

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.]

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CRUMBLING CREEDS.

(CONCLUDED.)

WITHIN the Church of England the process of disintegration goes on rapidly. What a change since the day of *Essays and Reviews* and Colenso's *Pentateuch*! The heresy which then was appalling is now mild; the shocking novelties have become old-fashioned commonplaces. Such things are no longer, as Lord Shaftesbury said, the "vilest productions ever vomited from the jaws of hell." Under the most orthodox exterior, men like Archdeacon Farrar, Canon Driver, and Canon Cheyne, conceal a scepticism that would have frightened the writers of *Essays and Reviews*. They have turned the Bible into something worse than a wax nose; they have made it a kaleidoscope, and no one knows how it will look in the next turn of clerical criticism. The time-honored chronology of the Bible books is demolished. "God spake unto Moses" is put aside as a delusion. The fact is accepted that Moses did not write the *Pentateuch*, nor David the *Psalms*, nor Solomon the *Proverbs*; that *Ecclesiastes* is a late product of Jewish Epicureanism; that *Jonah* is a romance, and the prophecies of *Daniel* an instance of being wise after the event. The science of the Bible is no longer defended by responsible divines. Such a task is left to a hobby-horsical writer like Mr. Gladstone. Nor is Bible morality defended as of yore. The Old Testament is at a discount; even the editor of *Lux Mundi* speaks of its "low standard of morals." Canon Farrar's *Solomon* contains a passage on the filthy and disgusting state of the Temple courts, reeking with the blood and stench of sacrifices, which would be strong reading in a Freethought journal.

In order to explain these glaring defects of the Old Testament the theory is started that God accommodated himself to the ignorance and barbarism of the Jews. In the vernacular phrase he was "leading them on." But such a theory is temporising. It suffices for the moment. When it is weighed and tested it will be dismissed with contempt. Men will not go on believing that Omnipotent Wisdom could do no better. They will see that a righteous God, where he could do no good, would never countenance evil.

The whole theory of Inspiration is changing. We are now told that God did not speak straight through the lips of his prophets. He influenced but did not control them. Hence their message was mixed. *Lux Mundi* goes to the length of saying that the great, representative writers of all nations were inspired. Thus the clergy are approaching the view, which is embodied in popular language, that inspiration and genius are the same thing. Originally they were precisely so. A man's *genius* was his attendant spirit. But the spirit is gone, and his genius now means his superior faculty. Similarly, a man's inspiration has come to mean the exaltation of his own natural powers, his being "possessed" by a great idea.

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Already the battle, which is practically over with educated persons as to the Old Testament, is beginning to rage around the New Testament. Very much has been done by continental scholars, but more remains to do. The critical methods, applied with such effect to the Hebrew part of the Bible, will be applied as thoroughly to the Greek part. Every line, every word, will be put under the critical microscope. Professor Huxley challenged the clergy to say whether they really believe that Jesus told devils to come out of men and go into pigs. His challenge was evaded. Yet we now see Canon Liddon and the editor of *Lux Mundi* at loggerheads as to whether Jesus meant exactly what he said in his references to Noah's Flood, Lot's wife, and Jonah's whale. So disquieting is the controversy that the Bishop of Lichfield wishes it could be carried on in Latin. Another Bishop, his lordship of Carlisle, admits, though in roundabout language, that Jesus could be mistaken. Thus all the old positions of Freethought are being gradually taken up by the clergy. Of course they deny that we have won anything. But we are satisfied if they are. They have come to us. We have not gone to them.

The good old comfortable doctrine of Hell is also disappearing. Archdeacon Farrar denounces it as vehemently as we do. The Rev. Edward White goes farther. He contends that man has no immortal soul at all. Mr. Spurgeon is the Abdiel of faith. He will neither cool Hell down nor shorten its duration. But the younger generation of Baptist preachers draw away from the old moorings. Thus we have the Down Grade controversy—about Hell and Damnation. Will God cook his own children? "Yes," says Mr. Spurgeon. "No," cry the men of the new generation, who see that humanity has outgrown theology.

Professor Newman remarks that the doctrine of Hell is chiefly drawn from the language of Jesus. Let the doctrine go, therefore, and the credit of the Teacher will be impaired. Why, it will be asked, did he use language that led people to believe such an infamy?

The mere decay in the belief in hell is a fatal blow to Christianity; we mean to the Christianity of the New Testament, of the Creeds, and of history. When a religion trades, as Christianity has always done, on supernatural hopes and fears; when it works with promises of eternal bliss and everlasting torment; it must lose more than half its power in losing its doctrine of future punishment. Appeals to fear have always been the strongest element in Christianity. When these are no longer possible, it will lose its power of coercion. Nor is this all. Heaven and Hell logically hang together. It is impossible to lose the one and permanently retain the other. For a while, no doubt, the more repulsive doctrine having disappeared first, the more attractive will still remain. But it cannot last. Its intellectual absurdity must be too obvious. Heaven and Hell are two sides of the same idea, and if one half of the idea perishes the other cannot long survive.

Miracles are also going. Dr. Lightfoot's reply to *Supernatural Religion* shows how hopeless he felt the task of defending even the miracles of the New Testament. He spent his time on minute details of scholarship instead of discussing the central question, whether the Gospels are adequate evidence of the wonders they relate. Dr. Abbott has given up miracles altogether. Dr. Plumptre seems to be in the same position. It is evident that the best-informed clergy are heeding Mr. Matthew Arnold's warning that "the Bible miracles are doomed," and taking his advice to put the value and authority of the Bible upon a fresh basis.

The crumbling of Christianity is progressing even in Scotland. Dr. Robertson Smith was turned out of his Church, and given an opportunity of doing justice to his ability and accomplishments. But Dr. Dods and Dr. Bruce are allowed to keep their places. The white-washing of their reputations has provoked a fierce outburst of fanaticism in the Highlands, but the Lowlanders are satisfied that the old order is changing, and that the Creeds which embodied infallible truth must be brought into conformity with the altered views of an age of exact science, critical scholarship, and popular enlightenment.

Across the Atlantic there is a general loosening. Presbyterianism itself—the vilest creed that ever crawled from the brain of superstition—is submitting to revision. The old infallible truth is being changed into a new infallible truth. In response to the clamors of outraged humanity, infants are withdrawn from Hell. Only adults are to go there in future, and even their case is somewhat doubtful.

This debating of fundamentals, this universal movement of revision, are crumbings of Christianity. It no longer says to the waves of scepticism, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther." It draws back its seat as the tide advances, and swears it was sitting there all along. But its movements are being watched. What is more, the tide is ever advancing. Having once receded, religion must go on giving way, until it yields to the enemy. And it is yielding fast. Darwin's corpse is in Westminster Abbey. Three centuries ago the Church would have burnt him at the stake. His burial is an act of capitulation. When the Church cries, "Atheists admitted," it does not speak the language of love. Where it once cursed it is obliged to flatter. It bows to the science it cannot kill. Its tolerance is born of fear.

G. W. FOOTE.

A BIBLE SCEPTIC.

THE book of Ecclesiastes or "the preacher," has given rise to a variety of opinions among theologians. Attributed by tradition to Solomon B.C. 1013-973 critics have assigned it to much later dates, Grätz bringing it down to the days of Herod. Dean Plumptre, who considers from the clear traces of both Stoic and Epicurean philosophy that it was written somewhere between B.C. 240 (the death of Zeno) and B.C. 181 (that of Ptolemy Epiphanes), says "Absolutely the first external evidence which we have of its existence is found in a Talmudic report of a discussion between the two schools of Hillel and of Shammai as to its admission into the Canon of the sacred books." The latter argued against it on the ground that its statements contradicted each other, and they found in them sentiments that tended to infidelity. They were, says Plumptre, at last led to acquiesce in its admission by the fact that at least it began and ended with words that were in harmony with the Law. There is no evidence that they ever suspected the integrity of any portion of the book, which has been called in question by modern scholars. These have conjectured that the last chapter of the book has been added by another hand as a corrective to the impiety of the first portion. The contradictions

are palpable. In the bulk of the work the writer distinctly states that the lot of man is that of the beasts, and questions who can tell a man what shall be after him. In the addendum he is told that the spirit shall return unto God who gave it and that God shall bring every work into judgment. It cannot but strike any one as strange that the writer should dwell at length on his reasons for scepticism and then at last briefly come to the opposite conclusion which he had previously done so much to confute.

