

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## FARRAR'S REPLY TO INGERSOLL.

WHAT a swarm of Christian apologists flutter round Colonel Ingersoll! He is a perfect nobody; he has no learning, and no brains to speak of; nothing he says is new, and it has all been answered before; in brief, he is a smart pretender, a showy shallow-pate, and every sensible Christian should leave him alone. But somehow they *cannot* leave him alone. He requires no answer, but they *will* answer him. He is not worth a thought, but they shower their articles upon him. Meanwhile the Colonel smiles that great, genial smile of his, and never loses his temper for a minute. He knows his own strength, and the strength of his cause, and he knows the meaning of all this pious *blague*.

Judge Black tilted at Ingersoll, and would not try a second round. Then came Dr. Field, then Mr. Gladstone, then Cardinal Manning, then Dr. Abbott and some smaller fry, and now comes Archdeacon Farrar with "A Few Words on Colonel Ingersoll" in the *North American Review*. Dr. Farrar is a prolix gentleman, with a style like a dictionary with the diarrhœa, and his "few words" extend to fifteen pages. All he has to say could have been put into a third of the space. On Mr. Gladstone's admission, Colonel Ingersoll "writes with a rare and enviable brilliancy." Archdeacon Farrar writes effeminately, with a vehemence that simulates strength, and a glare that apes magnificence. He revels in big adjectives and grandiose sentences, and is a striking specimen of literary flatulence.

This is not a complimentary description, but the Archdeacon has invited it. To prove the invitation we quote his opening sentence. "Although the views of Colonel Ingersoll," he says, "lie immeasurably apart from my own, he will not find in this paper a word of invective or discourtesy." Now this sentence is loose in style and false in statement. "Although" implies that invective and discourtesy might well be expected by anyone who differs from Dr. Farrar. "Immeasurably" is nonsense, for Colonel Ingersoll and Dr. Farrar both have definite views, and the difference between them is easily ascertained. "Discourtesy," at least, is infelicitous. Dr. Farrar speaks of Colonel Ingersoll's "enormous arrogance of assumption"; of his looking down "from the whole height of his own inferiority;" of thousands of intellects that, compared with his, are "as Dhawalaghari to a molehill." Here is "courtesy" for you! But this is not all. With his customary extravagance of language, the Archdeacon speaks of "those myriads of students of Holy Writ, who probably know ten thousand times more of the Scriptures than Colonel Ingersoll." What delightful good breeding! It seems that the Christians have so long enjoyed the right of "immeasurably" abusing Freethinkers that they fancy themselves quite polite when they are impudent enough to invite a kicking.

Let us now see what Dr. Farrar's "few words" amount to. He accuses Ingersoll of asserting

instead of arguing, of indulging in "the unlimited enunciation of immense generalities," of "tossing aside the deepest and most permanent convictions of the vast majority of mankind as though they were too absurd even to need an answer," and generally of putting forth arguments which have been killed by the theologians, and really ought to feel that they are dead, and to get decently buried. Dr. Farrar evidently regards Ingersoll as a sceptical Banquo who indecently haunts the supper-room of the theological Macbeth.

But when he condescends to details the Archdeacon cuts a sorry figure. He takes some of Ingersoll's "immense generalities" and tries to explode them, with shocking results to himself. Here is number one.

I. *The same rules or laws of probability must govern in religious questions as in others.*

This would have been regarded by the great Bishop Butler as an axiom. But Dr. Farrar is not a Bishop Butler, so he calls it "an exceedingly dubious and disputable assertion." Revelation appeals to man's *spirit*, and Colonel Ingersoll ignores that "sphere of being." He is therefore like a blind man arguing about colors, or a deaf man arguing about music. In other words Dr. Farrar cannot *prove* the truth of his religion. He knows it intuitively, by means of a high faculty which Ingersoll does not possess, or only in an atrophied state. But this piece of fatuous impudence is far from convincing. Besides, Dr. Farrar is shrewd enough to see that the sceptic may reply, "Very well, then, what is the use of your talking to me?" Consequently he falls back upon the contention that the evidences of Christianity are "largely historical." But instead of adducing these evidences, and firmly defending them, he flies back immediately to his special faculty. "Men of science tell us," he says, "that there are ultra-violet rays of light invisible to the naked eye. Supposing that such rays can never be made apprehensible to *our* individual senses, are we therefore justified in a categorical denial that such rays exist?" Certainly not. Those ultra-violet rays of light can be *demonstrated*. They are apprehensible, though not to the naked eye. The analogy, therefore, is perfectly fallacious. Nor would anyone but a hopelessly incapable logician have adduced such a *mal à propos* illustration. Dr. Farrar is affirming the existence of a spiritual faculty as common as sight, and whose absence is as rare as blindness, and he adduces an instance of a fact which is only known to specialists.

II. *There is no subject—and can be none—concerning which any human being is obliged to believe without evidence.*

This proposition of Ingersoll's is indisputable. Dr. Farrar allows its truth. But he says it "insinuates" that Christianity is believed without evidence, and this is "outrageous and historically absurd." We will not discuss "outrageous," but we venture to say that "historically absurd" is a great absurdity. Nothing is clearer than that the mass of mankind,

whether Christian or heathen, *do* believe without evidence. Their religion is simply a matter of education, and their faith depends on the geographical accident of their birth. Dr. Farrar may deny this, but every man of sense knows it is true.

We will not follow Dr. Farrar's tall talk about "the divine beauty of Christianity," the "unparalleled and transcendent loveliness" of Christ, and the "proved adaptation" (heaven save the mark!) of Christianity "to the needs of every branch of the human race." All this is professional verbiage. It is like the cry of "fresh fish!" in the streets, and is perfectly useless in discussion with Freethinkers.

III. *Neither is there any intelligent being who can, by any possibility, be flattered by the exercise of ignorant credulity.*

Dr. Farrar cannot deny this, but again he complains of insinuation. What right has Colonel Ingersoll to stigmatise as *ignorant credulity* "that inspired, inspiring," etc. etc.?

IV. *The man who, without prejudice, reads and understands the Old and New Testaments will cease to be an orthodox Christian.*

Dr. Farrar flies into a passion over this proposition, though the Catholic Church has always acted upon it, and tried to keep the Bible out of the people's hands. He also flies off on the question of "what is an orthodox Christian?" Colonel Ingersoll, he says, would probably include under the word *orthodox* "a great many views which many Christians have held, but which are in no sense a part of Christian faith, nor in any way essential to it." But who constituted Dr. Farrar the supreme authority on this question? Colonel Ingersoll judges for himself. He follows the sensible plan of taking the Bible as the Christian's standard. After that he takes the accepted and published doctrines of the great Christian churches. He is not bound to discuss the particular views of Dr. Farrar. Indeed, it is ludicrous that at this time of day, nearly two thousand years after Christ, a discussion on Christianity should be stopped to settle what Christianity is.

V. *The intelligent man who investigates the religion of any country without fear and without prejudice will not and cannot be a believer.*

Ingersoll's opinion may be unpalatable to Christians, though they would endorse it with regard to every religion but their own. His language, however, is perfectly courteous. Having to convey such an opinion, he could not have chosen less irritating words. But this moderation is lost on Dr. Farrar, who bursts into a characteristic storm of sound and fury.

"Argul, every believer in any religion is either an incompetent idiot [did you ever know a *competent* idiot?] or a coward with a dash of prejudice! If Colonel Ingersoll really takes in the meaning implied in his own words [really!], I should think that he would have [grammar!] recoiled before the exorbitant and unparalleled hardihood of thus branding with fatuity, with craven timidity, or with indolent inability to resist a bias, the majority of mankind, as well as the brightest of human intellects. Surely no human being can be taken in by the show of self-confidence involved in such assertions as this! It is as useless to combat their unsupported obstreperousness as it is to argue with a man who bawls out a proposition in very loud tones [could he bawl in *soft* tones?] and thumps the table to emphasise his own infallibility. We have but to glance at the luminous path in the firmament of human greatness to see thousands of names of men whose intellect was, in comparison with the Colonel's, as Dhawalaghari to a molehill, who have yet studied each his own form of religion with infinitely [infinitely?] greater power than he has done, and have set to their seal that God is true."

Hallelujah! But after all this sputter the question remains where it was. Dr. Farrar is too fond of "words, words, words," and like Gratiano he can "talk an infinite deal of nothing." He would do well to study Ingersoll for a month or two, and prune the nauseous luxuriance of his own style.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## P R A Y E R S.

