

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

SCIENCE and scholarship have not been at work for nothing even at Oxford. Old-fashioned as English universities are apt to be, they cannot for ever keep out the results of inquiry and speculation. The atmosphere, so to speak, becomes suffused with the advanced thought of the age, and it penetrates everywhere. The very man in the street is affected by it unawares. And as the subtle influence of an east wind cannot by any device be excluded even from a sick chamber, it need not surprise us that the scepticism which is "in the air" has crept into the halls of Oxford and stolen into the mental blood of their denizens.

Slowly, but surely, the old order changes. The well-informed champions of Christianity see that it must adjust itself to altered conditions of knowledge and sentiment; that, if it is to live at all in the future, it must flow with the stream of secular thought. Anathemas and excommunications have lost their terror. The world reads them and smiles. Nor is persecution a resource to be depended on. Now and then a heretic may be harried, a member of Parliament may be kept out of his seat, a mother may be robbed of her children, or an editor may be sent to prison. But such things have as little effect on the broad tendency of the age as flies on the back of an elephant. They exasperate, perhaps, but they do not check. They only emphasise the progress of rethought and the growing impotence of Ecclesiasticism.

Putting these reasons together, it is easy to account for such a volume as *Lux Mundi*. The sub-title is "A Series of Studies in the Light of Incarnation." But that is the disguise. The real object of the book is to bring Christianity, if possible, into a line with as much of the results of criticism as can no longer be ignored. The writers seem to say to their fellow clergy, "Let us cease playing the ostrich, let us raise our heads from the sands of dogma, let us meet the hunter Reason half way, let us persuade him that we are his natural colleagues, and induce him to let us all go hunting together."

No wonder the more orthodox clergy are alarmed. Their heads are fast enough in the sand. They are seeking truth "at the centre." If a deluge comes they will be drowned tail upwards. Archdeacon Denison, the ever-faithful watch-dog of the flock, barks ferociously. Occasionally his voice runs to a plaintive howl, like a canine hypochondriac braying the moon. He threatens to bring the matter before Convocation, and anon he pleads with the "advanced" clergy not to rend their dear old Mother Church. For our part, we hope he will be as good as his word. A debate in Convocation on another heresy case will be a plum to the profane. The bigots will rave, the hypocrites will hum and ha, the knowing ones will sprinkle cool patience on the heat of the distemper. But the upshot will be *nothing*. For proof of this forecast see what has happened in Scotland.

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Drs. Dods and Bruce have gone farther than Professor Robertson Smith had gone when he was turned out of the Church; although, of course, he has gone a great deal farther since that auspicious event. But the Church has not expelled them. By a considerable majority it has whitewashed their reputations. "Gentlemen," the Church says, "we will not turn you out. It would not do. The heathen would laugh, the infidel would jibe, the men of the world would sneer. We gained nothing, and lost a good deal, by turning out Dr. Smith. That folly is not to be repeated. You are therefore to stay in the Church and enjoy your salaries; and, gentlemen, draw it as mild as you can."

Archdeacon Denison's attempt will come to grief. But there is more in the Bishop of Lichfield's proposal. He wishes that discussions like those in *Lux Mundi* could be carried on in Latin. Why let the multitude into the secret? Why not go on bamboozling them? It is a game that pays. Once upon a time the entire language of the Church was Latin. Hymns, liturgies, the Bible itself—everything was in the sonorous language of Rome. The good old times cannot, indeed, be restored. We must pray, sing, and read the Bible in English. But these unsettling discussions, and these alarming admissions, might still be couched in Latin. Only a select few could understand them, and the ball might be kept rolling with as much delight to the players, and a great deal less information to the spectator. Honor amongst—parsons!

There is more in the Bishop's proposal, but is it not too late to be very useful? The discussion is not confined to the clergy. It does not even begin in clerical circles. It originates in the learned world, chiefly of Germany, Holland, and France, and only reaches the clergy by infiltration. Their secrecy is thus of little value. Whether they discuss in Latin or Sanscrit, the noise of the debate will reach the ears of the people. It is far broader than the Church. The sound reaches to the ends of the civilised world. And are there not cheap "infidel" papers that act as telephones—ay, and *interpreting* telephones—between the giants of criticism and the working masses? Are not the conclusions of patient scholars in their studies shouted from the housetops by bold bad men, who think that if there is any truth knocking about in the world the working masses are the very people who need it? They do need it, and so far as we can help them, they shall have it.

To return to *Lux Mundi*. The volume is written entirely by clergymen, a fact that would hardly have delighted Sidney Smith. They are in a certain sense old friends. This is what we find in the Preface.

"The writers found themselves at Oxford together between the years 1875-1885, engaged in the common work of University education; and compelled for their own sake, no less than that of others, to attempt to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems. Such common necessity and effort led to not infrequent meetings, in which a common body of thought and sentiment, and a common method of commending the faith to the acceptance of

others, tended to form itself. We, who once enjoyed this happy companionship, are now for the most part separated. But at least some result of our temporary association remains which it is hoped may justify and explain the present volume.'

The writers are men of education as well as clergymen. The reference to "the Catholic faith" shows they are High Churchmen. The Rev. Charles Gore, who edits the volume, is the Principal of Pusey House, though his article is enough to make Dr. Pusey turn in his grave. The book as a whole, therefore, is of distinguished authorship. We are not dealing with guerrillas or petty skirmishers, but with staff-officers of the army of Faith.

Lux Mundi is a volume of five hundred pages. It is impossible to treat the whole of its contents in a single article. We have elected to deal with the editor's article, which is appropriately the most important. Its subject is "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration." Consequently it goes to the root of the matter. The existence of God and the immortality of the soul are doctrines of Natural Religion. They existed before Christianity and they may survive it. They are also common to other religious systems. Christianity is Revealed Religion. It lives in and through the Bible. Even the Romish Church, which claims to speak the living voice of God, is a castle in the air without the Scriptures. Whether and how the Bible is inspired is the supreme, and at bottom the *only* question for Christian theologians. We are thus testing the very foundation of Christianity.

(To be continued.)

G. W. FOOTE.

WHEN DID CHRIST DIE?

THOSE who have read my previous article, "When was Christ born?" will understand the little mistake made by those who fixed the Christian era. Taking as a basis the statement of Luke that when Jesus was baptised he began to be about thirty years of age (the age, by the way, of the adolescent Horus), and that John began to baptise in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, and allowing one year for John's prior ministry, the birth of Jesus would fall 14 years before the reign of Tiberius—the date of our era. But they overlooked the fact that Herod died four years before this. So since this little error has been pointed out they remove the birth of their Savior to 6 or 7 B.C., forgetting that then Luke ought to have made Jesus at least thirty-six years of age when baptised by John.

But, as we have seen, Luke's own statement as to the taxing under Cyrenius, which certainly did not take place till after the banishment of Archelaus, reduces the birth of Christ until some seven years after our own era, so that there is a difference of some thirteen years between the accounts of Matthew and Luke, the only writers who give any hints of chronology, for Mark and John have nothing to say on the wondrous birth of their hero. According to Luke's own evidence then in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Jesus was only twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, and as his ministry, according to the first three gospels, only lasted one year he was crucified at a very early age indeed.

From Matthew iii. and 1, it would appear that "in those days," *i.e.*, when Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt to Nazareth, John the Baptist was already preaching in the wilderness, while according to Luke John was only the senior of Jesus by six months. But the question of the length of time of the ministry of John and also of Jesus is much disputed. The former, judging by Jesus being taken for John the Baptist risen from the dead must have been very short indeed. For the latter, as I have said, there is nothing in the Synoptics to render it necessary to suppose it extended over a single Passover. The arrangement which lengthens the public life of Jesus

to three years is obtained from the fourth gospel, but John presents a fatal contradiction to the rest by describing the crucifixion as preceding the Passover, whereas in the Synoptics Jesus had already kept the Passover with his disciples on the evening before he suffered.