Dean Plumptre who admits of the very last verses, xii., 8-24, that they "are in the nature of an apologue, added, it is almost certain, by another writer," contends nevertheless that the work exhibits a gradual advance towards a firmer faith. We think this very questionable. If a gradual advance is made it is in scepticism. Thus in viii., 14, it says "there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked," implying this occurs only in the case of some. But in ix., 2, the declaration is more emphatic. "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." And on the view that Koheleth ends at chapter xi., 10, the whole conclusion is in favor of enjoyment in youth. Not only is the spirit of the book of Ecclesiastes sceptical and pessimistic, but reasons are given for scepticism which are not answered in the apologue. At the outset the preacher says "One generation passeth away and other generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever." A sentiment by the way in direct opposition to 2 Peter iii., 10, which says that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." He finds all is vanity. "For what hath man of all his labor and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath labored under the sun." Vanity of vanities all is vanity.

19. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

20. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

22. Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice, in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

The twenty-first verse is more correctly rendered in the Douay version "Who knoweth if the spirit of the children of Adam ascend upward, and if the spirit of the beasts descend downward?" It is not an affirmation but a sceptical inquiry implying a sceptical answer. The position of the author is to the full as dubious as that of the Roman Epicurean poet Lucretius who says:

We know not what the nature of the soul,
Or born or entering into men at birth,
Or whether with our frame it perisheth,
Or treads the gloom and regions vast of death.

It is noteworthy that there is not a single passage in the Bible in which natural immortality is so explicitly asserted as it is denied by the preacher. Yet, if a materialist were to assert his conclusions in similar language to that of the Bible, no terms would be too offensive to be hurled against him by Christians.

The writer of Ecclesiastes appears to have been not only a sceptic but a pessimist. He considers all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and concludes that death is better than life.

The words of James Thomson, the great modern poet of pessimism,

The world rolls round for ever like a mill,
It grinds out death and life and good and ill,
It has no purpose, heart, or mind, or will,

are really little more than a condensation of the teaching of Ecclesiastes, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth" says the preacher, and the remark is surely no compliment to the alleged creator of life. And what denial of divine providence

can be more explicit than the statement "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good so is the sinner: and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath." "The dead," he asserts, "know not anything, neither have they any more reward." "There is no work nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

His conclusion is not so much that of the Secularist as that of the sybarite, that the enjoyment of life is the wisest course that man can pursue. It is no Atheist but the inspired writer who says emphatically that "man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat and to drink and to be merry." It is curious that this sentiment should so generally be attributed to Secularists, and that with every expression of abhorrence, when in reality it is found in the Bible itself. It is true the same sentiment is said to have been inscribed on the tomb of the Assyrian monarch Sardanapalus, upon which the Pagan Aristotle, who was a Secularist so far as rejecting any theological foundation for morality, observed "What better inscription could you have for the tomb, not of a king but of an ox?" It is Paul and no Atheist who says "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die."

It is contended by some orthodox theologians that Ecclesiastes is of the nature of a dialogue and that the sceptical statements are only made in order to be refuted. Of this there is no evidence, for there is no refutation of the statements, even in the added last chapter which winds up with the orthodox conclusion, "Fear God and keep his commandments." Even therefore if it is granted that this was the writer's intention, he has succeeded no better than those writers on Christian evidences, who by stating freethought objections and replying to them feebly have done as much to promote scepticism as Freethinkers themselves.

J. M. WHEELER.

FREETHOUGHT AND SALVATIONISM.

ON Saturday, July 19, the *Pall Mall Gazette* gave prominence to the following communication on the Salvation Army. We have every reason to believe that the writer was Mr. George Standing.

A FREETHINKER'S VIEW OF THE SALVATION ARMY.

BY A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

The jubilee of General Booth's great movement affords a fitting opportunity to place on record the fact—perhaps hitherto unsuspected by the public—that a least one phase of the Salvation Army's work is regarded with sympathy and admiration by many Freethinkers. The view which I will endeavor briefly to express will be scouted as rank heresy by some bigoted Secularists, for a certain leaven of bigotry is not lacking even amongst the adherents of Freethought; but I am convinced that a large section of that body are perfectly willing to recognise the fact that some good thing may come out of Nazareth, and to wish *good-speed* to whatever of good it may produce.

It should, however, be noted that this admission in no wise relates to the theological aspect of the question. To me, as to many others, the "Salvation" element is but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, standing upon precisely the same moral and intellectual plane as the uncouth devotions of Mumbo Jumbo with his stone idol decked out in Monmouth Street frippery. We retain our own pious opinion upon the theology of the Salvation Army; it is the socialising, humanising (in a word, the *secular*) work of the organisation which engages our attention and compels our sympathy.

During the seventeen years of my work as an active Freethinker the conviction has sorrowfully and reluctantly been impressed upon me that to the most unfortunate, and, alas! degraded of our fellow-creatures Secularism has no message, rather no message that can be "understood of the common people." Our principles are a series of more or less philosophical propositions which are grotesquely inefficient in

the face of the terribly brutalised ignorance which surrounds us. To what purpose would a Freethought propagandist exhort a drunken wife-beater by preaching to him the fact that "Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge"? How would one of our fallen sisters be impressed by the sententious statement that Secularism "regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide"? It would indeed be seed cast upon stony ground. But we have the evidence of our senses to convince us that the Salvation Army has at least a message which *can* influence those to whom the phrase of philosophy would be mere gibberish. "It is the first step which costs," and it is just this first step upwards from the abyss of ignorance and degradation that the Army has made possible where Secularism would have utterly failed.

Some months ago I had occasion to attend a "holiness meeting" at the Grecian Theatre, City Road, and during that morning service I found abundant food for reflection. The Salvation Army, I could clearly see had succeeded where the Church of England and other religious bodies had signally failed—it had got hold of the *people*. There I found in strong force the working-man, whom I had sought in vain at more "respectable" conventicles. And there, too, I saw—most pathetic and significant feature of all—an aged male pauper from the workhouse opposite, clad in the rough brown coat and odorous corduroys which form the sad badge of all his tribe. He slowly entered the room and took his seat, none looking askance at him. Here, then, the brotherhood of men—even of paupers—was frankly recognised: and, though to me Christ and Christianity meant very little, this simple incident meant very much.

Speaking, then, as a Freethinker, for myself—and I am sure that I do not stand alone in this—I say heartily *good-speed* to the work of social improvement in which the Salvation Army is engaged. It is surely well that our brethren should be lifted from the moral quagmire in which many thousands of them are sinking to lower depths of poverty, crime and debasement; it is surely well that our fallen sisters should be tenderly and lovingly taken by the hand and led upwards from the path of sin and shame. If our shibboleth of Secularism be ineffectual, and if the shibboleth of faith succeed, then let it be so; I care not *how*, so that it be done.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake, taking the chair at Mr. Watts's lecture in the Hall of Science, passed a caustic criticism on this tribute to "the Army"; and as soon as it was brought to his notice, Mr. Foote addressed a reply to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We print it, as we print Mr. Standing's communication, *in extenso*.

THE SALVATION ARMY AND THE SECULARISTS.

