

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE PARSONS' PALAVER.

HULL has been black with parsons. They came from all parts of the kingdom, and discussed all sorts of questions. All of them are called by the Holy Ghost, yet their differences of opinion are as pronounced as those of other persons who are merely endowed with common sense.

There was unlimited talk about "the social question," but we cannot find a sensible suggestion. The upshot of the discussion seems to be this: parsons are to act as "the candid friend" of both sides in trade disputes; they should not arbitrate, because they are not specialists, but they should implore the combatants to act in "the spirit of Christianity." In other words, the clerical pill is a necessary part of the remedy. Several speakers waxed eloquent about "the poor," and prophesied the wonderful things that Christianity in general, and the Church in particular, is going to do for them. But these beautiful promises have been made for centuries. The Church is always promising. It outrivals Mr. Micawber. If it had to meet its bills, instead of perpetually renewing them, it would be utterly bankrupt.

Some of the frothy speech about "the poor" strikes us as ghastly hypocrisy. An archbishop and several bishops were the most distinguished performers in this comedy. These gentlemen are in the receipt of thousands a year for purely imaginary services. They teach men how to get to heaven, a place that only exists on the map of faith. They have hardly the impudence to deny, at this time of day, that if there be a heaven, and God be wise and good, every honest man will find it. Have they, then, the impudence to affirm that honest men are manufactured by bishops? We challenge them to declare what function they perform. We should be pleased to tell them to their faces that they are living monuments of priestcraft; that their incomes are monstrous and scandalous; and that their whining over the sorrows of the poor, whose industry sustains their extravagance, is a wretched mixture of farce and tragedy. It is a wonder to us that working men can be so abject as to listen to these high-fed parasites; to applaud them when they insult with pity the victims of their extortion, is a disgrace to human nature.

We have no patience to discuss the nauseous cant of snuffling bishops. Their lachrymose effusions over poverty and distress are themes for satire and denunciation. We are surprised that Jesus Christ, if he still exist, can stand it so patiently. His "meekness" is proverbial, but the slightest sense of self-respect should impel him to stop the wretches who drag him through the mire. Well may the poet ask,

What manhood in that God can be
Who sees their worship, and is dumb?

Let us, however, keep sight of one important fact. When hundreds of clergymen meet together, and find they *must* talk about strikes, sanitation, disease, and people's dwellings, it shows that the interest in

theology is seriously declining. Kingdom-come is giving way to secular salvation. The coating gets thicker and thicker, and the pill dwindles. Some day, perhaps, the Church Congress will open and close with prayer, and all the rest of the time will be spent by the great Clerical Debating Society in discussing questions which are always started, and always eventually settled, by more serious and well-informed persons.

Archdeacon Farrar made a fight for his Brotherhoods. The Church is to be saved by enrolling a lot of strapping young fellows, binding them by vows of poverty and chastity, and setting them to work among "the poor," in back-streets and slums, while the regular, married parson looks after the fashionable part of the town. Dr. Farrar wants to see "a revival." He declares that "there are parishes of the Church of England, numbering thousands of the working classes, where practically all but the name of Christianity may be said to be dead." He says that the Church is too prudent and respectable and deprecates enthusiasm. Thus she lost the Nonconformists, thus she lost Newman and the Tractarians, and thus the Salvation Army grows to two millions. But after all, we may ask the Archdeacon whether these people are not going to heaven as well as Churchmen. We understand he decidedly thinks they are. Why then is he so anxious about them? Simply because he wishes them to deal with his shop. Other traders' goods are sound, but the Church hankers after all the custom and profit.

Up rose the Bishop of Liverpool, who has been thrice married, and opposed the Brotherhoods. He would have none of them. Let the Church stick to the old Gospel. Lord Norton also opposed the imposition of vows. A "Brother" might fall in love with a charming young lady, and the fat would be in the fire. His lordship, however, recommended the checking of improvident marriages among curates—not being a curate himself, and not understanding the species. Other speakers opposed the Archdeacon, and the "Brotherhoods" went by the board.

Another subject of discussion was Inspiration. High Churchmen like Mr. Gore look down upon Church Congresses with a lofty disdain, and the debate was therefore one-sided. The Dean of Peterborough led off and said nothing in particular. Professor Margoliouth followed suit, and was much applauded on declaring that the inspiration of Scripture was "as hopeful as ever it was." The farce, in fact, was screaming. Canon Tristram argued that the Bible was inspired because it gave the names of ancient places correctly. Other speakers were no less subtle and acute. No wonder the Bishop of Beverley terminated the sitting with the remark that "criticism was in its infancy." It evidently was at the Church Congress.

The Church Congress did consider one practical matter. It was Free Education. Some of the clergy were for opposing it tooth and nail, but others saw that the thing was coming, and advised the Church

to make a bargain whereby its sectional schools could be supported out of the rates. No doubt this policy will be pursued. It is to be feared that a large body of Nonconformists will play into the Church's hands when the crisis arrives. A note to that effect has already been sounded. But if this policy succeeds, its triumph will be but momentary, for the principle of Secular Education is the only permanent solution of the problem.

A word in conclusion about the "meeting of working men" in Hengler's Circus. Two bishops (Durham and Ripon) did some fairly good clowning, and were followed by two hard-working-men in the persons of Sir John Gorst and Sir Albert Rollit, both members of the Collective Wisdom at Westminster. Sir John talked unctuously about "the Master"—not Lord Salisbury, but Jesus Christ; and Sir Albert talked about slavery and the inhumanity of Greece and Rome. It was, in fact, clowning all round; and working men who crowd (if they *did* crowd) to hear two rich priests, a climbing Tory lawyer, and a wealthy merchant, hold forth on "labor," deserve to be bamboozled and plundered for the rest of their natural lives.

G. W. FOOTE.

JOSHUA AND THE SUN.

SAVAGES fail to recognise the limits of their power over nature. Things which the experience of the race shows us to be obviously impossible are not only attempted but believed to be performed by persons in a low stage of culture. Miracles always accompany ignorance. No better proof of the barbarous and unintelligent state whence we have emerged could be given than the stories of the supernatural which are found embodied in all religions, and also in the customs of savages and the folk-lore of peasantry.

Primitive man thinks of all phenomena as caused by spirits. Hence to control the spirits is to control the phenomena. Herodotus (iv., 173) tells a curious tale how once in the land of Psylli, the modern Tripoli, the wind blowing from the Sahara dried up all the water-tanks. So the people took counsel and marched in a body to make war on the south wind. But when they entered the desert, the simoon swept down on them and buried them. It is still said of the Bedouins of Eastern Africa that "no whirlwind ever sweeps across the path without being pursued by a dozen savages with drawn creeses, who stab into the centre of the dusty column, in order to drive away the evil spirit that is believed to be riding on the blast." The Chinese beat gongs and make other noises at an eclipse, to drive away the dragon of darkness. At an eclipse, too, the Ojibbeways used to think the sun was being extinguished, so they shot fire-tipped arrows in the air, hoping thus to re-ignite his expiring light. At the present day Theosophists seek to compass magical powers which in early times were supposed to be generally possessed by sorcerers.

Rain-making was one of the most common of these supposed powers. Instances are found in the Bible. Samuel says: "I will call unto the Lord and he shall send thunder and rain," and he does so (1 Sam. xii., 17, 18). So Elijah, by prayer (which in early times meant a magical spell), obtained rain. Jesus controls the winds and waves, walks on the water, and levitates through the air.

Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his splendid work on *The Golden Bough*, gives many instances of savages making sunshine and staying the sun. Thus "the Melanesians make sunshine by means of a mock sun. A round stone is wound about with red braid and stuck with owl's feathers to represent rays; it is then hung on a high tree." "In a pass of the Peruvian Andes stand two ruined towers on opposite hills. Iron hooks are clamped into their walls for the purpose of stretching a net from one tower to the other.

The net is intended to catch the sun." Numerous other methods are resorted to by different tribes. Jerome, of Prague, travelling among the Lithuanians, who early in the fifteenth century were still Pagans, found a tribe who worshipped the sun and venerated a large iron hammer. "The priests told him that once the sun had been invisible for several months because a powerful king had shut it up in a strong tower; but the signs of the zodiac had broken open the tower with this very hammer and released the sun. Therefore they adored the hammer."* Mr. Frazer gives reasons for thinking that the fire festivals solemnised at Midsummer in ancient times were really sun-charms.

