

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## FOOLING JACK.

ONE of the most remarkable signs of the times is the spread of Freethought in the army and navy. More than one Branch of the National Secular Society is composed entirely of soldiers, and although the conditions of life on board ship do not admit (at least at present) of Branches being maintained there, the Society boasts of a good many members in that branch of the service. Copies of this journal are passed from hand to hand, and hundreds of our pamphlets are thumbed until they are almost illegible. Jack is not so superstitious as he used to be. He does not swallow the chaplain's nostrums with the old implicit faith. He is learning that he has a head of his own, and beginning to think for himself. His "superiors"—that is, the persons who are in office over him, and almost fancy themselves of a different species—resent this as an impertinence. They appear to think that Jack should not only do what he is told, but believe what he is told. His duty is to obey, and theirs to command; and the despotism on the one side, and the submission on the other, are supposed to be almost unlimited. Accordingly we hear from time to time of men being worried by the chaplain, and rebuked by the captain, for reading the *Freethinker*. Sometimes, indeed, the paper has been intercepted, and Jack has been solemnly informed that he will not be allowed to receive such "blasphemous" periodicals. But an editorial letter has generally put an end to this odious tyranny.

A proof that we are not exaggerating is furnished by a document to which we drew attention last week; namely, the August "monthly letter" from Miss Weston to "the Royal Navy and Royal Marines." Miss Weston is "the sailor's friend." By means of pertinaciously begged subscriptions she has raised a palatial building at Portsmouth for the men of the navy, though it may be doubted whether their patronage of the establishment is commensurate with its imposing exterior. However, it was recently opened by a prince of the blood, and therefore has the best chances of success; and so far as it induces Jack ashore to sleep in a clean bed, and drink two-pennyworth of cocoa instead of a shilling'sworth of rum, it is deserving of praise; although, for our part, we are decidedly of opinion that a greater amount of good would be done if Jack were treated a little more like a man, and a little less like an overgrown baby.

Miss Weston is granted every facility for her work. She and her agents are allowed a free run of the ships and barracks. Her monthly letter is distributed wholesale, and apparently by the authorities, for we have seen copies bearing the official stamp. Miss Weston's writing is simplicity itself. Jack is reputed to be soft-hearted; Miss Weston treats him as soft-headed. She appears to think any nonsense good enough for him; or it may be that her letters are the best she can write, and that their ineptitude springs from no deliberate purpose, but simply from the lady's

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incapacity. In either case our title is justified. It comes to the same thing in the end, whether she is fooling Jack, or treating him like a fool because she cannot do better.

Miss Weston's letter for August is all about the *Freethinker*. We may take it, therefore, as a proof that she is aware of its being extensively read in the navy. Her letter assumes the form of "a little story." The arguments are of a similar character. In fact, the whole thing is a work of imagination.

"Joe the marine is gone to sea," the song says, and Miss Weston calls her marine Joe. Her sailor is Jack. These are the two characters in the story. Joe is a Freethinker, at least he reads the *Freethinker*. Jack "once belonged to the party," but thanks to Miss Weston, or some other capable instructor, he has learnt "a thing or two more." This is exactly as it should be. It is a very nice arrangement. Joe acts as a chopping-block for Jack, and Jack is a mouthpiece for Miss Weston.

Jack tackles Joe about reading the *Freethinker* and invites him to a confabulation on the contents of that pestilent paper, with its "Acid Drops" that are "sour enough to turn all the milk in creation"—though, on the whole, sailors would be more concerned if they soured all the rum. When the confabulation comes off, the *Freethinker* is judiciously dropped; at least its contents are not discussed. Jack begins to untie Bible knots for Joe, and this is how he does it.

First comes his exordium. He tells Joe that the Bible "is the most commonsense book in the world," which no person could help thinking it who had read our *Bible Absurdities*. Still, it has "very hard knots in it." But what of that? Its very hardness to understand is a proof that God wrote it. Any fool could write plain. Besides "there's lots of honey in it." No instances are given, but we presume the lady refers to Lot and his daughters, Judah and Tamar, the Levite and his concubine, Jacob's sleeping with the wrong lady, David's adventures with Bathsheba, and other edifying Bible stories; or perchance to the luscious descriptions of the Song of Songs which is (or rather *isn't*) Solomon's.

Jack takes the marlinespike of faith and undoes the Bible knots. He reads "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There you are, says Miss Weston—we beg pardon, Jack: or should it be Jack Weston?—there you are, there is no date given, you can "roll in ten million years if you like." Perhaps so. But what if you don't like? And how about the six-days' creation? Well, says Jack, the world may have been building (note the word!) for millions of years, and it may have been fitted up for man's residence in a week. It wasn't after all, though; for Jack tells Joe that "day" means "period"; and Joe, who is only a Miss Weston sceptic, is floored at once. He does not reply (Miss Weston does not want him to) that "day" means day, and that, if it does not, the Fourth Commandment is a screaming farce.

As to light being created on Monday, and the sun on Thursday, Jack is very little troubled. He for-

gets that the earth is a child of the sun. "I'm a torpedo man," he says, and goes on to argue that light may have preceded the sun by millions of years. There is electric light, for instance. True, but Jack forgets that grass and fruit trees come before the sun in Genesis. Perhaps he will ask a farmer to grow apples with electric light. If the experiment is successful it will be a great aid to the theologians.

Here endeth Jack's wonderful untying of the Creation knot. Poor Joe is dumbfounded. The wonder is it did not send him into an asylum.

The next knot is the Deluge. Jack scouts the idea of a universal flood. True, the Bible says the flood covered all the highest hills under the whole heaven, but the Bible has a knack of not meaning what it says. The words mean "as far as the eye could reach." Then as to the height of the flood. "Ararat means a hilly district," and the hill the ark rested on may have been anything from a hundred to a thousand feet high. But Jack omits to tell us how a body of water, of that height, could be kept standing on a particular spot without flowing away, in obedience to the law that fluids will seek their level. Then as to the water. Where did it come from? "The fountains of the great deep were broken up." That means there was "a tidal wave," which, by the way, is a queer phenomenon in the part of Asia where the flood is said to have occurred. Shakespeare's ships in Bohemia are nothing to it. There were also the windows of heaven, that were opened. On this point Jack gives Joe some very novel information. "As to the atmosphere," he says, "I know from my studies that an electric spark passed through it will turn it into water at once," and "there would soon be enough to drown the world."

Poor Jack! Or rather poor Miss Weston! Some one has been abusing her easy credulity. The atmosphere does not contain the ingredients of water. It is composed of oxygen and nitrogen, while water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. How wonderful that Miss Weston did not reflect on the precariousness of life on her theory. If an electric spark would turn the atmosphere into water, it would be all over with the human race in a single thunderstorm.

With respect to the beasts, birds, and insects that sailed in the ark, and constituted the most wonderful menagerie on record, it is Jack's opinion that they belonged only to "the part where the flood prevailed," although he gives no reason for believing that he is better acquainted with the meaning of the Holy Ghost than the editors of the Authorised and Revised Versions. Nor does he explain how, in that age, a ship was built as big as "the *Great Eastern*." He does attempt, however, to explain how the animals came together. During a thunderstorm the cattle, pigs, and geese on his "father's farm" used to "come to the farm yard for shelter," and "the creatures in Noah's day were not more stupid than those alive now." Perhaps not, though in view of what Darwin tells us the point is debateable. But how did all the animals of Mesopotamia, or wherever it was, learn that Noah was building an ark for them? How did they find their way to it when "the thunderstorm" began? And how was it that only two of each species had the sense to come along?