As President of the National Secular Society, I may be allowed a few words on the remarkable letter "by a Vice-President" of that body which appeared in your Saturday's issue. His anonymity is (to me) of course transparent. I wish he had given his name, instead of a kind of semi-official headline. I also wish he had taken some more satisfactory method than casual conversations of ascertaining the view of the Salvation Army entertained by Freethinkers before speaking for so "many" of them. I further wish he had avoided the crude bigotry of supposing that only "bigoted Secularists" could dissent from his view of the matter. Lastly, I wish he had not committed the blunder of looking to the formulas of Secularism for words of inspiration. The formulas of churches and systems of philosophy are necessarily occupied with pregnant statements and definitions. Words of inspiration are to be found elsewhere, in exposition and application. They abound in the essays and addresses of an Ingersoll, as well as in the epistles of St. Paul; and I believe they would go home to a Salvation Army meeting if by any chance they could be heard in the intervals of drum and tambourine. So far as the Salvation Army, or any religious (or other) body, does the least secular good, it is a mere truism to say that Secularists approve it. But, after all, *method* counts for a good deal in this world; and to catch at a chance good work, to the exclusion of the broad tendency of a whole plan, is to commit a logical sin against which Mr. Herbert Spencer so eloquently inveighs. Here is a drunkard reclaimed; here is a "fallen woman"—in the dialect of Puritan piety—rescued. Good—in its way. But the broader question remains: What, in the long run, is the practical effect of hysterical methods on the *morale* of society? Does prostitution diminish? Are there fewer drunkards? What

is the answer of statistics? What was the disclosure of Mr. Goschen's last Budget? Purifying a few gallons of a muddy stream looks excellent work; but what if the sources of impurity are left untouched?

On the other hand, there can be no doubt as to the intense vulgarity of Salvationism. It appeals to the senses on atavistic principles, and its one motive seems the motive of asceticism. The intellect is simply ignored. Rationality, beyond that of a docile savage, is utterly discounted. I have a certain sympathy with my friend's momentary fit of generous hallucination; but I think he will find that very few Freethinkers are prepared to expect much good from any system, whether of Nazareth or elsewhere, in which reason does not play a conspicuous part, and I would remind him that it is a fallacy to imagine that irrational persons have more or better emotion than their intellectual superiors.

I do not speak officially. I have no authority to do so; nor has my friend. But I think it right that the public should not be misled by his rather sweeping assertions. For my part, I know many Freethinkers who look upon the Salvation Army as a vulgar copy of the Order of Jesus. There is the same autocracy, the same drill, the same pretence of salvation; only, instead of the learning there is a plentiful ignorance, and instead of the dignity a perfectly grotesque pandering to the lowest instincts of sensationalism. And those who see the Salvation Army in this light are not to be shaken by the casual good it may do. The world is governed, after all, not by reformation societies, but by ideas; and a great historian like Gibbon recognises this truth when he says that, to a philosophical eye, the virtues of the clergy are more dangerous than their vices.

As was to be expected, Mr. Standring's praise of the Salvation Army, and his quite uncalled-for sneers at his own party, have been greedily seized on by the Christian press. The *Methodist Times* sees in it "indications of the growing power of Christianity in the most unexpected quarters," and "one of the many indications that the days of Secularism are nearly over." All this is very natural, and we have no right to complain. Mr. Standring gave the Christians an opportunity, and they have a right to use it. Still, Secularism is not going to the dogs because a single Secularist trumpets his admiration of the Salvation Army. As a matter of fact, we are making more members than ever.

A CHEERFUL GIVER.

Caller—Beg pardon for intruding, sir, but knowing your reputation for benevolence, I have taken the liberty of stopping to ask you to subscribe to the fund to buy a bell for our church. We hope to collect enough to purchase one of the largest and handsomest bells now manufactured.

Benevolent Individual—Where is your church located?

Caller—Corner Restful and Peace Street.

Benevolent Individual—I will subscribe gladly. A man I hate lives near there.

Although Unitarians became exempt from fear of prosecution by the Act 53, George III., which received royal assent on July 21, 1813, it was not till the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels Bills on July 19, 1844, that property bequeathed to them for religious purposes was secure. In our case it seems likely that we may obtain relief from the disability which prevents our halls being endowed even before the removal of the Blasphemy Laws, and this will be an immense advantage.

It is interesting in these days to encounter a genuine believer in inspiration, and we have recently come across a big but anonymous work by a writer who urges that because Matt. xxvii., 9-10, deliberately ascribes to Jeremiah a passage not found in Jeremiah, but in Zechariah, therefore the passage in Zechariah must have been written by Jeremiah.

The American Bible Society reports that during the last eight years a quarter of a million families have been found in the States without a copy of the Bible, and that three hundred thousand refused it as a gift. We presume the majority of these were Catholics

ACID DROPS.

Victoria Park was the scene of disorder on Sunday afternoon. It was all on account of the black man. After a lecture by Mr. Hunt, the chairman of the Freethought platform, Mr. Eagles, invited opposition. A Christian, Mr. Elphlein, stepped forward; and at that moment, as if by arrangement, Celestine Edwards, the black preacher, came across from his own platform, bringing his audience with him. Mr. Elphlein had the impudence to announce that he was going to hand his notes over to Edwards, but Mr. Eagles very properly declined to let Edwards reply to a lecture he had not heard a word of. Thereupon the meek Christians, who love their enemies, and turn the right cheek when smitten on the left, attacked the Freethinkers and overthrew their platform, which was with difficulty saved from destruction.

Several children were thrown down in the *mêlée*, and the scene was altogether disgraceful. Freethinkers should rally round the Secular platform this afternoon (Aug. 3) and check the rowdiness of these disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Celestine Edwards has been paraded at Church Congresses as a powerful enemy of infidelity in East London. But if the "power" is to take a muscular direction we fancy the parson's pet may find out his mistake. Freethinkers are an orderly set of people, but they do not believe in "resist not evil," and they were never disposed to put up tamely with insult and oppression.

Christianity is always meaning something fresh. According to Mrs. Emma P. Ewing, a lady lecturer at Chantagua, it includes good cookery. "Good cookery," she exclaimed, "is indispensable to the highest type of Christian life." Bishop Vincent, who was on the platform, cried, "I say Amen to that." Well, if good cooking is a part of Christianity, it is about the best thing in it. We shall subscribe to that department anyhow. But how about mirth and laughter? They are excellent aids to digestion. Evidently, if we want to find the best Christians, we must leave the churches and go to the theatres. Mr. Toole would beat the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of the World* is to be published first in America. It is reported that "it invests Mary Magdalene with a charming romance." A French critic said there was a smell of patchouli through Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, but apparently Sir Edwin Arnold outdoes the Parisian.

The dissatisfaction of the Armenian Christians with their own patriarch has culminated in a religious riot at the Constantinople cathedral. The Turkish troops were brought in to quell the disturbance among Christians and bloodshed ensued, four Turks and three Armenians being killed. It is said the Armenians have appealed to the Russian Czar against Turkish persecution.

Mr. Burns, in his paper the *Medium*, speaking of the Spiritualist meeting at Epping Forest, which took place at the same time as the excursion of the L. S. F., says an influence was present "which was truly infernal." Mr. Burns does not allude either to the Secularists or the German clubs, but to the professional "mejums," who, he says, are the fungi and bane of the movement, which, judged by its Epping Forest outing, certainly makes no progress, be the reason what it may.

A work on *The Historic Relation of the Gospels*, by the Rev. J. J. Halcombe, contends that John's gospel is the earliest. If this is so it is certain the others must belong to the latter half of the second century, as there is no evidence of the existence of the gospel according to John before 160 A.D. But Mr. Halcombe is a faddist who has discovered a misplacement of the chapters of Luke.

The *Rock* begs for books, etc., to be sent to the poor clergy. We do not know much of these poor sufferers, described by the *Rock* as without means of satisfying their intellectual wants; but if any of them will send us their addresses we will gladly supply them with a little literature.

The Lord's Day Observance Society have sent a remonstrance to the Queen upon her permitting the band to play at Windsor on Sunday. Her Majesty has politely acknowledged the protest, but made no alteration.

A petition lies at West Brighton Station for the signature of those desiring a train to run from Brighton to Worthing at one p. m. on Sunday, for the convenience of those who come from the latter place to obtain their gospel ministrations at the more populous watering place.

In Victoria they have the Religious census, and Roman Catholics are carefully admonished that they must not omit the word *Roman* if they desire to be properly classified.