IN a very acute and philosophical pamphlet on *Prayer*, issued this year at Belfast, it is contended that prayer arose in savage times from the supplication for life by the vanquished to the victor. It was the natural and necessary result of a state of perpetual warfare. There is much to be said in favor of this theory. The very forms of prayer usually show a slavish spirit. The able author might have adduced the strong testimony of gesture language, the earliest of all forms of conveying thought and feeling. The attitudes of prayer are the attitudes of abject submission, the hands together as if bound or powerless, the petitioners on their knees, or as with the Mohammedans prostrate with face to the earth. Bowing at the name of Jesus; indeed all bowing is a sign of submission.

The Hebrew root of prayer signifies to bend, and we have the old form of prayer in the statement (Josh vii., 6), that Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord and put dust upon his head. We are told too of the Lord swearing that every knee shall bow before him (Isaiah xlv., 23.) But although the pamphlet alluded to gives the core of the matter, there is another aspect of prayer which I think is overlooked by this able and original writer. It is that of its being a spell or incantation, whereby one may obtain power over spirits. Early religion is all magical. The relations of cause and effect are ill-defined and the power of words exaggerated. Much prayer may, it seems to me, be traced to a development of the belief in the efficacy of words as charms or spells to obtain the wishes of the utterer. The Jews used the words of the Lord as an amulet. They were bound as the frontlet between the eyes and fastened upon the doorposts of the house, just as verses of the Koran are used as talismans among the Mohammedans. Belief in the power of names as spells is found in all religions,\* and is preserved in Christian baptism "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The names are charms to ward off evil spirits. Prayer-books are collections of spells, as well as petitions, for blessings, fine weather, success in war and other desired objects.

Prayer in its early phases was a humble request for personal advantages. Even in the relation of master and slave there is often the disposition of the latter to gain mastery. Prayers became the means of controlling the unseen powers. Much of this is still found in current religion. Even Tennyson says:

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of."

From being as flexible as requests to a living chief, prayers stiffened into traditional formulars whose repetition required verbal accuracy, and whose nature practically assimilated more or less to that of magical charms. We find this especially in all liturgies in dead languages. Here the more unintelligible the prayer the more holy. Repetition itself has a merit. The Hindu cried Om so many thousand or even million times, and this repetition was believed to give power over the gods. The Catholics have their *kyrie elison* copied by our formulars, Lord have mercy upon us, and Good Lord deliver us! The Catholics have copied their rosaries from the Buddhists, and keep their unintelligible prayers right by "telling their beads." But the Buddhists in their praying wheels, have brought mechanical piety to perfection. The prayer-mill was originally a "chakra" or symbolising wheel of the law, but has become a cylinder mounted on an axis which by each rotation is considered to repeat

\* See Gen. xxxii. 29; Lev. xxiv. 11-16 Jud. xiii. 13; Matt. viii. 16; Acts iii. 16, iv., 6; Phil. p. ii. 9, 10. Those who desire further information on this point are referred to my essay on Rumpelstiltskin, *Freethinker*, April 21, 1889, and the notes to the *Booker T. Washington* or Jewish Life of Christ.

the sentences written upon the papers it is filled with, usually *Om mani padme houn* (O the jewel in the lotus). This prayer-mill, turned by wind or water power, will "pray without ceasing" while the owner sleeps. But we have plenty of mechanical praying in our own churches.

"Supplication is the marrow of worship," said Muhammed, and the devotees of Islam carry out his theory. Among the Moslems, says Dean Stanley, "prayer is reduced to a mechanical act as distinct from a mental act, beyond any ritual observances in the West. It is striking to see the figures along the banks of the Nile going through their prostrations, at the rising of the sun, with the uniformity and regularity of clockwork; but it resembles the worship of machines rather than of reasonable beings." We doubt, however, if there is anything more perfunctory about Moslem worship than the bobbing down of the head and "smelling the hat" when the Protestant worshipper enters his pew. Among the sayings of Muhammed with reference to prayer was the curious one that "God accepts not the prayers of a woman arrived at puberty unless she covers her head." Covering the head was a sign of modesty and submission.

Whatever opinion we may have of the origin of prayers it is certain that reliance upon them is worse than futile. It is disastrous in that it hinders self-help, which is the great condition of progress. Christianity, as the writer of the pamphlet alluded to remarks, "intervened like a glacial period of ignorance between the time of Aristarchus and Epicurus to that of Newton and Darwin." As men become assured of the immutability of natural law they will cease praying for daily bread and co-operate with their fellows to assure it for themselves.

J. M. WHEELER.

## THE GOSPEL OF FACT.

### PART III.

"To say that nature had its origin in a God is only like saying that the moon is made of green cheese. Saying so does not mean that it is so. God is contrary to Fact, and consequently in putting our gospel into practice must be altogether ignored. As a no-fact let him be!

The Gospel of Fact when it inculcates belief in nothing except what we actually know, teaches us to fall back on our own resources and to be self-reliant. The great question to be considered is not what was the origin of man so much as what is to be done with him. We see him the victim of ignorance, pain, and poverty; we see him the slave of an imaginary being; we see him wasting much energy to conciliate that being, through fear of punishment and hope of reward; and we see him believing in all sorts of lies and absurdities, and subordinating his interests in this world of fact to his supposed interests in the shadowy world beyond the grave. If he only could be brought to see it, the Gospel of Fact is good tidings indeed for deluded and suffering mankind. It teaches men that Gods and Devils are pure inventions and absurd impossibilities, and it aims at emancipating them from their slavery to both. It teaches them to devote their energies to the affairs of this world, and to leave the affairs of the other world to rogues, cowards and fools. It warns them to beware of everything contrary to fact, and reminds them that lies and absurdities are poor things to work a world with.

The problem of how to make the most of this world is quite complicated enough without introducing the concerns of another world of which we know nothing, and in which reason forbids us to believe. We know quite enough about life when we know that it is inseparable from pain and misery, and that it must end in the grave. A soul is as inconceivable as a

God. Nobody has had ever any experience of such a thing as a soul, either of his own or anybody else's. As there is no harbor in space for a God, neither can there be for a soul, and to think of a soul—a spiritual nothing—flying through billions upon billions of miles of space to its supposed home beyond the stars, is preposterous, and it only requires a little reflection to convince anybody of its ridiculousness. The soul, then, should have no concern for man; his body is quite enough for him to care for, and difficult enough too.

In a word, the Gospel of Fact teaches that to make the most of life should be the great aim of man, and to make the most of it in accordance with the dictates of reason. To live as happy as possible; to do as much good to others as is possible; to endeavor to leave the condition of man better than they found it; and to give a helping hand to the cause of Progress—these are the aims of the followers of the Gospel of Fact, the godless men to whom a present life is everything, a future life nothing at all.

These principles of the Gospel of Fact may sometimes be claimed to be the product of that other Gospel which is *not* the Gospel of Fact; but claiming them does not make them so. The followers of the Christian Gospel have not a monopoly of goodness, or practice of kindness. Goodness, and justice, and kindness, are facts, natural facts, as inseparable from many men as the shape of their countenances. They are qualities implanted in human hearts by the process of evolution, and far from being the outcome of any Christian Gospel teaching, they are in reality tenets of the Gospel of Fact that were drawn on by the pious liars and dreamers of two thousand years ago. The Gospel of Fact has nothing to acknowledge to the Gospel of Christ—it is rather the other way.

To educate the young without frightening them about gods and devils; to teach them to be useful and to be just; to inculcate feelings of brotherly love—these are the great ambitions of the Gospel of Fact. To dispel ignorance; to extirpate poverty; to relieve pain; in short to secure everything that we know to be good, and to banish everything that we know to be hurtful—these, too, are the aims and the ambitions of the Gospel of Fact. To the religious person with the hope of reward beyond the grave, happiness here may seem a poor substitute for the "consolations of religion." But when the "consolations of religion" are proved to be shams; when everything outside this world has really no concern for us; and when the grave and eternal rest is the goal of humanity, the substantial happiness capable of being secured in this life is a thing not to be despised. If men could be induced to look facts in the face, and consider nothing but facts, death would lose its terrors, and the departed would be followed to the grave with genuine regrets, tempered with no false hopes of meeting in another world than this; while the certainty of parting for ever when Death comes on would make men kindlier towards each other, and would of itself help on civilisation towards that goal of perfection which is the ultimate aim and hope of the Godless Gospel of Fact.

J. O'DONOVAN.

## 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.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

*Held at Manchester, on Whit-Sunday, May 25.*

"ALL SAINTS?" was the inquiry of the stranger delegates to Manchester, and the congregation of Secular saints in that city had worked well to decorate their hall and accord their visitors a good reception.