For all her cock-sureness, Miss Weston seems to feel that such "arguments" are insufficient. She therefore winds up with the old-fashioned appeal to sentiment, telling us how Ben Bolt (good old Ben!) silenced a red-hot sceptic. After piping his eye at hearing "the Savior he loved laughed at," Ben Bolt thumped his manly chest, and declared that he had got the Savior in there. That settled it. No one could resist the force of "Ben Bolt's internal evidence." We should think not, indeed. On the whole, we advise Miss Weston to stick to this line of argument. She does it well, for it is just on the level of her intelligence. If she wants to fool Jack, this

is her only chance of success. It is better—for her at least—than floundering in the shallows of science, and fishing up such wonderful facts as that water is made of oxygen and nitrogen.

G. W. FOOTE.

### SALVATION.

"WHAT must I do to be saved?" is the very improbable question put in the mouth of a Pagan jailor by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles to educe the answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Christians are fond of repeating this stereotyped question and answer without pausing to inquire into its pertinence or meaning. What is it human beings need to be saved from, and how is their salvation to be effected?

The evils which afflict mankind are plentiful, but from which of them can they be saved by belief? No one supposes it can save us from fire, flood, famine, or the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to. Will believing on the Lord Jesus Christ save us from ignorance, the fruitful parent of so many woes? Jesus himself thought that disease was the work of demons. The true attitude of the believer was expressed by Paul, who called the wisdom of this world foolishness with God, and who expressed himself determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Such a course is an encouragement of ignorance. Will it save us from poverty? Jesus taught "Blessed be ye poor"; and his teaching of taking no thought for the morrow, and giving to every one that asketh, would make pauperism universal.

What has raised man from the condition of a troglodyte with no thought beyond the immediate satisfaction of bodily wants? Growth of intelligence. This has taught him to plough and sow, to reap and mow, to provide for the future. Christian Salvation never produced a grain of wheat, and is as powerless to stay the hunger of a savage as to satisfy the intellectual aspirations of a civilised man. Remove all that science has done, let that only remain which Christianity has done, and what would man be but a credulous superstitious savage?

But it is said the mission of Christianity is higher than that of ministering to man's material wants. It saves him from sin. Is this really so? Is the Christian saved from sin; from lying, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness? Are not our jails populated with Christians who have received a Christian education? Who will lend money to a Christian on the simple security that he is a believer? Christianity has had a long innings. What has this divine institution done to remove the palpable evils of war, oppression, poverty, drunkenness, prostitution or disease?

Every Sunday Christians confess themselves miserable offenders and pray that their trespasses may be forgiven. Why is this so if they are saved from their sins? Why is such an immense army of preachers employed in the war against sin? It is safe to say they have spent vastly more time and effort in endeavoring to suppress the imaginary sins of Sabbath breaking and inattention to their nostrums, than in coping with any of the real evils which afflict humanity. The Church has always devoted more energy to suppress heresy than to inculcate morality.

What then does Christianity save from? From the wrath of God and eternal damnation. That is it sets up a fictitious bogey and then pretends to be the deliverer from this invented terror.

The present generation has witnessed the rise and spread of a Salvation Army. Really there is nothing novel in the phenomenon. Religionists have ever been prone to outbursts of revivalism, more properly termed survivalism, being recrudescences of semi-savage beliefs and practices dating from a time when religion

was less under the dominion of reason than at present. Even the distinctive feature of the S. A., that which gives it all its force and power, its military discipline, is but a copy of the organisation of the Jesuits, and that body, though it has not ventured on bands, banners, and accoutrements, can boast of having its members more in hand than the followers of William Booth.

What is the Salvation of the Salvation Army? Manifestly it does not save from ignorance and vulgarity. It pretends, indeed, only to offer the Christian scheme of salvation through Christ's blood. Its aim is accomplished when its followers can sing,

Although I was wicked and lazy, and always was drunken and low,  
I'm washed in the blood of Jesus, so now I am whiter than snow.

Salvation through the merits of another, Christian Salvation, is really a gospel of rascality, a comfortable creed for those desirous of escaping the consequences of their misdeeds, and who hope to gain everlasting happiness on the easiest terms possible. It is small wonder that a faith which promises so much for so little should become a screaming success, when in addition it turns religion into a popular entertainment.

We are far from denying that some persons are improved by joining the Salvation Army. Many of the same persons would be improved by becoming Mohammedans. A man has been a drunkard. He joins the Salvation Army and becomes a teetotaler. What is it saves him from drunkenness? He says it is being washed in the blood of the Lamb. But evidently it is simply giving up drink, for the same result would have followed had he joined a teetotal organisation though all of them were infidels. The Army is of course a support, inasmuch as it environs him with a public opinion favorable to his reformation in this respect. But it gives him a new stimulant of fanaticism, and of this we must say as of other stimulants. While we do not deny the efficacy of brandy in particular instances, we are certainly averse to recommending it as a beverage. We have no more belief in moral miracles than in physical ones.

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE ROAD TO HEAVEN.

THE road to Heaven!!! I mean the heaven believed in by hundreds of thousands of Christians; the heaven spoken of in the Gospels, where angels pass their time in singing anthems around the throne of God; the heaven in which Father Abraham resides, and where at one time he was wont to carry about with him a poor beggar named Lazarus in his bosom; the heaven to which Enoch was despatched because of an early habit he acquired of "walking with God"; the heaven to which Elijah travelled in a fiery chariot with horses of fire;—in short, the heaven to which Jesus, the Christian God, journeyed after he had risen from the dead, and about which the Christians talk without ceasing.

Two circumstances recently led me to think upon this subject; first the sight of a balloon in distress;—a balloon over which the aeronaut had temporarily lost control; and secondly a most audacious sermon by the Rev. Dr. Talmage on "The Ascension." In respect to the balloon, I observed that the aeronaut was entirely at the mercy of the wind as to the direction his machine should take, and that even when he wished to descend he could not drop within hundreds of yards of the spot upon which he wished to alight. So I reasoned thus with myself. "Here is a man," said I, "who by the aid of scientific knowledge is able in some degree to navigate a machine through the air, and if it were possible to reach the Christian Heaven, would probably, like Stanley, go on

an exploring expedition through the darkest celestial continents in search of this 'home of the blest.'"

But how would it be possible for him to find it? In what direction does it lie? Nobody knows. None of the persons who are alleged to have taken the voyage have ever come back to give an account of the journey. If any of them had returned they would certainly have been invited to address the Church Congress, or read a paper before the members of one of the great scientific societies.

Now if the aeronaut with his scientific apparatus could not safely undertake a journey to heaven, what possible chance would an individual have who tried an ascent without such an appliance? I myself once saw an individual endeavoring to fly with a pair of "property" "wings," but he soon came to grief, and was converted into a ghastly pulp in one of the streets of Chelsea. But if the Gospels be true, Jesus flew off this earth in the direction of the clouds nearly two thousand years ago and has not been seen since. Who saw him fly? Certainly not Matthew, who mentions the resurrection, but is altogether silent on the important question of the ascension. Nor John, who either knew nothing of it, or forgot to mention it, or did not believe in it. Christians have therefore to rely upon the testimony of Mark or Luke for this extraordinary performance. But the very passage in Mark in which it occurs follows the now admittedly interpolated verses commencing "Go ye into all the world," etc., and stands therefore with them in the category of the highly improbable, if not the altogether discredited. The verse says: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God." Luke varies the sentence by saying that while Jesus was blessing his disciples "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven," but does not say whether Jesus sat on the right or the left hand of God—who being a "Spirit" has no hand either right or left to sit near.

But I repeat "Who saw Jesus fly?" Neither Mark nor Luke write like eye-witnesses. Neither of them says that "while we—his disciples—were speaking to him, Jesus suddenly leapt into the air, and went up, up, up, until he disappeared through the clouds and we never saw him again." No, they talk as though somebody had told them that Jesus had disappeared, and then they confidently affirm that he went straight off to heaven and sat at his father's right hand.

