letter from Mr. Lennstrand, written from prison. Mr. Lennstrand says: "I see the dawning of a better day in this country. I do not stand alone in this struggle, for thousands have declared themselves willing to fight for truth and liberty for this and coming generations. Our organisation is growing stronger every day, and I only wish my countrymen in America would do something jointly to drive away all nonsense, prejudice and superstition that has bedimmed our eyes and stolen away interest for our real welfare."

One of the lectures for which Mr. Lennstrand has been imprisoned is translated into English and published by Mr. Forder, with an introduction by Mr. Wheeler.

By paying nothing to authors or their representatives, American publishers are able to issue reprints of English works very cheaply. We see that the Humboldt Publishing Co., of New York, is issuing a number of standard works of Freethought tendency, such as Mr. S. Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, J. Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*, etc., at prices which should command a large sale and do much to spread Liberal ideas in the States.

Dr. Büchner has prepared a paper on "The Future History of Humanity in the Light of the Development Theory," which he will read before the German Freethought Conference at Hannover.

A translation of Arthur Schopenhauer's Aphorisms has just been published by Messrs. Swan, Sonnenschein and Co., It is entitled "The Wisdom of Life." Mr. T. Bailey Saunders, the translator, contributes a preface.

Professor John Fiske opens the *Popular Science Monthly* for May with an account of the life of Edward L. Youmans, including the story of his association with Herbert Spencer. Professor Fiske was a warm friend of the late Professor Youmans, and describes his fruitful labors in popularising science and the evolution philosophy in America with sympathetic appreciation. Herbert Spencer also writes on "Justice," and the Bishop of Carlisle on "Dr. Wallace on Darwinism."

Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy has been epitomised by Mr. F. Howard Collins, whose book is already in a second edition. It is a notable sign of the times to find so many readers for such a work.

Mr. Swinburne contributed a fervent poem "In Memory of Aurelio Saffi" to last week's *Athenaeum*. The two following stanzas show that the poet retains his hatred of priests—

No hat of man, but hat of hate, whose foam
Sheds poison forth from tongues of snakes and priests,
And stains the sickening air with steams whence Rome
Now feeds not full the God that slays and feasts;
For now the fangs of all the ravenous beasts
That ramped about him, fain of prayer and prey,
Fulfil their lust no more: the tide of day
Swells, and compels him down the deathward way.

Night sucks the Church its creature down, and hell
Yawns, heaves, and yearns to clasp its loathliest child
Close to the breasts that bore it. All the spell
Whence darkness saw the dawn in heaven defiled
Is dumb as death: the lips that lied and smiled
Wax white for fear as ashes. She that bore
The banner up of darkness now no more
Sheds night and fear and shame from shore to shore.

The *Stockwhip* has reached us from Brisbane, Queensland. It is edited by Wallace Nelson, and in its first number proclaims that "Christianity will be the special object of our attack." Mr. Nelson has entered upon a bold enterprise, in which we wish him all success.

The *Stockwhip* has a column headed "Freethought all over the World," in which it makes the following reference to ourselves: "'No one,' says Mrs. Besant, 'can hope to take Mr. Bradlaugh's place in the hearts of the thousands who love his personality'; and in another place she says, 'his loss is irreparable.' Now we think all this is overdrawn. The Freethought movement must ultimately stand or fall on the truth or falsity of its principles; no mere man, however great, is indispensable. Besides, Mr. Bradlaugh will still remain a Freethinker, and continue, at least with his pen, to advocate our principles. Where the 'irreparable loss' comes in we fail to see. There is only one man in England who has a right to take Mr. Bradlaugh's place. Mr. Foote by his culture, his capacity, and his courage has won the right to be regarded as England's representative Freethinker. No man understands our principles better, or loves our cause more dearly. The National Secular Society will honor itself by making him President."

The *Stockwhip* commences a novel by the editor entitled "God and Man." It promises to depict the career of a youth from Theology to Secularism, and we suspect contains some autobiographical matter.