Eminent authorities in the Christian Church differ as to the date of the crucifixion and have assigned it to various periods extending from 28 to 34 A.D. Eusebius makes it to have been 33 A.D., and this date has been generally adopted, though Clement of Alexandria affirms that Jesus suffered in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, A.D. 29, and Tertullian not only says the same but fixes the day, March 25th. But it has been calculated that, according to strict usage, the fourteenth of Nisan could not have fallen on Friday in any of these dates, and it is moreover certain that the Jews never permitted trials and executions on their holy days, so that the evidence of Matthew, Mark and Luke is completely discredited.

There used to be quoted on this subject the testimony of Phlegon, a freedman of Hadrian, who is said to have written that in the fourth year of the two hundred and second olympiad there was an eclipse of the sun greater than was ever known before. But as Gibbon says, this testimony is now wisely abandoned. The words of Phlegon are lost, and one citation of this fragment makes it the one hundred and second olympiad. Bayle long since pointed out that although Phlegon was a writer intent on recording the marvellous, he does not notice the extraordinary circumstance of the alleged darkness at the crucifixion, that it took place at the time of full moon. Moreover, as Gibbon remarks, "It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature—earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe."

The testimony of Irenæus (bk. ii., chap. 22), the first writer who mentions the four gospels, is that the ministry of Jesus lasted about twenty years and that he was over fifty years old when he was crucified. And for this statement Irenæus claimed to have the authority of all the elders in Asia. He argues, too, that had Jesus been only thirty the Jews would have said, "Thou art not yet forty years old," instead of "not yet fifty" (John viii., 57). Their object being to remind him of his youth they would not have added twenty years in specifying the limit he had not reached. As, however, Pilate was removed A.D. 36, this argument rather tends to throw the birth of Jesus back than his death forward, and since Christians now allow he was born from 4 to 7 years B.C., we do not see why they should not make it 17 B.C., or even earlier.

Altogether the evidence is so conflicting that it is possible to question whether Jesus ever really died at all since this position was taken up by early Christians and is held by Mahomedans even to the present day.

J. M. WHEELER.

A dying Irishman, when asked by the priest if he would renounce the devil, said "Oh your honor don't ask me that; I'm going into a strange country and I don't want to make myself enemies."

By the way, is it proper to call vergers, bell-ringers, pew-openers, and such small fry *infra-dig-nitarics* of the Church?

"That Adam and Eve were born gamblers
Is as easy to prove as to say;
They were caught at a game in the garden,
And their pair-o-dice taken away."

THE SUNDAY QUESTION IN BELFAST.

A DISCUSSION having some interest for Freethinkers is going on at present on the above subject in the most popular of the Belfast evening papers *The Telegraph*. A correspondent started the matter by suggesting the opening of the Free Library Reading Room on Sundays, and cited the example set by the City Council of Oxford, which has decided to open the Free Library of that city on Sundays from November next. Belfast is principally Presbyterian, and that of the narrow Scotch character, so that such a proposition was sure to be received with the fiercest hostility, but strangely enough the opponents of Sunday opening have had the least to say on the entire question. The numerous correspondents in favor of Sunday opening have been the most intelligent and logical in their arguments and some of them have expressed views startling in their liberality, and such as are seldom found outside the ranks of professed Atheists. The last letter, as I write, contains the following strong expressions:

"There are people in the world who do not think the reading of a good story or decent newspaper on a Sunday an unpardonable sin, people who, after studying the New Testament through and through, are unable to find therein anything authorising the absurd Sabbatarian views held by a, fortunately diminishing, section of the community. Sunday is not the Sabbath day, and the keeping of the Fourth Commandment is no more obligatory on Christians than are the many other obsolete and curious commands contained in the Mosaic code."

This should be a bombshell in the camp of Presbyterianism. The shorter catechism, which is taught daily in the national schools, under Presbyterian management, sets out expressly the obligations of the Fourth Commandment on all Christians, on pain of God's condemnation to the third and fourth generation of those who do not keep it. The austerities of Sunday observance in Belfast are disappearing rapidly. Excursion trains are popular—so popular as to somewhat decimate the attendance at the churches during Sunday services, with the result that the sky-pilots are protesting against the terrible desecration of the Lord's day, and calling on the shareholders—often themselves—of the various railway companies to put a stop to Sunday travelling. But it is useless; the pious shareholders pocket their increased dividends thankfully, and turning their eyes upwards deplore the wickedness abroad in the land, but they do no more.

The parks are open all day on Sundays, and the attendance is steadily increasing. I can remember when the parks were almost deserted during the hours of service; at present there is scarcely an appreciable difference. Comment is needless. Crowds of bicyclists start on journeys to the surrounding country, every Sunday morning during the summer months; and they are becoming so regardless of appearances that they do not sneak away early in the morning and return after dark as they used to do, but ride boldly in the daylight. Even the people on their way to church have ceased to be horrified at such things, and they will sometimes stop to look at a friendly race between two cyclists, turning away from the amusing spectacle with a sigh, and sadly continuing their dull journey to hear a duller sermon.

Pleasure steamers cater successfully on Sundays for a larger number of customers than all the Presbyterian churches in the city would hold, and judging from the favorable conditions enjoyed by these Sabbath breakers the God of the Presbyterian is either asleep or gone on an excursion himself.

All these matters, small in themselves, show most emphatically the loosening of the hold that religion has on the people, and the substitution of rational views on the Sunday question as on other and more Secular subjects.

W. M. KNOX.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A FREETHOUGHT MUSEUM,
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Paris possesses an incomparable Freethought Museum in the shape of the Musée des Religions, established by M. Emile Guimet. It would be hopeless for England to expect all at once such a magnificent endowment as that. But I have cherished the idea that a small museum and library might be instituted, in which should be found books and relics illustrating the history of Freethought. To this I should think many would gladly contribute. At any rate the idea is worth broaching, to see if it awakens any response.

CIVIS SUM.

A TRIBUTE TO BRUNO.

In the smiling land where the Tiber flows
On its winding way from the mountains down;
The sun of a far-off day arose
On a seven-hilled city of past renown.

It shone on pillar and tower and arch,
On church and temple and statue fair,
On a mob of black-robed priests who march
To a chosen spot in a public square.

It sees the man they have brought and bound,
It sees them driving the martyr's stake.
And while they are piling the fagots round
Their curses and maledictions break.

We look, and the cowed and howling crowd
Of Roman ruffians and Romish priests
Scowl dark on their victim, angry-browed
With the brutal passions of savage beasts.

No friend is present to take his part,
Nor venture the protest of groan or sob,
Save that some woman of tender heart
Weeps low at the outskirts of the mob.

The hands of assassins have lit the fire,
But the martyr, erect, unawed, unbowed,
Looks out from the smoke of his funeral pyre
Serene as the stars look through a crowd.

The deed is done, and the crowds disperse,
And Bruno, the noble, once more is free,
For the waves of the Tiber, a sombre hearse,
Flow down with his ashes toward the sea.

Ah, this was Rome when the Church had power
And owned the soil that the patriot trod;
This was the bloom of the papal flower—
Yea, this was Italy under God.

But the sun shines still, round goes the world,
And another era has dawned on Rome;
The vicar of Christ from the throne is hurled,
And the land of the popes is the free man's home.

On the spot where Bruno died that day
A marble statue confronts the eye,
While the priests in their cloister curse or pray,
And bemoan the worth of a time gone by.

And Italy's sons, while the Tiber flows,
Will guard that statue from break or fall,
And Bruno's lovers shall fame disclose
As the noblest Romans among them all.

Ah, this is Italy, free at last
From the curse of the sacerdotal clan;
Undoing the crimes of a brutal past,
Lo, this is Italy under Man.

G. E. MACDONALD (in *Freethought*).

MICHAEL O'RAFFERTY'S AGE.

