

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. X.—No. 37.]

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1890.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

GLADSTONE ON MOSES.

MR. GLADSTONE'S article in the September number of *Good Words* on "The Mosaic Legislation" is a dreary performance. All its substance might have been expressed clearly and fully in a couple of pages; but to fill his space and earn his cheque, or else to gratify his inordinate love of verbiage, he spins out his material to the edge of garrulity. This may be considered a hard criticism, and we shall therefore justify it by a single illustration. Mr. Gladstone takes all the following lines to state a simple truth.

"In the year 1853, it was my duty for the first time to submit to Parliament one of the large and complex statements of the public accounts for the year, which are associated in our country with the familiar name of Budgets. The speeches, in which these statements were contained, were made known to the country by reporting in the usual manner. But the art of the reporters could not be trusted to convey the figures with accuracy by the ear, and a practice had consequently grown up of supplying them from the official source in carefully written statements for their guidance, which were sent to them during the delivery of the speech. It has now been found more convenient not to trust at all to the ear, and the minister is understood to speak from printed figures."

Now all this rigmarole only means that it is difficult to report a lot of figures accurately, and that a reporter who knows his business will get hold of a written or printed statement. And the cream of the joke is that this rigmarole has absolutely no bearing on any part of Mr. Gladstone's argument; for, if the figures of the Pentateuch are wrong, it cannot be contended that the writer's ear deceived him; in fact, if errors crept in while the manuscripts were being copied or edited, it was in spite of the figures being before the very eyes of the scribes.

For a penny-a-liner, or a pound-a-liner, such a phrase as "associated in our country with the familiar name of Budgets" is very serviceable. In the same way he might speak of "an agricultural implement associated in our country with the familiar name of a Spade." But a busy reader is apt to resent such diffuseness.

Let us now deal with the substance of Mr. Gladstone's article. His object is to show that the Pentateuch is older than the "negative" critics allow, and that in any case the hand of Moses is obvious in the Law which is called by his name.

Incidentally he makes some very questionable statements. For instance, he speaks of Moses as the person by whom the books of the Pentateuch "profess to have been written." If he means that this authorship is asserted in the very texture of the books we think he is mistaken, and if he means that the name of Moses is affixed to them he is guilty of triviality. "We are not told," says Professor Max Müller, who is not a destructive critic, "that Moses consigned the Old Testament to writing." Again, he declares that "no scholar would suppose that Moses was even the author of the Pentateuch. 'The Books of Moses' were to the more orthodox Jews the books telling of Moses, not the books written by Moses, just as 'the

Book of Job' was the book containing the story of Job, not a book written by Job" (*Natural Religion*, p. 556).

Mr. Gladstone also asserts that "the existence of Moses is even better and far better established than that of Lycurgus." Whether that be so or not is of little consequence. "With regard to Lycurgus, the lawgiver," says Plutarch, "there is nothing whatever that is undisputed." Surely Mr. Gladstone does not think the "negative" critics have agreed to stand sponsors for this ancient Spartan; and if he does not, what is the meaning of his reference? We should also like him to explain the statement that "in the case of Moses we have much evidence independent of, and anterior to, the institutions in their historic form." Where is this "much evidence" to be found? Certainly not in profane history; as certainly not in the Jewish historical books, which ignore Moses and all his works.

There seems no limit to the license of affirmation on the orthodox side. Let a Christian write for orthodox readers, in a magazine where he cannot be replied to, and he will apparently invent as much as he can palm off, or restate without the slightest qualification any number of time-honored falsehoods, however frequently they have been challenged and exposed.

We must also say that Mr. Gladstone is playing to the gallery in his remarks on the differences among the "negative" critics. "Speaking at large," he says, "every imaginable difference has prevailed among the critics themselves as to the source, date, and authorship of the books." This is like the objection that the Bible chronology must be true because the geologists are not agreed as to the precise age of the earth's strata, although to a sensible man it is quite enough that they *do* agree on an immense antiquity. Similarly, the "negative" critics of the Pentateuch are not agreed as to the date and authorship of every part; for it is one thing to produce a forgery, and quite another to unravel it, more than two thousand years afterwards, so as to be able to say this was written by such a hand, and that was written at such a time. But there is a point of agreement among these critics, and it is a very important one. As Mr. Gladstone says they have brought the Books of Moses "gradually towards later epochs: to Samuel, to the age of David, to the severance of the Kingdoms, to Josiah, to the Captivity, and those who followed it." How absurd, then, is the statement that it is "difficult to learn whether there is any real standing ground which the present negative writers mean not only to occupy but to hold." They occupy and hold *this* ground—that the Pentateuch is not the work of Moses. This is established by a thousand reasons, linguistic, historical, and sociological. *Who* wrote the various parts, *when* they were written, and *where* they were written, are different and difficult questions. They are partially answered; but even if they should never be answered completely, it is certain that Moses was not and could not have been the author.

Suppose we take the case of the forged Parnell letters. Reasonable men might have been perfectly satisfied that Mr. Parnell did not write them without discovering who did. The negative evidence might have been overwhelming. The positive evidence was furnished, under pressure, by the forger himself. But suppose Pigott had died before he could be cross-examined, instead of blowing his brains out afterwards; it might never have been possible to ascertain all the details of the forgery, yet the forgery itself might still have been incontestible. In the same way we may satisfy ourselves that the Pentateuch was the work of many hands in many generations, without being able to put the forgers in the witness-box and wring from them a full confession.

There is one point, however, on which Mr. Gladstone is entitled to praise. Contending, as he does, that "the heart and substance" of the Mosaic Law is authentic, he repudiates all sympathy with temporisers like Mr. Gore, the clever editor of *Lux Mundi*. These writers plead for a possible "Mosaic germ" of Jewish legislation, but allow that it was developed through centuries by the priesthood, which ascribed its own work to the ancient Jewish leader. Now Mr. Gladstone remarks that "Those are doubtless perfectly sincere who represent this as a method of progressive revelation. But there are also those who think that such a progressive revelation as this would for over two thousand years have palmed upon the whole Jewish and Christian world a heartless imposture." On another page Mr. Gladstone urges the impossibility of regarding such an imposture as harmless. "If the use of his [Moses's] name was a fiction," he declares, "it was one of those fictions which are falsehoods, for it altered essentially the character of the writings to which it was attached."

This explicit statement is very much to Mr. Gladstone's credit. Yet it would not be difficult for Mr. Gore to show that Mr. Gladstone has his own way of evading the hardest task of his position. Mr. Gore puts forward a comprehensive theory, which, if accepted, provides for all difficulties. He works on wholesale principles. Mr. Gladstone employs another theory, which is open to as grave objections. He would have us believe that "it is the legislation, for which in the sacred text itself the claim is constantly made of being due to direct communication from above, while no corresponding assertion in general accompanies the historical recitals." This, he appears to think, enables him to ascribe any quantity of Bible blunders to the "probable imperfection of the text." But if imperfections crept into one part of the text, is it impossible that they crept into the other? If the historical text is corrupt, may not the legislative text be also corrupt? Is it conceivable, Mr. Gore might urge, that a God of infinite wisdom and power would make a positive and exact revelation of his will, without taking the precaution to preserve it in its original purity; or would he allow it to be associated, nay interwoven, with human writings, and thus inevitably to share the suspicion and discredit of such productions in future ages of scientific criticism? And if, Mr. Gore might continue, you abandon the plenary inspiration of the text, as you obviously do, you are bound to formulate another theory of inspiration or let the text go altogether. To pick and choose at your own pleasure is arbitrary. Formulate your theory, and let us see whether it differs essentially from mine.

Such a challenge Mr. Gladstone would be bound to accept; and if he did so he would probably discover that Mr. Gore's theory—which, by the way, is not original—is the only one that will leave a Protestant any hold on the Pentateuch as inspired; a slender hold, it is true, but the only one possible in the circumstances.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

A POLISH MARTYR.