The phenomena of nature were supposed to be at the service of the pious. The thunderbolts of Zeus fell upon the heads of perjurers. Some people still wonder the earth does not open when a man announces himself an atheist. Jahveh just before stopping the sun, pelted the enemies of Israel with hailstones. (Josh. x. 11) So Diodorus Siculus (xi. 1) relates how the Persians when on their way to spoil the temple at Delphi, were deterred by "a sudden and incredible tempest of wind and hail, with dreadful thunder and lightning, by which great rocks were rent to pieces and cast upon the heads of the Persians, destroying them in heaps." Herodotus too (ii, 142) tells how "The Egyptians asserted that the sun had four times deviated from his ordinary course." Sky-pilots cite this as a corroboration of the Jew-book yarn. It is instead a confirmation of the fact that all ancient peoples have similar absurd legends displaying their ignorance of nature and consequent superstition. The power of arresting the stars in their courses, and lengthening the days and nights was imputed to witches. Thus Tibullus says of a sorceress (i. eleg. 2)

I've seen her tear the planets from the sky,
Seen lightning backward at her bidding fly.

And Lucan in his *Pharsalia* (vi. 462)

Whene'er the proud enchantress gives command,
Eternal motion stops her active hand;
No more Heav'n's rapid circles journey on,
But universal nature stands foredone;
The lazy god of day forgets to rise,
And everlasting night pollutes the skies.

No modern poet would think of saying like Statius that the sun stood still at the unnatural murder of Atrous. Such an idea found its way into poetry because it had previously been conceived as a fact.

Hence we find numerous similar stories to that of Joshua. Thus it is related of Bacchus in the Orphic hymns that he arrested the course of the sun and the moon. Mr. Spence Hardy in his *Legends and Theories of Buddhists*, shows that arresting the course of the sun was a common thing among the disciples of Buddha. We need not be surprised to find that men were once believed to be able to control the sun when we reflect that to this day the majority of people fancy there is some magnified non-natural man, they call God, who is able to do the same. Seeing the legend of Joshua in its true form as one of numerous similar instances illustrating the barbarity and ignorance of the past, we see also that the whole merit and instruction of the story is taken away by those modern Christians, who speak of it as poetry, or who endeavor to reconcile it with the conclusions of science.

"Rationalistic" explanations of miracles are often the most irrational, because they fail to take into account the vast difference between the state of mind which gave rise to the stories, and that which seeks to rationalise them. J. M. WHEELER.

I am firmly persuaded that whatever is injurious to the intellect is also injurious to moral life and on this conviction I base my conduct with respect to Christianity. That religion is pernicious to the intellect; it demands that the reason shall be sacrificed upon the altar; it orders civilised men to believe in the legends of a savage race.—*Winwood Reade*.

* *The Golden Bough*, vol. i., pp. 24, 25.

PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

Once a month or so I propose to write under this heading, and address the members of the National Secular Society directly.

Mr. Robert Forder has tendered his resignation of the secretaryship, and his successor will be appointed before the next Conference. Meanwhile Mr. Forder will fulfil the duties of the office. His great services to the party demand a special recognition. Several Freethinkers have spoken to me on the subject, and I now invite the party to subscribe towards a testimonial, which may be publicly presented to Mr. Forder before he vacates his post. Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the honorary treasurer of the N. S. S., will act as treasurer to this fund. Subscriptions can be sent to him at Camplin House, New Cross, London, S.E., or to the editors of the *Freethinker* and the *National Reformer*. All subscriptions will be acknowledged in those journals.

Mr. Forder has given the best years of his life to our work. His health is now precarious, and the testimonial will assist him in the Freethought publishing business to which he is committed. He has many friends, and I believe no enemy; and as the Freethought Party has always been grateful to those who have served it ungrudgingly, I venture to believe that this appeal will elicit a liberal response.

A considerable number of new members have joined the N. S. S. since the Conference. Still there is plenty of room for more. I invite the readers of the *Freethinker* who have not yet joined to do so at once. Let no one say "I am only one." The army is made up of units, and no Freethinker should hold aloof from the only Freethought organisation in the kingdom. Those who think the N. S. S. is far from perfect should help to improve it. Criticism is easy work. What is wanted is co-operation.

Considerable trouble was occasioned by the suicide of poor Mr. Easton in St. Paul's Cathedral. It is thought that the place will have to be re-consecrated or "reconciled," but to me this is a matter of indifference. Mr. Forder's share of the trouble is what I am concerned with. As secretary of the N. S. S. he more than fulfilled his duty. Poor Easton desired to be cremated, and his mother wished his desires to be carried out in everything. This being a novel case, and Sir Henry Thompson being away from England, a lot of running to and fro had to be done. But the difficulties were surmounted, and poor Easton's remains were cremated at Woking, Mr. Forder attending officially, and reading an appropriate piece at the ceremony.

Freethinkers who wish to be cremated, instead of buried, would do well to pay £10 to the Cremation Society in advance. This sum covers everything, and the prepayment saves both trouble and additional expense.

Some persons have been wondering how much poor Easton left me. They appear to think I have suddenly grown rich. The fact is, he had a little money saved, and that goes rightly to his mother. He wished me to have his books, but he forgot he had given them all away before. The paralysis had clearly affected his brain. I received a letter from him about a fortnight before his death, and it was so incoherent that I had to ask for an explanation, which never came.

I am not on the look out for legacies. What I want to see is the N. S. S. better supported. The Executive will do a good winter's work if it is pro-

vided with the necessary funds. There is money in hand, but it would be prudent to keep a reserve balance of £200 always in the bank for possible emergencies. I appeal to those who have not yet subscribed to the Central Fund to do so as soon as convenient. In accordance with the resolution of the Conference, the Society's work will have to be more and more centralised, and this is not possible unless the central Executive is furnished with the means.

Mr. Wheeler and I have undertaken to edit the *N. S. S. Almanack* this year. Henceforth this publication will be issued by the Society directly. Any persons who desire to advertise on the cover or at the end of the reading matter, should apply at once. Secretaries must send in information of Branch work, meeting-places, etc., by October 12. All lecturers should also send in their addresses. The Calendar is thoroughly overhauled this year, and the other contents I hope will be found interesting and useful.

G. W. FOOTE.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING held at the Hall of Science on Thursday October 2. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, the secretary reported completion of arrangements for a course of Free Lectures at the East End; and it was also decided that a course should be given at the Peckham and Dulwich Radical Club, the secretary being instructed to take the necessary steps to that end. Satisfactory statements were given as to the work at Hammersmith and Midland Arches. The propaganda at the latter station being concluded for the season, the thanks of the Council were accorded to Miss E. M. Vance for her valuable assistance. Applications for grants were considered; and it was announced that the Committee had exhausted the funds at their disposal for open-air work. Progress was reported as to the Hall of Science Free Lectures. At the suggestion of the President, it was decided that an appeal for funds be made, so that the work of the Federation might be extended. Mr. E. Anderson stated that the West Ham Branch were arranging Tuesday evening Free Lectures; and the death of Mr. J. Fitzgerald, a respected member of West Ham Branch was made known to the meeting. After some further business of minor importance, the Council adjourned till November 6.

EDMUND POWNCEBY, *Secretary*.

MRS. BESANT IN BELFAST.

ON Sunday last the Ulster Branch of the N. S. S. held three of the largest meetings of a sceptical character ever held in the North of Ireland. Mrs. Besant gave three addresses: two on theological subjects and one on "Socialism." The greatest difficulty was experienced in obtaining a suitable hall for these lectures, and before St. Anne's Hall was secured a fortnight previously it was thought no hall would be got. The Ulster Hall (minor) was refused insultingly, although it had been let to a prize fighter, and another hall that is let regularly for the ballots in connection with illegal prize lotteries was also refused—prize fighting and gambling not being so obnoxious to orthodoxy as heresy. St. Anne's Hall with a holding capacity of a little over 500, was crowded to inconvenience at each lecture, and many people had to go away without obtaining admission at all. The audiences listened with profound attention, and the discussions were conducted with good humor and entire freedom from personal and disagreeable elements. The usual indefiniteness was exhibited by the Christian speakers, a lack that the audience seemed to enjoy. A very large quantity of Freethought literature was disposed of at each meeting, a large stock of *Freethinkers* being exhausted before the end of the second lecture, and the demand undiminished.