An Irishman got a job from an undertaker to make a coffin, the job to include painting the inscription on the lid. This he was too ignorant to do, but did not like to confess it. By dint of following the written copy given him, he managed to get as far as "Michael O'Rafferty, aged—" but try as he would he could not imitate the twenty-eight. At last he remembered that he could write 7, and that four sevens made twenty-eight, so he finished the inscription, "aged 7777." When they came to bury Michael, the coffin stood at the graveside, and the priest spoke as follows: "Ah, he was a fine lad, though he's lying there so still, taken away in the very prime of life. Young he was, too, only—" Here the priest looked down at the coffin-plate to see how old Michael was, "He was only" said his reverence again, and he put his glasses on, and went nearer, to see how old he really was. "He was only—" he continued "he was seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven years. Thunder and turf! how did he escape the Flood?"

JESUS CHRIST IN LONDON.

FOR long—very long—I have continually thought of the reception that would be accorded to a Savior who took it into his head to incarnate himself in this matter-of-fact age—say in London, for instance. Why, the whole affair would be so absurd that even the newspapers would only have a few lines of notice stating that a poor carpenter's wife, suffering from mania, was brought before the magistrate at Southwark charged with obstruction in consequence of causing a crowd to collect by asserting she was about to bring forth a Savior. Poor Joseph would certainly have to put her away privily in the local asylum. Supposing the birth had taken place in a manger at Pickford's stables; his lodging with his parents in a court in the Borough; his turning a reservoir of water into wine, thereby astonishing householders when they turned on the kitchen tap; cursing the tree in Cheapside because it would not produce fruit—all the comic paper-power of this town could not produce so uproarious an effect. Imagine this young carpenter God arguing with the bishops and arch ditto at St. Paul's or the Abbey; the idea is too funny. Again, his triumphant entry into the City would not in these days be on a donkey, but no doubt on a bicycle—one perhaps of the "bone-shaking" kind, his means not enabling him to hire one of the better sort, not being able to leave a large deposit. And then picture his life at home—one small, ill-ventilated room, with the washing about, the under-clothes being dried on strings stretched across the room; Mary, his mother, ironing to the best of her ability; Joseph, tired with his day's work, seated by the small fireside drowsily smoking a short clay pipe.

The whole idea brought down to present time is too ludicrous, although the plea of Christians is that the recorded birth and doings of this third part of a God took place many many years ago in an uncivilised part of the world, amongst unlettered and grossly ignorant Easterns. But surely if the deity considered them of such importance as to cause his son to appear at such an insignificant place—surely there is more need for him to send his third part of himself now amongst his children, in the largest and most civilised town in the world, should he think of a present day incarnation.

Imagination fails to think of the Shah, the Sultan, and the Mahdi being guided to London by a star to search out and pay homage to this wonderful child. Try to think of the reigning monarch here being so jealous of this young deity, that an order goes forth to destroy all the male infants round about, so as by this clumsy arrangement to include the death of this one child. Why parliament would have an all night sitting, and pushing aside the Irish question depose the monarch by an unanimous vote, not by a majority of four.

Then there would have to be the trial for sedition. The judge would press for the death penalty—and suppose this God was cast for hanging—it would be done in the usual unromantic way—black flag run up on prison roof—inquest, burial with quicklime (thereby making any attempt at levitation very difficult), wax effigy at Madame Tussaud's, etc. Suppose ascension was tried, balloons containing reporters would hover about the spot with carrier pigeons to convey the news quickly to Fleet Street—special editions of the papers would be issued—the streets would be made hideous by flying, panting nomads, folding their papers as they ran, shouting "start of Christ," "easy go up," "latest betting on the event."

After the Resurrection when the disciples had to meet Jesus in the country near London—it would have to be a cheap tram fare distance, and no doubt in consequence of our variable climate Christ would have the family umbrella under his arm. The last supper would have to be held at a place to suit their moderate means, say at a fried fish and stewed eel restaurant. If these absurd things were told me as having occurred this week, well! I might smile, but no serious thought would be given to the tissue of nonsense, and yet denunciation takes place because credence is not given to similar events said to have occurred 1800 years ago in an out of the way corner of the earth. What a pity, if the descent of a God was necessary, a populous city—say Rome—had not been chosen. It would have been the very best place for a Savior to have appeared, both for publicity and giving greater scope to his or her mission.

London, I contend, offers a splendid opportunity for one of the numerous sons of God to try his skill at salvation now, and so wrest it (the Salvation dodge) from the hands of those who are playing it down so very low—I mean the Boothites, with their mad antics mixed with the braying of

what they facetiously call their *musical* instruments. Besides, if he came quickly, all the vast incomes of the bishops, archbishops, deacons, curates, canons, presbyters, priests, etc., would be saved.

ACID DROPS.

Under the heading of "Blasphemous Publications" the London *Chronicle* reports that the New South Wales Cabinet has decided that the circulation of indecent literature shall be prosecuted. "This step," it is said, "has been taken in consequence of the recent arrival of blasphemous publications from Melbourne and London."

We are delighted to hear that the Freethought literature sent out from our office is a cause of alarm to the New South Wales bigots. But why do they use the word "indecent"? We think we know. They use it to bamboozle the public. Under the lying pretence of "indecent" they want to put down "blasphemy." Let them try.

It appears that the Humboldt Freethought Society of Leipsic, Saxony, has been definitely suppressed, and all objects which might serve to continue the society, as furniture, cards of membership, etc., confiscated by the Government. This is the extent of liberty now enjoyed in "king-deluded Germany," which claims to be a nation of thinkers. Since the advent of the pious young Emperor, who considers himself under the immediate patronage of God Almighty, no professor can utter his thoughts on theology without danger of losing his chair, and a society which seeks to replace religion by science is forcibly suppressed.

In keeping with this inquisitorial act is the indictment for blasphemy of Karl Schulze, editor of the *Nordhauser Volksblatt*, for publishing an Easter poem in which, according to our exchanges, there is no blasphemy whatever. In the Reichstag the Catholics rule the roost, and unless the German people wake up they will be in danger of seeing the State become a department of the Church.

Providence is distributing the weather badly. In London it is wet and cold, the glass only registering a little over sixty in the first week of July. In Chicago it is fearfully hot. Twenty-five deaths from sunstroke were reported on Monday. By-and-bye we shall have to go in for Home Rule for this planet. The imperial government has too much to do, in looking after the general affairs of the universe, to attend properly to the wants of mankind. Those wandering comets have to be coerced, and the rings of Jupiter, perhaps, have to be kept from premature separation. That is all very well, of course, but why not hand over local matters to a local government?

Mr. Gladstone never travels on Sunday. He thinks out articles on the Bible instead. When they are written he gets a big cheque. Good Old Man.

Henry Oatman, editor of the *Morning Call*, Pittsburg, has been officially notified by the Methodist Church he belongs to that he must cease publishing a Sunday edition or leave the Church. He refuses to do either. The world awaits the result with breathless suspense.

Catholic Opinion calls Count Tolstoi's views a revival of the heresy of the Albigenses that marriage is sinful. It ought to know that the doctrine in question is founded on the words of Christ, and was held by many of the orthodox fathers as well as by numerous heretics, long before the existence of the Albigenses.

At the Conference of the Catholic Truth Society at Birmingham, the Rev. Dr. Barry, who recently had an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on the same subject, contended that Christianity had ceased to influence the lives of the masses in our large towns. He said that hundreds of thousands were growing up outside the pale of every Church, and that "Christianity lagged terribly behind." A notable confession to come from the priests of a divine religion. What is perhaps yet more noteworthy is that the priests hope to regain influence, not by divine help or

prayers, but by "taking interest in strikes and labor disputes."