CASIMIR LISZINSKI, or Lyszczynski, was the last person known to have been judicially put to death in Europe on a charge of Atheism. About his case there has been some controversy, and still remains some little mystery. Certain it is that he was cited for Atheism by the Bishops of Kioff and Posen, found guilty of that charge, excommunicated, and condemned to be burnt alive. By grace of the king he was decapitated before being burnt. His execution took place at Grodno, March 30, 1689. After being burnt, his ashes were placed into a cannon and scattered to the four winds, an emblem, shall we say, of the spread of Atheistic doctrines. Whether Liszinski was really an Atheistic martyr or merely a victim of religious intolerance there is some doubt. Count Valerian Krasinski, in his *Sketch of the Religious History of the Slavonic Nations*, Edinburgh, 1851, pp. 224 and 225, thus relates the occurrence:—

"The other crime which disgraced that period was the judicial murder of Casimir Lyszczynski, a respectable landowner, perpetrated by the clergy in spite of Sobieski's efforts to save that innocent victim of fanaticism; an event which is described by all the historians of John Sobieski, and deserves a particular notice. Lyszczynski was perusing a book entitled *Theologia Naturalis*, by Henry Alsted, a Protestant divine; and finding that the arguments which the author employed to prove the existence of the Deity were so confused that it was possible to deduce from them quite contrary consequences, he added on the margin the following words:—*Ergo, non est Deus*,—evidently ridiculing the arguments of the author. This circumstance was found out by a debtor of Lyszczynski, called Brzoska, who denounced him as an Atheist, delivering, as the evidence of his accusation, a copy of the work, with the above-mentioned annotation, to Witwicki, bishop of Posen, who took up the affair with the greatest keenness. He was zealously seconded by Zaluski, bishop of Kioff, a prelate known for his great learning, and not devoid of merit in other respects, which however proved no check against religious fanaticism. The king, who was very far from countenancing such enormities, attempted to save Lyszczynski, by ordering that, being a Lithuanian, he should be judged at Vilna; but nothing could shelter the unfortunate man against the fanatical rage of the two bishops; and the great privilege of a Polish noble, that he could not be imprisoned before his condemnation, and which heretofore was sacredly observed, even with great criminals—was violated. On the simple accusation of his debtor, supported by two bishops, the affair was brought before the Diet of 1689 before which the clergy, but particularly Bishop Zaluski, accused Lyszczynski of having denied the existence of God, and uttered blasphemies against the holy virgin and the saints. The unfortunate victim, horrified by his perilous position, acknowledged all that was imputed to him, made a full recantation of what he might have said or written against the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and declared his entire submission to its authority. This was, however, of no avail to him; and the Diet, instigated by the blasphemous representations of the clergy, decreed that Lyszczynski should have his tongue pulled out, be beheaded, and then burnt. This atrocious sentence was executed; and Zaluski himself gives a relation of what he considered an act of piety and justice. The king was horror-struck at this news, and exclaimed that the Inquisition could not do any thing worse."

It must, however, be borne in mind that Count Krasinski was a Protestant, anxious to show the abuse made of their power by the Roman clergy in Poland, and to minimise the offences of their victims. It appears, moreover, from Bayle that he has by no means given the full particulars of the charge against Liszinski. According to his own defence, his only crime was having made a compilation of arguments for Atheism in order to refute them, and having written in the margin of a theological work that the arguments were inconclusive. Unfortunately for Liszinski, he had compiled the arguments for Atheism without proceeding with the second part of the work, in which they were to be confuted. Moreover, definite statements were cited against him from his own writings as that "Man is the creator of God, whom he had formed out of nothing." This statement, going as it does to the core of the question, certainly looks more like a confutation of the usual theistic position, than something set down in order to be answered.

It is easy to see how any man when such compromising and, in the eyes of bigots, dangerous statements were found among his papers, in an age when the penalty for Atheism was an agonising death, would endeavor to give such a turn to them as that they were simply noted down in order to be confuted. But in that case, in such an age, it was a most dangerous practice to compile arguments for Atheism and not at the very same time set down their confutation, or at least a personal disclaimer of holding them. Nor is it easy to see that the Polish Diet would, even if the Bishops took up the case on such flimsy evidence as Krasinski alleges, have proceeded to pass so cruel a sentence, in opposition to the known wishes of the king, if they had any faith whatever in Liszinski's defence; or that Bishop Zaluski would have triumphed in the execution as "an act of piety and justice" unless he had really believed that Liszinski was an Atheist, for whom of course no punishment could be too bad. It is, perhaps, true that Liszinski may have drawn religious bigotry on himself as being connected with a family which had not only supported Protestantism, but Anti-Trinitarianism in Poland; but I think this will not alone account for the judicial horror of his execution. Taking all things into consideration, I see no reason to regret the insertion of the name of Casimir Liszinski in my *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. His history forms a striking comment on Christian toleration and has a separate place as the last case of capital punishment for Atheism.

J. M. WHEELER.

HOLY MATRIMONY.

A CURIOUS LEGAL ARGUMENT.

IN the year 1715 a singular case was determined by the House of Peers, involving the question of the validity of a certain marriage. The details of the matter are, perhaps, hardly suitable for general publication; but one curious feature in the pleadings may interest the readers of the *Freethinker*.

Dr. Fleetwood appeared as the advocate for the dissolution of the marriage, and in the course of his address he traced the history of matrimony from the time of Adam and Eve! "The first marriage that ever was made," he said, "was made without any words at all, that we know of, expressing their consent; and it was so clandestine that there was not so much as a mortal man by, no not a priest, to join them together." The distinction between "a mortal man" and a "priest," by the way, is not at all clear.

But Dr. Fleetwood's "great argument" turned upon the relationship of Joseph to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and into this abstruse subject he entered very fully. "Joseph and the Blessed Virgin," he said, "were certainly espoused and betrothed each to the other; and he thereby became so much her husband, that he thought of putting her away, which shows he thought she was his wife; and he is called her husband by the Evangelist St. Matthew; and she herself calls Joseph the father of her Son, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing;' and a little before they are called his parents. There is not a word of all this that I do, or dare deny. . . . My Lords," he continued, "I have taken some pains to understand this matter . . . for it is something out of the way of my profession. It was absolutely necessary, by God's appointment, that the Savior of the world should be born of a woman: and it was, by the same appointment, full as necessary that he should not be the son of man in the common way. To reconcile these difficulties, therefore, he was 'conceived by the Holy Ghost,' and 'born of the Virgin Mary.' But because the Savior of the world was to be, in especial manner, the Messiah of the Jews, he was to be born a Jew; to descend from Abraham. . . . This Messiah the Jews expected should be born as other men were

born; and they would never have received him as such, or heard him as a prophet and teacher sent from God, unless they had believed him to be born in lawful wedlock; as they certainly did, or you would have heard of it over and over again in the gospels, which conceal none of the slanders, contumelies and reproaches which the Jews, upon all occasions, did so plentifully pour upon our Savior. Had the blessed Mary not been married, what would the people have said of her? What would they not have said of her son? It was therefore absolutely necessary to the Jews receiving Christ for the Messiah, and hearkening to him, that he should be born under the reputation of marriage; which could not be unless she took a husband in the usual manner. You see what entertainment both his person and doctrine found, although he was supposed to be born in wedlock, and of honest parents, only because of their mean and low condition; but what had been his fortune, had they thought him spurious [illegitimate]?"

In continuing his argument, Dr. Fleetwood contended that "the marriage of Joseph with the Blessed Virgin was all (as I am told the ancient Christian writers call it) according to œconomy. It was to save appearances; to cover both the mother and the son from the reproaches of ignorant malicious people, till it should please God, in his own good time, to manifest the truth more clearly to the world."

In preparing this remarkable plea Dr. Fleetwood seems to have sought—and obtained—the assistance of certain persons very well "up" in the counsels of the Almighty. His argument has for this generation a purely antiquarian interest. One can hardly imagine a speech of that kind being delivered by an eminent barrister before the judicial tribunal of the House of Lords to-day! Blackburn or Bramwell would certainly soon stop the theological disquisition—"Have done with that: what are the facts?" But in 1715 society was more pious than it is to-day.