The proceedings commenced by Mr. Foote taking the chair at half-past ten precisely. Having stated the conditions of the Conference, he called on Mr. Forder to read the roll. Delegates were present from Belfast, Bradford, Brighton, Bolton, Birmingham, Ball's Pond, Blackburn, Cardiff, Camberwell, Darlington, Lower Darwen, Deptford, Dublin, E. London, Finsbury, Farsley, Grimsby, Hawley, Halifax, Hamilton, Heckmondwicke, Huddersfield, Hull, Hyde, Hyde Park, Lincoln, Liverpool, Manchester, N. W. London, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Rochdale, South Shields, Staleybridge, Swindon, West Auckland, Westminster and Woolwich. Several of these places were represented by two or three delegates, and in addition individual members attended not only from the surrounding districts, but from all parts, one lady travelling all the way from Saltash, Cornwall, in order to be present at the gathering.

The minutes of last Conference having been taken as read, the President read the Report of the Executive as follows:

### EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.

This year, for the first time, the Executive has been obliged to fix the meeting-place of the Society's Conference. Four places were nominated—Newcastle, Huddersfield, Bradford, and Southampton; but the Branches in those towns had not been consulted and it was found, on inquiry, that neither of them was prepared to make the necessary arrangements. In these circumstances the President took the responsibility of immediate action, which was endorsed by the Executive at a special meeting. The Manchester Branch was communicated with, and promptly acceded to the request that the Conference should be held in this city. Had the Branch been without a hall of its own the difficulty might have been graver. It is to be hoped, therefore, that in future, when any town is nominated for the Conference, there will be no omission of the preliminary duty of obtaining the concurrence of the local Branch.

Unfortunately this is not the only circumstance of an exceptional nature. The Conference lacks the presence of two familiar figures. Stricken down by a perilous illness, Mr. Bradlaugh felt obliged to resign the presidency, which he has held for so many years, and which it was hoped he would continue to hold for many years to come. His resignation was formally tendered and accepted at a general meeting of members, held at the Hall of Science, in London, on February 16. Mr. Bradlaugh himself nominated Mr. G. W. Foote, one of the then vice-presidents, as his temporary successor, and the nomination was accepted unanimously. Since then your old President has partially recovered his health. He is now spending a brief holiday in Scotland, whence it is hoped he will return with recruited strength. In resigning the presidency, he has not severed his connexion with the National Secular Society. He has accepted a life membership, and will always be ready to place his wide experience and ripe judgment at the service of his successors.

The other familiar figure now absent is Mrs. Besant, who has resigned her connexion with the Society. Her reasons for this step have been already published. The Executive was unwilling to lose the co-operation of a lady so long and so shiningly connected with Secularism, but Mrs. Besant's resolution was unshakeable, and the Executive had no alternative but to accept her resignation.

After these misfortunes, which it would be idle to regard as anything but grave, it is a relief to find that the Society has in some respects a hopeful prospect. There is, to begin with, an increase in the Society's membership. Last year it was reported that 492 new members had been enrolled; this year the number amounts to 709. The Treasurer's balance sheet shows also a financial improvement, partly due to increased income and partly to diminished expenditure. Last year's General Fund was £84 3s. 1d.; this year's is £115 14s. 8½d. Last year's Propagandist Fund was £52 16s. 8½d.; this year's is £56 18s. 5½d. Last year's Benevolent Fund was £27 11s. 9½d.; this year's is £37 10s. 8d. The total account shows a balance of £45 12s. 3d. in advance of the previous year.

On the proposal of Mr. Foote, the Executive authorised the formation of a Central Fund, for the purpose of extending the Society's work. Up to the present the sum of £58 11s. 8d. has been subscribed. This will be carried forward into the new year's account, the appeal and the object being alike prospective. A constant effort should be made to swell this Fund. Hitherto the Secular party has subscribed handsomely in times of persecution and excitement. Henceforth the party will be asked to subscribe regularly for the regular work of the Society. Every member should feel it incumbent upon him or her to devote a definite sum yearly to the Society's objects. It is only thus that a voluntary Society, existing solely for the maintenance of a cause, can hope to carry on its organisation and propaganda.

The balance-sheet also shows a sum of £34 19s. 4d. collected for the Swedish Prisoner's Fund. Of this £30 6s. 10d. has been remitted, and a balance of £4 13s. 4d. is held at the disposal of the Swedish committee.

Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant have handed over to the Society a number of shares in various Secular Hall Companies. A statement on this matter will be made in the course of your proceedings, and the shares will be offered for sale, if the Conference endorses the view of the Executive that it would be better to dispose of these shares than to hold them.

During the past year eleven new Branches have been formed at Reading, Hamilton, Dublin, Woolwich, Gibraltar, Bombay, Trinidad, Barbados, Finsbury Park, Edmonton and Farsley. The Reading and Woolwich Branches are growing in number and in strength and doing excellent work. The Dublin branch, but just started, is represented here to day. There are now two Branches in Ireland. Before long it is hoped that further efforts will be made to carry the light of Freethought into the darkness of Irish superstition.

One Branch, the Central London, has been wound up, as no longer necessary in the changed conditions of the metropolis. Another, at Bristol, has become defunct, after outliving its usefulness. But such an important centre of population is not to be neglected. The Organisation Committee has already taken steps for the formation of a new Branch, and Messrs. Foote and Forder are to visit Bristol for that purpose.

The Organisation Committee, established by a vote of the last Conference, has proved successful. It has helped to form new branches and strengthen old ones, and in many ways has given a business turn to otherwise haphazard work. Its members have been Messrs. R. O. Smith, G. Standing, W. H. Reynolds, W. Smith, and G. W. Foote, the last acting as chairman, and Mr. R. Forder as secretary.

Special thanks are due to the ladies and gentlemen who have administered the Benevolent Fund. They are brought face to face with distressed Freethinkers, and there is universal praise of their tact and sympathy in the performance of difficult duties.

Your Executive has distributed, directly and indirectly, a good deal of Freethought literature during the past year. The stock of Tracts is now running low. They have been overhauled by the Organisation Committee. Some of them are obsolete, and the Committee recommend the publication of a fresh supply suited to present requirements.

Throughout the country there is a welcome tendency among the Branches towards the union which is strength. The London Secular Federation continues to do excellent work. During the past year it has inaugurated a new policy of free lectures in various parts of the metropolis. The course at the Hall of Science was very largely attended, and the lecturers—Messrs. Robertson, Standing, and Foote—were opposed by special representatives of the Christian Evidence Society. The Federation's second annual dinner was also a great success, and its summer excursion to Epping Forest was another step in a genial direction. It is pleasant to record that the Federation takes very little from the Branches. Its income is derived from subscriptions that would otherwise be unavailable, and after no niggardly expenditure, it is still able to boast of a handsome balance.

The example of London having proved contagious, other Federations of Branches are being formed. The North Eastern Secular Federation, which was assisted by a grant of £3 from the Executive, has put new life into the movement in the Tyneside. A great number of lectures have been delivered, literature has been distributed, and social gatherings have knit the Branches together. Messrs. Brown, Peacock, and their colleagues, may well be gratified with the result of their efforts.

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## ACID DROPS.

Sir Andrew Clark was the big gun at the annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society. He professed to have reached "the quiet haven" of Christianity through "seas of doubt." We suspect they were very calm seas, as calm as the haven itself. Perhaps Sir Andrew Clark will tell the world when he was in doubt, what kind of doubt it was, and how he left it behind him. This would be more interesting, and far more useful, than a vague general statement of the "converted infidel" order.

The second gun was Professor Beet, to whom Mr. Foote addressed one of his Letters to the Clergy. This gentleman talked about Mr. Herbert Spencer's "power behind the universe," and seemed to think that this power—which, if anywhere is not *behind* but *in* the universe—proved the truth of Christianity. But any logic does for a meeting of the Christian Evidence Society.

Professor Beet's remarks on Scripture ought to be printed as a Tract and widely circulated by the Christian Evidence Society. According to the *Christian World*, he said that "no one revered the Bible more than he did. But our faith did not rest upon the authority of that Word. We must fight now, not on the authority of Holy Scripture, but we must go back to the open grave of Jesus Christ and see there his resurrection." Allowing for the inadequacy of a summarised report, it seems evident that Professor Beet sees the "inspiration" of the Bible is a played out doctrine. Christians must throw it over and stick to Christ. Anyhow they must stick to the Resurrection. They must look into the open grave of Christ. In other words, the world must be dwarfed to a grave, and humanity to a resurrected corpse.