Messrs. Rose and Seago, who went out to Johannesburg, in the Transvaal, are evidently doing something for Freethought in that locality. In two different papers we have received from Johannesburg there are Freethought items such as would scarcely be admitted into any of our newspapers.

Mr. Foote's article, "God in a Coal Pit," is reprinted with acknowledgment in our esteemed exchange, the *Ironclad Age*.

We publish in another column the Agenda of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference at Manchester on Whit-Sunday. It is to be hoped that every Branch that has not yet appointed delegates will do so without delay. The 1890 Conference will probably be a turning-point in the Society's history.

"THE DEVIL'S PRAYERS."

SUCH a title as "The Devil's Prayers" would be blasphemous if it emanated from a Freethinker. As, however, it originates with a popular preacher who placards the East End of London with announcements of this subject as his leading article in his religious magazine *The Shield and Spear*, it is evident that the title is perfectly consistent with godliness, truth and respectability. If there is any doubt in these points, the responsibility will lie with the Rev. W. Evans Hurndall, M.A., who issues the address. He commences thus:—

"A strange subject that, some one cries! We did not know, say others, that Satan was in the habit of praying. But he is! And he is very much fonder of praying than a good many Christians are! He shames the mass of believers by his zeal and fervency in application. Come away to olden times, and see in Job i., 6—12, and ii., 1—6.; how he prayed concerning the patriarch, and how he prevailed in prayer. Turn to Matt. iv., 1—11, and note how he prayed to the Lord Jesus and did *not* prevail. Read in Rev. xii., 10, about the accuser of the brethren, who accused them before God day and night: plenty of prayer mixed up with those accusations. Yes! Satan is a great hand at prayer. And he is by far the more dangerous because he knows how to use this weapon, and to use it in many adroit ways. Do we not sing,

"And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees?"

But how do matters look when Satan himself takes to his knees! And how do matters look when Satan takes to his knees, *but the weak saint does not!* Brothers and sisters, we had better pray. Life is largely 'a battle of prayers.' Let us pray—for Satan is praying against us, and that in many ways."

If the preacher desired further confirmation of his belief, or pretended belief, in a praying Devil, he might have shown his congregation that the little devils could pray as well as the big Devil himself.

He could have told them how the devils "besought" Jesus that they might enter into two thousand pigs, and how graciously and pitifully their supreme Lord and Master answered their prayer of faith by granting the desired boon without any regard to the feelings of the pigs and their owners, who apparently were most righteously punished for failing to offer prayer to the incarnate deity to whom even the devils bent the knee. The good pastor could point to these devils, and recommend his audience to imitate them in praying to Jesus not to torment them (Luke viii., 28), or at least not to torment them before their time (Mark v., 7). At the same time he might explain why the natural desire to escape torment is so grand and glorious a motive in the Christian, although it is shared by the devils who equally "believe and tremble."

Modern preachers, however, with any pretension to knowledge and culture, fight shy of the little devils who talked to Jesus two thousand years ago, but who very sensibly retire from business as fast as they are discredited by the growth of reason and science. Even the great Devil they convert as far as possible and as often as possible into a figure of speech, or allegorical personification of moral evil; although they are perfectly willing to dangle the puppet before the eyes of those who are still frightened by it. How far the Rev. W. Evans Hurndall is one of the conscious or unconscious hypocrites I have no means of knowing. He certainly professes belief in the personal Devil who afflicted Job and planted Jesus on a pinnacle of a temple, and yet he does not carry out such views to their logical conclusion. Perhaps he is one of the many preachers who believe in Satan with their lips but not with their hearts and understandings. He keeps a devil just as he does a parrot, but keeps them both caged up and utilizes them both in the same offhand way, as models of conduct as far as earnest praying is concerned. He says:

"When we pray, let us pray as Satan does—with all our might of earnestness. I have a parrot at home who prays a great deal better than many of you do. When she wants anything she crawls up to the top of her cage, hangs backward, holding on by her talons, and then shrieks as though she would shriek the house down. Magnificent earnestness that! She generally gets what she wants, and that pretty speedily too. She is a grand hand at prayer, that parrot."