G. STANDRING.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

Council Meeting held at Hall of Science, September 4. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, the Secretary reported as to arrangements for courses of Free Lectures. On the motion of Mr. A. B. Moss it was agreed that a course be given at the Hall of the Tower Hamlets' Radical Club, the use of which had been offered on favorable terms; and it was also decided to deliver lectures either at Milton Hall or other place in the North Western District. Various other places were suggested, and the secretary was instructed to make further inquiries. The President reported that owing to pressure of work the proposed Christian Evidence class must for the present remain in abeyance. Reports were read from Hammersmith and Midland Arches. The Treasurer made a statement as to the financial position of the Federation; and applications for grants were referred to committee. Miss Vance, as secretary of the N. W. London Branch, complained of the indiscreet action of a member of another Branch, with respect to the lectures at Regent's Park; but after some discussion the matter was allowed to drop. A suggestion as to collections at Free Lectures was adopted; and it was thought advisable to alter the charge for reserved seats to sixpence, instead of one shilling as announced. The Council then adjourned till first Thursday in October.—EDMUND POWNCEBY, secretary.

"Ma, I've an idea that some of the folks in this graveyard haven't gone to heaven." "You don't say! What makes you think that they haven't?" "Because I read it on the tombstones." "No!" "Yes, I did, though. It was carved on ever so many, 'Peace to his ashes.' Now, there ain't any ashes 'cept where it is very hot, is there, ma?"

Young man (to sexton, at church door) "Isn't the sermon nearly done?" Sexton: "About an hour yet. He is only on his 'Lastly.'" Young man: "Will it take him an hour to get through his 'Lastly?'" Sexton: "No, but there's the 'One word more and I am done,' and the 'Finally,' and the 'In conclusion' to come yet. Don't get impatient, young man. Your girl won't spoil."

PERNICIOUS PRIESTS.

Yu Chi-K'ai, Provincial Treasurer and acting Governor of Kuantung, will stand no nonsense in the matter of priestly extortions. He has issued a proclamation setting forth some of the tricks practised in the temples of the Tutelary Gods of the various cities of that province, from which it appears that the priest in charge of the temple at Canton pays as much as from 7000 to 10,000 taels (the silver tael is equal to rather more than six shillings) for his post, recouping himself afterwards by a variety of extortions from the worshippers. They are, for example, not allowed to bring in their incense-sticks or candles, but must buy these from the priest inside at ten times their value. They must also pay an exorbitant hire for space on the mats on which they perform their prostrations; and women are persuaded by the priest that a night's sleep on the mats in the temple, for which they pay a heavy hotel bill to the priest, will ensure them male progeny. In the precincts of the temple, moreover, quack doctors, astrologers, and charlatans of all kinds are, it is said, permitted to erect booths on payment of a fee. The Governor sternly announces his intention of sweeping away all these abuses, hitherto winked at by the city officials, who have each in succession received large bribes for their complaisance.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. Ben Tillett has done a good work for the London dockers, but he does not shine as an amateur preacher. On Sunday afternoon he held forth in a Methodist chapel in Camberwell. It was a thanksgiving service, and Benjamin talked unctuously of the bounties of Providence. He appears to have forgotten the potato blight in Ireland. Mr. Tillett also expressed his opinion that a man could not be a good Christian on an empty stomach. This would be laughed at by every Catholic. Half the saints on record kept empty stomachs on purpose to heighten their spiritual faculties. Our own opinion is that men are very unlikely to be good Christians on full stomachs. Mr. Tillett should remember the words of Jesus Christ, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Mr. Tillett remarked that "poverty had shot more souls out of their chance of heaven than Atheism." This was not the teaching of Jesus Christ either. The Prophet of Nazareth said "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich." He also said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Why, then, does Mr. Tillett call himself a Christian, when he flies in the very face of Christ?

Has Mr. Tillett reflected seriously on the meaning of his own words? Is it possible that men have lost their chance of heaven through being poor? If so, was their poverty their fault or their misfortune? Mr. Tillett would undoubtedly reply "their misfortune," especially at a dockers' meeting. His statement therefore comes to this, that men have gone to hell, or at least lost heaven, through the misfortune of poverty. Yet in the same breath he talks of the bounty of Providence! If this is the best logic and morality he is able to muster on a religious platform, we need not fear the crusade against Atheism which he seems to contemplate.

The floods in Hungary have washed away the harvest from the granaries and ruined at least a hundred thousand people, so that the Austrian Government has been forced to take measures for their succor, and thus counteract the visitation of Providence. The hospitals are filling with the sick, and over fifty funerals of persons who have died through their sufferings, caused by the floods, have already taken place.

The fire at Salonica has rendered some 20,000 persons homeless. Most of them are of God's chosen people, so perhaps he is still paying them out because his unfortunate son "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

William Radcliff, formerly a clerk in holy orders, has been arrested in London and charged at Margate with appropriating three rings valued at £52 10s.

Some wicked fellow got into a church vestry after the deacons and clergy had held a meeting there, and left four

beer bottles, a whisky flask, all empty, and two packs of cards under the table. When the sewing society met an hour later and discovered the articles, they held a long and whispered conversation.

The Rev. R. Morgan's hay has been distrained for tithes by a brother in God belonging to the Established Church. Surely it is time that J. C. came again to settle the disputes among his consecrated servants. Each thinks he is acting for Christ. But the parson has the best of it, for he has collared the hay.

Jesus is set before children as a perfect example. Sometimes the application is of an unexpected character. The other week a boy, only five years of age, was seen in the Halifax Canal by a passing boatman, who at once got him out in an unconscious condition, with his boat-hook, and he was conveyed home. On coming round he was asked how he got into the Canal, when he said that his teacher at school had told them about Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was a man, while he was only a little boy.

"Hotspur" in the *Bolton Weekly Guardian* complains of the conduct of the Rev. T. Lancaster, who kept a funera party waiting a scandalous time while he was shooting on the moors. Many of the parishioners are highly incensed, but they might ask themselves whether a parson's life is worth living if he must leave his sport to do his duty.

The quarrels and extortions of the Christian sects at Jerusalem have led to the expulsion of some of the Franciscan monks from the city by the Turkish soldiery, notwithstanding the protests of the French Consul.

The Rev. Albert Vedder has been arrested in New York for abducting a little girl. This man of God has served a term in prison before for ruining a young woman of West Melton.

According to Dr. A. Bosco, an Italian statistician, the greatest number of murders occur in Italy, Spain and Hungary. These countries are pre-eminently religious.

Judge Abdy has granted an interim injunction against the Rev. Alfred Waller, curate to Bishop Gregg, of the Reformed Church of England, for causing a nuisance on the foreshore at Southend.

One month's hard labor is the lot of Jane Brittain for telling some girls their fortune at Leicester. Instead of promising them handsome husbands, Jane should have assured them of mansions in the sky, and she would have remained unmolested.

The Rev. George Rogers is the oldest Congregational minister in the world. He is in his ninety-second year. Naturally he finds the world is growing heterodox. He watches the "down-grade" controversy with feelings akin to those of Mr. Spurgeon. He began to preach at the age of seventeen, and he holds the same opinions still. In orthodox circles this is regarded as a merit, but to others it will savor of stupidity. A short time ago Mr. Rogers composed a hymn containing this verse:

The music of heaven I hear
From voices unnumbered and sweet,
And feel that I too must be there
To render the chorus complete.

Those who appreciate the quality of this verse will no doubt understand why Mr. Rogers retains the opinions he started with.

When the *Pall Mall Gazette* plays the Philistine it "goes the whole hog." Nothing could be more inexpressibly vulgar than its Monday's paragraphs on Booth and Comte. It positively revelled in the notion that while a single car might convey Comte's followers to his tomb, it would take ever so many to convey the Salvation Army. What a sublime test! At this rate Martin Tupper would lord it over Shakespeare, and the *Pall Mall* would sink immeasurably below the *Police News*. General Booth is a clever man, but what new idea has he contributed to the world? On the other hand, the genius of Comte, with all its aberrations, has left an indelible impression on the human mind.

and his influence is seen in much of the forward work of civilisation.

Happily the really great men have never cared for what Cardinal Newman called "canonisation in the periodical press." They have only valued the praise of competent judges. The time comes when distance gives a proper perspective; then the great figures stand out saliently, while the gods of the hour sink into nothingness.