Miss Weston, the "sailor's friend," writes and prints a Monthly Letter to the Royal Navy and Marines, and the authorities assist her in circulating it. Her August letter is chiefly devoted to the *Freethinker*, which we hope she will continue to advertise. Miss Weston replies to Jack's doubts about Bible science by telling him that "day" in the Creation story means "period," although she forgets to say what it means in the Fourth Commandment; and that electricity or something could make light without the sun, although she forgets to say how it could make "morning and evening" or raise a fruit crop. On the whole we cannot compliment Miss Weston on her scientific accomplishments, and we fancy Jack is hardly such a fool as she takes him to be.

There is something very pawky about the Bishop of Carlisle. His lordship has had his say on the *Lux Mundi* controversy, and he settles the difference between Mr. Gore and Canon Liddon by remarking that Jesus had two natures, the human and the divine. "We have no right to argue," the Bishop says, "that in virtue of his divine nature he must have known the truth, and that he could not have said anything which was opposed to the truth." Surely this is ingenious, though jesuitical. Henceforth we may expect to hear Christians say, "Oh, that is all wrong; Jesus was mistaken; he was speaking then as a man, and, like other men, he fell into error." We may even look forward to a work by a Bishop, entitled, "The Mistakes of Jesus a Proof of the Incarnation."

On Monday the 325 souls of Dummer parish, in the diocese of Winchester, together with the fine rectory and a living estimated at £420 a year, were sold by auction. The situation is a desirable one, and the bidding was spirited, but only run up to £1,130, the present occupier being only forty-nine years of age.

Dr. Parker, in withdrawing from the Peace Society, has not inflicted a heavy loss. He has not appeared on the Society's platform for years, nor subscribed sixpence to its funds. At least the *Echo* says so.

A so-called wizard named Marut has been sentenced to four months' imprisonment at Galicia for "snatching" bodies at the Jewish cemetery to burn at the houses of typhus patients. Marut admitted the charge, but pleaded that he had prevented Andreas Paterka taking the disease, whilst Paterka's wife and child died, after refusing to drink water containing the ashes of Jews' bones.

On Sunday afternoon a priest was arrested in Arras Cathedral during divine service. He is charged with offences against public morality, which is, of course, a euphemism for the crime to which priests are more prone than laymen. It was with difficulty that the gendarmes prevented his being lynched by the infuriated crowd.

John Tomlinson is a well-known Manchester street character, with a religious bee in his bonnet. John has been run in on a charge of attempting to obtain charitable contributions with intent to defraud. He collected a fund with the object of putting down the Sunday drink traffic. In answer to the magistrate, he said he had spent twenty-one days in fasting and prayer, and thought he had a call from God. He was bound over in his own recognisances to be of good behavior, so it is to be hoped God will not lead him into further trouble.

More Christian bigotry. This time in Bavaria. We

gather from the Munich correspondent of the *Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt* that Frau Hedwig Henrich-Wilhelmi, the German American Freethought lecturess, has been arrested for blasphemy at Munich. She had lectured there previously in March without molestation. We hope soon to hear of her release.

The Catholic *Tablet* rejoices over the disintegration of German Protestantism, which it finds is running in the direction of a reformed Christianity which cannot be discriminated from Deism, while Catholicism holds together, and, in the very country of Luther, has become a great political power by its capacity of adhesion.

Father Barry, writing in the *Tablet*, says: "We cannot blink the fact that, in spite of our churches and our preaching, the number of Catholics does not increase perceptibly, or perhaps not at all; that the young men are escaping from us, and that thousands on thousands of Catholic families have sunk into the residuum out of which, humanly speaking, there is no redemption." Father Barry advocates a propaganda of natural religion, and a sort of Christian Socialism. Meanwhile Father Best writes *Why no Good Catholic can be a Socialist*.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is in no hurry to offend either the Ritualists or the Evangelicals by giving his decision in the case of the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln. It is now announced that judgment will not be given until after the Long Vacation. Meantime secessions of Ritualists continue, the latest converts to Rome being the Rev. R. P. Camm and the Rev. J. E. C. Fownes, both of Oxford.

Behramji Malabari is one of the Hindu crusaders against the Indian custom of child-marriage, which, like most reprehensible customs, is maintained and sanctioned by religious prejudice. The *Daily News* says, "One of the worst forms of child-marriage is known as 'marrying girls to the gods,' which practically means slavery of body and soul to priests, great numbers of whom live upon the immorality of their girl wives."

In the celebrated Maharajah case, tried at Bombay in 1862, it transpired that not only were Maharajahs considered as incarnations of the god Krishna, but women deemed it the highest honor to have intercourse with these gods on earth, and to dedicate their daughters to their service. The Maharajahs, who were charged with this, did not deny it, but only asserted that their practices were in accordance with true religion and the inspired texts.

From the fact that the same word in Hebrew signifies "holy" and also "harlot," it has been argued that sacred prostitution at one time existed among the Jews, as it certainly did among the Babylonians and other Semitic nations. It has been noticed, too, that while Deut. xxiii., 17, prohibits any *kadeshah* among the daughters of Israel, it by no means interdicts those of other nations. There have not been wanting those who think the doom of Christian "brides of Christ" no better than that of Indian nautch girls or bayaderes.

Josephus, in the very next section to that which Christians have interpolated in order to make him testify of Jesus, tells how a beautiful woman was seduced in a temple under pretence of being visited by the god Anubis, and the story warns us that many of the so-called sons of God would be more properly designated sons of the priest.

The *Jewish Chronicle* notices Jewish superstitions against taking a census as illustrated in the case of David, whose people are said to have been punished because he numbered them, the instigation to do so being ascribed by Chronicles to Satan, while Samuel attributes it to Jehovah. It says, "Happily such superstitions are rapidly dying out, even among our Russian co-religionists." The most superstitious Jews of the present time are hardly so credulous as the writers of the Bible.

At a recent examination of girls in Cheshire for the rite of confirmation, in answer to the question "What is the outward and visible sign and form in baptism?" the reply of a smiling maid of thirteen was "The baby, sir."

Children get muddled, and no wonder, over historical characters. We see by the *Pall Mall Gazette* that, after the reading of Bell's poem, "Mary Queen of Scots," the girls in the Fifth Standard were asked who the lady was, and one of them answered "The Virgin Mary." Anyhow there was as much virginity in the one case as in the other.

In a leading article the *Christian Commonwealth* prints a malignant lie about the London Secularists. It says that they went down to Epping Forest, in company with Socialists and Spiritualists, took a lot of beer in barrels, pitched their camp at Starling's Hill, indulged in an orgie, and wound up with "a drunken scuffle. As the matter of fact, the Secularists went to High Beech, and by themselves; they took no beer barrels; they conducted themselves with perfect propriety; and they drove home in their own brakes before dark. No doubt our pious contemporary is thinking of another set of persons, only it puts the Secularists among them to show its Christian charity. It is neither Secularists nor Socialists who go to Epping Forest with beer barrels on Sundays, but certain German clubs.

We noticed recently how the Armenians became heretics through having only one and the same word to express Christ's nature and his person. The Mohawk Indians are also found to be heretical through a fault of their language. They have no definite articles, and use possessive or relative pronouns instead. So in place of saying "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," these converts say "Glory be to my Father, and to his Son, and to their Holy Ghost." This is a clear confounding of the persons, if not a dividing of the substance of the ever-blessed Trinity, and according to the Athanasian Creed a vast amount of money and pains has been expended on these poor Mohawks to no purpose, for "without doubt they shall perish everlastingly."

Palestine was described by God as a land of Promise flowing with milk and honey. If this was a correct description, it must have altered wonderfully; for a recent pilgrim describes it as a sterile and desolate to a degree and the towns as filthy into the bargain.

It is computed that Palestine is only worth about 200,000 yearly to the Turks and ought to be purchaseable from them for four millions. Why don't Rothschild buy it? Perhaps because some people would next ask why the Jews don't settle there.

At last, and owing to the personal intervention of Lord Plunket, Archbishop of Dublin, an inquiry has been set on foot as to the management of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, whose gross expenditure and little result has been shown up in the pages of the *Westminster Review* as well as in this journal. The inquiry has been most reluctantly forced on the Society, and it is to be hoped it will be followed by a scrutiny into the management of other missionary bodies. In the recent Wesleyan case the proceedings have been little more than a farce since both the missionaries and Dr. Lunn, who assailed them, are exonerated from all blame.