How could they know that he went to heaven because he went up? For all they knew to the contrary, he might have gone off to some other planet, to carry on the business of miracle-worker there. Indeed, he might have gone off to each planet in the universe in turn, to repeat the tragedy of the atonement, before finally making his appearance in heaven. Or—may I venture to suggest?—he might have gone straight off to Hell, for although he is said to have gone up, the word "up" in this case may have meant down, for when we are dealing with a planet of globular shape, it depends upon the position of the earth at the moment a thing or body leaves it as to whether it goes "up" or "down," and even then these terms are purely arbitrary. But Dr. Talmage knows a great deal more about it than either of the Gospel writers. He not only knows that Jesus went straight off to heaven, but he knows also what sort of reception he received on his arrival. According to Talmage, this is what the celestial inhabitants probably said: "Here he comes! Make way for him! Push back the bolts of diamond! Take hold of the doors of pearl and hoist them from their hinges of gold! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in."

So the doors of heaven have bolts and hinges, and can be lifted up. Here's work for somebody, although

"bolts of diamond" seems to be a new class of manufactured goods known only in the celestial regions.

Everybody knows to-day that to fly off the earth in the way in which Jesus is represented to have done, without any scientific appliance to assist him, is a distinct violation of the law of gravitation and a contradiction of the collective experience of mankind.

Some Christians say Jesus suspended the law of gravitation; to which Hume replied that to suspend one law involved the suspension of all the laws of the universe. More subtle-minded Christians, therefore, change the argument and say that Jesus did not suspend or violate any of the laws of nature; but by his omnipotent power he called into existence a force which modified the existing laws and enabled him to accomplish his purpose. But what proof can the Christians offer to substantiate this assertion? The Gospel writers did not think that Jesus called into being this new force; they regarded it as only one among the numerous miracles Jesus performed in order to demonstrate his divine origin and supernatural character.

They saw nothing more strange or wonderful in the ascension of Jesus than in his walking upon the sea, or calling Lazarus from the grave—it was all part and parcel of his miraculous career. Dr. Talmage, however, makes short work of such a trivial affair as the law of gravitation. If such a law as that stood in the way of Christ's ascension, so much the worse for the law of gravitation. It must go; it must relax its grip upon him, for is he not ready for flight? To use Talmage's words, "That law must now give way to him who made the law." It may hold the other stars, but it cannot hold the morning star of redemption; it may hold the noonday sun, but it cannot hold the sun of righteousness. But did Dr. Talmage understand what he was talking about? What is called the "law of gravitation" is not some written law that could be revoked at will. It is the observed order of natural phenomena, which has never been known to deviate in the smallest possible degree; indeed, to undo the law of gravitation would mean to undo the chain of causes and effects throughout eternity.

Talmage is sure also that it was the body of Jesus that ascended, and not his soul. "The same body that rose from Joseph's tomb ascended from Mount Olivet. Our human nature is in heaven to-day. Just as they had seen Christ for forty days he ascended, head, face, shoulders, hands, feet, and the entire human organism." Ah, that settles it! Talmage has gone and done it. He has committed the unpardonable sin. He has divided the substance. The Father and the Son are no longer one—the three persons of the blessed Trinity are separated and distinct for ever. Jesus the God has gone to heaven in the form of a man, and will remain so for evermore. The scarred and bruised form of Jesus carried to heaven in triumph! No wonder the angels waved their banners, blew their trumpets and chanted their hymns, for after all what is here typified is the ultimate triumph of humanity. So we too join in the hymn—

"The angels thronged his chariot wheels  
And bore him to his throne,  
Then swept their golden harps and sung  
The glorious work is done."

But how long must we wait for the triumph of humanity over superstition?

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

#### NORTH EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION ANNUAL PICNIC.

GLORIOUS weather ushered in the morning of August 3rd, and the hope of hundreds of Secularists that fine weather would favor their annual picnic was realised. At 9 a.m. four brakes containing the Newcastle contingent started for the scene of action. All determined to enjoy themselves, and a brighter, merrier company could not have been. An hour's drive

brought us to Chester-le-Street, where a halt was made at the Circus to wait for the other contingents. The Chester-le-Street friends were in force, Mr. Moss—who seems a great favorite among the pit folk—being with them. Close on eleven the Ox Hill and South Shields contingents were descried in the distance, and soon the whole company were once more on their journey to Durham. Arriving at the Market Place, it was found that the number present had far exceeded the highest anticipations, Freethinkers being there from all parts of the country. A move was soon made to Old Durham Gardens, one of the most beautiful and romantic spots imaginable, and no time was lost in the way of pleasure making. Dancing on the grass, musical chain, kiss in ring, were indulged in by the younger portion, and many of the old hands, for as our genial Mr. Moss, well said, "Let us enjoy ourselves like children; for what is a man but a grown up child?" Others enjoyed themselves in a quieter fashion, and parties could be seen lying under the cool shade of the trees, having a picnic all to themselves. At three o'clock a large number of the company assembled in the wood, on a sloping bank, for the purpose of being photographed. No doubt many present will prize this picture as a souvenir of this pleasant outing, comprising as it does most of the principal Freethinkers of the district.

By 4 p.m. the party had returned to the city for tea, and here the only hitch of the day occurred. The unprecedented attendance made it impossible for the hotel keeper to meet satisfactorily the demands made upon him, and caused some grumbling. The hotel keeper objected to the singing contest taking place, and it had to be postponed. But these were small matters, and in no way damped the enthusiasm of the trippers. The meeting in the Market Place was a big success, in spite of the fact that St. Nicholas' church bells were rung a quarter of an hour longer than usual. Our genial President was in the chair, Mr. Moss delivered a stirring reply to a sermon by the Bishop of Durham, and the old veteran, Mr. Thompson, spoke for half an hour in capital style. A hearty vote of thanks to the President, Secretary, and members of the Council, brought the proceedings to a close. Shortly after the branches started on their journey home, making the night air resound with song and jest, the Newcastle party arriving home at their rooms at 10.30.

JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec.

### ACID DROPS.

The Russian Czar has ordered another Jew-Hunt, and this time it is to be a thorough-going one. About a million Jews will be turned out of their homes, and it is apparently the Czar's intention to drive out or exterminate the entire four million Jews in his dominions. Such is the noble fruit of Christianity! It is an unspeakable disgrace to civilisation.

Those who want to see how the Jewish people have paid for the real or fictitious crime of crucifying Jesus should read the chapter on "The Persecution of the Jews" in the *Crimes of Christianity*. It is one of the most awful episodes in the history of religious cruelty.

Mr. Swinburne's lava-torrent of denunciation does him infinite credit. His ode entitled *Russia* in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review* is sneered at by the *Weekly Dispatch*, all because Mr. Swinburne is a Unionist. So fanatical is party passion that a great poet becomes a ninny when he is on "the other side."

By the way, it is not true that Mr. Swinburne is an enemy of Ireland. He pleaded for mercy for the Fenians who were caught red-handed, for they were brave men who risked their lives for their cause. But his whole nature revolted at the misdeeds of the cowardly wretches who cut off girls' hair, shot old men in the legs, and houghed innocent beasts instead of killing the landlord. His indignation has blinded him to the just demands of Ireland, but it is idle to pretend, as Liberal papers are doing, that it unfits him for denouncing the tyranny of the Czar. It seems to us that, in an age which is mealy-mouthed as to foreign despotisms, a fierce cry like Mr. Swinburne's on behalf of humanity is precious and reassuring. When the springs of indignation are impaired the world is sinking into slavery.

Having lied about his "Converted Atheist," and kept silence in face of his exposure, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes

has had to eat the leek over his impeachment of the Wesleyan missions in India. The committee of investigation has found his charges to be a perfect mare's nest, and the result is a very undignified rumpus. Mr. Hughes finds that it doesn't pay to treat Wesleyans with the same tactics as Freethinkers.

"Dagonet" of the *Referee* calls Mr. Hughes "a crank of cranks," and says that "Like his prophet, Mr. Stead, he is paved with good intentions." Altogether poor Mr. Hughes has fared badly of late, and none will enjoy his discomfiture more than the Freethinkers whom he treated so cavalierly.