That valiant defender of the faith, Archdeacon Denison, will bring *Lux Mundi* before the House of Convocation, and ask that a committee of examination shall sit upon it. If the House of Convocation knows its own interests it will leave it severely alone. Heresy cannot be sat upon without being advertised.

The correspondent of the *New York World*, who is now travelling through Russia, says that the priests encourage the people in drunkenness. He says: "Curious as it may sound to American ears, the Russian priests are notorious boozers. A village priest may get drunk as often as he pleases, and by so doing not forfeit the respect of his parishioners. It is no uncommon thing, so I am told, for a priest to drink himself into a state of beastly intoxication. And the 'black clergy,' the monks who spin out an indolent existence in the five hundred monasteries of the empire, drink brandy out of beer glasses."

The Rev. G. T. Allpress, of Greengate Church, Barking Road, Plaistow, avails himself of his privilege of giving letters of recommendation to the London Hospital and West Ham Dispensary, in order to extend the circulation of his paper, *The Monthly Evangel*. He promises to give letters of recommendation, "providing any remain on hand," to those producing coupons showing they have purchased the paper for six months.

Dr. Munro has been utilising the death of Cardinal Newman. His lectures in the Cathedral Church, Clydesdale, are reported in the *Glasgow Evening News*. He points out all the Protestant sects grow more and more heretical, and that liberty of conscience leads to the dissolution of faith—an admission which we are glad to acknowledge. If the faith is to be preserved, it must be by the Catholic Church. Dr. Munro denounces the private interpretation of the Bible by laymen. That is the function of the Church—or, in other words, the priests—and the layman's duty is to open his mouth and shut his eyes and swallow what they give him. A beautiful system—for priests.

Cardinal Tascherau, Archbishop of Quebec, overreached himself. He would not attend the banquet to Prince George of Wales unless he sat next to the Prince, but Admiral Watson and General Russ threatened to retire if this impudent demand were conceded, and the tables were accordingly re-arranged, the Archbishop being left out in the cold altogether.

The festival of St. Giles was celebrated with high mass in St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, and Canon Donlevy preached an appropriate sermon, in the course of which he mentioned St. Giles's arm-bone, a most precious relic, which was brought to Edinburgh by William of Preston. But the Canon forgot, apparently, to say what became of that bone. We hope it was not sold to a marine-store dealer, for poor old St. Giles will want it on the resurrection morning.

Pious people will adopt any means for the laudable end of raising the wind for God. At Mattituck (U.S.), the church, being in need of funds, set up a fancy fair, with a kissing booth. Twelve of the prettiest girls in the church were induced to play the part of kissers at twenty-five cents each. It took tremendously. In less than a quarter of an hour there was a line outside the kissing booth extending to the end of the church, and many of the kissed, on emerging from the tent, ran round and got in the line again, ready to pay a second time for another kiss. The receipts of the booth brought in a good round sum to the Lord. But all the other church and chapel people were very angry. The girls were publicly denounced by the pious people who were not in it as "bold hussies" and a disgrace to the town.

At the meeting of the Christian Colportage Association at Penzance the secretary mentioned the case of a woman who said she wanted "a good old lie," and to whom the colporteur sold a copy of the Bible. The woman might find a good selection from the talking serpent, Lot's wife, Baalam's ass, Samson and the foxes and Elisha's bears, to Christ's walking on water and ascending into heaven.

Mr. M. Bramston, in a letter to the *Spectator*, tells how the performers in the Oberammergau Passion Play put themselves back, the men into their not very well-fitting coats and trousers, and the girls into their cotton bodices and stuff skirts. The Madonna goes to her father's office, and there adjudges lodgings and tickets; St. Peter sits at his window carving Schnitzen; Pilate's attendant, who is also Tobias's angel, and has four other parts besides, goes to his carpenter's bench; the Apostle Simon opens the cow-house door to the gentle little cream-colored cows, who have brought themselves home for milking, and caresses them before they follow him in to be milked; while Jesus Christ Mayr appears to be at the beck and call of anyone who needs him.

The Bishop of Ripon preached to the British Association at Leeds from the text "Man shall not live by bread alone," and of course sought to show that the Word of God was necessary. The occasion, however, suggests that it is science by which men live, while theology could be entirely dispensed with and nobody except bishops and other parasites of commonwealths would be a penny the worse.

Says Colonel Ingersoll: "With the single exception of Cornell, there is not a college in the United States where truth has ever been a welcome guest. The moment one of the teachers denies the inspiration of the Bible he is discharged. If he discovers a fact inconsistent with that book, so much the worse for the fact, and especially for the discoverer of the fact. He must not corrupt the minds of his pupils with demonstrations. He must beware of every truth that cannot, in some way, be made to harmonise with the superstitions of the Jews."

The *Times* correspondent at Odessa states, that notwithstanding official denials, the stringent laws against the Jews are being put into force with great severity in South Russia. He himself knows many Jewish families who have received notice to quit the country in seven days. Six hundred Jewish families have been expelled from Odessa in the past three weeks. From Breditscheff more than 3,000 have left the country either for England or America, and the same expulsion is going on in many other towns.

The Nonconformist papers complain that the information ordered by Parliament to be set forth by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as to the ecclesiastical revenues of the country, is very inadequate. The Commissioners have interpreted the words "to be shown in counties" as meaning to be shown only in counties. They have set down the familiar fact of the Archbishop of Canterbury receiving £15,000 a year, instead of giving the value of the whole estate of his see, and in short it will be necessary to get a more stringent Parliamentary inquiry before the full value of ecclesiastical property will be made known.

The *Herald* continues to urge the suppression of Secular meetings in Beresford Square, Woolwich, and calls upon the Board of Health to act immediately. According to this bigoted journal, the Secularists infringe the bye-law against trading because they make a collection. But the same thing is done by the Salvation Army, and what is sauce for the Freethought gander is sauce for the Christian goose. Anyhow, if the worst come to the worst, the Secularists could easily outwit the *Herald* by dropping the collection. What would the bigots do then?

One of the old toasts will have to be altered when the Duke of Clarence visits Cardiff. It has been usual at public banquets to propose "The Bishop and the Clergy of the Diocese," but another formula must now be found to include the Dissenters. "Our Spiritual Forces" has been adopted, and it is really excellent. The red-coats fight the enemy, and the black-coats fight the Devil—although of them, as Fox said, he standeth not afraid. Our Military Forces run

the risk of meeting a *bullet*. Our Spiritual Forces only run the risk of a bad *billet*.

A stream of pilgrims have again been resorting to the "sacred grotto" at Lourdes in the South of France. The *Paris Univers* and other Catholic papers report many miraculous cures. The miracles, it need scarcely be stated, are of the character always found to accompany excitement and faith. In such cases apparent temporary benefit is often followed by a worse relapse. But the report of the cures suffices to attract crowds of well-to-do invalids who support the priests and also to bring many poor pilgrims who can ill-afford the expenses of the journey.

If we may trust Dr. Laffin, an African missionary, the negro makes the best orthodox Christian. "With the native African," he says, "God's Word settles any point of dispute." Here in England it is God's Word that the Christians are all disputing about.

Even ministers have to be very careful not to offend public sentiment in Kansas City. According to a Dalziel telegram, a divine named Smith, sixty-eight years of age, proposed to a widow of forty-five; and the "Whitecaps," a secret vigilance society, put his head in a sack, tied him to a horse, dragged him for a mile, and then stripped him naked and flogged him with willows till nearly dead. It is a very disgusting story, and shows what will happen when "good" people mind their neighbors' business.

The founder of the Russian Flagellants was Ivan Souslof. His father is supposed to have descended from heaven, whither he ascended after acknowledging his son to be the Christ. Ivan chose twelve apostles. He was arrested and crucified outside the sacred gate of Kremlin at Moscow, but he rose from the dead, and repeated the performance after a second crucifixion. His followers must neither drink nor marry. Their religious exercises are like those of the Salvation Army in the heel-kicking days of its youth.