The *Tablet*, the principal English Roman Catholic paper, has been celebrating its own fiftieth anniversary by giving an account of the progress of Popery in England during the half century. It claims that the number of churches, chapels and stations, which in 1840 amounted to 457 for England and Wales, and 65 for Scotland, in all 522, has been multiplied threefold, the figures for 1890 being 1,641, 1,312 being for England and Wales and 329 for Scotland. The number of priests has increased from 624 to 2,791. Religious orders have increased still more rapidly, and altogether it says the Church counts possibly two millions of the population.

The Catholics possess in the United Kingdom some fifty-four colleges, several of which are missionary colleges bent on the conversion of England. When will Freethought have its college endowed to equip young soldiers for the war with superstition?

Mr. Gladstone says that he looks with apprehension on the Government's arrangements with Rome. So do we. No fewer than twenty-three new Catholic dioceses are to be formed in India, all to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Calcutta, and officially recognised by the British Government. Thus Rome crawls in the Empire and waits to bite the hand that foolishly cherished it.

The Rev. H. V. Brown, senior curate of the parish church at Wycombe, cut his throat last week. The usual verdict of temporary insanity was returned.

The Rev. J. W. Hedgland, rector of the united parishes of St. Stephen and St. Martin, Exeter, died suddenly on Sunday at lunch, after having gone through the morning service at St. Stephen's Church. A big moral, with reflections on the visitation of God, ought to be worked in here, but we leave it to our readers.

The curate of All Souls, Bolton, has bolted. He was to have been married in a few days. "Much sympathy," says the *Evening News*, "is expressed with the young lady who has been so heartlessly deserted."

Some day or other the Malthusian propaganda will reach the clergy. Meanwhile they go on adding vigorously to the population. Mrs. Horsley, wife of the vicar of Holy Trinity, Woolwich, recently died at the age of thirty-five. According to a report of the funeral in a local paper, she "leaves seven young children."

One of our readers says that the "Rev. W. Jacomb," advertised as "a late colleague of Mr. Bradlaugh," was a prominent member of the Eleusis Club in 1882. He was never known to lecture on Secularism. By trade he was a tailor. In '84 he got "converted" and found an easier way of getting a living.

Dr. Sinclair, Archdeacon of London, deplures that in the religious press "the spirit of faction, intolerance, and misrepresentation is most rampant. There the entire want of charity and the bitter invective against those who differed were in sad opposition to the brotherly love that should prevail." Very true; but Dr. Sinclair and others forget the saying that the tree is known by its fruits.

The Rev. A. J. T. Johnson, now pastor of the Free Christ Church, North Fitzroy, Australia, is charged with having, when a missionary at Millstone Lane, Leicester, England, run away with a Mrs. James, with whose husband he lodged. It is said he caused an announcement to be sent to Leicester that he had been taken to a lunatic asylum in America. His congregation has decided that he should be dismissed.

A burglar was shot at St. Louis. He turned out to be H. Y. Kunolt a zealous church-goer, and director of a Y. M. C. A. who had been leading a double life of piety and burglary. A similar case has happened at Montclair, New Jersey.

When a panic occurs in a church we see how little superiority religion imparts to its votaries. Such an occurrence is just reported from Hildesheim. The villagers were assembled in the church to pray for the cessation of the hailstorms which were injuring their crops. While they were thus engaged the church was struck by lightning. Four persons were killed on the spot, twenty were seriously injured, and four blinded. Immediately there was a panic among the congregation, and in the mad rush for the doors four little children were crushed to death. Such an incident is at once a cogent proof of the efficacy of prayer, and a striking testimony to the consoling and sustaining influence of religion.

Some wealthy French Jews have offered the Pope £40,000 for the Vatican copy of the Hebrew Bible. It weighs about three hundredweight. The price is a big one for such heavy literature.

A stranger who has been visiting Bournemouth has been telling the town, through the *Guardian*, that it is altogether too good on Sunday. The yachts lie idle, the Hallelujah Chorus is unheard in the Pleasure Grounds, the policeman outside the pier hears not the call of the newspaper boy, and the very children paddle not in the water on the Sabbath. Worldly people will be apt to spend their shekels at less pious watering-places.

The Rev. C. Lacy, Rector of Allhallows London Wall who has recently died, during half a century received some £85,000 for holding what is practically a sinecure. The living was £1,700 per annum and the resident population under 500.

We are rather amused at the virtuous indignation of the Congregational Union against the "tyranny" of the Church in our public schools. The members of that body desire to keep the parson out, but they want to keep the Bible in. That is the point at which they preach "rest and be thankful." They don't see—because they won't see—that they are only seeking to shift the line of religious privilege. If they wanted perfect freedom, they they would go in for pure and simple secular education, leaving religion to be taught independently.

The *Christian Commonwealth* appears to have lost faith in the Temperance agitation. "The hope of the 'pre-ent distress' is that the churches may be driven to prayer throughout the land and to call for Divine deliverance from the threatened doom of the nation." Well, let the churches "pray without ceasing," and see if it makes any difference to Goschen's next budget.

O Lord, who hast said that wine cheereth God and man

who didst turn seventy-five gallons of water into wine at Cana in Galileo, and who didst inspire thy holy servant Paul to advise his beloved Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, look down upon the distress of this nation, banish drink from our midst, and make us all teetotalers like thyself. Amen.

This is how temperance prevailed when there was no other guide but the Bible. The following entry is found in the town records of Woburn, Massachusetts :

To Mr. Jonathan Poole, Esq., for subsisting the ministers, messengers, and gentlemen at the time of Mr. Jackson's ordination over the Congregational Church, 1729.

	£	s.	d.
To 433 dinners at 2s. 6d. a dinner ...	54	2	6
Suppers and breakfasts, 178 ...	8	18	0
Keeping 32 horses four days ...	3	0	0
Six barrels and a half of cider... ..	4	11	0
Two gallons of brandy and two of rum	1	16	0
25 gallons of wine ... ..	9	10	0
Loaf sugar, lime juice, and pipes ...	1	15	0

£83 12 6

At the Plymouth Annual Meeting of the Church Missionary Society, the Rev. J. Vernall, who has recently returned from Africa, said that outside his own church he had counted 20,000 cases of gin brought there by the Europeans for the natives. Another missionary had told him that in his district he had seen thousands of young African girls drunk outside the European canteen. The rev. missionary then went on to speak of the curse of idolatry, but we doubt if he convinced even his hearers that African superstitions are worse than their Christian importations.

Moody has a strange method of gauging the growth of scepticism. He says it is declining in America ; in fact, it is almost dead. True, Ingersoll is getting a big audience in the *North American Review*, and his writings are read with avidity by all classes. True, Freethought papers are multiplying and increasing in circulation. But what of that? Moody gets very few "infidel" questions from young men after his meetings, so "infidelity" is clearly played out. The Yankee revivalist overlooks the probable explanation of the fact he adduces. Very likely the young men troubled with doubts have found the uselessness of applying to Moody.

A very curious and suggestive sentence occurred recently in the correspondence of the *Times* from India. It told how a native police officer wrote to the Government authority, "A new Deity has appeared on the Swat frontier, the police after him." This officer is evidently a praiseworthy functionary. New deities are constantly arising in the East, where any man with a box of good pills can obtain the reputation of a prophet. Their followers soon lead to tumult and disorder, and a wise government will do as much to discourage the appearance of deities as possible.

Some intelligent functionary in Palestine may have sent a similar intimation to the government at Rome. But time was more propitious for the development of deities then.

J. C. said he would come again like a thief in the night, but the exact locality where he would turn up is as difficult to determine as the spot he ascended from. Suppose he has appeared on the Swat frontier and the police are after him! It was always an unfortunate family.

The West-end London Wesleyan Mission contrives to go to the Derby at other people's expense. Mr. Nix, the leader of the party, says, in the *Methodist Times*: "Next week we want £50 or £60 in money, some hams, plenty of blue ribbon, suitable tracts, and a stock of New Testaments." A few hampers from Fortnum and Mason's might also be acceptable.

Hugh Price Hughes has been cadging in Edinburgh for money to convert the people in West London, which he calls the wickedest place out of hell. The *Scotsman* gives him a scathing article, and calls upon the Edinburgh folk to discountenance this preposterous humbug.

There is a remarkable fitness in some things. The quarters of the Army Chaplain at Woolwich are designated "L."

The London correspondent of the *Liverpool Daily Post* relates an anecdote concerning the recent consecration of a church. The ceremony was performed whilst the building was still in a very unfinished state; the western doors not being in position a curtain was substituted, bearing the passage, "I was glad when they said unto me We will go unto the house of the Lord." The sermon was long and dull, and the congregation, leaving before its close, tore the curtain at the door in going out, the result being that the text ended with the word "go." The correspondent adds that the story is doubtless true, as it is told by a high church dignitary. M'yes!