W. M. KNOX.

OBITUARY.—Mr. J. Fitzgerald of the West Ham Branch, an earnest and genuine Freethinker, died on October 1 after a long and painful illness. I read the funeral service over his remains at Manor Park cemetery on Sunday last, in the presence of a very large gathering of the members of the branch and the friends of the deceased.—R. FORDER.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN SPIRITS.

The *Progressive Thinker* is a well printed and edited Spiritist paper of Chicago, with decidedly anti-Christian tendencies. We were highly amused to see in a recent number, the testimony of departed spirits against religion. Among those cited were Saint Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, who it seems now says, "Religion makes a man a fanatic. When once he has accepted a particular creed as a pathway to heaven, then commences his moral degradation. As I preached, taught, and helped to found the religion of Jesus, I think it my duty to do all I can to overthrow that religion." St. Irenæus (the first to testify to the four gospels) says, "Sir, there is one regret, a deep lasting regret with me, and that is, that I cannot atone for the blood that has been spilt through my efforts either directly or indirectly in formulating this damnable religion." Other spirits give similar testimony, and some it seems were much disappointed to find that after all the time they had spent on religion, they had not gone straight away to everlasting happiness.

HUXLEY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

There is a strong wish felt that Prof. Huxley would write his autobiography, and that he should include a statement of his own philosophical standpoint. It has been pointed out that though he has at various times told us a good deal of what he does not believe, yet he has been extremely chary of declaring himself in an opposite direction. In his works it is difficult to discover his position, though it is possible he would say that the word *agnostic*, which he himself invented, defines it. Perhaps there is more of himself in the little history of Hume, published in 1878, than in any other of his works; but even there it is difficult to tell how closely sympathy and agreement are yoked. In any case, whether it for ever took the argument out of the mouth of the controversialist or not, a biography of Prof. Huxley written by himself could not be other than a valuable contribution alike to literature and science.—*Athenæum*.

ACID DROPS.

"Give, and it shall be given to you" is skilfully worked up in the *War Cry*. Booth tries to raise the wind by showing that a subscription to the Salvation Army is a good business investment. He gives the case of "A. J. E." who denied herself a threepenny pork-pie during last year's Self-Denial Week. Shortly afterwards some one sent her three threepenny bits, so she cleared sixpence on the transaction, or 200 per cent. Good business!

A Scotch boy offered to deny himself going to school for a week, and to send Booth the threepence. From what we know of schoolboys we should say a good deal could be raised in this way.

The headquarters of the Salvation Army are close to our printing-office, and some of our compositors happen to dine at the same coffee house as the Salvationists. Very little self denial is discernible, for steaks and chops seem to vanish as if by magic. Jesus Christ would have all his work to do feed 5000 of these ravenous individuals, even during self-denial week.

General Booth's big scheme for the reformation of England will soon be before the public in a book of several hundred pages. As soon as possible we shall criticise it in these columns. Meanwhile we have two notions on the subject; first, that Booth is bidding for capitalist cash; second, that his gigantic scheme will in all probability be a failure, and lead to the wreck of the Salvation Army.

"With London seething mad and miserable all around you," said Booth to a *Pall Mall Gazette* interviewer, "you fellows are full of politics, and such-like trash, that doesn't really matter a straw to anybody, and wouldn't for the world be caught paying any heed to Souls—only Social effort, or Sanitation, or anything else with an S you like, but Souls—not you. I know you."

Here we have Boothism naked and unashamed. Men's souls are to be saved, from hell of course, or the word has no meaning; and meanwhile the "sovereigns and statesmen" of Beacon-field's epigram are to go on governing as they please, keeping up huge armies and navies, maintaining all the bad relics of feudalism, and bleeding the people

like veal with iniquitous taxes. The fact is, as we have said before, that Booth is one of the best friends of the wealthy and privileged classes, who, if they knew their own interest, would furnish him with unlimited cash.

"London seething mad and miserable all around you" is a fine piece of Boothian humbug. Madness and misery there is in London; no one disputes it; but "all around you" is a monstrous exaggeration. After reading Booth's nonsense we took a stroll through a great North London thoroughfare, crowded with Saturday-night shoppers. Most of them were working people, and it was pleasant to hear the wives chattering economy with their husbands, and to see the chatter emphasised with laughing faces. Very likely some of the baskets went home less handsomely furnished than they might have been, and some of the talk we overheard might have been more elegant; but Booth's picture of London is as near the truth as a *Moonshine* caricature is like the Grand Old Man.

The death of Mrs. Booth is a blow to the Salvation Army. In some senses she was very decidedly the "General's" better half. She appears to have been a good, kind-hearted woman, with a pleasant fluency of speech and a large share of personal magnetism. Whether she was a true Christian or not depends on the inspiration or otherwise of St. Paul. The great apostle told women to hold their tongues, and added "I suffer not a woman to teach." But Booth knew better. He saw that the female tongue was very persuasive, especially with men, and urged his wife to speak in public against her will and prepossessions. In our opinion the Lasses do more for "the Army" than the male officers, most of whom look as though they would fail in any ordinary occupation.

The *Star* printed a horrid *Police News* sort of picture on Monday. It was a portrait of Mrs. Booth propped up in bed during her last illness, with the folds of the Army flag over her, the words "Blood and Fire" being right above her head. Perhaps our taste is perverted, but to us the thing was disgusting. It was enough to make an old Greek or Roman stare and ask why the world had grown so vulgar in two thousand years.

The simpletons who credit Cardinal Manning's hypocritical protestations as to the tolerance the Catholics would display if they got the upper hand in England, should remember how he hounded on the bigots to exclude Mr. Bradlaugh from the House of Commons. If that is not enough they should just look at the programme of the approaching Catholic Congress at Madrid. Among the questions to be considered are, how to restore the temporal power of the Pope—an impossible thing without war with Italy—and what restrictions should be put on the freedom of the press. The Black Army always did hate a free press, and they will always oppose it wherever they can do so. The light of discussion is fatal to them, and they know it.

Protestants and Catholics continue to hate each other in Ireland with what the Psalmist calls "a perfect hatred." The *Irish Times* advertisement columns—to say nothing of the editorial matter—furnish some capital illustrations of this fact. For instance, there is an "Intelligent Protestant Lad Wanted at Donnybrook to clean boots." Another advertiser wants "A Protestant Boy to milk." Even the blacking must be laid on the boots by a boy of sound views, and apparently it is thought that a Catholic boy would sour a Protestant's milk.

Two Catholic priests have been detained at Philadelphia under the Contract Labor Law. They were engaged as teachers at a Catholic university. At this rate Europe will find it difficult to export its superfluous sky-pilots to America. But we believe the law is being modified.

In an address to working men in connection with the Church Congress, the Dean of Rochester gave a long list of classes of people he would "run in." After reading it carefully, we conclude that three-fourths of the population would be candidates for gaol. What a nice result, Mr. Dean, of eighteen centuries of Christianity.

"Running in," by the way, is a good old religious method. The Church answered heretics in that way when it had [the power. But sensible persons, who have no

religion at all, or only a Sunday one, see that the "running in" business is a mistake. Schools moralise the people better than gaols—yes, and better than churches.

"How unlovely a spectacle," exclaims Mr. B. P. Neuman in the *Nineteenth Century*, "is many an Independent church engaged in the task of selecting a pastor. The preaching competitions; the over-mastering anxiety to secure a man who will 'draw'; the management of meetings and the manipulation of votes, and, side by side with all this, the stereotyped form of the purest and most spiritual religious phraseology! Commerce tempered by prayer-meetings! The tables of the money-changers 'hard by the oracles of God!'"

Mr. Neuman has also a gird at the ministers. He says: "If the pews are reading Cheyne and Driver and Robertson Smith, to say nothing of Kuenen and Wellhausen, while the pulpit is just awake to the fact that some years ago there lived a dangerous heretic named Ewald, it is easy to foresee the result." The result is, of course, that congregations are outgrowing their ministers, and will no longer submit to having clotted nonsense pumped into them as the pure word of God.