Here is another little Price Hughes' libel. He states in the *Methodist Times* that "Pilate was a true representative of the *blasé* and demoralised autocracy of old Rome." We should like to know his authority for this statement. It is perfectly clear from the Gospels that Pilate tried to save Jesus, and the story of his washing his hands in public is perceived by every unprejudiced scholar to be a grotesque absurdity. Mr. Hughes makes much of Pilate's question, "What is Truth?" But surely any English judge would decline to discuss metaphysics with a prisoner accused of sedition. Pilate's question was tantamount to asking, "Do you think this is a debating society?"

Mr. Hughes exclaims, "Shall we take off our masks? Oh! for an hour of God-like reality!" Those are our sentiments too. Come then, Mr. Hughes, off with your own mask, and tell us the proper name and address of your Converted Atheist.

How the heart of the philanthropist must rejoice to know that a live lord and two baronets quarrel who should become guardian to a homeless orphan. Alas! it is only because the boy's religion was in dispute. The Roman Catholics claimed a son of Catholic parents lodged at Dr. Barnardo's Home, and Lord Denbigh offered to become his guardian. Thereupon those valiant defenders of the faith, Sir Arthur Stephenson Blackwood and Sir Robert Fowler were both willing to also become his guardians. Mr. Justice Kay, in deciding the question, remarked that if it were not a question of religion these gentlemen would not have come forward. After seeing the boy in private he said the boy had been made to swear an affidavit, the words of which were not his words. He ordered the boy to be given up to Lord Denbigh.

Something is gained by writing against Freethought. Here is the Rev. J. M. Wilson made Archdeacon of Manchester over the heads of all the local clergy.

At the Civil Tribunal of Nantes, France, the Sisterhood of Pont l'Abbé claimed £80 of one of its former borders. A sum of money for the girl's benefit was deposited by the father, but on growing up she had no inclination for convent life, and determined to be married. The husband, in his wife's name, demanded the money left in the hands of the Lady Superior, who in reply sent in a bill for board, education, and many extras, such as subscriptions towards missions, sums spent in buying souvenirs, ordering masses for deceased schoolfellows and nuns, and presents to relatives of the Superior and friends of the community. The Tribunal held that these extras, amounting in all to £80, should be struck out, and that the balance of the interest, with the principal, should be paid over to the ex-ward's husband.

The Rev. H. Banks, minister of Park Congregational Church, near Bury, attempted to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. Religion is the only preservative against suicide.

Frederick Innis, of North Shields, hanged himself. The jury returned the usual verdict. A letter by the deceased hoped that "God would forgive him," and contained other pious expressions about "the great Creator."

Charles Williams, a private of the Royal Dragoons, stationed at Colchester, quarreled with his sweetheart and then blew out his brains. He left a letter for his "darling Alice," ending with the words "God bless you." Another Atheist, Mr. Talmage!

Many deaths from excessive heat are reported from

America. Tornados have swept over New England, and at Boston the Catholic Cathedral was struck by lightning and half a ton of granite dislodged. The cholera is assuming alarming proportions among the pilgrims to Mecca, and a serious railway accident is reported from the Tyrol. "He doeth all things well."

The imitation of Christ is a dangerous thing in a Christian country. Franz Kreuger has been sentenced at Berlin to six months' imprisonment for denouncing Christian marriage on the principles of Count Tolstoi, that is, on the principles of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Walter Besant fires another broadside into the sweating firm known as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and promises to return to the charge later on when he has obtained fresh evidence. He accuses the Society of having lost all sense of morality in dealing with its literary employees.

The question of Cardinal Manning's precedence still occupies the minds of Evangelicals and others who are writing to the *Times* on the subject. The *English Churchman* regrets that the Prince of Wales's friends did not advise him "to beware how he acted in a matter which closely concerns the title by which his family occupy the throne of these realms." As the head of an important sect the Cardinal demands a certain amount of courtesy, but if the Catholics think that gives him any real status above the legal dignitaries of the country, they will probably find their mistake in due course.

The *Record* for last week tells how a clergyman going to a south country vicarage on a visit, found there installed as *locum tenens* a Jesuit whom he had heard preach in Rome. In the same week's number of the *English Churchman* there is a letter stating that Father Ouseley, the chaplain of the Church of England Monastery in Norwich, in connection with Father Ignatius's similar scheme at Llanthony Abbey, is a Roman Catholic priest of the Jesuit order. This correspondent states that he met Father Ouseley at Lisbon, and found that he was a member of a Jesuit college there. These little incidents indicate how active our friend the enemy is just now.

The Archducess Valérie has married her cousin. Yet Austria is a Catholic country, and the Pope has blessed the union, although it is forbidden by the Church's table of consanguinity. Of course the reason is that high and rich families can always make accommodations with heaven. When low and poor people are concerned the Church's law is enforced with the greatest rigor.

Dr. Parker likes Jews. We do not know if the feeling is reciprocated. He reminds the world that the Old Testament was written by Jews, and so was the New Testament. But this is a great deal more than he can prove. Nor can he prove that "The Jewish mind is the greatest intellectual power in the world." Spinoza was a Jew, and so was Heine, but both had to leave Judaism. The fact is, the Jewish mind is lacking in originality. What discovery or invention have the Jews ever given to the world? We begin to suspect Dr. Parker of having an eye on a rich converted Hebrew.

Poor Dr. Parker! His cup, as the Irishman said, is overflowing and it's not yet full. The secretary of the Peace Society writes to the *Christian World* that Dr. Parker was "never connected" with the Society. His pompous resignation was therefore a bit of advertising hocus-pocus.

"Unbelief," says Mr. Spurgeon, "is enthroned in the high places of the earth. The philosophers sneer at the notion that prayer is of avail without heaven; in fact, they know no heaven, and believe in nothing but their own wisdom." True, most true; and what a change from the days when philosophers sang small for fear of being burnt or imprisoned by the gentlemen who believed in heaven! No wonder Mr. Spurgeon is looking for a fresh move from above.

Thy strong right hand, Lord, mak' it bare,  
And weigh it down, and dinna spare,  
For their misdeeds.

Mohammedanism is superior to Christianity in its inculcation of sobriety and cleanliness, yet the congregation of pilgrims to the prophet's shrine at Mecca does much to propagate the germs of disease and death. Religious pilgrimages, which the English Catholics are seeking to revive, have much to answer for.

Canon Liddon is now in high favor with the Low Churchmen, who are delighted with his defence of orthodoxy against the authors of *Lux Mundi*. Those gentlemen wish to tack for safety, but the Canon is for steering straight on the rocks.

The *Church Reformer* rejoices at the spread of "the wax nose" theory of the Bible, and hails *Lux Mundi* as a deliverer from "the burden of a book of infallible sentences." It points out that the Archbishop of Canterbury supports this theory, and denounces both Canon Liddon and Huxley as prosaic persons who are foolish enough to think the Bible means what it says.

For our part, we are glad to see the Bible dying as "a book of infallible sentences," for this means that it is falling into a line with other ancient sacred writings. By and bye it will stand on the shelf with the rest of its species. But when that time arrives what will become of the "priests" of the Church of England?

Effete England is bad enough, but in one aspect of the freedom of the press America is a good deal worse. There is a nice little method in the States of suppressing obnoxious literature. The Post Office authorities are allowed to act as censors of morality, to open private letters to see if there is anything "indecent" in them, and to confiscate books which they decide to be unfit for the public to read. An edict has gone forth that Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata* is not to be carried in the mails. There is nothing like obscenity in the book, but what does that matter? It enforces, in chaster language than that of the Bible, the sexual teachings of Jesus Christ; and as this is hateful to the churches that trade on the name of Jesus, while defying his teaching, the Post Office authorities are sure of a strong backing. But fancy the hypocrisy of it all! And fancy the nation which tolerates this calling itself "free"! The American eagle should scream a little less until he has got his leg out of the official trap.