Miss Milner, a "staunch Church-woman," opened a Non-conformist bazaar at York. She explained her position by saying that in these days all "should work against Atheism, or, as some now called it, Agnosticism." Yes, the Christians should join forces to settle Atheists, and then—go on with their own quarrel.

The Scottish Church is in peril of becoming Ritualistic. At least so think the Rev. Jacob Primmer and the Rev. Robert Thomson. The General Assembly has authorised the publication of "Prayers for Social and Family Worship," with a view of substituting well-written prayers for extemporaneous rot. Whereupon Dr. Primmer calls them "poor fools," who show their "utter incompetency to be ministers of the Gospel." But even the Scotch Presbyterians laugh at Jacob.

Messrs. Primmer and Thomson are to be assisted in their anti-Catholic crusade, that is in spending the legacy of Mr. Hope, by a converted Roman Catholic named Duncan Charles McVarnish, who speaks in Gaelic, and undertakes to prevent Catholicism from spreading in the Highlands.

A Building Scheme Prayer Union is a funny idea, but it commends itself to the intelligence of Rochester Baptist Church. A printed card, with a blank for signatures, pledges the members to pray "every day" for a blessing on the new edifice which is being raised. Prayer is to be offered for cash—of course. That is indispensable. Also for "the workmen to be preserved from accident." This implies that the Lord can stop accidents if he pleases. Well, if he can, and doesn't, he is a curious being. We might also inquire why the workmen engaged on this particular gospel-shop should be more highly favored than their fellow workmen engaged on other buildings.

Considering the well-known views of Mr. John Morley, it is astonishing to find the Young Men's Christian Association at Newcastle asking him to favor them with a lecture. If he complies with the invitation, we suggest that he should address them on Christianity and Common Sense.

A big cyclone last week visited Lawrence, a thriving Massachusetts town, killing six persons and injuring fifty, and destroying over one hundred buildings, which it is said were crushed like egg-shells. A church was also partially destroyed by the visitation, and the value of the property destroyed is estimated at a hundred thousand dollars.

The Rev. S. D. Headlam recently lectured at the West Ham Secular Hall on Christian Socialism. During his discourse, which was about anything but the Socialism of the New Testament, Mr. Headlam said that a Sunday-school teacher is capable of refuting the average Freethought lecturer, and that the men on our platform could not pass the simplest examination in Biblical knowledge. Now we have always thought Mr. Headlam a good sort of a man, though he will drag in his "Lord and Master Jesus Christ" at political meetings, but as a thinker, and especially a Christian thinker, we have never been able to take him seriously. We know of one Secular lecturer who would be happy to show Mr. Headlam what Christian Socialism is, and to do it on a public platform. The audience would then be able to judge whether the Bible knowledge is all on the Christian side.

The Russian Government is very regardful of the salvation of the Deicides. An order has been issued prohibiting foreign missionaries from carrying on religious propaganda among the Jews in Poland in detriment to the exclusive right of propaganda possessed by the Orthodox Greek Church. A Jew might as well be damned for Judaism as for Lutheranism. If he wants to be saved, let him accept at once the only true and infallible religion.

Since the opening of the Zoological Gardens in San Francisco, hundreds of people go there every Sunday, and after watching the antics of the bears care not for church.

The *Edinburgh Evening News* is fair-minded enough to give an extract from Mr. Foote's rejoinder to Mr. Standing. But it says that Mr. Foote does not go to the root of the problem, which is "how to impart to Secularism the inspirational power of the Salvation Army." This "inspirational power" lies in the Army's "appeal to the supernatural hopes and fears," and certainly Secularism will never compete with it in that direction. But, after, all does not the Mahdi beat Booth hollow in this "inspirational power"? His followers have no doubts or hesitations; heaven or hell is the lot of those who obey or disobey him; and they rush fearlessly on rifles and Gatling guns under the "inspirational power" of this faith. Booth's followers encounter nothing worse than bad smells, unless it be an occasional dispute with the police.

The *Evening News* is mistaken in supposing that "Secularism offers nothing to humanity beyond the yawning grave, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"—which, by the way, is Scriptural language. Secularism offers men something on this side of "the yawning grave"—happiness, usefulness, and dignity. Its message is lost on the vulgar superstitionist. Granted, but the message of the vulgar superstitionist is lost on the Secularist. Is it the fault of a Marcus Aurelius, an Epicure, or a Spinoza, that the ignorant and stupid devotees of a besetting superstition are unable to appreciate a word of his wisdom?

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 3, Camberwell Secular Hall, 61 New Church Road, at 7.30, "Heresy at Oxford: a Review of *Lux Mundi*."
 August 10, Hall of Science; 17, Hall of Science; 24, Portsmouth; 31, Birmingham.
 September 7, Milton Hall; 14, Milton Hall; 28, Hull.
 October 5, 12, 19, 26, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

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

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

T. E. PERKINS.—See "Acid Drops." We hope the Victoria Park platform will be well supported.

SERGEANT WESTERMAN.—Mr. Forder has received your letter, and notes that the *Freethinker* can be sent to soldiers for a halfpenny. Tracts and pamphlets are sent for the extra postage. We are glad to hear of your success in the West Indies, and send greeting to you and your colleagues.

J. K. SYKES.—Glad to hear the "Freethinker Tracts" are doing good in Southend. Keep pegging away.

L. SPURGEON.—Letters to the local press are very useful. The plates of the Comic Bible Sketches were destroyed or broken in the fire on our premises five years ago. We cannot afford to reproduce them. We thank you for circulating our Tracts.

THRIST.—Thanks for the quotation from Ueberweg.

G. DAVIS.—There are many improvements needed, and we hope to carry some of them out. But a Society can only be reformed from inside. Why do you not join and help in the work?

L. H.—The suggestion shall be considered. We have not heard yet from anyone at Norwich. Mr. Cooper used to be a pillar of the cause in that city, but he seems to do little at present.

H. ROWDEN.—Certainly you should get some knowledge of Political Economy before reading special books on the Labor Question. There is a cheap edition of Mill's work at 5s.

W. M. K.—Some of the lines are halting, especially the third, fifth, and seventh.

T. GREEN.—The only possible dispute is over the word "deposed." Do you mean that the change is made on Col. Olcott's suggestion?

S. STANDRING.—Always glad to hear from you. You are doing a capital work.

QUIZ.—It is perfect fiction. There is not the slightest proof that St. Paul was ever in Britain. We have not seen the correspondence in the *Newcastle Chronicle*.

J. S. ROGERS.—We have printed it in full.

T. RILEY.—We shall be glad to see the Barker pamphlet you refer to. Mr. Foote's *Is the Bible Inspired?* is reprinted as a penny pamphlet. He has added quite thirty per cent. of fresh matter.

C. DOEG.—Your private note to hand. Send us further information in due course.

JAMES FIRTH.—The letter was just what Mr. Stead wanted, and he has sent it all over the country. It would be idle to expect the same circulation for Mr. Foote's rejoinder. We are sorry that Mr. Stead's summary is flouted in your faces at Rochdale, but we fear it will continue to be so used.

W. HYDE.—That story about Ward Beecher and Colonel Ingersoll was publicly denied by both parties. But, as Ingersoll says, there's nothing in this world so hard to kill as a good, sound, healthy religious lie. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

A. B. MOSS.—Received. Shall appear next week. We wish you success in the North.

T. THURLOW.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

C. W. STUART.—The *Bow Bells* figures are incorrect. The Christians are put a few millions too high, the Buddhists more than a hundred millions too low. Sintoism is the ancient religion of Japan. While preserving a belief in evil spirits it nevertheless inculcates a high morality and easily allies itself to Buddhism. See the lectures of C. Ffoules and Miss Bird in *Religious Systems of the World*.

T. BOX.—Printer's errors will occur in the best regulated houses. We thank you for pointing out the one in question.

It is, however, as you perceive, by no means a substantial mistake, but only a misprint of the number of the chapter. *Is the Bible Inspired?* is now on sale. The address of the secretary at Birmingham is, Baskerville Hall, the Crescent. A. McALLISTER.—Of course "send" should have been "sends." F. MARGETSON.—We fear it would only be appreciated by those who witnessed the encounter.