The *Medium* is sent to us, with a reproduction of a "Photograph of a Medium and Spirit." The medium's hands are out of sight and the spirit, which is accommodated with a chair, looks remarkably like a doll enveloped in drapery. Our scepticism is confirmed by reading in the "Testimony of one of the photographers," that "Mr. Smith and I each stood beside our cameras, also with our backs towards the cabinet, which was one of the instructions given, as the constant anxious peering of the human eye disintegrates the atoms of the built up form, and would prevent it standing long enough to be photographed." As the only "spectators" had their backs turned, how could they be sure the doll was not placed on the chair by the medium?

The mysterious nunnery commonly called the "Nunnery of the Buried Alive" at Naples, which has been closed against outsiders for four centuries, was opened on Saturday by order of the Minister of Justice. In spite of the strenuous opposition of the doorkeeper of the nunnery, the police entered by the windows. Sixteen nuns were found within a state bordering upon insanity. They were covered with rags, and their surroundings were of the most filthy description. Many had forgotten how to speak, and the demeanour of all of them was more that of animals than human beings, but those who were induced to talk expressed themselves as perfectly resigned to their fate.

According to a Dalziel telegram from Berlin, the cause of the raid upon the nunnery was the desire of the parents of a young girl who had entered the convent to recover her. She had been banished to the nunnery on account of a love affair objectionable to her family. The latter, being unable to communicate with her, had complained to the police, and an order from the Minister of Justice for her removal was obtained. She was found to be a mere skeleton, and her parents became half crazed at the condition in which she discovered. The nunnery has been closed and a strict investigation ordered by the Governor of Naples. The facts of this extraordinary case are contained in a special dispatch to the *Tageblatt*, which states that the case is attracting the widest attention at Naples, and it is said all the nunneries in Southern Italy will be visited by the police.

At a late inquest at Faversham, the coroner, Mr. W. J. Harris, upon a juryman named Packman stating he did not believe in oaths, both dismissed him and refused to let him leave the court. Mr. H. Rowden thereupon addressed a letter to the *Faversham Mercury*, pointing out that the coroner had no authority for this high-handed treatment.

The British and Foreign Bible Society report a deficit of over fifteen thousand pounds. Even the Protestant world is not quite so certain as it was that the circulation of Hebrew literature means the advent of the millenium.

Etymologically the words God and Devil have no relation to good and evil. There is a similarity in spelling and nothing more. This is noted by Dr. Whitney, the great

philologist, in the *Century Dictionary*. But the *Christian World* does not like this destruction of a popular fallacy which is so useful to sentimental theology. "We shall be very reluctant," it says, "to abandon the familiar derivation of God. If not correct it ought to be."

If not correct it ought to be! Here is the spirit which inspired the huge mass of Christian forgeries. Miracles and legends "ought to be" true. That was the reason for swearing they were, and by and bye for murdering everybody who said they were not.

The *Harvest*, a Roman Catholic journal, has a story from the pen of Lady Herbert, entitled "What the Crucifix and Scapular can do" It seems that a ship was jammed in field ice and borne down upon by a huge iceberg. In this emergency a sailor held out a crucifix, and the iceberg sheered off like a devil from holy water. The scapular story is similar. A boat was in a snow-storm and driven towards shore. One of the men fastened his scapular on to the rigging, whereupon the vessel slewed round, and they continued their voyage in safety. Lady Herbert is perhaps graduating as a writer of romances. If she displayed more variety in her stories we should predict for her a brilliant future.

Telephonic communication with church has been tried at Birmingham. This is the beginning of the end. The wealthy pious will have their religion turned on to their own houses like gas, and put nothing in the plate when they leave the telephone. Soon they will expect to do their praying through the same instrument by which they get their preaching.

A clerical minority at Trèves oppose the opening of the municipal gymnasium as a lawn-tennis ground for girls. They say the game is unbecoming. Probably they have watched it and caught a glimpse of a girl's ankle, and felt an awful tug at their vow of celibacy.

Father Flavin, of Clonmel, exercised his priestly prerogative and drove some of his flock out of a public-house. But one of them got a leg broken, and the priest is charged with pushing him "over the garden wall." So serious is the injury that the man's depositions have been taken and Father Flavin is arrested.

Mr. E. B. Lanin has a long and important article on "Jews in Russia" in the October number of the *Fortnightly*. He details the laws against them and the insidious persecution to which they are subjected, and which constantly makes them apostatise to Christianity. Mr. Lanin says: "One reads frequently in the Russian newspapers of 'sixty young Jews who, desirous of entering the university, have abjured the law of Moses'; of forty others who became Christians because their business called them outside of the Pale; and scores of others who, for equally valid reasons, are introduced every month into the true fold, where they are as much in their places as eagles in a barnyard."

Mr. Lanin gives his opinion that "Any one of the means employed against the Jews would be enough to convert three-fourths of the Christians of Russia to Shamanism or Buddhism in a week." He has conversed with very many of these "converted" Jews, and affirms, "with few exceptions, not only that they have not the faintest glimmer of faith in Christianity, but they hate the very name, despise its priests, sneer at its ceremonies, and loathe themselves for perjuring their souls by receiving its sacraments and praising the name of its founder. And they bring up their sons and daughters in the same sentiments."

The Americans at Albany boast of baptising three Chinamen. We wonder if the consideration was paid in hard dollars or only in rice.

Theosophy the Religion of Jesus is the title of a two-cent pamphlet issued by the Theosophical Society, New York.

Cuba is infested with bandits. The most famous of them signs his proclamations: "I the king of the country people, and of nearly the whole island of Cuba, Manuel Garcia the First." His followers are good Christians, and think that they ward off capture by repeating this prayer: "O Lord!

when my enemies [the gendarmes] will pursue me, let not their feet be useful for running; neither their hands take hold of me, nor their eyes see me. Throw them down as thou hast thrown those who wanted to arrest thee on Holy Thursday. Deliver me from them as thou hast delivered Jonah from the whale's belly." They expect their piety to clear them from all sins.

Signor Pecci, the successor to the fisherman at the Vatican, is said to spend his mornings catching birds with nets. Hundreds of birds are caught every morning and distributed among the poor, who bless his Holiness. But what do the birds think of the Vicar of Christ?

The priests are energetically collecting Peter's Pence in Ireland, holding that whether the landlords or the people suffer from the failure of the potato crop, the Church must secure its perquisites in good time.

The Rev. J. S. Rudd, vicar of Freshwater, Isle of Wight, has without assigning any reason, dismissed the master and mistress of the schools, who have been in their position eleven years. The vicar acknowledges "their good moral character and teaching abilities," but the truth is they are not sectarian enough to suit his notions. An indignation meeting has been held, and the vicar burnt in effigy.

The Rev. W. T. Ratcliffe made a curious statement at Colne. He is reported as saying: "Had the habit of independent thinking been more prevalent, Bishop Colenso would never have fallen into the fallacies he did." We always thought Bishop Colenso was sought to be deprived of his charge because he did show himself an independent thinker. But we live and learn.

The *Reading Standard* is sent us with the report of a Christian Evidence lecture, with the usual quotation from a person called "John Stewart Mills" (*sic*). Evidently the lecturer has not read Mill, but has simply got hold of the stock citation which is supposed to prove that non-Christian writer was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

The Sabbatarians of Littlehampton have, with the Catholic Duke of Norfolk at their head, memorialised the directors of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway against permitting any more Sunday excursions like that which recently brought 7000 persons to their town. A counter memorial has, however, been started in favor of the continuance of such excursions, which however they may annoy a few, give health and pleasure to the excursionists, and profit both to the railway and those who entertain them.

Milkmen and mackerel sellers are exempted from the provisions of the Sunday Observance Act of Charles II. But according to a Sheffield magistrate, a milkman is not allowed to call out the fact that he has milk to sell, even though no one complains of him. A case has been stated for a higher court, and it may be found that the Sheffield magistrate is incorrect.

Birchall, the condemned murderer, is growing graver. Religious books are supplied to him, and the chaplain hopes he will make an edifying end. Probably he will be good enough to forgive his victim.