The critics say that at the Oberammergau Passion Play, the part of Judas is overdone and causes laughter. The visitors when they obtain their bills will think that the whole performance smacks over much of him surnamed Iscariot.

In the Passion Play as now produced, the part of Mary is acted by a girl of twenty-two, while her son J. C. is a man of forty-eight. This is justified by the pictures which make the B.V.M. ever young, and is there not in the Bible the case of Abaziah who was two years older than his father?

It is said that Barnum will give a good price to the Oberammergau peasants if they will repeat their performance in New York. When the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem is completed some enterprising impressario will exhibit a Passion Play of the Crucifixion on the spot. The days of reverence are over.

According to a writer in the *World*, Mr. Best, assistant to Dr. Bramwell the hypnotist of Goole, has, by suggestion, produced the same phenomena of blood flowing as in the case of Louise Lateau, one of the most famous of modern Catholic miracles. This is all very well in the interests of science, but what does the girl who was experimented on think about it?

There is a town in America called Ingersoll. It was founded by one of the orator's admirers. At present it only contains one Freethinker, but Mr. J. E. Remsburg has just been lecturing there and perhaps a few more Freethinkers are growing. The American Secular Union ought to bombard that town.

A Catholic book firm in Ottawa has been trying to prove that Victor Hugo's works are immoral. With this view they refused to fulfil a contract, and the recreation has cost them 700 dollars and costs. Judge Davidson gave a decision in favor of common sense, and the Pope's *Index Expurgatorius* won't be recognised in Ontario.

How hard it is to make Christians play fair! For a long while the American clergy have been denouncing Sunday newspapers as violations of "the day of rest." But their real reason was a very different one, and the *Christian Advocate* has blurted it out. "If no Sunday work," it says, "were required of employers in getting out a Sunday paper, it would still be an evil. It hinders people from attending church."

Miss Close, the chief nurse of the Newcastle infirmary, nearly fell a victim to diphtheria. Happily she recovered, and is once more able to attend to her duties. This event is naturally referred to in the Infirmary Report for 1889. But how funnily it reads!—"Through the blessing of Providence, and the skilful and constant exertions of Dr. Philipson and Dr. Oliver, Miss Close was restored to comparative health." Providence, Dr. Philipson, and Dr. Oliver may join hands and say "We did it."

According to Canon Liddon, faith is health, and doubt is disease. But faith in what? Of course the Canon would reply "Faith in my creed, sir." Those, therefore, who agree with Canon Liddon are healthy; and those who differ from him are diseased. A modest creed!

THE ANTIPODES.—Baden Powell records that three views were taken by great Christian authorities as to the existence of Antipodes. St. Augustine declared the belief unscriptural, Lactantius pronounced it absurd, while St. Boniface said there might indeed be Antipodes, but that they would all without exception be damned.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 1, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London; at 7.30, "Mr. Gladstone on the Jew-Book."

June 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 3, Camberwell; 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.

C. DOEG.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope Mr. Clarke will be a successful propagandist in South Lancashire.

G. WILDMAN.—We agree with you as to the value of open-air lecturing.

J. BROAD.—The clergy are not fond of discussing. We are always ready to debate with a representative Christian, but we cannot throw out special challenges.

T. R. FOX.—There is no error. The bridge over the Wear was made from Paine's model. He did not construct the bridge.

G. WARREN.—The financial matter will be decided at once by the L. S. F. sub-committee. Lecturers who lose their tempers should be politely but firmly admonished to keep cool. A friendly word in private is best.

W. MANN.—It shall be included if possible. Giles's *Hebrew Records* would help you.

G. HILL.—Many of our readers, we hope, will lend *Bible Contradictions* about. They will no doubt find the same happy results as you have. Thanks for the jokes.

A. W. BARBER.—Thanks for your interesting letter. Your suggestion is a good one. We have long had it in our mind, and we hope to carry it out. Glad to hear you appreciate "the way in which matters of immediate interest are turned to account in the *Freethinker*."

A. FREETHINKER.—We are overcrowded with matter at present. Your questions for Stanley might be multiplied.

J. T. CONGREVE.—Your criticism is not just. We are neither Optimist or Pessimist, but Meliorist. Things are neither so bad nor so good as they might be, and they can be improved. Anyhow it is worth a trial. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" would be all right if man were all stomach. But he isn't—a fact you have overlooked.

W. T. L.—Pleased to hear of Mr. Snoll's success in Regent's Park. What subscription do you refer to? We have not noticed it.

J. E. BASCOMBE.—Dr. Farrar's article is having our attention.

F. SIMPSON.—Hastings's falsehoods have already been exposed in our columns. We cannot do the dirty task over and over. These pious soul-savers are always shaky in the matter of dates and places.

BRENO.—There are good reasons against pursuing the matter. They were contained in your own letter some weeks ago.

H. CALASCA.—Thanks for the cuttings. You will punish Mr. Walsh most by taking no notice of him.

P. H. ECHLIN.—We echo your wish that there were many such open Freethinkers as Dr. Allinson.

J. FENWICK.—We are much obliged to you for your trouble.

J. E. ROOSE.—Shall appear.

J. FERGUSON.—We have read the book you mention. We gave the Rev. R. F. Horton a reply in *Letters to the Clergy*. He says now that "the Atheist is simply a fool." But he knows better than to debate with one.

W. BUSSEY.—The "converted infidel" game is getting played out. When religious history is impartially written, it will be recorded that Christian champions were the biggest liars that ever trod the earth. The other nineteen cases are as true as you yourself know the twentieth to be. Glad you are so delighted with *Letters to the Clergy* and our replies to Gladstone, and also that the circulation of the *Freethinker* is improving in your district, partly through your own generous efforts.

J. BARTRAM.—No doubt Mr. Foote will visit the Tyneside again before Christmas.

W. HYDE.—Cuttings are always welcome.

JOSEPH BROWN AND J. TULLIN.—Your letters in the Newcastle *Leader* will do good, but, for our part, we decline to devote

any more paragraphs to the Rev. Walter Walsh, who has completely lost his temper, and is discharging his venom in a manner that shows how hollow were all his professions of amity. Like many other Christians, he is good-tempered while he has everything his own way.

REX REGES.—We should say that the allusions in the three passages you quote from F. W. Robertson are to Shelley, Byron, and Laplace.

X. Y. Z.—(1) Buddhism, as taught by its founder, is a godless system. Professor Max Müller himself admits this. (2) The Inquisition did not exist for many centuries after the time of Constantine, but he inaugurated the system of persecution, of course at the instigation of the clergy. (3) Pope Joan is regarded by most scholars as a mythical personage, but there are some who assert her existence. (4) You could join the N. S. S. as a passive member, and your name would not be published.

W. R.—We are obliged for your letter and cuttings.

C. FREAKER.—Your letter arrived on Wednesday morning. We have broken our rule for the sake of the Branch, but this cannot be repeated.

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—Fritankaren—Cosmopolitan—Boston Investigator—Echo—Melbourne Age—Open Court—Evening Standard—Coming Man—Bournemouth Guardian—South Eastern Herald—La Montana—La Concordia—La Antorcha Valentina—El Progreso—La Aurora del Libre-Pensamiento—La Avanzada—Independent—Independent Pulpit—Newcastle Leader—People's Press—Seafaring—Leicester Daily Mercury—Modern Society.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Hall of Science, London, this evening (June 1) in reply to Mr. Gladstone's new article in the June number of *Good Words* on "The Office and Work of the Old Testament." This article is the most peculiar thing Mr. Gladstone has yet perpetrated. He deals with the Fall and the Mosaic Law.

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain a special article by Mr. Foote, entitled "Mr. Gladstone on the Fall of Man." As the article will be carefully written we hope our friends will take extra copies for circulation.

Now the fine weather is coming upon us, and people are moving about the country, it would be well for the friends of the *Freethinker* to distribute as many copies as possible. People are not so busy at the seaside, or in the towns when they get out of doors, and the summer is the very best time for circulating anything you want people to read.

The Manchester Conference of the National Secular Society was a very striking success. There was an unusually large attendance of delegates; from Hull and Grimsby in the east, Plymouth in the south, Cardiff in the west, and Newcastle in the north, not to enumerate the intermediate places. Happily the weather was perfect, and the spirit of the Conference was no less bright and genial. No one who watched the proceedings could help concluding that they augured well for the future of the Secular movement. No sign was there of decay; none of lassitude or apprehension; the universal feeling was one of hope, nay of assurance.

Mr. Foote's proposals were all adopted after full and impartial discussion. They will in time revolutionise the Society. Henceforth, to begin with, the terms of subscription will make a direct appeal to the honor and generosity of the members. Every person who joins the Society will be told this—"The subscription is optional; we don't take less than a shilling, but we leave you to decide how much more you will give." On the other hand, instead of the entrance barrier being four shillings, it will only be one shilling. This should admit a larger number of members, and of course you must get people inside before you can do anything with them.