CLAUDIAN.—Jowett's translation of Plato is incomparably the best, but it is very expensive. Grote's *History of Greece* is the only English one we should recommend, though Thirlwall's is not without merit. Whether it is worth your while to learn Latin or Greek is a question you must decide for yourself. Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* would assist you in reading Homer.

EGYPT.—Draper alludes to something of the kind in his *Conflict Between Religion and Science*.

W. COWELL.—We are not surprised that you are astonished at Bentham's "blasphemy" in the *Church Catechism Examined*. The great Jeremy was unquestionably a thorough enemy of religion, and he could not quite control his intellectual scorn of Christianity. We shall be satisfied with a very small profit on such reprints, a mere return for our time and labor.

G. B.—(1) Your statement was an exaggeration. St. Paul was the only man of much note in the primitive Church, but writers like Origen and Tertullian, before the Council of Nice, were certainly able men. (2) Better send our literature to laymen than to parsons, who have strong material reasons against a change of opinion; though, of course, there is a bare chance that some of them may denounce and so advertise us. But the old birds are too wily for that.

W. H. TAYLOR.—Thanks for the note about Paine. We are not an authority on pocket dictionaries, never having used them. Cassell's French and Latin dictionaries are good at the price.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Menschentum—Progressive Thinker—Lucifer—Freidenker—Freethought—Fritankaren—Cosmopolitan—Boston Investigator—Echo—Loyal American—Secular Thought—Open Court—Star—La Verité Philosophique—Fair Play—Twentieth Century—East Anglican Daily Times—Glasgow Herald—West Sussex Gazette—Ashore and Afloat—Daily Graphic—Liberty—Edinburgh Evening News—St. Michael's Union Herald—Manchester Examiner.

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 £77 0s. 1d.

Twelfth List.

£ s. d.		£ s. d.	
E. C.	0 2 6	J. Melling	0 1 0
B. L. Coleman	0 5 0	D. Woodhouse	0 17 0
F. F. Coleman	0 5 0	T. Smith	0 1 0
J. H. E. (2nd don.)	0 10 0	Mrs. Pascoe	0 1 0

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's articles on "Is the Bible Inspired?" have been reprinted as a penny pamphlet. Several pages of new matter have been added, and it is a wonderfully cheap pennyworth. There are sixteen pages of small type. Freethinkers might take copies for distribution among their friends and acquaintances.

Eve and the Apple and *Cain and Abel*, two fresh numbers of "Bible Romances," are now ready. The latter has been revised and added to, and the former almost entirely re-written.

Mr. Bradlaugh looked somewhat better on the evening of his debate with Mr. Hyndman, but he seemed far from his old self, and he confessed that the effort told upon him more than he expected. This pathetic remark, we regret to say, was jeered at by some of Mr. Hyndman's supporters; indeed, their behaviour all through was shameful. So great was the disorder that Mr. Bradlaugh was three or four times obliged to sit down. Mr. Buxton was an amiable chairman, but the meeting required a master. One fellow, almost a youth, was allowed to reply to Mr. Bradlaugh again and again while he was speaking. The chairman should have had the culprit expelled; and, on one or two occasions, he should have demanded order on a threat of closing the debate.

We hardly know how the debate will read, but our impression was that neither debater did adequate justice to his own side. Perhaps Mr. Bradlaugh was too heavily handicapped by the brutal interruptions, and the consequent generation of personal feeling. Besides, there is no love lost between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Hyndman, and such a subject requires dispassionate treatment.

Mr. Bradlaugh's health, in our opinion, is endangered by his absorption in public work. A man of his temperament cannot take things easy. His only remedy is to get away from work altogether for a three or six months' holiday. This is pretty plain speaking, but Freethinkers are naturally anxious about Mr. Bradlaugh's health.

Col. Ingersoll has been interviewed on the subject of great impromptu speeches. He says he doesn't believe in the impromptu great speech. All great speeches are the result of much hard labor in preparing for them.

A statue of Voltaire was unveiled on Sunday by M. Le Royer, President of the French Senate, in the market-place of Ferney. The City of Geneva (John Calvin's city!) sent a deputation headed by M. Richard, Councillor of State, and M. Didier, Vice-President of the Executive Council. M. Le Royer, in his address, spoke of Voltaire as the greatest master of the French tongue, the brightest and most keenly perceptive mind of the eighteenth century, and in a sense the father of the Republic.

The North Middlesex Secular Federation held its Summer Conference on Sunday evening at Wood Green. Mr. J. M. Robertson, president, took the chair. The secretary reported a considerable amount of work. It was resolved to organise a Sunday excursion. The grant from the London Federation had secured several lectures for weak Branches. A vote of thanks to this journal was passed for the insertion of notices.

A new Branch with ten members to start it has been formed at Birkenhead. The secretary is Mr. T. W. Turner, 7 Kendal Street, who will be pleased to hear from Freethinkers on the Cheshire side of the Mersey.

The Freethinkers of Wakefield, Normanton and district, desirous of forming a branch of the N.S.S. are requested to write to or call on Mr. F. W. Smith, Barr's Place, Clarion Street, Wakefield.

A special members' meeting of the Three Towns' Branch will be held this evening (Aug. 3) at 7, at 100 Union Street, Plymouth, for the purpose of going through the accounts and preparing for fresh work.

¶ We have received the first Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the North Eastern Secular Federation. It is a cheerful document, reflecting the greatest credit on the leaders of the organisation. They say with perfect truth, "We have shown that the Federation means business."

The Report admits that the work could not have been done as it has been "without the aid of the N.S.S. Executive." Pecuniary and other assistance has been freely rendered. We hope this will meet the eye of those who have not yet subscribed to the Central Fund.

¶ The North-Eastern Federation's Excursion takes place to-day (Aug. 3). The Newcastle contingent leaves Newgate Street at 9; the South Shields contingent starts from the Market Place at 8.40. They join the Ox Hill and other contingents at Chester-le-Street. Durham market-place is to

be reached at 12. Then come visits to the Old Durham Pleasure Gardens and to Pelaw Wood. At 3 there is to be a knife-and-fork tea at the Temperance Hotel, North Road, Durham. Later on an open-air meeting takes place in Market Square, Mr. A. B. Moss being among the speakers. All that is now required is fine weather.

On July 23rd Mr. Edward Truelove, the veteran Freethought and Radical publisher, celebrated his golden wedding. A number of friends met to do honor to one who has so staunchly upheld his principles for so many years. On Oct. 9 Mr. Truelove will celebrate his 81st birthday.

A correspondent informs us that one newsagent at Nelson, a small town in Lancashire, sells sixty copies of the *Freethinker* weekly.

The report of the Convention held in Washington to organise the Women's National Liberal Union has been issued in pamphlet form, and can be obtained from Mrs. Gage, Fayetteville, New York. The W.N.L.U. not only goes in for woman suffrage, but boldly attacks the Church as the worst enemy, not only of woman's freedom, but of freedom in general.

A Masonic writer in *La Verité Philosophique* argues in favor of the admission of women to the order of Freemasons. This will be no more in opposition to the traditions of the order than dispensing with belief in the Grand Architect of the Universe. The continental Freemasons appear to be well in the van of progress, but our own are so far in the rear that they must be classed with the most conservative in the country.

The *Athenæum* gives Sir William Dawson, the Christian scientist, a severe drubbing. Reviewing his latest volume, published by the Religious Tract Society, it says there is "one passage which shows Sir William either to be entirely ignorant of one of the most elementary facts of physiology, or—which we cannot believe—to have made a statement which he knows to be untrue." It adds that a person so ignorant of fundamental facts has "really no authority to speak on the problems of evolution," and "if he has been manipulating his facts to suit his argument he is unfit to deal with the deeper questions which are implied by his use of the word 'revelation.'"

IS AGNOSTICISM PRESUMPTUOUS?

"AN Agnostic is a man who says he knows nothing, and thinks he knows everything." I quote from an American church newspaper.