Dr. Parker has declared against sacramental wine altogether. Intoxicants ought to be banished from the Lord's table, but the substitutes for it are vile concoctions, and the City Temple oracle gives his vote for water. Poor J. C. ! He turned water into wine, and his followers are turning his wine into water.

Praying and working were both exemplified at Filey on Saturday. A fire broke out, and the vicar of the parish, who is an athlete, pulled off his coat and helped the fishermen to extinguish the flames. But another parson, a holiday visitor, bolted from his lodgings, and having got to a safe distance, pulled out a Prayer Book, fell on his knees, and offered up supplication to heaven. The report does not say that his prayer was answered.

The living of Handsworth parish is worth £2,000 a year, and will soon be worth a great deal more. It has been bought by Mr. Sabin for £20,000. Mr. Sabin secures it for

his son, who by virtue of this bargain will be the legal sky-pilot of that parish when the present incumbent pegs out. Meanwhile the sweating business goes on merrily, for no curate of Handsworth Church receives more than £100 a year. Good old Mother Church!

When the younger Mr. Sabin takes the living he will have to swear that he has been no party to the payment of a single farthing for it. Of course he will do it. They all do it.

Colonel Ingersoll, according to a Central News telegram, is going to lecture on "Art and Morality" for the benefit of Walt Whitman. But the bigots are up in arms against him. The Academy of Music and the Union League Club absolutely refused to let him speak within their sacred precincts. However, the Horticultural Hall has been secured, and the lecture will be delivered on the last day of October. No doubt the action of the bigots will only cause a bigger crush at the doors.

Truth had its knife into Reuben May for years and pretty well spoiled his game. Now it has taken up the case of Walter Austin, the pious Finsbury philanthropist, and subjected him to a frightful examination. In the face of this, however, Prophet Baxter gives "friend Walter" an editorial puff in the *Christian Herald*. Birds of a feather—but the proverb is somewhat musty.

Money is being raised for a Catholic Cathedral in Sheffield. By-and-bye we shall doubtless hear of another costly House of God erected amidst one of the filthiest collections of human dwellings in all England. Sheffield wants more soap and less religion.

There is a little nest of Mohammedans in Liverpool, most of them (we understand) being Englishmen, and they are protesting against the proposed representation of a new play by Mr. Hall Caine in which Mohammed is the principal character. How universal is the law that religious people claim not only a right to their own taste, but a right to make other people respect it at the expense of their own.

Lively scenes are expected in Wales. The total arrears of tithes in thirteen Cardiganshire parishes is calculated at £2,278, and the clergy are determined to get it by hook or by crook.

The Mormons have put forth a new profession of faith. Polygamy is excluded, but the inspiration of the Book of Mormon is retained, and that of the Bible "as far as it is translated correctly." This is a very important proviso. But what about the different readings of the originals?

The Mormons also "believe in the gift of tongues, in prophecy, revelations, visions, and healing." Of course this means *faith* healing, or the cure of broken legs without the aid of a surgeon. They further believe in the "literal gathering of Israel, the restoration of the Ten Tribes, and that Zion will be built on this continent," that is, America. Altogether the Mormon profession of faith is a strange comment on nineteenth-century civilisation. It shows that superstition goes on living in an age of science, just as the elephant continues to exist among the newer species of evolution.

One of the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's boasted "converts" came to our office begging on Tuesday morning. Apparently he had not obtained what he expected from his converter. We regret to say that he made an impression on the susceptible benevolence of our "sub."

The Agnostic Annual, 1891. Stewart and Co.: London.—This publication, edited by C. A. Watts, is in its eighth year. The present number is certainly a good sixpennyworth. Mr. Samuel Laing opens with a capital article on the Bible, with special reference to Mr. Gladstone's recent performances. We regret, however, that Mr. Laing gives currency to the story of the burning of the Alexandrian library by the Caliph Omar. Dr. Bithell writes on Fundamental Theses of Agnosticism. Among the other contributions is one from the pen of Mr. Holyoake against the Blasphemy Laws. Dr. Carus and W. S. Ross discuss Agnosticism. Dr. Hardwicke writes on Androgynous Gods.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Oct. 12, at the Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C.; at 7, "Where is the Devil?"

Thursday, Oct. 16, Tower Hamlets Radical Club, 19 Redman's Road, Mile End, E.; at 8, "Is the Bible Inspired?" Admission free.

October 19, 26, Hall of Science, London.

November 2, Nelson; 9, Grimbsy; 20, St. Pancras Reform Club; 23, Liverpool; 30, Leicester.

December 7, Portsmouth; 14, Manchester; 21 and 28, Hall of Science.

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.

R. CHAMBERS.—It is a matter of taste. The reverend gentleman is entitled to his preference. For our part, we would rather own kinship with an ape who defends his female, than acknowledge descent from a cur like Adam, who, directly he got into a scrape, sneaked behind his wife, and cried "It wasn't my fault, she made me do it." Those who sneer at man's animal origin, prove the truth of what they sneer at. As Darwin said, they draw back their snarling muscles and reveal the line of their descent.

E. HANNATH.—Sir W. Ball's *Story of the Heavens* is a good book; so is Lockyer's *Astronomy*, the large edition. You will find that the shape of the world was determined in its plastic state, perhaps two or three hundred million years ago.

J. IRELAND.—Suggestions are not "impudence." We don't belong to the usual tribe of editors. There is no infallibility, and certainly no omniscience, in our office. Glad to hear the *Freethinker* is procurable in your part of the country. Mr. S. Peacock is, as you say, a "jolly brick"—a man of energy, intelligence, honesty, and, rarer still, modesty. Some men with less than a tenth of his ability keep their noses pointed to the zenith. We have not decided about reprinting our Gladstone articles.

F. R. BIRD, 3 Tanners Terrace, Murchison Road, Leyton, will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers in the vicinity who are willing to co-operate in forming a Branch of the N. S. S.

PEACOCK, newsagent, East Street, Walworth, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

C. TURNER.—No doubt a good Branch might be established at Poplar. If a few friends will join together there, the N. S. S. will furnish assistance.

B. HARRIS.—You miss the point. The women were killed as witches, but they were *not* witches. Witchcraft was believed in, and almost if not quite universally. Darwin himself thought this fact disproved the assumption that what everybody believes is true, or has some truth in it.

PRO BONO PUBLICO.—Grammatical rules can be carried to the point of pedantry. There are fine shades of meaning not provided for in text-books, and in such cases a writer must use his own judgment. "If" is not always a sign of the subjunctive, and sometimes when it is there is nothing dubious in the nominal hypothesis.

A. F. A.—The republication of our Gladstone articles is being considered. The Halstead Branch promises well. We intend to print the N. S. S. principles and objects occasionally in our columns, beginning next week, with particulars as to joining.

UNKNOWN.—You have a queer notion of what *investigation* means. Apparently you believe everything you see in print. We are quite aware that the newspaper obituaries tell of persons who lived more than a hundred years. But we repeat our statement, which you don't appear to have the sense to understand, that no centenarian case that has been sifted to the bottom has proved to be real. No doubt you are ignorant of the fact that Sir George Cornwall Lewis, once Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote a work on the subject, maintaining the very assertion you quarrel with. Pray open a dictionary and turn to "investigate" before you write again.

R. J. MURRAY.—We are glad to hear that the Nottingham Branch will carry on outdoor work next spring. Certainly there should be a Midland Federation. But its organisers must be careful. They will succeed if they work hard and

have patience. But they will fail if they attempt too much at once, or expect to gallop on the road of progress.

AN Ingersollite says: "I have read the Colonel's new pamphlet with unbounded delight. Would that the Christians would read it too! It would show them the rottenness of a good deal they profess to admire, and that the noblest feelings may animate the heart of a Freethinker."

J. D. (Plymouth) thinks our replies to Mr. Gladstone should be reprinted and bound in cloth for preservation. He promises to take some copies. He would also like to see a selection of Mr. Wheeler's best *Freethinker* articles reprinted in the same way. "Indemnity from loss," he adds, "might be secured by getting promises of support, sufficient to cover expenses, previously to publication." What do other readers say?