The Rev. J. P. Hopps, of Leicester, is starting a new journal. The first number will contain a letter from Mr. Gladstone on revealed religion. Considering the views of Mr. Hopps, who is an "advanced" Unitarian, the letter may be looked upon as merely an advertisement. The G.O.M. is easily had in such matters.

Spurgeon is bent on being the Abdiel of Christianity. Some weeks ago the play of "Judah" was performed to an audience of ministers, who were let in "free, gratis, for nothing." The sky-pilots thought it a nice play, especially at the price. But Mr. Spurgeon is shocked at their impiety, and this is how he let out at them the other evening in his Tabernacle:—"There are no amusements too vile for her [the Christian Church]. Her pastors had filled a theatre of late, and have set their mark by their clamors on the labors of play-actors. To this we had come at last to which we had never come before—no, not in Rome's darkest hour. And if you do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you."

Some people will think Spurgeon needs a blue pill. Others would like to see a discussion between him and Stewart Headlam, with a ballet girl in the chair.

Spurgeon denies that he does not dream of a long sea voyage. He is going to work until the November fogs warn him his time for a holiday is come. Some of us would like the same "warning," but Freethought does not pay like superstition. It is astonishing what salaries are paid to men for preaching "Blessed be ye poor."

The humbug of ordinary Christianity has just been displayed at Worcester. The magistrates of that city fined three poor boys half-a-crown each for selling the *Umpire* and the *Sunday Chronicle* on Sunday. Thereupon some lovers of impartiality prosecuted a man for selling the *War Cry*. But the magistrates dismissed the case, and they remarked, with a curious mixture of impudence and illegality, that the Act was only useful in some cases. Apparently, therefore, the law may be broken in Worcester, and the magistrates, of all men, are the persons to decide when

it may be done. Would it not simplify matters to pass a new Act, enforcing the Sabbath on unbelievers, and giving the sole right of breaking it to Christians?

A twaddling sermon by Dr. Parker is reported in the *Christian Commonwealth*. The subject is Agnosticism. Before the sermon comes the prayer, which is printed in small type. No doubt it might pass in church, when Parker and his congregation had their eyes screwed up; but printed in cold blood it is cant and silliness. If there be a God—and Parker knows as much about that as we do—he must be infinitely sick of the stuff addressed to him by sky-pilots.

Parker's sermon has only one point in it. All the rest is verbiage. He replies to the argument that the universe made itself, but as this argument is not used by Freethinkers, the preacher is merely wasting his time. It would be well for Parker to remember, or to learn, that the opponents of Theism do not believe the universe was made at all; and that, before he can discuss with them *who* made it, he must show that it *was* made. But he will draw his last year's salary before he does that.

The Rev. Dr. Hiles Hitchins, of Eccleston Square Church, talks rot to the Almighty as easily as Parker. The other Sunday morning he was good enough to tell God of his "infinite, superabounding, kingly glory." If the Lord heard it he must have laughed at the anti-climax. It was like the French gentleman's, who exclaimed "Magnificent, grand, vera goot."

W. T. Stead took William Booth to see Lord Wolesley. After a long conversation, the Queen's general said to the Lord's general that if he had been a soldier he would have been the greatest general of this century. We are not told what Booth said in reply. No doubt it was something handsome. For our part, we think one of these worthies is the equal of the other. Both are pious and splendid self-advertisers.

Why a Christian minister should dress like a crow is agitating the minds of correspondents of the *Christian World*. This, we take it, is a fresh sign of the dissolution of Christianity. Its doctrines are dissolving, its Bible is dissolving, and the ministers themselves are beginning to dissolve into the general population.

After spending £30,000 on their temple at Chatham, which is to house the 144,000 elect when J. C. appears in the clouds, the Jezreelites are in financial difficulties. A Chancery suit is pending, and meanwhile, if the work is to go on, £2,000 will be required to roof the building. So solidly is the structure built that it will be very costly to pull down, and perhaps it will stand as a monument of religious folly.

Mr. Foote's lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall is still causing a stir. Another anonymous Christian complains in the *Daily Post*, but R. S. Bransley, a Freethinker, who gives his name and address, like an honest man, contributes a very excellent letter on the Secularist side. The *Daily Mail* devotes an editorial to the subject, to which Mr. Foote has written a reply. The *Mail* pretends to be in favor of fair play, and would not deprive the Freethinkers of their rights, but it objects to Mr. Foote and his "methods of discussion," and appear to think that the Secularists forfeit their right to the use of the Town Hall by inviting their President to speak there. This is a very transparent pretence, especially as the *Mail* has no fault to find with the particular lecture in question. On the whole it is pretty plain that Liberal as well as Conservative pressure will be put upon the Mayor to refuse the annual use of the Town Hall to the Secularists when they make their next application. We can only hope that the Mayor, whoever he should be, will be true to the principles of civil and religious freedom.

Since the preceding paragraph was written we have received a copy of the Birmingham *Daily Post* containing two further well written letters by Secularists. It is gratifying to see that the local Freethinkers are so well able to defend their cause.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Sept. 14, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town; at 7.30, "Gladstone on Moses."

September 21, Manchester; 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.

IGNORAMUS.—Received with thanks.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks for the cutting. Your report is well done, but it is not verbatim. You have succeeded better with the chairman's speech than with the lecture. Reporters have always found Mr. Foote difficult to take down accurately. He seems to speak very deliberately, but he often speaks with great rapidity.

A. HINDLEY.—Always pleased to hear from recent recruits. We hope, as you do, that the Secularists will have fair-play in Birmingham.

T. BROMLEY.—Cuttings are always welcome.

A. A. A.—(1) We have no knowledge of the concern. You would be very foolish to entrust your money to any Stock-broking firm. It is only licensed gambling. If you want to invest in any kind of stock, see for yourself, and purchase in the regular way. (2) Glad to hear you are so pleased with the *Freethinker*.

J. DAVIES.—Mrs. Besant's *Law of Population* might suit you. Malthus's volume is more expensive.

H. JUSTICE.—In the language of Scripture, "inquire of the Lord"

REX REGES writes: "I am more than pleased with this week's *Freethinker* (Sep. 7), and have taken six copies for distribution."

A. CRAIG (Belfast)—No attack, scurrilous or otherwise, on the Rev. John Waddell has appeared in the *Freethinker*. The letter he sent us was a reply to Mr. Knox's article on Sunday Observance in the North of Ireland. The reverend gentleman "demanded" its insertion, and partly for this reason, but more because of its inordinate length (it would have filled three columns), the letter was not inserted. Apparently the reverend gentleman is as inventive as he is spiteful. But as he threatened us with what he would do if his letter was not printed *in extenso* we are not in the least surprised. It is time for insolent Christians to learn that Freethought editors are masters of their own columns, and require to be addressed in terms of decent civility.

W. GILMOUR.—The *Bible Handbook* has proved useful to hundreds of Freethinkers. Thanks for the cuttings.

H. G. S.—Ask the candidate this question—"Are you in favor of abolishing the Blasphemy Laws, under which Secularists may be sent to prison for opposing Christianity in their own journals, and under which no Secular Society can receive a legacy or hold any kind of property?" Every parliamentary candidate should be asked this question, and pressed for a straightforward reply.

W. M. KNOX.—Thanks for the copy of the *Belfast News Letter*. Mr. Waddell sends that journal "the substance of his reply to the *Freethinker*"—to use his own words. The reply itself was much longer, and even more impolite. We have our own sense of propriety, and our space is limited. Those who send us letters for insertion must write with reasonable brevity and courtesy—otherwise their effusions will go into the waste-basket, even if the writers were Bishops or Cardinals.

YORKSHIRE SECULAR FEDERATION.—The secretary desires to acknowledge the receipt of the following contributions:—

W. Kay, 1s.; J. Greevz Fisher, 2s. 6d.; H. Smith, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Goss, 3s.; H. Hardcastle, 1s.; J. Dobson, 1s.; R. Atkinson, 2s.; H. Riley, 1s.; R. Bedford, 6d.; A. Jessop, 6d.; J. Grange, 1s.; H. Rothera, 1s.; Mr. Sunderland, 5s.

JOHN ROBINSON.—Mr. Forder will supply you with any necessary information as to establishing the Branch.