Epigram is a delightful weapon in the hands of the controversialist. The neat turn of phrase has something very comforting about it—to the epigrammatist; and if its effect on the epigrammatee (excuse the coinage) is irritating rather than comforting—well, so much the better. In the sting—or, to be more correct, in the infliction of the sting—lies the greater part of the sweetness. An epigram has various advantages. It possesses the proverbial soul of wit. It is smart, biting, polished. After giving birth to one, there steals over you a feeling of quite maternal happiness, as you nurse and fondle the newborn offspring of your own fertile brain.

But epigram has also its disadvantages. Most of our gold is tainted with alloy; and so this particular form of satirical opinionativeness is not entirely good. It is apt to be one-sided and superficial. Strange, indeed, were it otherwise. An attempt to sum up the numerous pros and cons. of a thorny controversy in half-a-dozen words it as likely to conduce to flippant superficiality as to weighty condensation. And when this narrow compass has also to contain a good-sized lump of uncharity, the valuable matter left stands a fair chance of being reduced to a minimum quality.

The epigram which I have chosen as my text (to borrow an expression familiar to the readers and writers of the paper whence this curious definition is taken) is certainly not free from the disadvantages mentioned. Without exaggeration one might say that it is aptly illustrative of them, and that, as a model of what a judicial pronouncement on an intellectual problem should *not* be, it is invaluable.

That this is not too strong a judgment will, I think, be sufficiently apparent to any candid mind on a little con-

sideration of the subject; and that is what I propose to give to this ecclesiastical witticism in the next few paragraphs.

It is not my province now to travel over the whole field of theological controversy. It is intended to confine these remarks to one special point, a point so constantly and painfully evident in discussions on this subject, namely, the personal charges hurled at the devoted heads of Freethinkers. But these again are so many that to range over them all would take up much more space than is provided by the limits of a short paper. Therefore, I will deal with but one of them, the charge insinuated in the above excerpt—the charge of presumption.

"No case; abuse plaintiff's attorney." A well-worn phrase, but it wears well still. The advocates who defend dogmatic theology do most certainly abuse with spirited energy those who champion the opposite side. I do not say that therefore they have no case; yet—well, appearances are against them. To this stricture there should, I know, be mentioned honorable exceptions, but they are unfortunately so rare that their voices are lost in the general clamor of vituperation.

Presumption is a charge which goes down very well with lots of good people. "What," they are told (and readily believe), "can exceed the presumption of men who dare to doubt the glorious truths impressed on them in pulpit and Bible—these poor, know-nothing worms, who burrow in the earth's mire, these petty little insects, who crawl over the surface of a sin-stained world, and by God's grace are allowed to bask for a while in his sun's rays!"

Here we are, born in a Christian country, the means of grace all around us, noble examples of piety (of a sort) set up for our emulation in high places, church bells calling us every Sunday (and pretty frequently in the week too, for that matter) to worship, the truths of Scripture instilled into our minds from earliest childhood, the respect of our neighbors held out to us if we are good Churchmen; everything, in fact, leading us along the ecclesiastical path; and yet some of us, like unruly horses—or shall we say donkeys?—jib and back, and persist in taking the opposite direction. It does seem rather like presumption, on a superficial view any way. But I would ask you to go a little below the surface, to divest your minds of the clothes of prejudice, and take a plunge into the waters of truth, and then see if you do not come up to the top again with a more charitable conception of the position of the Freethinkers.

Let me clear the ground by first stating shortly what the position of the Agnostic is. As our ecclesiastical friend says, "the Agnostic is a man who says he knows nothing." Nothing, that is, outside the radius of limited human faculties, which sounds very like a truism. We know, to adopt the formula of the Kantian philosophy, that "we are." By the aid of the lamp of Science we can trace our history back a long though fragmentary way, and tell to some extent what we are and how we came here. But we soon reach the boundary. We come to a dead stop, a gloom of impenetrable darkness, a wall on whose thickness we can make no impression, directly we ask the question, What is life? what is the motive power at work behind the visible operations of Nature? There, at that point, unlike the theologian, we stop. It is here that he leaves us. The Christian admits the unutterable wonderfulness of the Universe, with its countless array of immense worlds revolving ceaselessly through space, and the minute worlds within worlds which the microscope affords us glimpses of. He stands in the awful presence of all this beauty and life and strength, grand beyond expression in its immensity, grand also in its tiny details, this perfect animated machinery—and he dares to explain it all by a concoction from the legends of some tribes of barbarian Orientals, whose wise men expounded nature and philosophy in days when the light of knowledge was so dim that the flatness of the earth and the sun's revolution around it were regarded as axiomatic facts, and when diseases were thought to be the work of a divine spirit instead of the result of a dirty body. These puerile conceptions, compounded with many will o'-the-wisps of fancy and pseudo-philosophic imaginings of a later civilisation, are accepted as scientific certainties; nay more, for when they clash with the findings of Science, Science is treated as far as possible with a contemptuous indifference that would be amusing were it not also so sad.

ERNEST E. WILLIAMS.

(To be concluded.)

"My son" said a parson of severe aspect, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder, "I believe Satan has got hold of you"
"I believe so too," was the reply.

HUXLEY ON A PARTIAL DELUGE.

LET us, provisionally, accept the theory of a partial deluge, and try to form a clear mental picture of the occurrence. Let us suppose that, for forty days and forty nights, such a vast quantity of water was poured upon the ground that the whole surface of Mesopotamia was covered by water to a depth certainly greater, probably much greater, than fifteen cubits, or twenty feet (Gen. vii. 20). The inundation prevails upon the earth for one hundred and fifty days; and then the flood gradually decreases, until, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark, which had previously floated on its surface, grounds upon the 'mountains of Ararat' (Gen. viii. 31). Then, as Diestel has acutely pointed out (*Sintflut*, p. 13), we are to imagine the further subsidence of the flood to take place so gradually that it was not until nearly two months and a-half after this time (that is to say, on the first day of the tenth month) that the 'tops of the mountains' became visible. Hence it follows that, if the ark drew even as much as twenty feet of water, the level of the inundation fell very slowly—at a rate of only a few inches a day—until the top of the mountain on which it rested became visible. This is an amount of movement which, if it took place in the sea, would be overlooked by ordinary people on the shore. But the Mesopotamian plain slopes gently, from an elevation of 500 or 600 feet at its northern end, to the sea, at its southern end, with hardly so much as a notable ridge to break its uniform flatness, for 300 to 400 miles. These being the conditions of the case, the following inquiry naturally presents itself: not, be it observed, as a recondite problem, generated by modern speculation, but as a plain suggestion flowing out of that very ordinary and archaic piece of knowledge that water cannot be piled up in a heap like sand; or that it seeks the lowest level. When, after 150 days, 'the fountains also of the deep and windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained' (Gen. viii. 2), what prevented the mass of water, several, possibly very many, fathoms deep, which covered, say, the present site of Bagdad, from sweeping seaward in a furious torrent; and, in a very few hours, leaving, not only the 'tops of the mountains,' but the whole plain, save any minor depressions, bare? How could its subsidence, by any possibility, be an affair of weeks and months?

And if this difficulty is not enough, let any one try to imagine how a mass of water several, perhaps very many, fathoms deep, could be accumulated on a flat surface of land rising well above the sea, and separated from it by no sort of barrier. Most people know Lord's Cricket-ground. Would it not be in absurd contradiction to our common knowledge of the properties of water to imagine that, if all the mains of all the waterworks of London were turned on to it, they could maintain a heap of water twenty feet deep over its level surface? Is it not obvious that the water, whatever momentary accumulation might take place at first, would not stop there, but that it would dash, like a mighty mill-race, southwards down the gentle slope which ends in the Thames? And is it not further obvious, that whatever depth of water might be maintained over the cricket-ground, so long as all the mains poured on to it, anything which floated there would be speedily whirled away by the current, like a cork in a gutter when the rain pours? But if this is so, then it is no less certain that Noah's deeply laden, sailless, oarless, and rudderless craft, if by good fortune it escaped capsizing in whirlpools, or having its bottom knocked into holes by snags (like those which prove fatal even to well-built steamers on the Mississippi in our day), would have speedily found itself a good way down the Persian Gulf, and not long after in the Indian Ocean, somewhere between Arabia and Hindostan. Even if, eventually, the ark might have gone ashore, with other jetsam and flotsam, on the coasts of Arabia, or of Hindostan, or of the Maldives, or of Madagascar, its return to the 'mountains of Ararat' would have been a miracle more stupendous than all the rest.