A. M. J. WRIGHT.—Your Christian friends must be very hard up for an argument if they trade upon poor Easton's suicide. We have noted hundreds of Christian suicides in our columns, several being those of clergymen. These facts do not count, apparently; but if a Secularist, whose frame is shattered, and his brain injured, by paralysis, shoots himself, that proves the falsity of Secularism! The logic is fit for an asylum. Stay, it is *not* fit for an asylum; it is only fit for a church.

MILLER, newsagent, 76 Holloway Road, London, N., supplies this journal and other Freethought publications.

A. J. FIELD.—Glad to hear of continued success at Finsbury Park. Are you still searching for an indoor meeting-place?

T. A. BRUCE.—The statement was taken from a daily paper. We did not know that the Earl of Devon seceded, as the *Church Times* says, fifteen or twenty years ago. The other names in our paragraph are not affected.

IDA.—There are two English translations of Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, both published at one shilling. Any bookseller will supply you.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—"Daylight," 5s.; Finsbury Branch, 3s. 8d.; J. Swinburne-Hanham, 10s.; Westminster Branch, 7s. 2d.—R. FORDER.

C. WATKINSON.—Perhaps the present editor is unaware of the fact. It is a long time since Mr. Forder tried the paper in question. Our statement is perfectly correct.

S. SODDY.—Rather hard on the poor devil.

R. WIDDUP.—Technically you are right.

H. F. SMART.—Children frequently ask questions about religion that are enough to flutter a whole college of theologians, and the day is gone by when prophets could send bears to devour them.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Nenes Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Menschenthum—Freidenker—Freethought—Truthseeker—Portsmouth Evening News—Nazarene—Yorkshire Post—Lucifer the Lightbearer—Hull Express—Colne and Nelson Times—Cape Argus—Independent Pulpit—Progressive Thinker—Chichester Observer—Kidderminster Shuttle—Globe—Reading Standard—Reading Observer—Daily Telegraph—Independent—Hull Critic—Tocsin—Echo—Medium—Der Arme Teufel—Canterbury Press—Umpire—Freethinkers' Magazine—Harvest—De Dageraad—St. Pancras Guardian.

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 had a capital audience at the Hall of Science on Sunday evening. There was one opponent, who spoke courteously, and was carefully replied to. This evening (Oct. 12) Mr. Foote delivers the second lecture of this course. His subject will be "Where is the Devil?" Christians are invited to come and answer the question.

After Mr. Foote's lecture he met a number of ladies and gentlemen upstairs, who formed themselves into a Committee to arrange for a London Freethinkers' Ball. The date fixed upon is Wednesday, November 26. Mr. Anderson acts as secretary, and Mr. R. O. Smith as treasurer. Miss Vance superintends the concert. Other parts of the business are delegated to sub-committees. The tickets are to be one shilling each. Altogether we venture to predict a great success for this gathering.

Several new subscribers to the *Freethinker* have been gained by Mr. Foote's recent visit to Hull. One of them never heard of the paper before, and is very glad he has lighted upon it. This should encourage our friends who circulate extra copies.

The *Hull Critic* finds space for a vigorous letter, *apropos* of the Church Congress, from the pen of Mr. Naewiger, the Branch Secretary. The subject is "The Church and the Poor." Mr. Naewiger declares that the breach between the Church and the poor is widening, and denounces as hypocrites the high-salaried clergy who meet and chatter about the problem of poverty.

The *Hull Express* gives a very fair report of Mr. Foote's lectures in the Alhambra, and notes that there were large audiences.

A gentleman, whose name we withhold, sends us a very interesting letter about his conversion to Freethought. He is a member of a School Board on the Secular ticket, and and president of a district Trade Union. Years ago he was a perfect bigot, simply owing to his Christianity. He rejoiced at Mr. Bradlaugh's exclusion from the House of Commons, and was delighted at Mr. Foote's imprisonment. But he began to read Freethought publications, and at last, he says, "Mr. Foote captured me, against my will, I own; but one cannot fight against facts." This gentleman has never heard a Freethought lecture. His change of mind is the result of reading, and, of course, thinking.

Secular Thought reports the annual Convention of the Canadian Secular Union, at which letters of encouragement were read from several leading English Freethinkers. Captain Robert C. Adams was re-elected President, and Mr. Risser secretary. The first resolution passed was as follows:—"While it is a source of regret that Mr. Charles Bradlaugh has been compelled to withdraw from the leadership of the Secular Party in England, the Secularists and Freethinkers of Canada send their warmest congratulations to his successor, Mr. G. W. Foote, and wish him every success as President of the National Secular Society." Further resolutions pledged the Convention to support *Secular Thought* and Mr. Watts's lecture propaganda.

Mr. Watts gives an account of his visit to England. He pays Mr. Foote some compliments, which need not be reproduced, and says that as President of the N. S. S. he is "the right man in the right place." Mr. Watts also states that he conveyed the message from the Hall of Science of "admiration and deep affection" to Colonel Ingersoll, and the Colonel replied "Give them my love."

Thomas Gordon, the Scotch Deist, born in 1684, who died in 1750, has a merited place in Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. A portion of Gordon's translation of Tacitus has just been added to the "Camelot Series," with an introduction by Arthur Galton. "In politics, and in theology," says Mr. Galton, "he was a republican and a free-thinker." Gordon wrote very fine English, and Mr. Galton pays a just tribute to his strong, nervous style.

In Sweden Mr. Henry V. Berghall has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment for blasphemy at Jönköping. It is to be hoped the Supreme Court will over-rule the judgment. Meantime Mr. Berghall is undismayed, and is repeating the lecture for which he has been sentenced.

We are pleased to hear from Captain Otto Thomson that the sale of the Swedish Freethought paper *Fritänkaren* is increasing, and that it is especially finding its way among Scandinavian readers in America.

Mr. H. S. Salt, who wrote the Life of James Thomson, and has just issued the Life of another Freethinker (Thoreau), will read a paper on "The New Shelleyism" at the Shelley Society's monthly meeting next Wednesday evening (Oct. 15). Mr. Salt's paper should interest Freethinkers. Anyone is free to attend the meeting, which takes place at 8 o'clock at University College, Gower Street. Mr. Foote hopes to attend and participate in the discussion.

Miss Ada Campbell, the Australian Freethought lecturer is at present in New York where she is proposing to lecture.

That curious paper *The Tocsin* in an article on "Creeds" says "Investigations into the nature of what some people call the Spirit of God, or the universal spirit or the sun's rays—it matters little by what name it is called—have hitherto been characterised, with few exceptions by intense

crudeness." Orthodox people will think intense crudeness is displayed in identifying the spirit of God with the rays of the sun.

Kidderminster, the town of Richard Baxter, possesses a paper, the *Shuttle*, which is liberal enough to insert a good Freethought letter on Professor Huxley and the Pentateuch, with the signature "Agnostic."

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* for October has as frontispiece, a very good portrait of Judge C. B. Waite, of Chicago, who has written a very able study of Christian Origins, entitled *History of the Christian Religion to the Year 200*. Among notable articles in the magazine is one on "Protoplasm," by T. B. Wakeman, and another on "The Cyrus Story in the Old Testament," by Prof. A. L. Rawson.

The *Independent Pulpit* of Waco, Texas, has interesting articles on Secularisation of Public Schools and Optimism, and an able editorial on Religion, Superstition and Liberalism. It also reprints from our columns Mr. Wheeler's article on Jews and Christians.

De Dageraad of Amsterdam devotes a good deal of its space to book reviews, and in its last number notices Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, D'Ablain's *History of Religious Ideas in Mesopotamia*, Dr. Chatelain on the *Alleged Insanity of Rousseau*, and Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christ and Krishna*.

A Jewish Freethought organisation is to be tried at Liverpool. At this rate the Jews will be Secularised before they are Christianised, despite the thousands a year spent on bringing them to Jesus, and supporting the kind gentlemen who do the bringing.

The Glee-Class advertised on our last page is really in connection with Milton Hall. It has already commenced to meet in the lower hall on Tuesday evenings. As the class becomes fairly efficient it will be utilised on Sunday evenings. This should ensure support. The fee is merely nominal.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures for the Battersea Branch of the N. S. S. on Wednesday, Oct. 15, at 8 p.m., on "The Saviors of Mankind." Some tickets (3d. each) are being sold to defray expenses, and can be obtained at the meeting place. These week-night lectures are a new feature of this Branch, the idea being to engage lecturers who cannot afford to come to a small hall on Sundays. It is to be hoped that Freethinkers in the neighborhood will help to make this experiment a success.