The Catholic Truth Conference has also been discussing the Salvation Army and as to how far it is desirable to imitate that belligerent body. Father Lawless appropriately began the discussion. This gentleman has been getting up Catholic processions in the streets of Poplar. The Guild of Our Lady of Ransom has made a start on almost exactly the same lines as the S. A.

The Roman Catholic Guild of our Lady of Ransom, whose special object is the conversion of England and the salvation of apostates, has, in addition to White, Red, and Blue Cross Ransomers, a special Children's Crusade for those under the age of fourteen. In imitation of the S. A., they have a Red Cross Banner with the motto "Rather Die than Deny," and altogether aim at a military aspect. Two journals are devoted to their interest, *The Weekly Register* and a monthly, *The Faith of Our Fathers*. Here is a verse of one of their hymns:

We go on to conquer, we cease not from war,
Till the dowry of Our Queen is brought back from afar,
Till the chant of thanksgiving, the altar restored,
Proclaims your mild triumph sweet Wounds of our Lord.

The lines are in the forcible-feeble vein, but we can assure our readers the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom has the special blessing of the Pope and is no joke. A crocodile's egg has a very innocent appearance before it is fully hatched.

Mr. Foote's recent article on "Jesus at the Derby" has inspired a Chester-le-Street religious genius with a pome which appears in the local *Advertiser*. As a choice specimen of Christian sentiment and poetic art we enshrine two verses in our pages.

To what a state have we arrived
In horrid caricature,
When men on syllabus, on bills,
Mock their own Creator;
And others post them on their boards,
And run all in a hurry,
And set them out that folks may read
Jesus at the Derby.

But was he there? Yes, oh yes!
We ask, where is he not?
He's in the palace, mansion, hall,
And in the humble cot;
He's in the sea, he's in the earth,
And sweeps the heavens starry,
He's here, he's there, he's everywhere,
Then sure he's at the Derby.

There are four more verses of this beautiful composition, but we think this is perhaps about as much as our readers can stand.

"Sister Mary Agnes" has written an account of *Nunnery Life in the Church of England*. The lady was persuaded by Father Ignatius to become a bride of the much married Christ. She took the veil and, after a long process of disillusionment, broke her vows, and returned to the world after sixteen years experience. According to her account the nuns are treated with the utmost harshness, for instance eating off the bare floor is a device intended to cure inattention to the convent bell. The book suggests that there is much reason in those who urge that all convents should be inspected.

Talk about Jesus at the Derby! Here is *Joyful News*, who connects the Jericho taxgatherer Zaccheus with the modern publican, and says "This is not the first time Jesus went to a public-house, and it won't be the last by a long way."

The Queen has permitted the inhabitants of Windsor to come on the Eastern Terrace of the Castle and hear the band of the Coldstream Guards on Sunday afternoons, thus letting them share in a pleasure she has long enjoyed. Meantime provincial barbers and sweetstuff sellers are still occasionally prosecuted under the Sunday Law of His Most Gracious Majesty Charles II.

Alexandre Jacques, the French fasting man at the Aquarium, is going to beat the record of Succi, Dr. Tanner and Jesus Christ. He will fast for 42 days, and is in a fair

way of performing his feat without assistance from ministering angels.

A conflict has taken place between Turkish soldiers and Armenian Christians at Erzeroum. The Turks, suspecting an Armenian church to be used as a storehouse for Christian arms and ammunition, sent a party of soldiers to search during the time that service was proceeding. During the search an Armenian among the worshippers fired upon and killed the Turkish officer, this act being followed by a tumult, in which the soldiers fired upon the Armenians. The latter rejoined with revolvers, and in the mêlée four Armenians and eight Turks were killed and a number of others wounded.

A shocking murder is reported from Melbourne. A man named McGrath who had been suffering from religious mania, quarrelled with one Conrad Ratzlaff on some religious topic and then struck him over the head with a heavy door scraper. He also violently assaulted a constable who tried to arrest him. When secured he raved and shouted in the wildest manner, declaring that he had visited hell and found a sister there, that it was necessary for him to sacrifice a victim in order to release her, and that having done so he was happy. Ratzlaff was alive when picked up, but died before the hospital was reached. McGrath probably derived his inspiration and insanity from the Bible.

Last Saturday Thomas Hadon, a Wesleyan local preacher at Bedworth, committed suicide at Bulkington.

Bow Bells' correspondence column contains the sad case of B. T. F., a young man of Portsmouth, who has been engaged to a lady of twenty-three. His affianced began to read the works of Spencer and other scientists, and "has become a decided infidel." She has offered to release B. T. F. from his engagement. His father has said he shall not inherit a shilling if he marries anyone not a Christian. What is he to do? *Bow Bells* says—"If the lady is unchangeably set in her infidel views, and you are a devoted Christian, it is your duty not to marry her." We wonder if such cases happen often. Usually the difficulty is when the young man has become "an infidel."

The Bishop of Manchester has been defending Jael, the murderess of Sisera, selecting as his text Judges v., 24, "Blessed above women is Jael." According to the bishop, this pious woman, "who loved the God of Israel," killed her country's enemy with the best of motives; "the conflict in her mind would seem to be between a life pure and righteous and a life oppressive, cruel and of the basest and foulest immorality." It is needless to say there is nothing of this in the story. Sisera was at peace with Jael's husband; she invited him into her tent and treacherously slew him in his sleep.

Sisera being an enemy of the Jews, they praised Jael, and the bishop says, "though Jael committed a crime, it was one of those inspired crimes that had no ignoble motive and were at the worst the consequence of a splendid mistake." The rhetoric of a bishop is well employed in turning a treacherous assassination into a splendid mistake.

"I will make you fishers of men" is a queer title for the frontispiece of the "Young Women's Christian Association's Almanack."

A newsagent at Reading was asked to exhibit a bill of a Freethought lecture on "Darwin versus Moses." "What's that," said he, "a debate? I thought Darwin was dead." "Well," replied the Secularist, "I thought Moses was dead too." "Oh, ah," said the Christian, "I forgot that."

Here is a specimen of what the poor pedagogue has to put up with at the hands of parsons. It is an advertisement from the *Schoolmaster*—

"Certificated MASTER. Decided Christian. Advertiser seeks Converted, God-fearing Man (2 Cor. v., 17; Phil. iii., 3) for Mixed Country School. Exceptionally healthy part. 52 on Books. Married. Abstainer. Sing, play Organ. Wife or Needlework. References as to personal piety. One who values Gospel Ministry would find a happy Home. Present salary about £100 (may be increased), with good house and garden.—Rev. W. Woodward, Dalehead Vicarage, via Clitheroe."

When the "converted God-fearing" schoolmaster gets the situation at the magnificent salary of £1 18s. 5½d. a week, which is apparently to include his wife's services as a needlewoman, he will have to eke out his income with the advantages of the "Gospel Ministry." He will go to church, lead the singing, play the organ, and act as factotum to the Rev. W. Woodhead—we beg pardon Woodward. (The first syllable of one word got mixed with the second syllable of the next.) But if he perseveres his salary "may be increased." Perhaps it will be made up to £2 a week. And as he must be "an abstainer" he will soon be able to invest heavily in government stock. Happy man in a "happy home." Woodhead (no, confound it! Woodward) for ever!

Some sceptical person at Bournemouth heard the gospel account of the choking of the swine in the sea given as a proof that pigs cannot swim. He addressed a query to the local paper and was answered with instances of pigs being capital swimmers. Now the question is, can pigs swim with devils inside of them?

A proposed Act of the American Congress "to Suppress Fraud and Deceit in Alleged Spiritual Manifestations" has been stoutly opposed by the spiritists and withdrawn.

There was a debt-ridden church near Pittsburg, and Carnegie *didn't* come to the rescue. But the Lord did. Oil was struck in the churchyard, and the flow is now 1,000 barrels a day. Some other churches would like the same luck. But the oil is likely to get into the minister's sermon, and some of them are oily enough already.