We need not dwell upon the other proposals which will be found in our report. They will involve a great deal of work for the Executive, but the enthusiasm of the true lovers of a

great cause is apt to rise instead of sinking before such demands. Fortunately the Executive has had some fresh blood infused into it in the shape of new vice-presidents, and we dare say it will be equal to heavier calls upon its time and energies.

Mr. Forder was, of course, re-elected as secretary; but, unfortunately, he was obliged to announce that he would not seek re-election next year. His health is too precarious, and he feels himself unequal to the work. A competent successor will be difficult to find. Mr. Forder has been secretary for fifteen years, and is thoroughly acquainted with every part of the Society's business. He is also a genial man, with a host of friends, and hardly a single enemy.

Verily, verily—as the Scripture says—this is an era of changes. But Secularists must not be daunted by difficulties. Wailing over the inevitable is a foolish waste of time. We must recognise it, once for all, and go on with our work.

The Manchester Branch worked very hard to prepare for the Conference. Ever so much labor was spent on the hall, which was very greatly improved. All the arrangements for the delegates' dinner and tea were made in the underground kitchen by the lady members, some of whom were obviously fatigued. They wouldn't have worked half so hard for good wages. They put their hearts into it for the good old cause.

The London Secular Federation's new course of Free Lectures will be given on the Thursday evenings in June at the Hall of the Hammersmith Club, No. 1 The Grove. Mr. A. B. Moss leads off on June 5, his subject being "Religious Guide Posts." The following lectures are—June 12, Mr. G. Standing, "Freethought and the Church"; June 19, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Dishonesty of the Church"; June 26, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Freethought and Christ."

Freethinkers who were present at the two nights debate on the birth of Christ between the Rev. F. W. Ford and Mr. J. M. Robertson were well satisfied with the Freethought champion. We fancy this can hardly be the case with the few Christians who listened to Mr. Ford. That gentleman was urbane and candid, but he virtually gave up the case. He refused to defend the virgin birth, allowed it was ill-voiced for, and only contended for a vague undogmatic Christianity, which could scarcely be distinguished from any other religion. Mr. Robertson had an easy task, but it is difficult in these days to get a Christian minister to come forward and really defend the old creed.

Dr. T. R. Allinson has just joined the National Secular Society. There are several medical men on the Society's books, but they cannot all afford to be known. Dr. Allinson is able to defy Mrs. Grundy, ay, and Mr. Bumble too.

Mr. Lees is taking the secretaryship of the Camberwell Branch. Mr. Lappage is resigning, not through any loss of interest in Secular work, but through the pressure of other engagements.

Mr. J. Clarke contemplates moving from London to the north, probably to Manchester, where he would be in the centre of a district that could be worked without extravagant railway expenditure. Meanwhile, for a few weeks, he is anxious to lecture as frequently as possible in London.

M. Renan has spoken out with dignity, but with firmness, against the bull-fights going on in Paris. He sees that such exhibitions must degrade the spectators by appealing to the savage within them, and he utters a protest in the name of humanity. It is worthy of notice that the people who flock to the circus to witness these performances belong to the classes who are loyal to the monarchy and the Church.

A letter of Voltaire's, at a recent London sale, fetched £43. It was a characteristic one. The great heretic declared that persecutors were the enemies of God and man, and that all good men were of one church.

The brochure on *Prayer* alluded to by Mr. Wheeler in his article can we believe be obtained from the Ulster Secular Society, Belfast. It is written by a very able gentleman who contributed some of the most striking pamphlets to the series

of Freethought tracts issued some twenty years ago by Thomas Scott of Ramsgate.

A new indictment has been issued against Dr. Voelkel of the *Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt*, for lectures delivered in Berlin. He treats this his fifth prosecution lightly, expecting it will break down like previous ones.

The *Independent Pulpit*, of Waco, Texas, keeps up its standard of excellence in bold Freethought articles.

Messrs. S. Alward and J. W. Wittering are ably defending Secularism in the columns of the *Grimshy News*. Their principal opponent last week was a Mr. F. Stebbing, who makes a tremendous point. Mr. Alward said, "I believe that humanity is in the heart. Why not in the kidneys?" asks Mr. Stebbing. When Vauvenargues, one of the finest of French moralists, said, "All great thoughts spring from the heart." Mr. Stebbing, had he lived then, would have asked, "Why not the big toe?" Yet this gentleman gives himself airs of great "spiritual" superiority over his "materialist" opponents.

Mr. Bradlaugh did a good bit of work in talking out Mr. Pearce's bill for the registration of midwives. There may be differences of opinion as to whether these ladies should be registered, but what friend of personal freedom and religious equality will approve the following clause?—"Every woman applying to be registered as a midwife shall bring proof of being a good moral character, as certified by a magistrate or clergyman, or some other minister of religion, in the town, parish, or hamlet in which she lives." Why should midwives have to carry about a certificate of moral character any more than doctors? And would not sky-pilots' certificates be given on sectarian grounds? The best certificate a midwife can have is the recommendation of her clients.

A Spanish friend sends us a number of Freethought papers from Spain, the names of which appear among "Papers Received." It is a notable fact that, while Catholicism is succeeding among Protestants in Germany, England and North America, it is declining before Freethought in Spain, its chief stronghold, as well as in other Catholic countries.

OBITUARY.—Among deaths announced in the *Athenæum* is that of Mr. George Hooper, a veteran journalist. As "Eugene" Mr. Hooper contributed largely to the *Reasoner* and was connected with the *Republican* and the *Leader*, established by G. H. Lewes. From 1868 to 1871 he edited the *Bombay Gazette*, and on his return became a leader writer in the *Daily Telegraph*. He wrote much on military history and has left important books on Waterloo and Sedan.

On Sunday, June 1, the Portsmouth Branch take their first excursion by water. They will go to Hythe, near Southampton, calling back to Warsash for a crab tea. A good muster is expected. The steamer leaves the pontoon at nine o'clock sharp.

NORTH EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.—I beg to acknowledge the following subscriptions:—Jacob Roos, 1s; Franty Roos, 1s; David Pearce, 1s; John Pearce, 1s; Michael Platt, 1s; John Robinson, 1s; A Friend, 1s; Per Mr. Peacock collected at Mr. Foote's evening lecture South Shields 18s. 6d.; Mr. Clements 2s. 6d.; D., 5s; B., 5s; Hanis, 1s.; Saunderson, 2s; collected at Mr. Clarke's South Shields lecture, 8s. 3½d. Mr. Chas. J. Hunt, 4s. 6d. Collected at Mr. Hunt's lecture at Chester-le-Street, 4s. 1d. Collected at Mr. Hunt's lecture at South Shields, 3s. 0½d. Further subscriptions are requested.—Joseph Brown, hon. sec., 86 Durham Street, Bantick, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

SCHOOLBOY BIBLIANA.—"Paul was one day on the road to Damascus, with a warrant to take up the Christians. He rode upon an ass. When he came to a lane, his ass it would not go; so he beat it, and it ran against the wall and bruised his foot, and he smote it very sore, and began to curse it, when an angel appeared to him in the way. And the ass opened his mouth saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'"

At a prayer-meeting not long ago in the mission hall in the town of S. the missionary requested all those who wanted to go to Heaven to stand up; so every one in the hall rose except one man, who was fast asleep. He then requested those who wanted to go to the other place to stand up, and with the bustle of the rest sitting down it wakened up the sleeper, who heard the last of the sentence—"stand up." Getting up, rubbing his eyes and looking all round, he says—"Well, parson, I don't know exactly what we are voting for, but you and I seem to be in a hopeless minority."



## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

(Continued from p. 256.)

Federations are also forming in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. All such attempts at improved organisation should be assisted, whenever possible, by the Central Executive.

Two of the Society's vice-presidents are engaged in Free-thought work at the antipodes. Mr. Joseph Symes is editing the *Liberator* and lecturing at Melbourne, where the Secular Society, mainly through his efforts, has become the possessor of handsome premises. Mr. W. W. Collins is lecturing and editing *Freedom* at Sydney. There also the Secularists, after being driven by bigotry out of a public hall, have secured premises of their own. Mr. Wallace Nelson, another emigrant from England, is vigorously lecturing at Brisbane and conducting a Free-thought paper called the *Stockwhip*.