On Thursday evening (Oct. 16) Mr. Foote opens a course of Free Lectures in the East End of London at the Tower Hamlets' Radical Club. His subject will be "Is the Bible Inspired?" On the following Thursday the lecturer will be Mrs. Thornton Smith, her subject being "Secularism." Mr. Moss takes Oct. 23, and "Was Jesus God or Man?" for his subject. Mr. J. M. Robertson winds up on Oct. 30 with a lecture on the "Whitewashing of Christianity."

The London Federation is arranging for another course of Free Lectures at Peckham in the large hall of the Radical Club.

DR. TALMAGE AND "CHESTNUTS."

"Rambler," in *The Canadian Advance*, a Christian journal, referring to Dr. Talmage's recent lecture at Grimsby Park, Ont., says: "An immense and sympathetic audience of thousands greeted him. To say that the great mass went home dissatisfied would be to put it mildly. He talked just 100 minutes and for this received \$500, or \$5 per minute, and what was given in exchange for this money? Stories that are as old as Methuselah; hoary-headed old 'chestnuts' that have done service in a thousand forms, from time immemorial. He managed to spend about five minutes in telling the thread-bare tale of a man so mean that he utilised a wart on the back of his neck as a collar button. This five minute story netted Dr. Talmage \$25. Another of his stock stories was of the man who invited an old friend home to dinner and who notified his wife through the telephone of the fact that Jones would dine with them. In the meantime Jones took his turn at the telephone and heard the indignant housewife cry: 'What are you bringing that old fool home to dinner for?' This story, by the watch, cost about \$30."

BIBLE TOMFOOLEBY:
END OF WORLD: MODERN PROPHECY.

(From the "Liberator.")

If ever a book contained tomfoolery, or silly trifling, the Bible does; and nowhere more so than in its pretended prophecies or foretelling of events long future. This would be amusing enough but for the mischief it does. If all would take the prophets' jokes and their predictions as jests, no harm would ensue. But fanatics and fools regard the Bible all the more solemnly the more it jests and trifles. When the Holy Ghost puts on his cap and bells then it is the dupes of superstition tremble the most.

When Bible writers were bent on the utmost stretch of tomfoolery they sat down and dreamed and manufactured visions, fell into trances, saw the invisible, felt the intangible, heard absolute silence, and allowed their imagination to run riot in grotesque imagery.

If one of them saw God, another would see the Devil; if one figured Behemoth, another dreamt he saw Leviathan; if one saw the Son of God, another would behold a cocatrice, a third a unicorn, a fourth would see beasts overdone with eyes, crowded with horns, and behaving as no circus animals ever behaved. If one prophet foretold the overthrow of a kingdom, another predicted the collapse of an empire, or plunged into foretellings of the end of the world itself, with appropriate music and attendant circumstances.

I must give a few examples of this pious tomfoolery; and the first I mention is the Book of Daniel. It is generally supposed that a man named Daniel lived at the court of Nebuchadnezzar and other kings of Babylon. He was a soothsayer, or Professor of Dreams. The Jews held him up as being the tip-top dream interpreter in the kingdom; and they supposed they glorified their God, their religion and their nation by so doing.

Several hundred years after Daniel's death some Jew wrote a romance, now known as the Book of Daniel—a romance as full of piety, political squibs and Punch-like takings-off as can well be imagined. That the book is a romance is plain on its face. Daniel interprets dreams, and even recovers one the king had lost, and expounds the fugitive after bringing him back! Look at the Jew who wrote that stuff, and see how he puts his thumb to his nose and expands his fingers. Hear what he says:—

"You boast of expounding a dream, you unclean gentiles. That is nothing. Any fool can expound a dream when related to him. But my great countryman Daniel could go after a lost dream that the dreamer had forgotten, and restore it first, and then afterwards expound it to the perfect satisfaction of the dreamer! Yea, verily, Amen!"

Not content, the unscrupulous romancer wrote a tale about three of his countrymen, who were put into a fire and came out unhurt, although those who put them in were killed by the heat.

Daniel himself was cast into a den of lions; and the beasts would not eat him.

Nebuchadnezzar became metamorphosed into a nondescript animal, just as many persons in *Arabian Nights* and in Grimm's *Household Tales*; and he ate grass like an ox; and after after all this became king again! Hoodwinked believers have looked for confirmation of this tale in pagan records, in *Æsop's Fables* and nursery books. It is only in romances that such miracles took place.

Well, the tales I have alluded to—the three Jews in the fire, too fireproof to burn; Daniel undevoured in the den of lions, and Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into an ox-eagle-man or man-eagle-ox—those, I say, would be regarded by any impartial critic as more than enough to stamp any book in the world a romance.

This impostor, who wrote in the name of Daniel hundreds of years after Daniel was dead—for even those who escape the fire and dodge the lions somehow do manage to die at last like ordinary mortals—wrote political records in the guise of prophecy, not daring, perhaps, to speak plainly on account of the Antiochian tyrants then ruling his country. He attributed to Daniel a lot of jargon about huge beasts of most unsightly descriptions, and an image he saw in vision, with head of gold, breast of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of clay.

Out of this stuff modern quacks have manufactured prophecy, predictions of Jesus under the name of the oily one or Messiah; and also predictions of Greek, Roman and other kings and dynasties from the time of Daniel to the very end of the world.

Here you have an exhibition of Bible tom-foolery and also of Christian quackery in trying to expound and apply those so-called prophecies, which were not prophecies at all. Any quack, like the late Dr. Cumming or the living Mr. Baxter, could fix the end of the world from that prediction, and postpone it a hundred times without losing the least credit with the pious rabble.

A note in passing from this topic may put the reader on his guard. No one can read the Daniel romance without perceiving that it was written to glorify the Jews and their religion. Every incident is manufactured to set forth some excellence in their superstition; and that is the design of the whole. "There is nothing like leather" is the motto of the book, and it meets you at every turn. The Catholics could not more industriously sound the praises of their saints than this writer does the virtues of his God and his religion.

And now turn we to Christ. He foretells, according to the gospels, the end of the world; so do his apostles. And here we have predictions that can readily be tested and decided to be either true or false.

He foretells, we are informed, the destruction of Jerusalem; and after describing this event in terrible language, he says: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: then all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in clouds of heaven with power and great glory. . . . This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv., 29-34.)

1. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 71. 2. The sun was not darkened immediately after; nor has been until now, except in eclipses; the moon has never ceased to give her light as she gave it before; nor has one single star fallen from heaven from that day till now. Rev. iv., 13, shows that the stars were expected to fall upon the earth. Only an astronomer can fully appreciate the absurdity of this part of the prophecy. 3. No powers of the heavens have been shaken since the time mentioned, nor ever will be. 4. No sign of a Son of Man has yet appeared in the heavens; he has not come in the clouds; no trumpet has sounded therefrom, except the thunder; no angels have been seen; no elect have been gathered together and the ends of the earth have not been discovered. 5. That generation passed away, and sixty-subsequent generations have followed them; and still the Son of Man does not appear; his silly predictions have not been fulfilled, though his blind dupes are as stupidly believing as ever. Nothing can open their eyes.

If Jesus ever uttered the words attributed to him, they show him to have been the vainest and most conceited cock-comb that could be imagined. Other insane persons have expected to be kings; but he is probably the only one that expected the universe to be wrecked in honor of his mounting the throne. But if he was a fool for expecting such things to happen, what must be said of those who still expect him to fulfil a promise or a threat that should have been accomplished then in the lifetime of the people who heard it?

Either Jesus is a convicted false prophet; or the New Testament ascribes to him predictions he never uttered. Let the Christians take which alternative they please. There stands the prediction, pledged to be fulfilled then and there; it has never been fulfilled yet, although about 1850 years have fled since it was uttered.

And yet quacks go on expounding Bible prophecy and foretelling the end of the world as if the Bible could be trusted and Christ were an honest and a rational man.

There cannot be the shadow of doubt that the New Testament writers—if they honestly wrote down what they believed—really and literally expected the dead to rise, Christ to appear in the clouds, the general judgment of all mankind, and the total wreck of the universe to take place in their day; they expected to be alive at the time when the angel's trumpet should wake the dead, and when Christ should descend on the clouds of heaven.