A missionary to Liberia gives the following as a part of the cargo of the steamer that carried him: 10,000 casks of rum, eleven cases of gin, 460 tons of gunpowder, and fourteen missionaries—all on their way to further darken the Dark Continent.

A petition was brought before the Lord Mayor and Court of Common Council from the inhabitants in the neighborhood of Finsbury Chapel, praying the Court to withhold its sanction to the proposed transfer of the chapel property to the Salvation Army. The memorialists urged that the noisy processions incident to the services of the Salvation Army would lead to public commotion in the neighborhood, and would seriously depreciate the value of the property. It was decided to refer the matter to a committee.

Some months ago we referred to the action of the Liverpool Corporation, who, having obtained parliamentary powers ostensibly for the purpose of regulating singing and dancing on licensed premises, were using those powers in quite an unexpected direction in the curtailment of individual liberty. The *Liverpool Daily Post* now remarks that the Frankenstein who framed that Act has raised a monster at which he probably stands aghast. The question has arisen over an application by the Liverpool Sunday Society for the use of a Corporation hall for their "lectures with music" on Sunday afternoons, as during previous winter months. The matter has been referred to the town clerk as to the legal position. Should his decision prove adverse, the *Post* points out that it is doubtful whether Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P., can continue his "Undenominational Services" in the same hall on Sunday evenings. It will be a treat to see the bigots hoist with their own petard. Meanwhile placards announce services at a certain church for this day (Aug. 10) at which a charge will be made for admission, although this is a distinct breach of the terms under which places of worship are licensed and exempted from taxation.

But it appears to be one of the privileges of the godly to break the law in this and many other respects, whilst demanding its rigorous enforcement against those who have the audacity to differ from them in opinion.

Two Brahmins named Krishna have started a tanyard and leather business. This, among a race where the cow is sacred, is awful sacrilege, and its mere possibility shows how far India has advanced out of its native beliefs.

By the way, the sacredness of the cow was not altogether a useless superstition in India. It prevented the most useful animal becoming extirpated in time of famine. Belief in the sacredness of the cow is not half so silly as belief in salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

According to Sir Edwin Arnold, the "tub" is more of an institution in Japan than in England. Every fairly-sized house in Tokio has its bath-room, and besides this there are no less than 800 baths in the city where 300,000 bathe daily at a cost per head of about a halfpenny. Cleanliness is said to be next to godliness, but we think it comes a long way first. Many of the godly have no time for a virtue that is unrecommended in Scripture.

Here are some clerical items from a single number of our American contemporary, the *Ironclad Age*—(1) Dr. W. Mitchell, pastor of the Broadway Presbyterian Church, of Fort Worth, was arrested on July 15 for forgeries amounting to 2,500 dollars, and sent to prison in the absence of bail. (2) Rev. Oliver J. Booth, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, at Lincoln, is sued by his wife for divorce. He has been carrying on with the pretty wife of General Smith. (3) The *Iowa Register* reports that "An Ohio minister is charged with hugging lady members of his flock." (4) Rev. S. B. Martin, Methodist preacher, of Birmingham, being refused by a young lady named Susan Williams, split open his rival's head with an axe. He then fled, and has not yet been captured.

Miss Emma Hardinge Britten says, in *Two Worlds*, that "Spirits on a low plane require food to sustain their spiritual bodies. That food is fruits, vegetables and plants; never animal food." It would seem that the spirits are dietetic reformers. In old times it was considered there was nothing they were so partial to as blood and slaughtered animals. Jehovah rejoiced in the sweet savor of roast meat and his altars ran red with blood. The Vegetarian Society will be glad to learn of the improved habits of the spirits, who, we hope, cultivate their own "fruits, vegetables and plants."

A large and powerful lioness escaped from Sanger's Circus at Portsmouth, and was captured by a clown. The noble animal was utterly debased by servitude. Is not this typical? Call the lioness "Reason" and the clown "Priest," and you have history in a nutshell.

A letter in the *Church Times*, while lamenting that all cannot go to see the Passion Play at Oberammergau, suggests that the next best thing to going will be for every church to subscribe some £30 or £35, and send its clergyman, in order to have a good description on his return.

Mrs. Price, an Indianapolis lady, recently deceased, ordered that no religious ceremonies should be performed at her funeral; but she stipulated for a brass band to head the procession, and her pious husband circumvented her by getting the band to play "Nearer, my God, to thee."

Mrs. Howson, of Crewe, and the Bishop of Chester are at loggerheads on dancing. The lady thinks it bad for girls—that is, *charity* girls, but the Bishop thinks it useless to run amuck against human nature. Anyhow, the Bible is all on the side of the Bishop.

The melancholy Jacques has finished his fast at the Aquarium, thus outrivalling his Blessed Savior. Some good people cast doubt on the feat which, unlike that of J.C., has been under medical supervision. In August 1880 some of the highest medical authorities in America certified their belief in the genuineness of the forty days' fast of Dr. Tanner. But doctors differ on this point as on others.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 10, Hall of Science; 142 Old Street, at 7.30, "Mr. Swinburne and the Poetry of Freedom."

Sunday, August 17, Hall of Science; 21, 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. THURLOW.—We are not in favor of any such action apart from the Branch. Our party needs discipline, like others; it will not do for every one to be fighting on his own hand. Any notice from the Branch will be inserted.

J. G. DOBSON.—The Huddersfield Branch has no doubt made a wise selection, and we hope its business will prosper under your management.

W. WARRY.—Your letter is a fair specimen of Christian insolence. Future communications from you will go into the waste-basket.

T. E. PERKINS.—We do not believe that Celestine Edwards will meet Mr. Heaford in a set debate. If he does you will have to guard against disorder. We are glad to hear that our paragraph brought you plenty of supporters in Victoria Park.

J. B.—We have given a special article to Miss Weston's letter, and our friends in the navy might circulate it as widely as possible.

A. WEBBE, 154 Windmill Street, Gravesend, and 28 The Hill, Northfleet, sells the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

C. DOEG.—Thanks for your letter. We are ready to make an earnest appeal whenever you give the word.

T. W. SMITH (not F. W. as previously printed), Barr's Place, Clarion Street, Belle Vue, Wakefield, will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers willing to co-operate in forming a Branch in that district.

H. CALASCA.—We have not seen the Ground letters. The anecdote of Gounod and Sarah Bernhardt has already appeared.

R. C. B.—Our space is too limited. No doubt you point to a very real grievance. Shopmen and shopwomen are worked villainously long hours, and we fear the working classes who go out gaily shopping late at night are largely responsible for the evil.

J. M. MCALISTER.—It has appeared.

E. H. JONES.—See "Sugar Plums."

T. GREEN.—We note your statement that the change is made with Colonel Olcott's "fullest approval." This is the substance of your communication. We only omit the padding.

W. HOLLAND.—Opinions will vary as to the best methods of advocacy. Let every one follow his own course. Natural selection will decide. We detest the narrowness of the superfine persons who would cut every man's cloth to their own pattern.

DR. MORTIMER.—The 5s. is applied as desired to the "Freethinker Circulation Fund."

T. RILEY.—Thanks for the volume, which shall be returned. Mr. Foote's *Is the Bible Inspired?* is now published as a pamphlet and should have a good circulation.

E. ALCOCK.—We will answer next week. It looks like a Hindu dialect.

A. B. MOSS is requested, if this meets his eye, to send us his seaside address.

J. HUTCHINSON.—Your letter has been directed to Mrs. Besant. Her address is 19 Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, N. W.

S. KAUFMAN.—We cannot afford to give illustrations at present.

FREETHINKER.—Blunt's *History of Sects and Heresies* or Cassell's *Dictionary of Religion* would supply what you want.