Having learned to pray like the devil and like a parrot, we are next told to notice that "not only does Satan himself pray, but he teaches others to do so." He commonly converts the Lord's Prayer into a Devil's Prayer, it seems, and causes the latter prayer to be uttered with the greater sincerity and fervency. He teaches weak Christians to wish that their heavenly Father may not keep a rod, but may rather break it, or burn it, or destroy it in any way rather than make them uncomfortable with chastisements from above instead of the pleasant gifts they desire. He teaches men to wish on that their own will may be done rather than the Lord's, and that God's kingdom shall not come, because life would not be worth living then with all its pious restrictions and worries. The artful Devil also causes falling saints to ask for cheese and butter, and meat, and fine houses and furniture and clothes besides the daily "bread" which is apparently all they ought to ask for; and he tempts them to wish for more than the "daily" food which should content the faithful who are willing to live from hand to mouth, in full reliance on the Lord's continued help. He makes them want to "know about to-morrow as well as to-day" and to see a good way ahead" and to acquire money and property, for fear the Lord might forget the family meals some day, and might not prove quite so regular and certain as the daily calls of the butcher and baker and greengrocer. The popular preacher forgets to tell us whether it is the Devil that inspires the desire for a parrot and other luxuries, and the pastor's desire for a good income, and his habitual

trust in the baker and butcher and the power of cash and property and secured prospects rather than an implicit reliance on divine providence, *plus* human providence and ceaseless prayer.

There is one consideration which never by any chance occurs to preachers so far as *their own* beliefs or assertions are concerned. If the Devil inspires prayers or wishes may he not inspire sermons and teachings? May he not enter the pulpit as well as the pew or the confessional? Does so cunning a deceiver stupidly refrain from misleading priests and evangelists? Would he not be likely to poison the waters at the fountain-head? Would he not introduce plausible forgeries into the Bible and all manner of errors and delusions into the minds of the conflicting teachers of conflicting sects? May there not be Devil's Sermons and Devil's Doctrines as well as Devil's Prayers? And may not the condemnation of human forethought and human providence, and the glorification of self-seeking prayer and mendacious terrorism and fraud and folly proceed from a bad source rather than a good one?

If the preacher is right in his views, Satan's prayers must be far more efficacious than those of Christians. For nearly two thousand years Christians have prayed for the conversion of the world and the coming of Christ's kingdom. Yet Satan's wishes and prayers to the contrary have so far prevailed that not a fourth of the world's population is converted, and science and Freethought are fast undermining and dissolving their belief. Even among this Christian section of mankind, the Protestant sub-section must own that Satan has perverted the belief of the majority of Christians into the gross superstition and immorality of Popery and the Greek Church, to say nothing of Mormons, Anabaptists and so forth, who have only been put down by physical force. Up to the present the Devil has been more powerful than Jesus. Jesus, for whose prayers on our behalf we are to pray, has not prayed with sufficient energy. The ministers should stir him up "with strong crying and tears" till he too is in as "deadly earnest" in his prayers, as we are told that his great and successful rival is. How can Jesus and his followers ever expect to convert the world if they allow themselves to be beaten by their adversary even in their own special line of praying?

One important question the Rev. Evans Hurndall never attempts to solve. He does not tell us why God answers the Devil's Prayers, or permits them to be answered, instead of fulfilling the prayers and wishes of his omnipotent Son and of earnest Christians in general. Good Christians must be content to know that Satan's successes are somehow achieved by prayer, and that if they would imitate his successes they must imitate the means by which he gains them. They must never venture to suspect that the Devil himself speaks from the Christian platform to recommend reliance on prayer, while he laughs in his sleeve at his poor dupes and resorts to more active and more effective means of baffling their pious intentions. Still less may they venture to suspect that the Christian bogey is a contemptible fraud, or a mere figure of speech. They must rest assured that any such suspicion would be a sure and certain proof of the presence and activity of the Great Tempter, and they must at once expel him and his insidious suggestions by the power of Christian prayer. Whether the Christian prayers for crushing thought and reason under the heel of blind credulity may not be Devil's Prayers, is an idea that must be similarly crushed under the great steam-roller of faith as another subtle device of the terrible enemy of mankind. If there is no Devil there is no need of a Savior. God and Satan, heaven and hell, must disappear together, and what would the Christian do then, poor thing? What could possibly restrain him from ruining the world by his inevitable indulgence