J. R. SYKES.—If you can secure a hall Mr. Foote will visit Southend. See paragraphs.

M. GOLDWORTH.—Cuttings are always welcome.

W. LAPPAGE.—The proposal has been under consideration already. The tract is not worth a paragraph.

R. ATKINSON.—The paragraph about Morecambe appeared in our last.

J. S. ROGERS.—Mr. Foote will write.

J. H. BECKER.—It shall have our attention.

J. MOORE.—We see nothing in the bill calling for criticism. Is there something you have not disclosed?

A. M.—We were quite right. The "not" in the first clause would be implied after "or," and "unwilling" would therefore be a double negative. Of course it is a small matter. We see the *Methodist Times* queries Booth's grammar at the very same point.

F. GOODWIN.—Mr. Foote is in good health though often very tired. The Booth article seems to be generally relished.

S. STANDING reports that Mr. Sutcliffe, an old Brighton Freethinker, has undertaken to build up a Branch at Tottenham. Mr. Standing had a capital outdoor audience on Sunday, and has good hopes of Tottenham.

A. H. B.—The dogma of Papal Infallibility, was only proclaimed in 1870, but it had been asserted by implication before.

T. P.—(1) We are in the habit of acknowledging what we reprint from the *Twentieth Century*. The omission in the case of Clara Davidson's story was owing to our absence from London. The Edgar Fawcett bit of verse came to us as a cutting. We did not remember its having first appeared in Mr. Pentecost's journal. Both pieces were obviously of American origin. By the way, our own paragraphs are often used, and not always with acknowledgment, in various parts of the world. (2) Glad to find the Booth article gives such satisfaction, and that you think this journal improves every week. (3) Celestine Edwards' chief attraction is his color.

W. J. S.—A line is dropped out. The words are—"sufficient for many months afterwards, must have been stored in the ark."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Menschentum—Progressive Thinker—Freidenker—Fulham Chronicle—Fritankaren—Cosmopolitan—Boston Investigator—Echo—Loyal American—Secular Thought—Open Court—Star—Fair Play—Freethinker's Magazine—Yorkshire Post—People's Press—Chat—Liberty—Playgoer—South Eastern Herald—Cornish Telegraph—La Verite—Evening Standard—Birmingham Daily Post—Birmingham Daily Mail—North Middlesex Chronicle—Evening Tidings—Leeds Mercury.

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.

IMPORTANT.

ON Sunday afternoon the band of Christian, and apparently hired, rowdies who have so frequently disturbed the Secular meetings in Finsbury Park, carried their brutality to the extreme; and Mr. A. B. Moss, after speaking for some time amidst shocking noises, some of which were of a perfectly obscene character, was obliged to desist on seeing that a violent assault was being directed against the platform. The Finsbury Park Branch has appealed to me, and although I am advised to do no open-air speaking this year, I have resolved to go to the Park myself. This afternoon (Sep. 14) at half-past three, I shall be at the Branch station, which is a hundred yards or so from the bandstand. I call on the North London Freethinkers to meet me there and assist me in holding a meeting. I have written to the Commissioner of Police, and pointed out that, as that portion of the Park is set aside for public speaking, the Secularists expect to be protected in the exercise of their legal right; and I have added that if they are obliged to protect that right themselves, the responsibility will rest on those who have neglected their warning.

G. W. FOOTE.

President, National Secular Society.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Despite the paradisiacal weather, a good audience assembled in Milton Hall on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "A World Without God." Among the audience was Mr. Van der Ende, one of the staff of our Dutch contemporary *De Dageraad*. Mr. Van der Ende was delighted to hear a Freethought lecture. The cause is promoted in Holland solely by the pen. The time has not arrived for

successful public meetings. The editors of *De Dageraad* and all the writers labor gratuitously, and as lectures would have to be carried on in the same way, the double task is beyond their strength. Unfortunately the movement has no rich supporters.

After Mr Foote's lecture a lady mounted the platform, and as she walked infirmly he gave her his seat, which she occupied, as well as the platform, for ten minutes. She spoke with tolerable fluency and perfect self-possession and was attentively listened to. In one sense her appearance was very welcome. It is refreshing to listen to a Christian opponent who speaks from personal thought and observation.

This evening (Sep. 14) Mr. Foote lectures at Milton Hall again. His subject will be "Gladstone on Moses." He will deal more fully than is possible in an article with Mr. Gladstone's paper in the current number of *Good Words*.

The London Secular Federation's courses of Free Lectures at the Hall of Science opens next Thursday evening (Sep. 18), when Mr. Foote lectures on "The Miracles of Christ." Some seats are reserved at sixpence (not a shilling, as on the bill), and the usual collection will be made to defray expenses. After the lecture there will be ample opportunity for discussion. All comers will be welcome so long as they speak decently to the point.

Mr. G. Standing takes Thursday, Sep. 25, his subject being "A Defence of Secularism"; Mr. R. Forder Oct 2, "Gospel Legends"; and Mr. Foote Oct. 9, "Christian and Secular Morality."

Other courses of Free Lectures are being arranged in the East and North-West of London. Of course they involve expense. It is some time since the Federation made any appeal for funds, but subscriptions are now required. Will our London friends please forward cheques, post-office orders, etc., without delay?

We congratulate our sub-editor. His *Letters from Heaven* and *Letters from Hell* have been confiscated as "blasphemous" by the Custom House authorities at Melbourne. We regret that the importer has lost his property, but we hope he will bring an action for recovery, and succeed in teaching these impudent bigots a salutary lesson.

The *Independent Pulpit* (Waco, Texas) copies Mr. Wheeler's two recent articles, "When was Christ Born? When did Christ Die?" from our columns. We are pleased to notice that Mr. J. D. Shaw, the editor, proposes to change the name of his Freethought journal and turn it from a monthly into a weekly organ.

R. B. Cunningham Grahame, M.P., lays his profane finger on the sacred ark in the *People's Press*, edited by Shaw Maxwell. He speaks of chapel as "some dissenting god-box," and says of the Church of England: "It has been in the main the Church of the rich, the orthodox, and those whose chief delight has been to hunt and shoot and fish, cheat on the Stock Exchange, make war on harmless unarmed savages, carry round the plate on Sunday, and repose at last beneath a ton or two of Purbeck marble and rot away, calmly awaiting the never-coming resurrection."

One of the most astonishing things in Stanley's *Darkest Africa* is the statement on the authority of Emin Pasha, that chimpanzees use torches in their night expeditions. Mr. Romanes doubts the statement, but it is scarcely stranger than that recently made in *Nature* that "a large ape is now undoubtedly acting as a signalman (under direction) on one of the railways in Natal."

The *Freethinker's Magazine* (Buffalo, New York) for September, gives a portrait of Mr. G. J. Holyoake, together with an article from that veteran entitled "The Sorrows of God." The editor, Mr. H. L. Green, deals with the orthodox Hell. Mr. T. Bush writes on "Euripides and the Gods," and Lucy N. Colman, an aged Freethought and abolitionist lecturer, concludes her interesting Reminiscences. We trust the *Freethinker's Magazine* receives the support it so well deserves from our friends in America.

"Religion and Recreation" is the title of an outspoken

article in the *Cambrian News*, the organ of the Welsh farmers. The sky-pilots complain of the pagan tendencies of the people, and the writer tells them that they are fussy folk who are always "manufacturing wickedness." As to "pure literature" he tells the Churches that they are far from blameless, for "some of the worst offenders are religious papers that advertise impure books alongside of sermons and religious tracts."

Ignatian Difficulties and Historic Doubts, by R. C. Jenkins, is a work attacking Bishop Lightfoot's defence of the alleged epistles of Ignatius. The *Academy*, reviewing the work, says the matter must "be considered settled, not in the sense advocated, but opposed to Bishop Lightfoot's conclusions." Dr. Lipsius gives his opinion against the authenticity of the epistles, and the *Academy* adds: "For the future they must be consigned—in company with the forged Decretals and similar hierarchical impostures—into the large limbo of ecclesiastical unveracities whence they ought never to have been permitted to emerge." Bishop Lightfoot defended the Ignatius epistles because they bolster up episcopal pretences, just as the clergy defend the Bible because it supports their own impostures.