CORRESPONDENTS who send us MS. to look through are requested to remember that we work seven days a week from morn till night. Those who ask if any remuneration can be obtained for their writings, are informed that they had better turn to cracking stones if they want to earn money.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Menschenthum—Progressive Thinker—Lucifer—Freidenker—Freethought—Fritankaren—Cosmopolitan—Boston Investigator—Echo—Loyal American—Secular Thought—Open Court—Star—Fair Play—Twentieth Century—Referee—Chat—Echo—Manchester Guardian—Newcastle Chronicle—West Sussex Gazette.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (Aug. 10) at the London Hall of Science. His subject was to have been "Mr. Gladstone on the Law of Moses," but as Mr. Gladstone's article on that topic is postponed till the September number of *Good Words*, another subject has to be chosen. Mr. Foote will take a somewhat novel subject, namely, "Mr. Swinburne and the Poetry of Freedom."

Mr. Charles Watts lectures this evening (Aug. 10) at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. The admission is free, through the liberality of a well-known Secularist, and of course there will be a bumping house.

Before leaving for Canada the editor of *Secular Thought* will take an opportunity of seeing the London Secularists face to face again. Mr. Watts will take the chair at Mr. Foote's lecture on August 17.

We venture once more to press upon our friends the advisability of circulating this journal and other of our publications in every way open to them. Our means do not permit of wholesale advertising, but it is evident that there are many persons who would be readers of Freethought literature if they only knew of its existence. We advertised the new edition of *Bible Romances* recently in the *Weekly Times*, and this brought several customers, some of whom subscribed for the *Freethinker* on receiving a catalogue. One of them was so satisfied with the *Creation Story* that he inquired how many numbers there would be in all, and on learning that there would be twenty or so, he immediately remitted in advance for the whole number.

The next number of *Bible Romances* will be a double one, and the price twopence. Its title will be *Noah's Flood*. It will be ready on Wednesday, August 27. Subsequent instalments of the work will appear every fortnight.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive it was resolved to invite applications for the secretaryship, which will soon become vacant in consequence of Mr. Forder's resignation. All applications should be addressed to the present secretary, Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. They will be laid before the Executive at its next meeting.

It was also resolved that the N.S.S. Almanack should in future be published by the Society, the business arrangements being left in the hands of the Organisation Committee. Messrs. Foote and Wheeler undertook the editing of the next number. The calendar will be thoroughly overhauled, and new features will be introduced. Secretaries of Branches are requested to send in to the editors at once particulars of the meetings, etc. The Almanack will probably be issued in November.

Mr. A. B. Moss has returned home from a very successful tour in the North; a tour, by the way, which would not have been possible without the assistance of the N.S.S. Executive. Mr. Moss is now off for a fortnight's holiday at the seaside. He promises a brief account of his tour for our next issue.

In a recent railroad accident in America, a family of four persons were instantly killed. The father and son were unbaptised Infidels, but the daughter and mother were baptised believers and belonged to the Church. Mr. Watson Heston has seized the incident and represented in the *Truthseeker* cartoon, the Devil hurling males to hell and the angels leading their loved and loving ones to heaven.

Mr. Gustave Nelson has now joined the staff of the *Truthseeker*. His "Items of Foreign Freethought News," and translations prove that he will be a valuable acquisition.

The *Church Reformer* says that "All true friends of religious liberty will rejoice to see that the question of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will not be altogether left out of consideration at the next general election." Candidates are being heckled, and many are promising to vote for the abolition of these odious laws.

Mr. Headlam's paper administers a just rebuke to its Socialist friends who so shamefully interrupted Mr. Bradlaugh in the recent debate. "Anything more disgraceful," it says, "than the conduct of Mr. Hyndman's supporters towards Mr. Bradlaugh is difficult to imagine," and adds, "No wonder men are afraid of State Socialism when Socialists show so little fairness or self-restraint."

The Lancashire Secular Federation is now on its legs, though the legs are still young and weak. There is a desire on the part of the Federation to carry on open-air propaganda during the summer. Mr. E. H. Jones, secretary, 47 Pigot Street, Manchester, will be happy to hear from any South Lancashire friends willing to arrange for meetings. No charge will be made beyond the lecturer's travelling expenses.

Mr. C. Watts' *Secular Thought* has now reached its eighth volume. It continues its policy of reprinting debates, and the number before us has a short paper by the veteran G. J. Holyoake.

We see from *Fritankaren* that our good friend Captain Otto Thomson is keeping the ball rolling with Freethought lectures in Sweden. We hope soon to hear of the formation of a Freethought Society in Norway, where the leading writers have done much to liberalise the reading public.

The *Shields Daily News* has fairly reported a recent lecture on Voltaire and Paine by Mr. Arthur B. Moss.

The Huddersfield Branch warmly thanks Mr. W. H. Spivey for his services as secretary. Mr. Spivey has resigned the post, but he will continue to assist the Branch in its work. His successor is Mr. J. G. Dobson.

We see from letters in the *Manchester Guardian* that a movement in favor of Sunday bands in the parks is growing in Cottonopolis. If the *Sunday Chronicle* will keep pegging away on the subject, the movement will soon be a strong one.

Réban's third volume of his *History of the People of Israel* will be ready early in October.

Dr. A. Regnard, whom we had the pleasure of meeting at the International Freethought Congress in Paris, has obligingly sent us a copy of the first volume of his *Le Bilan du Judaïsme et du Christianisme*, just published by Dentu. It is an important work, and will receive notice in a future number of the *Freethinker*.

"J'ignore" (I know not) is the inscription to go on the tombstone of the French poetess, Louise Ackermann, who has just died. She was a woman of remarkable powers. In early life she was a devout Christian, but she thought herself out of that superstition, and added some fine things to the literature of Freethought.

In the south of India a Society for the Preservation of the Hindu Religion has been formed, under the presidency of a Tamil Brahmin. When Brahmins are setting up tanneries it is too late to preserve the old religion, but something may be done to keep out the imported superstition of Christianity.

The *Women's Penny Paper* for Aug. 2, gives a portrait of the late Miss Constance Naden authoress of *A Modern Apostle*, *What is Religion?* and other Agnostic works, with an account of her views from the pen of Miss Jane Hume Clapperton, authoress of *Scientific Meliorism*.

*Lux Mundi*, the heretical High Church volume, which Mr. Foote has recently noticed in these columns has already reached a ninth edition at the price of fourteen shillings. The

only chance of making a religious work pay at this rate is to put in a spice of heterodoxy.

We are reprinting an early pamphlet of Shelley's, published in 1814, entitled *A Refutation of Deism*. Mr. Foote furnishes a brief Introduction, from which we extract the following passage:—"Shelley's object was to attack both natural and revealed religion. The method he adopted in this pamphlet was not lacking in astuteness. Theosophus assails Christianity in the name of reason, and Eusebes demonstrates that the difficulties of Theism are as great as those of the creed founded upon the Bible. It is a bold extension of the logical method pursued by Bishop Butler in his famous *Analogy*, and considering Shelley's age, it is conducted with great ability. The style is rather stiff, as youthful prose is apt to be; but although something is sacrificed to sonorousness, there is no sacrifice of perspicuity to ornament. Shelley lost no time in cultivating simplicity of statement, with the result that his mature prose, even when dealing with metaphysical topics or the subtlest qualities of poetry, was as lucid as it was beautiful."

### HUXLEY ON FAITH.

WHILE, therefore, every right-minded man must sympathise with the efforts of those theologians, who have not been able altogether to close their ears to the still, small voice of reason, to escape from the fetters which ecclesiasticism has forged, the melancholy fact remains, that the position they have taken up is hopelessly untenable. It is raked alike by the old-fashioned artillery of the Churches and by the fatal weapons of precision with which the *enfants perdus* of the advancing forces of science are armed. They must surrender, or fall back into a more sheltered position. And it is possible that they may long find safety in such retreat.