Here is a chance for sinners! According to a circular issued from the Oratory, South Kensington, those who confess and communicate there, on the three days devoted to the Blessed John Juvenal Ancina, will be granted an Indulgence of 100 years on each of those days, and a Plenary Indulgence up to date. "Both indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory."—Walk in sinners, walk in. Clear off the old score and start afresh. For three days in every year, for a century, you will be able to "go it blind" with impunity.

Mr. Bradlaugh's seat at Northampton is assailed by a Mr. Mahon, who takes time by the forelock and issues an address of four foolscap pages to the electors. He seeks to outbid both Mr. Labouchere and Mr. Bradlaugh by advocating the eight hours legal day, State workshops, and better housing of the poor. Mr. Mahon claims to represent the labor party, but it is surmised the funds for his expenses are more likely to come from wealthy Conservatives than from laborers.

A Chinese railway is to be constructed entirely through Mongolia to the Russian frontier. The orientals are gradually waking up to the benefits of Western science. But they will not have our religion at any price.

Chinese Christians, what there are of them, have to bear the taunt of having adopted the religion of "the foreign devils who are making China into a hell by their opinions." This is from the *Methodist Times*.

The National Anti-Gambling League is a Christian body, and of course it is no respecter of persons. We expect to hear of its making strong representations to the Prince of Wales, Lord Randolph Churchill, and other members of the aristocracy. "Do ye?" grins our printer's devil. After wiping off the contents of a quart bottle of ink, he has gone to bet the office-boy two to one that we wait till the Greek Kalends. That is our way of putting it. *His* language is more forcible.

"Was the wine made by Christ at the marriage feast intoxicating?" asks a correspondent of the *Christian Commonwealth*. No, replies the editor; had it been so "they would have been already inebriated without a further supply." Indeed! Why it is just when drinkers are "well on" that they are most anxious for "a further supply." Try again.

Archdeacon Blakeney is too exacting. He wound up a discussion at Sheffield on "Brotherhoods" by remarking

that he should think more of the Bishops who supported them if they set the example of celibacy, poverty, and obedience. He forgets that Bishops are only guide-posts. They show the way. It is too much to ask them to travel as well as point.

Dr. Parker has made the discovery that "God did not write the Bible in English." It is high time he did though, for the translations vary, and hundreds of sects are founded on diverse interpretations. God might write the Bible over again in English, and then we should all read it alike. But that would put an end to the clerical business. No wonder, therefore, that Dr. Parker is satisfied with the Bible as it is.

Dr. Cuyler has been preaching on "Mules." Can he mean the "advanced" clergy—a cross between reason and faith, with the proverbial infecundity of hybrids? We might have found out by reading the sermon, but we had read several before, and we had such a fit of yawning that we could not proceed. All we could master was the title.

The Rev. Newton E. Howe, vicar of Old Swindon, who came to that town three years ago invoking the prayers of the inhabitants, has for some time been in hot water with his parishioners, and now the most disgraceful charges are urged against him. Pending an investigation he has placed his resignation in the hands of the bishop. On Saturday and Monday a mob surrounded the vicarage intent on administering a novel form of baptism in the adjacent Wilts and Berk canal. But the vicar had fortunately departed and failed to put in an appearance at the parish church on Sunday. The inhabitants seem to doubt if he did really receive the Holy Ghost at ordination.

They are fond of sport in the north, and even contrive to mix it with their piety. The *Newcastle Chronicle* tells how recently a Church hymn-book had to be reprinted, and the work was given to a local tradesman. Whether for a freak, or for a deep design, several persons got each set of twelve or sixteen pages printed on paper of different colors in such wise that when the sheets were bound into a book and the edges gilded, it was impossible to detect the colors beneath. Not once, we are assured, but scores of times, have pennies in this town been betted in church on the simple chance of sticking a pin between the leaves of a specified color.

"Love not the world nor the things of the world"—especially theatres, where wicked authors like Shakespeare compete with the men of the pulpit. The Rev. George Hack and the Rev. Sidney Dunman, of Cardiff, two hot and strong Methodists, have just been denouncing playhouses; and this leads the Welsh correspondent of the *Methodist Times* to remark that "Puritanism in Wales is in a healthy condition."

Dr. Thain Davidson recently preached on "Rubbish." There was no lack of matter. He had the Bible before him.

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.

OBITUARY.

We regret to notice the sudden death of Mr. T. L. McCready the associate editor with Mr. H. O. Pentecost, of the *Twentieth Century*. Although Mr. McCready wrote mainly on Social subjects, his utterances were always thoughtful and manly. They will be missed from our welcome exchange.

We regret to announce the death of Leonard Hemingway, aged 4 years, youngest son of Mr. A. Hemingway, our esteemed secretary, which took place on the 24th inst. He was interred at the Southern Cemetery, Manchester, on the 26th. Mr. Pegg reading Austin Holyoake's Burial Service.—C. WATTS

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

July 13, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.
August 3, Camberwell; 10, Hall of Science; 17, Hall of Science; 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.

J. B.—The Victorian law allows as reasons for divorce—1, adultery; 2, desertion, without excuse, for three years; 3, habitual drunkenness and neglect of home responsibilities; 4, seven years' imprisonment.

W. HIRON.—Buckle's *History of Civilisation*. The subject will be dealt with exhaustively in a future volume—now preparing—of *Crimes of Christianity*. Cassell and Co. publish a History of the American Civil War. We don't know the price.

E. M. VANCE.—See "Sugar Plums." The party is much indebted to you for undertaking the work.

C. TURNER.—You certainly did say there was no lecture at Tottenham on June 24. We note your correction. Mr. S. Standing, who manages that district, is working with too slender resources both in men and money.

R. G. LEES.—We have not the addresses by us. Apply to Mr. Forder.

ATHLIST.—Mr. Slater, of the Salvation Army, was never a Freethought lecturer. He is a personal acquaintance of Mr. Wheeler's. Mr. Foote has seen him, always accidentally, about three times in seven years, but has never had any conversation with him. We do not believe that Mr. Slater told the Salvationist you refer to that Mr. Foote "did not believe what he preached." Whether he did or not is a matter of indifference. We cannot stoop to contradict such nonsense.

INCOG.—See "Acid Drops."

W. LIZ (Dum Dum, India).—The rumor that Mr. Bradlaugh is seceding from Secularism to Theosophy is *too* preposterous. Some persons in India seem to have softening of the brain, but Mr. Bradlaugh is not yet so afflicted.

E. S.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

B. HARRIS.—Shall be glad to hear the result of your inquiries.

H. J. SPACE.—We are surprised to learn that the Committee of the Westminster Branch wishes to have its own separate excursion, and not to join the Federation excursion on July 20. As the Branch is affiliated to the Federation, it certainly seems to us a matter on which the members have a right to be heard. Branches should not stand aside from the Federation arrangements unless there is a principle at stake. If they do, then co-operation is an empty sound.

E. MAGNIER.—We have handed the complaint to Mr. Forder. It shall be attended to.

W. T. GRIFFITHS.—You do not say what special branch of Religion you wish to read. It is impossible to recommend books unless you mention the specific subject—the Bible, the Life of Christ, Miracles, or what not.

J. PRUETT.—Thanks. See acknowledgment in List.

H. COURTNEY, 8 Norland Road North, Notting Hill, W., will be glad to hear from Mr. Smart, late secretary of the Kensington Branch. He has something important to communicate.

STUPID AWE.—Pleased to learn that your newsagent, by displaying a bill, has run up his sale to fifteen copies. All the *Freethinker* requires is to be put before the public. Thousands would be glad to buy it if they found it easy to obtain.

JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec., N.E. Secular Federation, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne, acknowledges the following subs.:—N. S. S. Executive, £5; H. Richardson, £2; Mr. Fleming, 1s. 6d.; Mr. Roberts, 5s.; A Friend, 2s.; Middlesbro' Branch, 3s. More funds are urgently needed.