in the awful vices and terrible crimes for which he proclaims his almost unconquerable predilection? The poor Christian libels himself. He would survive the loss of his darling Devil and even of his beloved priest, just as well as Sinbad survived the loss of his Old Man of the Sea. When Christendom attains manhood it will smile at the lost bogey of its childhood, and live by higher ideals and wiser rules than were possible while degrading superstitions still maintained a hold upon men's feelings and upon their daily life.

W. P. BALL.

OBITUARY.

Died on May 1, at Derby, James Birken, aged 58, after a lingering illness. A steadfast friend, a kind husband, indulgent father, and staunch Freethinker. His last wish was to be buried as he had lived, a Secularist.

The funeral of John Cole, an energetic member of the Bethnal Green Branch, took place on April 30, at Finchley Cemetery. There was a large gathering; Mr. Forder read the Secular Burial Service.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7, Mr. Soddy, "The English Language and the Confusion of Tongues."

Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30, Free Concert. Social evening every Tuesday.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, Capt. Pfouides, F.R.G.S., "Philosophic Buddhism."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30 Mrs. Annie Besant, "An Answer to the Question: What is your Opinion about Spiritualism?"

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, "Some Popular Mistakes about the Church's Teachings."

West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "And yet it Moves"; 9, music, etc.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Free Will and Responsibility."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates 11.15, Mr. Calvert, "Is Matter able of itself to Produce its Phenomenon?"

Bethnal Green—Opposite "Salmon and Ball," 11.15, Mr. G. Standing, "Faith and Freethought."

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 3, Lucretius Keen, "Holy Morality."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand) 3.30, Mr. J. Rowney "The Bible against Civilisation."

Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. F. Millar, "A Future State."

Mile End Waste, 11.30, W. Heaford, "A Vindication of Freethought."

New Southgate, Betsyle Bridge, 11.30, Mr. Sam. Standing, "Men who have Risen."

Old Southgate On the Green, 6.30, Sam Standing, "What Think ye of Christ?"

Plaistow Green, 11.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "Is there a God?"

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. J. Marshall, "Who Shall Deliver me from the Body of This Death?"

Westminster - Old Picnic Pier, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "The Life and Times of Thomas Paine."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, a Freethought lecture.

COUNTRY.

Glasgow Secular Society and Branch of N. S. S., 122 Ingram Street, 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "Secularism in Glasgow, 1881-90."

Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, Mr. H. Smith, 11, "By the Grace of God I am what I am"; 3, "What Think ye of Christ"; 7, "The Child of Hell."

Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—7, Mr. E. S. Jones, "A Defence of Atheism."

Newcastle—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11, a meeting of Sunday Music League to make arrangements for concerts on Town Moor; 3, fortnightly financial meeting of members.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Southsea, 7, Mr. Hore will read Bellamy's Looking Backward.

Sheffield - Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, 7, Dr. Gaunt, the deferred humorous lecture on "Magic," with startling illusory experiments.

South Shields—Free Library Hall, Ocean Road, Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "Shelley, the Poet of Atheism"; 3, "Mr. Gladstone's Defence of the Bible"; 7, "Is there a Future Life?"

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden Road, London, S.E. —May 11, (morning), Camberwell; 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25 (afternoon), Regent's Park. June 1 (morning), Picnic, (evening), Woolwich; 8 (morning), Bethnal Green; 15 (evening), Ball's Pond; 22 (morning), Clerkenwell; 20 (morning), Mile End. July 13, Mile End.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool. —May 11, Hanley; 25, Liverpool.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton Liverpool.—May 11, Liverpool; 18, Failsworth. June 8, Manchester.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—May 11 (morning), Wood Green; 18 (morning), Mile End Waste; 25 (morning), Battersea. June 15 (morning and evening), Battersea.

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