It is, indeed, probable that the proportional number of those who will distinctly profess their belief in the transubstantiation of Lot's wife, and the anticipatory experience of submarine navigation by Jonah; in water standing fathoms deep on the side of a declivity without anything to hold it up; and in devils who enter swine, will not increase. But neither is there ground for much more hope that the proportion of those who cast aside these fictions and adopt the consequence of that repudiation, are, for some generations, likely to constitute a majority. Our age is a day of compromises. The present and the near future seem given over to those happily, if curiously, constituted people who see as little difficulty in throwing aside any amount of post-Abrahamic Scriptural narrative, as the authors of *Lux Mundi* see in sacrificing the pre-Abrahamic stories; and having distilled away every inconvenient matter of fact in Christian history, continue to pay divine honors to the residue. There really seems to be no reason why the next generation should not listen to a Bampton Lecture modelled upon that addressed to the last:—

"Time was—and that not very long ago—when all the relations of Biblical authors concerning the old world were received with a ready belief; and an unreasoning and uncritical faith accepted with equal satisfaction the narrative of the Captivity and the doings of Moses at the court of Pharaoh, the account of the Apostolic meeting in the Epistle to the Galatians, and of the fabrication of Eve. We can most of us remember when, in this country, the whole story of the Exodus, and even the legend of Jonah, were seriously placed before boys as history and discoursed of in as dogmatic a tone as the tale of Agincourt or the history of the Norman Conquest.

"But all this is now changed. The last century has seen the growth of scientific criticism to its full strength. The whole world of history has been revolutionised, and the mythology which embarrassed earnest Christians has vanished as an evil mist, the lifting of which has only more fully revealed the lineaments of infallible Truth. No longer in contact with fact of any kind, Faith stands now and for ever proudly inaccessible to the attacks of the infidel."

So far the apologist of the future. Why not? *Cantabit vacuus.*—"Nineteenth Century."



## "FREETHOUGHT AND SALVATIONISM."

It is, I conceive, incumbent upon me to furnish some reply to the article which appeared in the *Freethinker* of last week under the above title. Mr. Foote has, with commendable fairness, reprinted *in extenso* my original article from the *Pall Mall Gazette* of July 19, and both sides of the question at issue are thus before the reader. I do not propose to enter into any elaborate argument, for I am content to abide by the statement which has already been printed. For the sake of brevity and clearness I will deal with certain points that need some explanation.

*The "Semi-official Headline."*—My article in the *P.M.G.* was headed, "By a Vice-President of the National Secular Society." In adopting that course I certainly had no desire to conceal my identity from Freethinkers, many of whom I felt sure would at once know the particular Vice-President concerned. And certainly I had no desire to claim "official" or even "semi-official" sanction for my opinions. The title of the article, for instance, was "A Freethinker's View of the Salvation Army." Again, I said, "Speaking, then, as a Freethinker, for myself—and I am sure that I do not stand alone in this," etc. I explained, in a letter which appeared in the *P.M.G.* on July 26, my reasons for taking the course of which complaint is made. My name, I pointed out, was not widely known, and would have conveyed nothing to the general public; but the fact of my official connection with the Secular party at least established a *prima facie* justification for writing on the subject. Mr. Foote possibly did not see that letter, as he has made no reference to it in his article.

*Mr. Holyoake's "Caustic Criticism."*—Mr. Holyoake is alleged to have "passed a caustic criticism" on my "tribute to 'the Army.'" Mr. Foote cannot possibly have heard the criticism, as he was some miles distant from the Hall of Science at the time, and he must in this matter be relying upon hearsay. Neither did I hear it, and the verbal reports which reached me were conflicting and even in some cases incoherent. But on that evening Mr. Holyoake spoke to me, and I informed him that I was the writer of the article which he had criticised. Mr. Holyoake replied: "Oh! indeed; well, you should have proposed that the Freethinkers should establish a Salvation Army of their own, with better bands and banners." This (in effect) he has since repeated to me in writing; and this is all. I am not sufficiently acute to discern any "caustic criticism" in this.

*The "Sneers" at Freethought.*—I have written no "sneers" at the Freethought party. Every word that I wrote was penned in sober earnestness and good faith. I would as soon "sneer" at the memory of my mother as utter a gibe at Freethought or the Secular party. Are there no bigots amongst Freethinkers? Has every member of our party risen superior to every failing of human nature? Mr. Foote suggests that I am a bigot myself, and he may be right; but I sincerely hope that he is mistaken. The head and front of my offending seems to be that I have expressed my conviction that the tenets of Secularism cannot be understood by "brutalised ignorance." Is this true, or is it false? My experience as a propagandist, extending over fifteen years, has convinced me that, while we *can* and *do* influence the instructed, the thoughtful, and intelligent among our brethren, there is still a very large class—the most unfortunate and degraded of all—to whom our principles and our advocacy would convey no meaning and upon whom they would produce no effect. Our recruits come to us, not from the slums, with their dreadful harvest of vice, selfishness and brutality, but from the most enlightened section of the working class and the so-called "middle class." Now the Salvation Army—the superstitious side of which I cordially detest—*has* in many cases reached and influenced for good those whom, I maintain, we do not and cannot influence. Are we to ignore or decry this good *secular* work because it is done in the name of a religion which we reject? Even if I stood alone in this against the whole Freethought party I would say, *No!* If a drunkard be reclaimed, his wife and family rescued from poverty and misery,

then I say that is good work. If the reformed man derives his elevating impulse from the Salvation Army, he will probably spend some of his time in tamborine-shaking, singing and praying. I, personally, would of course very much prefer to see him devoting his leisure to the improvement of his mind; but I would rather see him sober and kneeling at a "holiness meeting" than find him drunk and lying in the gutter.

Let me go one step further. In the *National Reformer*, some months ago (in one of my "Atheist at Church" articles) I expressed my belief that the Salvation Army may prove to be the John the Baptist of Freethought. "Salvationism," with its childish appurtenances, may be the first stage in an evolutionary process with Secularism as its ultimate development. The principles of our party are not meat for babes. Our literature and our advocacy would be "gibberish" to those whose intellectual powers are practically a minus quantity. If the Salvation Army can arouse the germ of thought, it is to that extent making possible the future Freethinker. If there were no hope of development beyond the "Salvationism" stage, perhaps the cure might be almost as bad as the disease: but I have sufficient faith in my principles to believe that they will remain to influence and elevate when the temporary craze of superstition shall have passed away.

*The "Opportunity" to the Enemy.*—Something has been said of the "opportunity" I am supposed to have afforded to the enemy of decrying Secularism. But what is this to me? I know perfectly well that, if I had signed my name to a page of Bradshaw's Time Table, it would have been used by Christians as an infidel's testimony to Christ. Mr. Foote is not perhaps aware that his attacks on the National Secular Society of twelve or fifteen years ago are to this day among the cherished weapons of Christian Evidence spadassins. The Christians who, according to Mr. Foote, are sending my letter "all over the country" are doing nothing of the kind. They are using distorted extracts in the good old Christian style. In this way the Psalmist can be made to declare that "There is no God," Christians are to-day doing me the honor of misrepresenting me as they have misrepresented better men over and over again.

The only question to my mind is whether or not I was justified by truth and reason in writing and publishing my view. Mr. Foote suggests that I am a fool, and speaks in the *P.M.G.* of my "hallucination"; in the *Freethinker* of last week he suggests that I am something far worse than a fool—that is, a traitor to my principles and their visible embodiment, the Secular party. I will not stoop to defend myself against such insinuations. My record as a worker for Freethought is written in the minute-books of the National Secular Society for fifteen years without interruption. I have ever been chary of professions, but no Secularist can truthfully say that I ever shirked my fair share—perhaps more than my fair share—of party drudgery. If my good faith is not vindicated by the service I have rendered according to my abilities and opportunities, then judgment must go by default, for I will not say another word.