Portsmouth *Chat* gives an editorial report of Mr. Foote's recent lectures in the Alhambra. According to this lively paper, which has outlived its youthful troubles and is now a flourishing concern, the evening audience that listened to the lecture on "*Lux Mundi*" was "a highly intellectual" one. The compliments to the lecturer must remain in the pages of *Chat*. The editor remarks that "three long lectures in one day, and three hours' debate added thereto, is too much for the strongest man." We agree with him, and we have often remonstrated with Mr. Foote, but he says he cannot help himself.

Chat asks "Why can't there be some music at these lectures?" We echo the question. Why not?

Sir Frederick Abel, in his opening address before the British Association, paid a tribute to the name and fame of Joseph Priestley, whose heresy, as he pointed out, hindered his advancement in life, as well as led to direct persecution: Yet the freethinking chemist is remembered while his orthodox persecutors are forgotten.

Mr. Bowmaker, lessee of the Alexandra Theatre, Southend, took a step in the right direction on Sunday, August 31, when he gave a Concert, in which the Rousbey Opera Company took part.

All communications referring to the intended formation of a Branch of the N. S. S. at Wakefield should be directed to the Provincial Secretary, E. Jones-Schofield, Dovecot House, Horbury, near Wakefield.

A meeting was held on Sunday last, at the house of Mr. John Robinson, 35 Gladstone Terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law, Durham, for the purpose of forming a Branch of the N.S.S. for Crook and neighborhood. Every confidence was expressed by those present that a good society could be established. Taking Crook as a centre, it might include Willington, Sunny Brow, Stanley, Sunnyside, Tow Law, and even Wolsingham. It was agreed that the next meeting shall be at Crook on Sunday, Sept. 21st, at 6 p.m., at some place to be hereafter announced, for the purpose of electing officers and transacting other necessary business.

Members of the Finsbury Park Branch are requested to attend a meeting on Friday (Sep. 12) at 8 p.m., at Mr. Rowney's house, 155 Winston Road, Green Lanes. No member should be absent.

Freethinkers should scatter the seed of thought. Sometimes it springs up in unlikely quarters. One of our Bradford subscribers first saw a copy of this journal two years ago. It was dropped into his garden. He picked it up, liked it, and has bought it ever since.

Dr. Allinson orders the weekly insertion of his advertisement as he "finds the *Freethinker* a good medium for advertising." As our circulation is steadily increasing we venture to remind our business readers that they might assist us in this respect with advantage to themselves.

THE MASTER DREAMER.

THERE was a jolly carpenter,
His name, 'tis said, was Joe,
Who fondly loved a charming maid,
And straightway told her so.

They soon resolved, as one, to share
The sweets and sour of life,
He swore he'd be a faithful hub,
She, an obedient wife.

One night he supped on pork and beans,
Washed down with mugs of "four,"
And had a very dreadful dream
That troubled him full sore.

He dreamt his sweetheart had been false,
And all that live-long day
He tried to hit upon a plan
To put the girl away.

That night he dreamt he plainly heard
A voice from his bed-post
Say, "All right Joe, your sweetheart's babe's
The offspring of a ghost."

This joyful news removed a load
From off his aching heart—
The priest soon hitched them in a knot
That Death alone could part.

Joe had to go and pay his rent,
And as 'twas nice and mild
He took his wife along with him,
Though she was "big with child."

When they arrived the inn was full
And all the host could say
Was, "there's my stable, take a stall,
There's plenty good fresh hay."

As Joe had no alternative
He thanked the worthy host:
And on that hay a boy was born—
The bantling of a ghost.

But soon Joe had another dream
And heard the voice again.—
It told him if he didn't slope,
The baby would be slain.

Poor Joe arose in mortal funk,
Packed up some togs and toke,
And scuttled off to Egypt's shores
Well mounted on a moke.

Soon after that another dream
Brought welcome news from home,
That he who sought the youngster's life,
Had gone to Kingdom-Come.

Then Joe at once made tracks for home,
Where Matthew drops his quill
And leaves us to decide the point,
If he be dreaming still.

T. CLARK.

FOOLING EACH OTHER; OR, POOR LITTLE ISAAC.
[A SCREAMING FARCE.]

SCENE 1.—A grove in Beersheba; Abraham's farmhouse in the background.

JEHOVAH (entering). Ha, ha, ha, that's a very good idea of mine. I'll frighten the wits out of my old friend Abraham. I do so love to tantalise my people—in fact I only created them for my own amusement. Ha, he comes this way.

ABRAHAM (entering). How does this weather suit you, most mighty Jehovah; but stay, I was forgetting that you made the weather to suit yourself.

JEH. Thou hast spoken truly, my faithful servant Abraham. You cannot suppose that I worked six days making the world for the benefit of others. By the way, I just want you to do me a little favor—I only want you to slaughter your only son Isaac and offer him up to me as a burnt offering.

AB. Is that all you require of me, oh noble and kind-hearted Jah! Your merciful command shall be obeyed. Would that I had fifty sons to offer as sacrifices to one so benevolent as yourself!

JEH. That will do, friend Abe; don't flatter me too much; I know I am all-good. Still, I might observe that Isaac ought to be proud of having such a humane parent as yourself.

AB. When am I to offer up my son?

JEH. Three days from now. It will take you that time to reach the land of Moriah, and you can offer him up on one of the mountains there. But you need not let Isaac know he is to be the sacrifice until the last minute, or the little wretch might skeddaddle.

AB. Your command shall be obeyed. Farewell, most wise and generous Lord. (Exit.)

JEH. Now I wonder whether he will attempt to offer up his only son as a sacrifice. Of course I'm only going to see if the old fellow has faith in me. I know I can foresee all that will happen, but still I'm not quite sure whether he will obey me. But time will show. (Exit.)

SCENE 2.—Country road, mountains in the distance.

ABRAHAM. Come along Isaac. Don't make such a fuss about carrying that wood. Those two fellows and the donkey we have just left behind carried it quite easily between them. Surely it's not heavy. Besides I've got my share to carry—this knife and a box of matches; I call that an equal division of labor.

ISAAC. It's all right dad; but how many more miles have we to go?

AB. Only another mile now, my boy. Perhaps we'll see a pub. on the road, and I can have a tankard of ale, and ask them if they can spare you a drop of water.

IS. Thanks, dad. This is rather a dry job. I'll sing to keep my spirits up.

AB. (some time after) I can see the spot we want; it's only a little distance now. You'll have to climb up yonder mountain with that wood.

IS. Don't you think I had better carry up one piece at a time?

AB. Certainly not; it will take you all day getting up and down. Carry it all up at once. The Lord will help you.

IS. Well, he hasn't helped me much yet. I am sweating like a bull and tired as a dog.

AB. Don't talk such blasphemy, my boy. It makes my heart bleed to hear you go on like that.

IS. Very sorry. But I say dad, what's the use of carrying all this wood up that mountain when there's plenty of trees up there?

AB. God only knows. The Lord told me to take some wood. Perhaps he didn't know there were any trees on the mountain. You had better throw the whole lot away. I cannot help you with it, for I've got enough to do to scramble up with the knife and matches. Throw the wood away.

IS. Well, this is a rare go after carrying it all this way. It's a regular farce (throws down wood).

AB. Don't be so wicked; God won't love you. You had better carry the matches now you haven't got the wood. I'll try to scramble up with the knife (both climb mountain).

SCENE 3.—Top of Mount Moriah. Abraham and Isaac building altar.

AB. That will do nicely.

IS. I say, dad, you've got the wood and the matches, but I'm blowed if you haven't left the sacrifice behind. You're like the woman who forgot to bring the baby when she went to have it christened.

AB. Oh, I forget to tell you, the Lord wants me to offer you up as a sacrifice.

IS. Oh, does he. Ain't he awfully kind. I'm off; good bye dad (about to go).

AB. Here, come back, and let me whisper to you so that the Lord won't hear. I'm only going to fool him. Although he pretends to know all that's going to happen he makes me go through all this rigmarole to try my faith in him, therefore I'm only going to pretend to offer you up as a sacrifice.

IS. I don't quite understand you, dad.