T. E. N.—The verse is hardly up to the mark.

S. STANDING.—No one who knows you could doubt that you do your best. The wonder is that you get through so much work. We understand what a sacrifice you make for the cause every Sunday. The only advice we can give is that you apply to the London Federation or the N. S. S. Executive for assistance.

W. G. R.—Any London Branch can have old *Freethinkers* by calling at Clerkenwell Green for them. We have a lot left still.

W. HOLLAND.—(1) Our views on Theosophy and its relation to Secularism are already expressed in two pamphlets. We need not repeat them. (2) Yes, you can have the tracts assorted.

YOUNG SCEPTIC.—Your verse is not bad, but not good enough for publication. How can you expect your first attempt to be so? Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. We believe the Sunderland Branch is reorganising. Read, if you can get them, Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, and *Supernatural Religion*. Both should be in the library.

GAMIN (Leicester).—Mr. Forder will see to it. We are unable to answer the other questions at present.

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—Loyal American—Secular Thought—Open Court—Joyful News—Independent Pulpit—People's Press—Chester-le-Street Advertiser—Joyful News—La Verite—North Wilts Herald—Swindon Advertiser—Market Rasen Mail—Preston Herald.

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.

THE FREETHOUGHT FUND.

A Fund is being raised to enable the National Secular Society to extend its work and organisation. Members and friends are invited to give a yearly donation. A list will be kept, and the annual subscribers will be periodically applied to for their promised contributions. It is earnestly hoped that *all* will give according to their means. The wealthy should subscribe their pounds, but as much value is attached to poorer men's shillings. If every reader of the *Freethinker* were to join the National Secular Society, and subscribe *something* above the minimum of one shilling, the Society would be able to carry on the propaganda of Freethought with tenfold vigor and success.

Already acknowledged £66 1s. 8d.

Tenth List.

£ s. d.		£ s. d.	
M. Weatherburn	0 2 11	J. Moffatt	0 5 0
J. Temple	0 2 6	D. R. B.	0 5 0
E. Holland	0 10 0	W. R. Munton	0 10 0
Daylight	0 5 0	J. Powell	0 2 6
T. B. (Natal, South Africa)	5 5 0	J. Pruett	0 5 0
S. Middleton	0 2 6	T. A. Sutton	0 2 0
		C. Simson	0 1 6

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectured three times at Reading on Sunday. Considering the recent establishment of the Branch and the summer weather, the audiences were very satisfactory. The discussion was not of a particularly edifying character, the Christian side being poorly represented. The Branch now numbers over thirty members, nearly all of whom are working men of a very superior type. Fortunately there are a few outside sympathisers who assist financially.

Several members of the Swindon Branch, about a dozen in all, paid Mr. Foote a handsome compliment, besides showing their earnestness in the cause, by travelling a distance of forty miles to hear him lecture. Bigotry is very strong in Swindon. A hall for a lecture cannot be got for love or money.

The London Secular Federation's annual summer excursion takes place on July 20. There will be high jinks in Epping Forest unless the weather is spiteful. Each Branch is organising its own brake party, but an extra contingent will start from the Hall of Science. Tickets for this division can be obtained (2s. 6d. each) at the Hall, at 28 Stonecutter Street, and of Mr. Pownceby, 7 Finsbury Street, E.C.

Mr. Foote concluded the London Secular Federation's course of Free Lectures at Hammersmith on Thursday, June 26, his subject being "Freethought and Christ." There was a crowded audience, many persons being unable to obtain admission. The side windows were pulled down, and some stood and listened outside, their heads being just visible from within. The proceedings lasted from eight till eleven. Among the five opponents were two clergymen, Messrs. Donaldson and Ward. The chair was efficiently occupied by Mr. H. Courtney. We believe the collection more than defrayed the expenses.

The local Branch has determined to continue these lectures during July. Mr. C. J. Hunt takes the first two Thursdays, and will be followed by Mr. Heaford.

One result of these lectures is the starting of an open-air lecture station at Hammersmith Bridge. This more than compensates the lecturers and the other workers for their trouble. It is very evident that Freethought simply requires an active organisation, with sensible direction and a moderate amount of money, to make its way with rapid strides.

The Battersea Branch N. S. S. held its quarterly meeting last Sunday, and decided to allow members to join at 1s. per year if they could not afford 1s. per quarter. After the meeting the members and friends sat down to a substantial tea, during which the Salvation Army came and played some "sweet music" outside the secular hall. If the Salvationists had come an hour later the Freethinkers might have utilised their band for the *soiree* they were about to hold.

An adjourned meeting of the Finsbury Park Branch will be held at Mr. Rowney's, 155 Winston Road, Green Lanes, on Monday, July 7, at 8.30 p.m.

Miss Vance, the secretary of the North-West London Branch, and one of the new N. S. S. vice presidents, is to be congratulated on her energy and enterprise. On behalf of the London Secular Federation she undertook to re-start the open-air lecture-station at the Midland Arches. A spot has been chosen for the platform at the corner of Battle Bridge and Wharf Road, nearly opposite the old station, and a convenient distance from the hymn-singing crew. Mr. Forder delivers the first lecture to-day (July 6). We hope the Freethinkers of the neighborhood will gather round him and form the nucleus of a big audience.

Mr. Charles Watts, the editor of *Secular Thought*, Toronto, and lecturer to the Canadian Secular Union, will soon visit England. He is to lecture at the London Hall of Science on Sunday, July 20, on "Unbelief: a Plea for Mental Liberty"; and at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday, August 10. He will return to Toronto early in September.

The Newcastle friends have started a penny monthly called *Sunday Notes*, as an organ of the Sunday Music League. We wish it success.

Bruno's statue at Rome is not to be the only eyesore to the clericals. The Freethought associations have appointed a committee to carry out a plan for erecting a monument to another victim of the Church—the famous monk, Arnaldo Da Brescia, who was burnt in the Piazza Del Popolo in 1156. His chief crime was teaching that the clergy should forswear wealth.

The veteran Dr. Ludwig Büchner, of Darmstadt, author of *Force and Matter*, has published a new work entitled *Zwei Gekrönte Freidenker*—Two Crowned Freethinkers. The work gives an account of the Emperor Akbar of Hindustan and Frederick the Great of Prussia.

The *Independent Pulpit* for June has a capital varied list of contents. We notice especially "An Inquiry into the Antecedent Probability that Christianity is Divine" by S. J. Matthews.

Mr. R. B. Westbrook, President of the American Secular Union, has put forward *A Few Plain Words regarding Church Taxation*. The boasted separation of Church and State in America cannot be considered complete while churches have the unjust advantage of exemption from taxation.

The *Loyal American* advocates, among other matters, that "all wills to be signed thirty days before death, or failing that the State shall divide the estate among the heirs." This is intended as a blow at the perquisites of the Catholic priests who find attending the death-beds of the faithful so lucrative.

Harper's Magazine for July is made interesting to Freethinkers by an article on the great Italian poet, "Giosue Carducci and the Hellenic Reaction in Italy" by Frank Sewall. Mr. Sewall says, "So thorough is the reaction exhibited at the present day in Italy against the dogma and authority of the Church of Rome that we are led to inquire whether, not the Church alone, as Mr. Symonds says, but whether Christianity itself has ever imposed on the Italian character to such an extent as to obliterate wholly the underlying Latin or Hellenic element; or prevent these from springing again into a predominating influence when the foreign yoke is removed."

Mr. Sewall points out that Carducci differs from his contemporaries and the classicists in "the utter frankness of his renunciation of Christianity," and the bold substitution of a Pagan ideal. At the same time he allows Carducci to be the main-spring of the revival of poetry in Italy. Some translations of sonnets and odes are given in one of which he addresses the Christian idol:

Crucified Martyr! Man thou crucifist
The very air thou darkenest with thy gloom.