GEORGE STANDRING.

[No one is better aware than I am of Mr. Standring's long and faithful service to the Secular cause. But this is not in question. Mr. Standring chose to write a puff of the Salvation Army, he chose to have it printed in a journal very friendly to that body, and he chose to use the same vehicle for informing the world that there are "bigoted Secularists." That such Secularists are to be found I neither affirm nor deny; I confine myself to the statement that a Freethinker who writes in a public journal with religious leanings, praising a Christian society, and at the same time casting reflections on members of his own party, must expect to find himself the subject of criticism. I have not suggested that Mr. Standring is "a fool," and I am far from thinking so; nor have I called him "a bigot"; and I certainly have not suggested that he is "a traitor." But Mr. Standring has, however unintentionally, furnished the Christians with a useful weapon. It was not to be expected that his *Pall Mall Gazette* article would be reproduced in full, and it is only natural that religious and semi-religious journals should use what tells for their own side. For the rest, it seems to me that Mr. Standring overlooks all I said in opposition to his view of the Salvation Army. I may add that I did not see his letter of July 26, and that, with respect to Mr. Holyoake's remarks, I still believe I was correctly informed.]

—G. W. FOOTE.]

## IS AGNOSTICISM PRESUMPTUOUS?—II.

Agnostics, on the other hand, when bidden to accept this hotch-potch of sentiment and superstition, hold back, remembering the golden advice of Descartes, to give consent to no proposition the truth of which is not so clear that it cannot be doubted—a description which to our minds does not include the fairy tales of old-world barbarians. Churchmen themselves declare this sort of thing to be “incomprehensible.” What wonder, then, if we rebel at any dogmatising on it, and refuse to believe that our non-acceptance of it will bring about our heads a fearful retribution.

That is our attitude, and the Christian tells us it is one of presumption. Why, Agnosticism has for its very foundation a protest against presumption! Is it presumption to decline to chatter a shibboleth in respect of things of which we can know nothing? Is it presumption to stand apart from the herd of noisy theologians of all kinds, who, like cheap-jacks at a fair, are constantly dinning into our ears the excellence of their wares and the rottenness of their neighbors? Is it presumption to content oneself with the proven teachings of Science and the range of human faculties? Compare the principles of the Agnostic with, say the Athanasian Creed—a succession of silly paradoxes winding up with the modest announcement that “This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.” On which does the stigma of presumption rest? It is not considered presumption in the ordinary affairs of life to suspend the judgment when it is assailed by divers people, each clamoring a different tale, each stating positively that his version is the only correct one, and all the time each talking of matters which are necessarily beyond his cognisance.

Theologians talk as though the onus of proof lay on the Freethinkers. But this manifestly cannot be so. The churchmen come to us with a lot of statements, which, to use the mildest language, cannot be regarded as easy of credence. It is for them to prove their propositions, not for us to actively disprove them. When their dogmas run counter to the knowledge of modern times, we do disprove them, but no law of logic compels us to the task, and as a rule the data of theological dogmas lie so far beyond the radius of either proof or disproof that any successful attempt at the latter is in the nature of things impossible. But that does not make our position any the less tenable, nor can it make us guilty of presumption. When, for instance, we have thrown at our heads the words of Tertullian—“certum est quia impossibile est”—you must not charge us with self-conceit if our minds are unable to follow such a subtle train of reasoning. Rather does humility of mind impel us to reply in the words which Leigh Hunt addressed to Shelley:—

In the midst of all this lovely world, that should engage  
Their mutual search for the old golden age,  
They set a phantom, swelled into grim size  
Out of their own passions and bigotries.

And this they call a light and a revealing.

Forgive us if our dim eyes are too blind to see this light, and our minds are incapable of perceiving this revelation. If you don't we can bear it. Harsh words have a boomerang like way of recoiling on those who utter them. Such shafts of petty spite as the nineteenth century has left in the Church's memory are almost harmless. We feel ourselves encased with the breastplate of truth and protected by the shield of reason, an armor made to withstand far keener darts than any flippant sarcasm can hurl.

Let any one who deems humility of mind incompatible with scepticism cultivate the acquaintance of earnest Freethinkers. He will be unfortunate indeed if he does not meet in their ranks men whose minds are as humble as they are free. Take Science's great apostle, Darwin, as an example. After his death a model was taken of his skull, and submitted to the examination of some phrenologists on the continent. One of them, who did not at the time know whose was the head modelled, said that the skull belonged either to a priest or a scientist, so great was the development of the organ of reverence. The story carries with it a moral worth studying. Reverence was one of the great man's distinguishing characteristics. There was far more humility of mind in the author of the *Origin of Species* than is to be found in many of those who jostle one another in their eagerness to charge him with presumption.

I have said that we do not mind the sarcasm and abuse which are hurled at us. We do not, except when they come from those whom we love and respect. Then our feelings

are hurt, strange as it is to some imaginations to conceive a Freethinker having any feelings to hurt. What we ask from those who differ from us is that they will appreciate our standpoint, or, if that is impossible, that they will at least give us credit for worthy motives. We are toiling painfully to find the path of truth in the tangle of the wilderness of life. If we strike a different road from that on which you who call yourselves Christians are travelling, do not therefore shout after us opprobrious epithets. The world is not so full of charity that any of us can afford to indulge in that kind of thing. Believe that our attitude is not the result of an empty-headed “cocksureness.” It is not vanity that makes us reject the Faith of the Fathers. It is that we see the rise and zenith and fall of system after system of religion—or their modification almost out of recognition by the encroachments of advancing thought; that we notice how devotion to dogma is coeval with the existence of other superstitions, and the measure of a people's belief the gauge of their lowness of intellectual calibre; and we sorrowfully but honestly arrive at the irresistible conclusion that a knowledge of the things unseen is beyond the grasp of the children of men.

ERNEST E. WILLIAMS.

## SUNDAY MEETINGS.

## LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, “The Jews' March out of Egypt.” Monday, social evening. Friday, at 8, discussion. Members' subscriptions due.

Bethnal Green—At Mr. Simson's, 2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road, on Wednesday, Aug. 13, meeting of members.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. J. B. Coppock, “The Fate of the Universe.”

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, a Fabian lecturer, “socialism and Secularism.”

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, “Mr. Swinburne and the Poetry of Freedom.”

West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7.30, Mr. George Standring, “A Freethinker's View of the Bible.”

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, “Samson, the Strong Man.”

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. A. J. Dipper, “Inspired Arithmetic.”

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, “What Think ye of Christ?”

Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. C. Durrant will lecture.

Midland Arches, St. Pancras Road, N.W., 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, “Salvation.”

Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, “Christ's Teachings.”

Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, Mr. George Standring, “A Tilt at the Christian Evidence Society.”

Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. W. Heaford, “Secularism Superior to Christianity.”

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. C. J. Hunt, “The Teachings of Christ.”

Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, “Who was Jesus and What did he Teach?”

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. Charles Watts, “Unbelief: a Plea for Mental Reform.” Preceded by a dramatic recital by Mrs. Charles Watts.

Heckinondwike—At Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a meeting.

Huddersfield—4 Thornton Road, Mr. J. Grange, 3, “Why I am not a Christian;” 7, “Does Man Survive after Death?”

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Bergmann, “Right and Wrong.”

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

Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 3, fortnightly members' meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 7, Mr. Googe, “The Eight Hours' Day: a Boon to Labor!”

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road, 6.30, Mr. Henry Smith, “Evolution or Devolution.”

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street.—Members and friends meet at tram terminus, Snig Hill, and leave by 2.30 car for Hillsbro' and Little Matlock.

South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, usual weekly meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3.30, a lecture.

Rochdale—Town Hall Square, 3, Mr. Henry Smith, “Is there a Hell? and what Class will be most likely to get there.”

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—August 24, Manchester. Sept. 7., Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—August 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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