Thus, the last state of the would-be reconcilers of the story of the Deluge with fact is worse than the first. All that they have done is to transfer the contradictions to established truth from the region of science proper to that of common information and common sense. For, really, the assertion that the surface of a body of deep water, to which no addition was made, and which there was nothing to stop from running into the sea, sank at the rate of only a few inches or even feet a day, simply outrages the most ordinary and familiar teachings of every man's daily experience. A child may see the folly of it.—*Nineteenth Century*.

The colleges of the twentieth century will have little room for dead languages and supernaturalism; the past and the future will defer to the claims of the present; the text books of the coming generation will teach the science of life.—Dr. Felix L. Oswald, "American Auguries."

The priest insists on five things—First, There is a God; Second, He has made known his will; Third, He has selected me to explain this message; Fourth, We will now take up a collection; Fifth, Those who fail to subscribe will certainly be damned.—*Ingersoll*.

LOST TREASURES.

The Rabbis tell us that the rod of Moses had been carved by Adam out of a tree in Eden, that Noah bequeathed it to Shem, that it descended to Abraham, that Isaac gave it to Jacob; that during his stay in Egypt he gave it to Joseph, and it became the possession of Moses. Tradition has no more to tell us either of that or of the Tables of the Law, which were shattered on Mount Sinai, or of the ark of the covenant itself, save that when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, the prophet Jeremiah took the Ark and the Tables of the Law, and the other sacred relics, and hid them in a cleft of Mount Sinai, where the Talmudists add, one day he will reappear to point them out. The rock-hewn Tables of the Law are indestructible in themselves, somewhere hidden therefore, but still existing they must be. Will they ever return to the custody of the House of Israel? Where too, are the stones of the High Priests' breast-plate, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes? They cannot perish. We have stones in our possession of a far older date, signets and rings of Nimrod, and Erech, and Sennacherib and others. Is it not strange that these incomparably more precious engraved gems have passed away from sight, to which so awful and mystic significance is attached? Yet so it is. These rare, and sacred, and most valuable relics are among the irreparable and lamentable losses the chosen people have sustained. Where is that seal of Solomon concerning which the *Talmud* and the *Arabian Nights* relate such wonders? It had power, so the Jews affirm, to seal and unloose the Genii or bind them in captivity. Its owner was potent to understand the language of the birds and beasts. We have recovered the seal of Uzziah deep down in the foundations of Jerusalem, but if our explorers had lit upon Solomon's how much more to the purpose it would have been! "*All the Year Round*," May, 1882.

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION.

Think of the heretical tribunals, inquisitions, religious wars, crusades, Socrates' cup of poison, Bruno's and Vanini's death in the flames! Is all this to day quite a thing of the past? How can genuine philosophical effort, sincere search after truth, and noblest calling of the noblest men, be let and hindered more completely than by a conventional system of metaphysics enjoying a state monopoly, the principles of which are impressed into every head in earliest youth so earnestly, so deeply, and so firmly, that unless the mind is miraculously elastic, they remain indelible. In this way the groundwork of all healthy reason is once for all deranged; that is to say, the capacity for original thought and unbiased judgment, which is weak enough with itself, is, in regard to those subjects to which it might be applied, for ever paralysed and ruined.—*Schopenhauer*.

HE PREFERS HELL.

A well-known Society widow who has worn the "weeds" for a little over a year, and whose temper is said to have a strong dash of pepper in it, attended a spiritualistic *séance* one day last week. Table rapping was in order, and she seized this opportunity of communing with the late lamented.

"Are you happy in the other world?" she asked.

A single tap signified "Yes."

"Happier than you were in this?"

Again "Yes" was rapped out.

"Then you must be in heaven?"

Then there was quite a long pause, and all held their breaths as the shade of the late Mr. B. alphabetically rapped out—

"On the contrary, I am in hell."

The gay widow hastily grabbed her satchel and departed, vowing that spiritualism was an arrant fraud, while those present who knew her smiled audibly.

RUDE TO A BISHOP.

A venerable and dignified bishop was recently having his portrait painted by an eminent artist. After sitting steadily for about an hour in silence, his lordship thought he would like to break the monotony with a remark. Accordingly he said to the artist, "How are you getting on?" To the astonishment of his sitter, the knight of the palette, absorbed in his work, thus replied, "Move your head a little that way, and shut your mouth!" Not being accustomed to be spoken to in this fashion, the bishop said, "May I ask why you address me in this manner?" Artist (still absorbed): "I want to take off a little of your cheek." Collapse of the bishop.

PROFANE JOKES.

At a Salvation meeting a bright youth said to some young woman seated in front of him, "Don't be washed in the blood of the Lamb to-night; it's right dirty to-night, they have just been washing some colliers in it."

Miss Chatty (showing her library): "Yes, that's Browning. It's awfully good, I suppose, but I cannot say I understand him." Friend: "And you have Præd?" Miss C. (blushing): "Yes I have, but it didn't do any good."

Teacher: "Johnny, I should think you would be ashamed of yourself to run away from school for the sake of floating around in that old leaky flat-bottomed boat. Weren't you afraid of getting drowned?" Johnny: "No'm; not so much as on shore." Teacher: "What nonsense! Did you ever hear of anybody going out in a boat for fear of getting drowned?" Johnny: "Yes'm." Teacher (astonished): "Who?" Johnny: "Noer."

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. Hemmer, "The late Eight Hours Debate." Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting. Friday, at 8, discussion.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foo e, "Heresy at Oxford: a Review of *Lux Mundi*."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mr. T. Parris, "A Revolution Needed."

West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Richard Carlile and the Free Press."

OPEN AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates 11.15, a lecture.

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. J. Fagan, "Belief, Disbelief, and Unbelief"

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Jesus and his Beliefs."

Clckenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Life and Times of Robert Owen."

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 6.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Morality of the Messiah."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand) 3.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Morality of the Messiah."

Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Midland Aches, St. Pancras Road, N.W., 11.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "Miracles and Prophecies as a Test of Truth."

Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Prophets and Prophecies."

New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11.30, a lecture.

Old Southgate—On the Green, 7.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Is Southgate a Christian Villa e?"

Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, Mr. J. Long, "Christian v. Secular Teachings and Practice."

Regent's Park near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. H. Courtney, "The Apostles' Creed."

Tottenham—Corner of Seven Sisters Road, 3.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Why I Don't Believe in God."

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."

Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, a lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "The Laws of England and Jehovah."

Woolwich—Beresford Square (opposite the Arsenal gates), 7, Mr. W. Heaford, "What Think ye of Christ?"

COUNTRY.

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—7, Mr. Doeg, "God so Loved the World."

Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints—6.30, a lecture.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 7, Mr. Corryn, "The Coming General Election: What do Radicals Want?"

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street.—Entertainment.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3, a lecture.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden Road, London S.E.—North-Eastern Secular Federation tour:—Sat., Aug. 3, Durham.

August 24 (morning), Clerkenwell, (afternoon), Regent's Park, (evening), Camberwell; 27, Hyde Park; 31 (morning) Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich. Sept. 7 (morning), Pimlico; 14 (morning), Bethnal Green, (afternoon), Victoria Park; 21 (morning), Midland Arches; 28 (morning), Clerkenwell, (evening), Woolwich.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—August 3, Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Aug. 3 (morning), Camberwell; 10 (morning), Midland Arches; 17 (morning), Bethnal Green; 24 (morning), Plaistow Green. Sept. 14 (morning), Camberwell, 21 (morning) out-door, and evening in the hall, Plaistow.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—August 17 (morning), Plaistow Green; 24, Brighton; 31 (afternoon), Finsbury Park. Sept. 7, Chatham; 21 (evening), Woolwich; 28 (afternoon), Finsbury Park, Oct. 5, Woolwich.

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