There is also a translation of Carducci's hymn to Satan, which we shall probably present to our readers.

There is a Progressive party in the Jewish Church in England, who propose that at the installation of the new Grand Rabbi, which will shortly take place, there also shall be instituted an Ecclesiastical Board empowered to make reforms in worship. The orthodox Jews, who are mostly of German or Polish descent, urge that all reforms hitherto made in Germany and America have had the effect of weakening allegiance to their faith, and the same result will probably follow in England. It is likely the dispute between the orthodox and the progressives will lead to a split.

Under the heading "Olla Podrida" the *Market Rasen Mail* gives insertion to some cuttings from the *Freethinker*.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's pen is frequently found in the pages of the *Echo* with some suggestive scrap of Freethought. For instance, recently a correspondent suggested that the Pope should forbid the manufacture of Chartreuse. Mr. Mackenzie points out that "Such an interdiction would be an implicit condemnation of Christ's anti-teetotalism. A teetotaler would, if he could, turn wine into water. Christ is said to have turned water into wine, of a quality that met with convivial approval, and all for the delectation of feasters already 'drunk.' I fancy that Christ's 'wine-bibbing' will stand in the way of his Vicar's conversion." This is a good instance of the way in which a ready penman may take occasion to put in a word for Freethought.

Mr. Thwaites, a veteran Secularist of Stockton-on-Tees, has taken the whole of our back page for three weeks. May we remind some of our readers who are in business that the *Freethinker* is a good advertising medium? It has a good circulation—far larger than some journals that live on advertisements, and it is read and often kept the whole week in the house, to say nothing of the copies that are bound up in volumes.

Those who wish to obtain Mr. Foote's portrait must order it by post. The price is fixed very low for a cabinet portrait, and does not admit of trade discounts. The purchaser reaps the benefit if he only takes the trouble to post his order.

The Creation Story, the first Part of the new edition of Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances," is now on sale. This number is a double one of sixteen pages, and the price is twopence. Most of the succeeding parts will be one penny as before. Mr. Foote has used only a few sentences of the old edition of *The Creation Story*. The new edition is new in the fullest sense of the word. It is replete with information, and a great number of references are given in the footnotes.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE Meeting June 25, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present—Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Baker, Bater, Bentley, Heath, Hunt, Ivatts, Killick, Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Truelove, Warren, Wheeler, and Forder (Secretary). Mrs. Thornton Smith moved, and Mr. Hunt seconded, "That Miss Vance, Mrs. Burton, Messrs. C. Herbert, C. Williams, G. Burton, G. Standing, R. O. Smith, W. H. Reynolds, V. Roger, J. Robertson, and G. J. Warren be the Benevolent Fund Committee for 1890-91"; carried. Mr. Hunt moved, and Mr. Warren seconded, "That Mrs. Thornton Smith be added to the Benevolent Fund Committee"; carried. Miss Vance moved, and Mr. Truelove seconded, "That Messrs. Smith, Standing, Reynolds, Warren, and Roger be the Organisation Committee for 1890-91"; carried. Mr. Warren moved, and Mr. Bater seconded, "That Mr. J. F. Henley and Mr. C. Herbert be the Finance Committee." An amendment was moved and seconded, "That Mr. V. Roger and Mr. C. Hunt be the Finance Committee." The amendment was carried by seven to four. Mr. Reynolds moved, and Mr. Bater seconded, "That the N. S. S. affiliate with the Hall of Science Club and Institute for the ensuing twelve months"; carried. The consideration of the sale of the shares presented to the Society by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant was proceeded with. After some discussion Mr. Hunt proposed, and Mr. Ivatts seconded, "That they be offered for sale through the *National Reformer and Freethinker*"; carried. Mr. Hunt moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, "That the Secretary be instructed to proceed with the issue of a new prospectus without delay, and that the President be authorised to append a paragraph on the back thereof explaining the meaning of the minimum subscription to the Society"; carried. Mr. Forder having reported that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant had determined not to issue again the N. S. S. Almanac, a discussion ensued on the advisability of the Executive issuing that publication. Mr. Reynolds moved, and Mrs. Thornton Smith seconded, "That the question of issuing an almanac be deferred until next meeting"; carried. The Secretary was authorised to insert a paragraph relating to questions to be put to all candidates for Parliament at the next general election. Mr. Forder having reported that he had received an application for the secretaryship, Mr. Reynolds moved, and Mrs. Thornton Smith seconded, "That the question of the appointment of a new secretary be referred to the Organisation Committee"; carried. A question arose respecting reports of the Executive being sent to the *Freethinker*, and Mr. Foote having expressed his readiness to insert them, the Secretary was instructed to send such reports in future. A report having been made to the Executive of disturbances in Finsbury Park at the outdoor lectures, Mr. Foote and Mr. Forder undertook to report thereon to the next meeting. Mr. Bater moved, and Mrs. Thornton Smith seconded, "That the sum of £5 be given to the North-Eastern Secular Federation"; carried.

R. FORDER, *Secretary*.

SECULAR HALL SHARES FOR SALE.

The following shares presented to the N. S. S. by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant are hereby offered for sale, the proceeds of which will go to the funds of the Society. Eighteen shares of One Pound each in the Lambeth Progressive Club; seven shares of One Pound each in the Rochdale Secular Hall Company; eleven shares of One Pound each in the Portsmouth Secular and Radical Hall Company; five shares of One Pound each in the Grimsby Hall of Science Company; eight shares of One Pound each in the Manchester Secular Hall Company; thirty shares of One Pound each in the South London Secular Hall Company; and twenty-eight shares of One Pound each in the Hanley Secular Hall Company. All the above are fully paid up. Also twenty-five shares in the Ball's Pond Secular Hall Company of One Pound each, on which £17 10s. has been paid; and three in the same Company of One Pound each, fully paid up. All the above are those handed over by Mr. Bradlaugh.

Mrs. Besant's shares are—Five of One Pound each in the Grimsby Hall of Science Company; thirty of One Pound each in the South London Secular Hall Company; nine of One Pound each in the Lambeth Progressive Club; seven of One Pound each in the Rochdale Secular Hall Company. All these are fully paid up. And twenty-five shares of One Pound each in the Ball's Pond Secular Hall Company, on which fifteen shillings each has been paid. Applications,

with offers, for these shares to be sent to R. FORDER, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

PROPOSED SECULAR HALL FOR LIVERPOOL.

A special meeting of the Committee of the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. was held on Sunday, to consider the feasibility of obtaining a secular hall in which more effectually to carry on the propaganda. The present hall is inconvenient in many respects, and there is little doubt that in more suitable premises the movement would have much greater success. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Newcombe, Smith and Hall, were appointed to consider the various suggestions made and report to the committee meeting this day (July 6). Several friends have already promised support to the project, and the assistance of others willing to help is earnestly asked.—C. DOEG.

A FREETHINKER'S DEATH-BED.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(Continued from page 304.)

It is quite true that many unbelievers weaken in the presence of death and recant all their infidelity. This is because they have followed somebody into unbelief without working out their religious problems for themselves, for there are some blind followers of the liberal lecturers, just as there are many blind followers of the theologians; or it is because religious beliefs, absorbed in early life and retained for many years, are very apt to assert themselves against all our best reasoning, especially when the mind is in the second childhood of illness; or it is because when with weakened faculties one faces the grim monster he is frightened out of his best senses. I knew of a case of a German-born man who came to this country, when a mere child and utterly forgot his mother tongue, but before he died in periods of delirium he talked in German just as he did when a little child. The child-mind and what was in it came back to him, or he went back to childishness. It might be and often is so with one's early religious training.