Mr. W. W. Collins has figured in connexion with an important case tried in the Supreme Court of New South Wales. As publisher of Mrs. Besant's pamphlet on Population, he was found guilty of "obscenity" by a stipendiary magistrate, but this decision was reversed by the Supreme Court on appeal, and the senior judge, Mr. Justice Windeyer, delivered a striking judgment, completely vindicating the full and free discussion of the population question. The National Secular Society, of course, has no special interest in any particular solution of this problem, but it is bound to welcome every fresh triumph of the freedom of the press.

Probably owing to Mr. Bradlaugh's visit, there is a revival of Free-thought activity in India. The new Branch of the National Secular Society at Bombay promises well, and a new Free-thought journal, the *Cosmopolitan*, is established at Calcutta.

The Swedish Utilitarian Society, founded on the same lines as the National Secular Society, has been in close communication with your Executive. The imprisonment of Mr. Viktor Lennstrand for "blasphemy" led to an appeal by the Swedish Freethinkers for assistance from their English brethren. Your Executive voted the sum of £2 10s., and opened a special subscription, which has softened the hardship of Mr. Lennstrand's imprisonment, and helped to tide his journal, the *Fritankaren*, over a difficult crisis. Happily Mr. Lennstrand is once more a free man. His health was so seriously endangered by his imprisonment that the authorities were afraid to carry out his infamous accumulation of sentences. Mr. Lennstrand and his gallant colleagues, especially Captain Otto Thomson, deserve the greatest admiration for their courage and ability. It is reassuring to know that Swedish juries are not disposed to convict Freethinkers. A verdict of Guilty, and a sentence of imprisonment, can apparently only be obtained in the courts where juries are dispensed with.

In England the Blasphemy Laws are still unrepealed. Mr. Bradlaugh does not see a prospect of making any headway with his Bill if reintroduced in the present House of Commons. Whether it would be right, or worth while, to press for a more partial measure of justice, in the form of a Bill to enable Secular Societies to receive legacies or other endowments, it would be for a Conference of this Society to determine.

This report must not close without mentioning the International Free-thought Congress held at Paris in September. Your Society was represented by Messrs. G. W. Foote and J. M. Robertson. Mr. J. M. Wheeler represented the London Secular Federation, and delegates attended from the following Branches:—Halifax, Nottingham, N.W. London, E. London, Southgate, Westminster, Deptford and Finsbury.

During the week in which the Congress held its sittings, it members were accorded a public reception at the Hotel de Ville by the Municipal Council of Paris. The speeches of the President and the vice-president of the Council, replete with the most pronounced Free-thought, together with those of the official spokesmen of the Congress, were fully reported in the official organ of the municipality. This memorable fact, in conjunction with the immense demonstration at Rome on the unveiling of the statue of Giordano Bruno, marks the great advance of Free-thought in Europe, and is full of encouragement to the friends of Free-thought in every part of the world. It shows that, in the country of Voltaire, the hardest part of the battle is over; that Free-thought is no longer a persecuted suppliant there, but able to lift its head in the highest places, and to speak with confidence and dignity.

On the motion of Mr. Bridges, of Birmingham, seconded by Mr. Settle, of Halifax, the report was adopted unanimously.

Mr. W. H. REYNOLDS then read the treasurer's report, which showed improved balances on each fund, having a total of £210 3s. 10d. in hand.

The adoption of the report was moved by Mr. Holstead (of Bolton) and seconded by Mr. Lees (Camberwell) and carried unanimously.

Mr. FOOTE having ceded the chair to Mr. W. H. Reynolds, Mr. BATER, in a eulogistic speech, moved that Mr. G. W. Foote be President for 1890-1. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilson (of Banbury) and carried with acclamation.

Mr. FOOTE said: Fellow members of the National Secular Society, you have just conferred on me a distinguished honor. Since February 16 I have been holding the temporary presidency of the Society in circumstances necessarily of a more or less melancholy and trying nature. I begin to feel what it means, and to see that Mr. Bradlaugh has not been lying on a bed of roses. I have felt some of the thorns and expect to feel more. I think I owe a duty to tell in what sense I regard the duties of this post. I do not regard the presidential office as simply that of a chairman. The President of a Society such as this must look around him and ahead of him. If a lecturer and writer he is in a better position to judge of the party's needs than any person with a less open horizon. I think I see that the National Secular Society needs changes to adapt it to new conditions. Having no longer Mr. Bradlaugh as active leader, we must adapt ourselves to that loss. This is an age of many organisations and appeals to society. I am convinced our work must be conducted more energetically. Having no gift of prophecy, I can speak but for myself, and promise that I will at least try, and hope to have the hearty co-operation of the party as Mr. Bradlaugh had it. I am prepared for grumbling. Next year I shall have to give an account of the work, and I trust you will then be as unanimous in approving that work as you are now in electing me.

Mr. FOOTE then moved that the following names as vice-presidents:—G. Anderson, Daniel Baker, Prof. Ludwig Büchner, W. W. Collins, P. A. V. Le Lubez, W. Pratt, W. H. Reynolds, Dr. E. Schlaeger, Thos. Slater, R. O. Smith, Geo. Standing, J. Swaagman, Joseph Symes, E. Truelove. He omitted the name of Mrs. Bonner, as that lady had sent a letter he would desire the Secretary to read.

Mr. FORDER then read the letter expressing Mrs. Bonner's deep regret that she would be unable to attend to the duties of the office.

Mr. FOOTE stated that as the Executive had undoubtedly been weakened perhaps someone would like to move that additions thereto be made a matter of urgency. This being proposed and seconded, Mr. Foote first took the motion placed on the agenda by the Finsbury Branch that Mr. J. M. Wheeler be elected as Vice-President. This being seconded and supported was carried.

Mr. WHEELER in returning thanks for the honor, proposed the name of W. J. Birch, author of the *Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare*, as that of a gentleman who had with pen and purse supported the publications of Hetherington, Southwell and Holyoake. The motion was seconded by Mr. Truelove, who testified to Mr. Birch's great services in the past. The motion was carried. Upon the motion of various delegates, the names of Mr. N. B. Billiny, Mr. J. E. Brumage, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Mr. J. Umpleby and Miss E. Vance, were also added to the list of Vice-Presidents. Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Angus Thomas were also proposed, but both these gentlemen declined on account of pressure of other work.

Mr. Reynolds was then unanimously elected treasurer, and Messrs. J. Early and C. Herbert auditors.

Mr. FORDER, on the motion of Mr. Foote, was unanimously elected secretary, and in replying mentioned that, owing to ill health, this was the last occasion he should be re-elected. He expected he should be obliged to go abroad before they next met.

Mr. FORDER then read the announcement as to the surrender of certain shares held in various Secular Societies by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant and after some discussion, the motion of Mr. Reynolds that a list be offered for sale in the Free-thought papers, and that tenders be invited to be sent in and dealt by the Executive, was accepted.

The time approaching the end of the morning sitting, it was decided that precedence be given to the motion of the Birmingham Branch, "That in future no person shall hold the office of President for more than three years in succession." This was moved by Mr. Morley, seconded by Mr. Bridges, and supported by Mr. Ridgway and others, but, although

the proceedings were carried over to the afternoon sitting, it found little support in the Conference, and when the vote was taken only eight or nine hands were held up in its favor.

Mr. FOOTE, in proposing a series of five motions, said these were only part of a scheme which he hoped to carry out. He felt it best to proceed with some regard to existing arrangements. The first motion was the keynote to all that followed. It was "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." This Society was not like a friendly society, a trades union, a co-operative society, or any organisation based on self-interest. It was based on the very reverse. Self-interest would say, Have nothing to do with it. Every one who joins does so because he or she approves of the Society's principles, and wants to do something for their recognition. Their basis should govern their appeal. Hitherto they had worked too much on a purely commercial basis. Not being in debt was a dictate of prudence, but they did not want to regard all their affairs in a business light. It would be absurd to say that one Branch that was strong should not support another that was weak. Every one would see that was a violation of the spirit that should animate them. The object of the Society was the propagation of its principles. We want to include as many as possible, and to get as much as we can, and we want a system that will hinder no one, and give scope for those who do give. Up to the present the four shillings was neither a minimum nor a maximum. Special appeals had been made and money had been obtained to fight special battles, but for the general purposes of the Society the simple subscription was paid by many who could afford more. He was assured that many were kept out. Take the case of a working man who might like his wife and perhaps two children to feel essentially connected with the Society, where every penny has to be considered, four shillings a year for members was a hindrance. But would the proposed alteration diminish their income? He ventured to say it would have another effect. Our only possible appeal is to altruism and enthusiasm, to individual generosity. There were a number of men—and their number is increasing—who, if they could not take part in the work of the Society, could put their hands in their pockets for its support. We made an appeal recently, and in a few weeks got £60, each person saying this is a yearly subscription so long as able. By appealing to generosity and letting the commercial spirit slide we obtain more from the wealthy and do not exclude those who have but little. He hoped the Conference would recognise that the old methods no longer serve. We must trust more to organisation and an appeal to the emotion which induced the members to join.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Gowland (of Liverpool).