AB. Well, I want you to kneel down on that altar, and I'll flourish the knife about as though I were going to stick you. I know Jehovah is only fooling me, and I am almost sure he will stop me at the last minute. Anyhow, if he don't, I'll stop myself. Of course he can't tell whether I was going to kill you or not. Because if he could he wouldn't want me to go through this performance at all.

IS. You'll get something for all this dad, won't you?

AB. Yes, my boy, and you shall share it with me. Now then, jump on that altar and get yourself ready.

IS. Right you are dad, but be careful with that knife.

AB. (in loud voice) Farewell Isaac, my only son; it is hard to part with one so young; but I must obey the Lord, so here goes (pretends to strike).

VOICE (from above). Abraham, Abraham, hold hard; I didn't think you would go so far as that. I am truly pleased with you, and am perfectly satisfied that you have implicit faith in me. There's an old sheep just there in the thicket nearly pegging out; kill it to save its life and offer it up as a sacrifice instead of your only son Isaac. You are a god-fearing man and when you die you shall go to heaven and have Lazarus full of sores in your bosom and you will be happy for ever and ever. Amen.

SCOFFER.

FREETHOUGHT IN THE COUNTRY.

ALTHOUGH the Secular Society may not be increasing so rapidly as one could wish, there are most evident signs of Freethought progress even in most out-of-the-way districts. It cannot be said that the neighborhood I am now in has ever shown signs of great mental activity, yet two cases there have come to my knowledge of conversion to Freethought. I will take one case. I had been on a day's excursion from my lodgings, when on my arrival home I found a working man had been and was anxious to see me. Shortly after he called again, and as I had gone to the door myself I was therefore able to satisfy him. I shall not soon forget the hearty manner in which he shook my hand. I found that he and another were actually getting the *Freethinker* at one of the local newsagent's each week, in fact it was the channel of information that lead him to me. I found him a man considerably above the average of those parts in intelligence. He informed me he had never heard a lecture; but as we had so many things to talk about I forgot to inquire how he became a Secularist. I am hoping it may be the result of seeds sown at different times by myself in the neighborhood in the shape of old Freethought papers, tracts, etc. The distribution of literature is in my opinion at once a duty and a means of liberation from the coils of priestcraft. Any Freethinker who can afford to take a holiday should always be provided with literature, both for his own reading and for outside distribution. There are many opportunities in the country, such as heaps of broken stones, gates, clefts of stiles, etc.

One prolific field is the ordinary tract-distributor himself. They are very common in and around small provincial towns. Only last Sunday I was over-taken by one, a respectable earnest young man, and in answer to his "Will you accept a tract, sir?" I as promptly replied, "Yes, if you will accept one of mine." He was evidently only too pleased to exchange, and I got him to readily promise to read Mr. Wheeler's *Hell* through, as I faithfully promised to do the same by his, which I did. During a short walk with him I urged him to in future do his own thinking, and not to treat it as he would his washing. I found his tracts the usual mass of lies about the Atheist Tom Paine, Voltaire, etc., and little anecdotes of converted Infidels; of course names and places were blank, I met the young man tract distributor afterwards and he actually smiled as he passed. I have great hopes of that young gentleman.

P R A Y E R.

ONCE, Hoja, in his sleep, believed
That nine gold pieces he received.
Hopeful, he cried, "Lord, make it ten!"
And lo! ten came. And chuckling, then
"Let there be nineteen, Lord," he prayed.
And then, awake, he stared dismayed
For the space of that sad minute
At his bare hand, with nothing in it.
Then shutting eyes, with hands outspread,
"Let it be nine, then, Lord," he said.

—Poems from Turkey.

FAIR DIVISION.—"My dear," said the aunt of a young widow to her niece one day, "is that your husband's portrait on the wall?" "Yes, auntie." "How blissfully happy! and what a heaven on earth must have been his life below!" simpered the aunt. "Ah, yes," said the widow, "but we arranged matters so that when he became blissful in heaven I became happy on earth."

AN English missionary was invited to a large dinner-party by a German professor and deputy. Out of regard to his cloth, the host, after the ladies had withdrawn from the table, apologised to the missionary for their perhaps too *décolletée* style of dress. "O, pray don't mention it, replied the missionary; "I have lived for ten years among the savages of Africa, and am quite accustomed to such sights."

A colored preacher was talking of prayer, and said: "Now, bredren, when you prays don't pray so much in a ginerall way; pray more pertickler. And when I says 'more pertickler,' do you know what I means? Let me tell yer. If I prays de Lord to gib me a turkey, dat ain't nothin'—I ain't a-goin' to git dat turkey! But when I prays de Lord to gib me one o' Massa John's turkeys, I knows I's gwine to git dat turkey fore Sat'd'y night!"

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7 Mr. J. Coppock, F.C.L., "Animals, Plants, and Minerals: their Relations."
Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. Henefer, "Thomas Paine, the Deist." Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.
Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt "Science and Responsibility."
East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, 8, Mr. G. B. Shaw, "Socialism and Secularism."
Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant, "The Bible as a Guide in Science."
Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote. "Mr. Gladstone on Moses."
Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Masey Road), 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Richard Carlile and the Free Press Battle."
OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.
Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. Sam Standing, "Street Preachers."
Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Heavenly Government."
Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Salvation."
Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Has the Religion of Christ been of Benefit to the World?"
Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 6.30, Mr. J. Rowney, "God and his Friends."
Finsbury Park (near the band-stand) 11.15, Mr. F. Haslam, "Modern Science and Revelation"; 3.30, Mr. G. W. Foote.
Hammersmith Bridge (Surrey side), 6.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Who was Christ and what did he Teach?"
Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.30, Mr. M. Smith, "God is Love." Wednesday, at 8, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "The Fall of Man: is the Story True?" Thursday, at 8, Mr. J. Fagan, "What is Sin?"
Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. Samuel Soddy, "Religious Belief."
Midland Arches, St. Pancras Road, N.W., 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Simon Peter."
Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Ten Commandments."

Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Miracles of the Old Testament."
Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3.30, a lecture.
Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Bible Biography"; 5.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Mansions in the Sky."
Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Omnipotence."
Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Hastings on the Bible"; 7, Mr. Sam Standing, "St. Paul's Impudence at Athens."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. C. Burton, "Phrenology and Religion," with illustrations.
Heckmondwike—At Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a meeting.
Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—7, Mr. Henry Smith, "The Soul that Sinneth it shall Die."
Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints—6.30, debate between the Rev. Mr. Collar (of Manchester) and Mr. Stanley Jones (of Liverpool), on "Has God Revealed Himself to Man?" Free.
Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30 (and on Wednesday, 7.30), general meeting of Sunday Music League; 3, fortnightly meeting of members.
Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mrs. A. Clifton, "Agnosticism: from an Inquirer's Point of View."
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 7, Mr. R. Forder, "Jesus: was he Man, God, or Myth?"
Sheffield Hall of Science Rockingham Street.—Mr. A. B. Wakefield, 3, "The Historic Struggle of Freethought"; 7, "The Eight Hours' Movement, Impracticable and Absurd."
South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, a meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3, Mr. Jones will lecture.
Morecambe—On the Sands, 3, Mr. J. Greevz Fisher, "Evolution"; 7, Mr. A. B. Wakefield."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London. S.E.—Sept. 14 (morning) Bethnal Green, (afternoon) Victoria Park; 21 (morning) Midland Arches, (afternoon) Finsbury Park, (evening) Hammersmith; 28 (morning) Clerkenwell, (evening) Woolwich. October 5 (morning) Camberwell; 15, Battersea.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—Sept. 14, Liverpool.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—Sept. 14, Manchester. Oct. 12, Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Sept. 14 (morning) Camberwell 21 (morning) out-door and evening in the hall) Plaistow; 28 (morning) outside "Salmon and Ball," Bethnal Green. Oct. 12 (morning) Hyde Park; 19 (morning) Battersea Park, (evening) Battersea Secular Hall.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—Sept. 21 (evening) Woolwich; 28 (afternoon) Finsbury Park. Oct 5 (evening) Woolwich; 12 (morning) Finsbury Park; 19, Mile End, debate; 26, Woolwich.

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