It would not surprise me at all if on my death-bed, or if I should fall very ill, I would recant all the most certain conclusions I have reached in perfect health, but if I do it will mean nothing except that under physical weakness and fear I will go back to the impressions that were part of my very being until I was no longer a young man. What is engraved on my mind and worked into the character in thirty-five years is not rubbed off in a jiffy. So far as I am concerned, I doubt if I ever get over the inclination to pray when I get into trouble. I think I never went into the pulpit in my life without first spending a few minutes in prayer, for a blessing to attend my preaching, and to this day at about a certain hour on Sunday morning my impulse is to ask God to bless the address that I am about to deliver to you. Every Sunday morning I have to pull myself together and remember that nobody can help me deliver the address of that day but you by your sympathetic attention, and that it will have no power except that of the truth that is in it, the honesty with which I myself believe what I am saying, and the earnestness and forcibleness with which I say it. Knowing thus by experience and observation the tenacity of old habits of thought, I wish to say that no matter what I may say on a sick-bed or death-bed I desire my friends to take my utterances while I am in my sound mind and not scared, as the expression of my views.

This, however, is by the way. I am concerned just now in giving you a rational explanation of how it happened that some Freethinkers revert to former superstitions when they come to grapple with the king of terrors and they know that he is about to fling them off into the silent night of the voiceless and pulseless tomb. But you must not forget that it is the rarest occurrence in the world for a Freethinker who is really a *thinker*, who has worked out his conclusions for himself, to recant at death. I do not believe that when Voltaire or Paine died either of them changed his mind, and we know that Gibbon, Hume, and a host of others died like the philosophers they had lived. In our own day Courtlandt Palmer has shown us how an Agnostic can die, and I venture to say that Robert Ingersoll will not call in a priest when death taps him on the shoulder.

Now, I want you to understand why a Freethinker should not fear death any more than a Christian nor as much. A Christian never can know that he is one of the elect or that he has faithfully believed and performed everything necessary

to his salvation. It is always possible, therefore, that he may drop on the prongs of the Old Boy's pitchfork. Hell is for him always a possibility; though it is intended for somebody else. To a Christian there is always an element of fear about death. But whatever else a Freethinker may be afraid of, a literal, fiery hell is entirely out of the question.

I want you to understand why a Freethinker should meet death as calmly as a religious person. I say calmly and not triumphantly, for there can be nothing ecstatic about a Freethinker's death except to look back over a well-spent life. If we can meet death with no more than ordinary fear, if we can meet it serenely, this is all that can be reasonably expected of us. And I think I can show that our philosophy of life is better calculated to enable us to do that than any other.

When I use the expression Freethinker in this connection I mean one who knows nothing upon which to base a hope of a continuous personal existence after death.

The average Christian philosophy of the future life makes death a terrible calamity. It is a toss up with an ordinarily decent person whether he would rather go to the Christian heaven or the Christian hell. How could an ordinary decent person enjoy heaven, knowing that his father, mother, sister, brother, child, friend, or indeed, anybody else, was in hell? The only philosophy of the future life that I know of that is not horrible is the Unitarian, Swedenborgian, Christian Scientist, or Spiritualist, all of which are practically the same, and either of which is far better than anything that orthodox Christianity has to offer. But even that general philosophy keeps people alive through all eternity who might wish to be dead, and the thought of being obliged to live forever if you didn't want to is worse than horrible.

(To be concluded.)

REVIEWS.

Stepping-Stones to Agnosticism. By F. J. GOULD. London; Watts and Co. (1s. 6d.).—Mr. Gould is a pleasant writer of good English. He is also an Agnostic, which is a longer word for Atheist. His essays are intended to lead Christians away from their creed. With this object he makes many concessions, though we doubt if they will be accepted with gratitude. "All or nothing" is the Christian's motto. You are a Christian, or you are not; there is no medium. Mr. Gould says to the Christian, "See, we have much in common; cross over to me." But what if the Christian replies, "Well, as we have so much in common, suppose you cross over to me?" The essay on "The Immortal Bible" makes too much of the Jew Book, and we must smile at the sentence that "In the unbounded devotion of Protestants to the Bible we see a passionate respect for truth." But Mr. Gould speaks, with or without a commission, for "cultured Freethinkers." Culture or no culture, we cannot follow Mr. Gould's chronology of the Bible books, and what he says about the relation of Mark to Matthew and Luke seems to us the reverse of truth. This comes of relying too much on Dr. Davidson. Mr. Gould's best essay is "The Noble Path." But why is the philosophy "terrible and repulsive" which "sees no mystery in the universe"? And where is that philosophy found? After all, however, we are not bent on detraction. Mr. Gould thinks for himself, and his book may be read with some pleasure by all, and with profit by many.

Medical Essays, vol. iii. By Dr. T. R. ALLINSON. London: F. Pitman (1s.).—Like the two previous volumes, this is reprinted from the *Weekly Times and Echo*. It is full of hygienic information by a practical doctor, who has discarded mystery and gone in for science and common sense. Dr. Allinson's books may be heartily recommended. They tell people how to live healthy lives, which is a great deal better than circulating bottled drugs. Freethinkers would do well to keep these *Medical Essays* constantly by them, and try to carry out their sensible advice.

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 Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "How Christianity has Cursed the World." Social evening every Monday at 8. Friday, at 8, discussion. Members' subscriptions now due.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 6, quarterly tea and soiree, members 6d., public 9d.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Forgiveness of Sins"
Westminster—"Duke of Ormonde," 13 Prince's Street, 7, half-yearly general meeting of members.
West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7.30, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Science v. Genesis."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates. 11.15, Mr. Soddy will lecture.
Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, a lecture.
Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. S. Standring, "The Woman of Samaria."
Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "The Miracles of the Bible: are they True?" A meeting of members after the lecture.
Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 6.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "Is Easter a Christian Festival?"
Finsbury Park (near the band-stand) 3.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "Protestantism the Stepping Stone to Atheism."
Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.15, Mr. J. Rowney, "An Hour with Adam." July 9, at 8, Mr. G. Standring, "Freethought and the Bible."
Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sophistry."
Midland Arches, St. Pancras Road, N.W., 11.30, Mr. R. Forder, "Christians without Christianity."
Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Barbarities."
New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Six Days' Hard Labor."
Old Southgate—On the Green, 7, Mr. Sam. Standring, "Christ and Working Men."
Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "The Fall."
Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Teachings of Christ."
Tottenham—Corner of Seven Sisters Road, 3.30, a Freethought lecture.
Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. F. Haslam, will lecture.
Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Christianity to Civilisation."
Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Mr. H. Blan, "What Christianity has Stolen."
Woolwich—Beresford Square (opposite the Arsenal gates), 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Common Sense."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, annual picnic to Henley in Arden; brakes leave the hall at 9.30.
Chester-le-Street—At the house of Mrs. McLean, 6.30, business meeting, election of officers, etc.; subscriptions due.
Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, 7, a reading by Mr. J. Adams, "The Range of Knowledge."
Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—11.30, committee meeting; 7, Mr. Doeg, "Wandering Jews."
Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints—On vacant land at corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 11, Mr. H. Smith, "Profitable Christianity." In the hall, 3, conference of Freethinkers to inaugurate the Lancashire Federation; 6.30, Mr. H. Smith, "Bondsmen for Ever."
Newcastle—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11, business meeting of Sunday Music League; 7, on the Town Moor, grand concert by Mr. T. Wood's band.
Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, excursion to Stoke; leave G.N.R. for Gedling at 2.50, p.m.
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Southsea, 7, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Death's Test." Admission free.
Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street.—3, members' quarterly meeting; 7, Mr. Jonathan Taylor, "Housing of the Poor."
South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, usual weekly meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E. — July 6 (morning), Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich; 13 (morning), Mile End (evening) Camberwell; 20 (afternoon), Victoria Park.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool. — July 20, Liverpool.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool. — July 20, Sheffield.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham. — July 6, Portsmouth. Aug. 10 (morning), Midland Arches; 24 (morning), Plaistow. Sept. 21 (morning out doors, and evening in the hall), Plaistow.

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