Mr. THOMAS (Camberwell) asked if Branches would retain their right of fixing their own subscriptions.

Mr. FOOTE: As a matter of fact the Executive has never interfered. A special law would have to be passed before they did so.

Mr. BATER thought the London Branches would be injuriously affected by the motion. The parent Society would take the money, and the work of the Branches be undone. Members would join the parent Society and the weaker Branches fall through.

Mr. LEES (Camberwell) pointed out that the new method would not make a serious difference. He believed the parent Society is strengthening the Branches.

Mr. PEGG (Manchester) observed that there was no doubt much force in what the President had said, yet he held that the motion would add to the parent Society at the expense of the branches. They found their members prepared to pay the smallest possible amount. He thought it would be detrimental to branches, and if so it was not easy to see how the whole Society would benefit.

Mr. KELF (Newcastle) pointed to the denominations which trusted to the enthusiasm of members. In Newcastle for every Freethinker inside their ranks there were ten out. If the parent Society sent down lecturers that would be compensation.

Mr. CHEESE (Manchester) wished to know if they did not pay their way now, how will they do so with a less subscription. He thought that experience showed that though for a year or two members would continue their present subscription, they would fall down to the minimum.

An individual Manchester member supported the motion. It would bring many more into the Society; he himself

could bring twenty, and thought one thousand ought to be brought in at Manchester.

Mr. KAYE supported the motion. He thought it would result in an increase of membership. In each branch there were a certain number of old standards on whom the new rule would have no effect.

Mr. DOEG (Liverpool) also spoke in favor. For every member in Liverpool they had a hundred outside. A lot of working men at present were forced to be in arrears.

Miss VANCE opposed the motion. She felt the minimum would become the maximum. Human nature was the same among Freethinkers as among others. At present some of the members were waiting for the reduction, and she feared the proposition would much weaken the Branches.

Mr. A. THOMAS (Camberwell) mentioned that in his society there were two grades, the A and B—the B's giving a guinea a year and the A's 5s. 4d. This was found to work well. They would welcome any change which would put greater life into the movement, and this plan might bring in those who may give more in work than in money.

Mr. GOWLAND was not afraid that members of local Branches would leave and join the parent Society.

Mr. FORDER (Woolwich) pointed out that if a Branch was in difficulties and a proper balance-sheet was shown, the Executive had never failed to cancel all arrears, and he had no doubt that in future the same consideration would be shown. He mentioned that on board a large ironclad there were several members, and nearly fifty Secularists, who might join if the subscription were one shilling. Two new Branches had been formed at Barbadoes and Gibraltar. They had, indeed, members in nearly every regiment. If the proposition was accepted, he felt sure a larger number would join. If we turned to the balance-sheets it would be found that many did not at present pay their full subscription, but make a renewal when they fell into arrears.

Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON (North West London), said he had been instructed to oppose the motion, but personally he was in favor of it. He saw little argument on the other side, and replying to Miss Vance, said that if a person thinks he will gain five shillings by lowering his subscription, he might gain six shillings by leaving altogether.

The motion was carried by an overwhelming vote.

Mr. FOOTE then moved "That Branches shall henceforth pay to the central fund the sum of sixpence per year for each member." Mr. Smith (Farsley) seconded, and after some little discussion the motion was accepted.

The proposition that the Propagandist and General funds should be merged into one was also accepted, although Mr. Forder feared it might possibly cut off a portion of the Society's income.

The fourth motion, "That it is (1) 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," was, after a few inquiries, unanimously adopted, as was also the fifth motion, "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."

Mr. KELF introduced the motion which had been placed on the agenda paper by the 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." He urged that at all elections Secularists should rather sink party spirit than principle, and decline to vote for any candidate who refused to pledge himself against these intolerant laws, and also that the replies of candidates should be published in the public press.

Mr. ROBERTSON supported the motion, and proposed a supplementary resolution, "That this Conference appeals to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., to attempt to secure the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws in so far as they affect the right of the Society to receive legacies, if he is of opinion he can secure this by waiving for a time the demand that other disabling laws be repealed." Some years ago he (Mr. Robertson)

held that they should agitate for nothing less than the complete removal of the obnoxious statutes. But that he saw was impossible with the present House of Commons, and although the laws might be held in terror over them he thought if they obtained the right of receiving legacies they would have the best half of the loaf.

Both motions were carried unanimously.

Mr. DOEG, for the Liverpool Branch, proposed, "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." The motion was accepted.

This was all the business on the agenda paper. Two other resolutions, that in future all voting should be by ballot, and that individual members should have the right of sending a representative to sit on the Executive, were held to be of such importance that they could not be taken at the end of the sitting, but must be placed on the agenda paper for the consideration of members next year.

A vote of thanks to the Manchester friends for their entertaining the Conference at short notice closed the afternoon's proceedings.

**EVENING MEETING.**

The evening meeting was well attended, and was addressed by Mr. PEGG, President of the Manchester Branch, who said they had been greatly pleased with the Conference, and spoke of the new Lancashire Federation, which they expected would prove of great value.

On Mr. Foote announcing Mr. O'DONOVAN, who had recently formed a Branch at Dublin, that gentleman was accorded a very flattering reception. He dwelt on the condition of priests and paupers in Ireland, and assured the audience that, although they had a uphill fight there, they were prepared to face it.

Mr. Moss then gave a powerful address, in which he dwelt on the results of destructive criticism and Freethought, pointing out how much had been gained.—Mrs. THORNTON SMITH urged her audience to be unwearying in their efforts against the Blasphemy Laws and loyal in their support of the Executive.

Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON followed with a thoughtful speech, in which he compared the Freethought of the present with that of last century, and dwelt on its alliance with Democracy. The Society was at one with the spirit of the time in being more democratic than ever, and in entering on a system of scientific organisation. Our cause was bound up with the progress of the race. He looked forward to the time when it would have an endowed system of advocacy. Its triumph would mean the raising of the whole level of life.

Mr. FORDER, in a brief speech, pointed to the signs of progress in the Bruno monument and the rationalistic explanation of Bible miracles by clergymen.

Mr. FOOTE brought the proceedings to a close by an oration, in which he alluded to the loss of Mr. Bradlaugh as leader, the reception of the Freethinkers by the Municipal Council of Paris, and the many signs of promise for the future. His peroration was greeted with great applause, and the meeting ended with every sign of general satisfaction.

**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.**

- Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30, a lecture. Social evening every Monday.
- Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "The Prince of Darkness as Opposed to the Prince of Light."
- Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Mr. Gladstone on the Jew Book."
- West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7.30, Mr. J. Dipper, "Inspired Arithmetic, II."
- Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Masey Road), 7.30, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, "Heavenly Government."

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

- Battersea Park Gates 11.15, a lecture.
- Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "Confusion of Tongues."
- Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: Are they True?" A meeting of members will be held after the lecture.
- Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Is the Bible a Good Book?"
- Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, Mr. J. Dipper, "Inspired Arithmetic, I."
- Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. G. Standring will lecture.
- Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, "Apostles of Freethought."

**COUNTRY.**

- Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, Mr. J. Hooper, 11, "Is the Bible True?"; 3 "The Ten Commandments and How They are Kept"; 7, "The Bible and Science: Do They Agree?"
- Heckmondwike—at Mr. John Bothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, Report of Delegates to Conference.

Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Doeg, "Hypocrisy and Cant."

Newcastle—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30, meeting of Sunday Music League; 3, annual meeting, election of officers, etc.

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road, 6.30, Report of delegates to Conference, and arrangements for the anniversary on June 29.

Sheffield Hall of Science Rockingham Street, Mr. Harry Smith, 3, "What Think ye of Christ"; 7, "By the Blast of God they Perish."

South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, a business meeting.

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London S.E. — June 1 (morning), Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich; 8 (morning), Bethnal Green, (evening), Camberwell; 15 (evening), Ball's Pond; 22 (morning), Clekenwell; 29 (morning), Mile End, (afternoon), Victoria Park July 6 (morning), Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich; 13 (morning), Mile End, (evening), Camberwell; 20 (afternoon), Victoria Park.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sincinton, Nottingham.—June 1, Hanley.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—June 1, Sheffield; 15, Birmingham.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Lera Street, City Road, Waltham, Liverpool.—June 1, Manchester; 8, Manchester; 29, Rochdale. July 20, Sheffield.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—June 15 (morning and evening), Battersea.

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