Time has falsified all this, fortunately; and the world and the universe go on as if no fanatic had ever trodden the earth's surface.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be concluded.)

Sunday school teacher [in Kentucky]—"Johnny, how did the forbidden fruit cause the fall of man?" Johnny—"They made it inter brandy."

TOLSTOI AND JESUS CHRIST.

COUNT TOLSTOI, following parts of the New Testament, regards love as essentially impure. He seems really to think that there is a love superior to human love; that the love of man for woman, of woman for man, is, after all, a kind of glittering degradation; that it is better to love God than woman; better to love the invisible phantoms of the skies than the children upon our knees—in other words, that it is far better to love a heaven somewhere else than to make one here. He seems to think that women adorn themselves simply for the purpose of getting in their power the innocent and unsuspecting men. He forgets that the best and purest of human beings are controlled, for the most part unconsciously, by the hidden, subtle tendencies of nature. He seems to forget the great fact of "natural selection," and that the choice of one in preference to all others is the result of forces beyond the control of the individual. To him there seems to be no purity in love, because men are influenced by forms, by the beauty of women; and women, knowing this fact, according to him, act, and consequently both are equally guilty. He endeavors to show that love is a delusion; that at best it can last but a few days; that it must of necessity be succeeded by indifference, then by disgust, lastly by hatred; that in every Garden of Eden is a serpent of jealousy, and that the brightest days end with the yawn of ennui.

Of course he is driven to the conclusion that life in this world is without value, that the race can be perpetuated only by vice, and that the practice of the highest virtue would leave the world without the form of man. Strange as it may sound to some, this is the same conclusion reached by his Divine Master: "They did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all." "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

According to Christianity, as it really is and really was, the Christian should have no home in this world—at least none until the earth has been purified by fire. His affections should be given to God; not to wife and children, not to friends or country. He is here but for a time on a journey, waiting for the summons. This life is a kind of dock running out into the sea of eternity, on which he waits for transportation. Nothing here is of any importance; the joys of life are frivolous and corrupting, and by losing these few gleams of happiness in this world he will bask for ever in the unclouded rays of infinite joy. Why should a man risk an eternity of perfect happiness for the sake of enjoying himself a few days with his wife and children? Why should he become an eternal outcast for the sake of having a home and fireside here?

The "Fathers" of the Church had the same opinion of marriage. They agreed with Saint Paul, and Tolstoi agrees with them. They had the same contempt for wives and mothers, and uttered the same blasphemies against that divine passion that has filled the world with art and song.

All this is to my mind a kind of insanity; nature soured or withered—deformed so that celibacy is mistaken for virtue. The imagination becomes polluted, and the poor wretch believes that he is purer than his thoughts, holier than his desires, and that to outrage nature is the highest form of religion. But nature imprisoned, obstructed, tormented, always has sought for and has always found revenge. Some of these victims, regarding the passions as low and corrupting, feeling humiliated by hunger and thirst, sought through maimings and mutilations the purification of the soul. . . .

The story of *The Kreutzer Sonata* seems to have been written for the purpose of showing that woman is at fault; that she has no right to be attractive, no right to be beautiful; and that she is morally responsible for the contour of her throat, for the pose of her body, for the symmetry of her limbs, for the red of her lips, and for the dimples in her cheeks.

The opposite of this doctrine is nearer true. It would be far better to hold people responsible for their ugliness than for their beauty. It may be true that the soul, the mind, in some wondrous way fashions the body, and that to that extent every individual is responsible for his looks. It may be that the man or woman thinking high thoughts will give, necessarily, a nobility to expression and a beauty to outline.

It is not true that the sins of man can be laid justly at the feet of woman. Women are better than men; they have

greater responsibilities; they bear even the burdens of joy. This is the real reason why their faults are considered greater.

Men and women desire each other, and this desire is a condition of civilisation, progress, and happiness, and of everything of real value. But there is this profound difference in the sexes; in man this desire is the foundation of love, while in woman love is the foundation of this desire.

Tolstoi seems to be a stranger to the heart of woman.
—From "Love the Redeemer," by Colonel Ingersoll.

"ALL IS FOR THE BEST."

"PRAISE God! from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him! all creatures here below!"
All sorrow is but seeming-woe;
His name be blest!
The end of all things he doth know
To be the best.

Praise God! O spider, when you spy
Entrapped the foolish fluttering fly;
And bid your victim, ere it die,
All thankful raise
To God all-good in heav'n on high,
A song of praise.

Praise God! oh mother! when you see
Your dying babe upon your knee;
And gladly sing with grateful glee
A joyous song.
To grieve o'er what is best would be
Absurd and wrong.

Praise God! O pirate, when you slay
The folk he sends athwart your way;
And let them sing, for well they may,
Since "All's for best."
He bids you speed them on their way
To heav'nly rest.

Praise God! O crafty, rich, and strong,
Ordnained to rob the weaker throng;
To you earth's fulness doth belong;
The Lord is good!
May all your victims join your song
In grateful mood.

Praise God! O deaf and dumb and blind!
Blest products of the Master mind;
Rejoice! for he is ever kind,
And knoweth best.
Sounds, speech, and sights, we often find,
Produce unrest.

Praise God! O "Jack-the-Ripper" bold,
From whom your strength and skill you hold;
In whom you "live and move," we're told
In Holy Writ:
Whose mighty arm your knife controlled,
And guided it.

Praise God! O parasites that cling
And live on ev'ry living thing!
O priest! O tapeworm! and O king!
And all the brood!
To God your maker praises sing,
For he is good.

O God—if God there be—we trust
That, after mould'ring into dust,
We all shall rise—if rise we must—
Where all's for worst;
Since here, on earth, where "all's for best,"
Your work's accurst.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Cora—"How meek and lamblike the new minister is!"
Dora—"Yes, and what sheep's eyes he casts at us girls!"

John Fryland, a Wisconsin man, sat in a chair under an apple tree, when a swarm of bees settled on him. He kept his nerve for two hours, or until the last one was hived, and he says he did it by repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards. It will be well to bear this in mind and to remember that the Ten Commandments won't do.

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. F. Millar, "Religion and Civilisation."
 Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "The Eight Hours Question." Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Wednesday, at 8, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Saviors of Mankind."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mrs. Annie Berant, "Recent Results in Hypnotism and Mesmerism."
 East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, 8, Dr. C. R. Drysdale, "Low Wages and Large Families."
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7. Mr. G. W. Foote, "Where is the Devil?"
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, "The Evolution of Socialism." Tuesday, at 8, Glee class.
 West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7.30, Mr. Arthur Lovell, "Signs of the Times."
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Uselessness of Prayer."
OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.
 Battersea Park Gates 11.15, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Salvation."
 Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. J. Rowney, "Jesus."
 Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sophistry."
 Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 3.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Freethought in Youth."
 Finsbury Park (near the band-stand), 11.15, Mr. E. T. Garner, "Man's Soul"; 3.30, Mr. J. Rowney, "Prophecy."
 Hammersmith Bridge (Surrey side), 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sophistry."
 Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Salvation."
 Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "Sacred Books."
 Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, Mr. J. Long will lecture.
 Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Is there a God?"
 Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Origin of Species."
 Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: are they true?"
 Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam. Standing, "Sermons from Shakespeare, I.—To be or not to be?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 5, tea; 7, concert.
 Bradford—Laycock's Temperance Hotel, 3, meeting of the Yorkshire Secular Federation.
 Chester-le-Street—Crown Hotel, 6.30, important business meeting.
 Glasgow—Waterloo Rooms, Waterloo Street, 6.30, Mr. Ritchie, "The Final Post to Heaven."
 Heckmondwike—At Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, annual general meeting, and collection in aid of Benevolent Fund.
 Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—7, Mr. E. Stanley Jones, "Has God Revealed himself to Man?"
 Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, Mr. Riley, "Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet, Atheist, and Republican."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 3, fortnightly meeting of members of N. S. S.; 11.30 (and on Wednesday, at 7.30), Sunday Music League.
 Nottingham—The Palace, Market Street, Mr. C. Bradlaugh, 11, "The Eight Hours Movement: for and against"; 3, "The Right and the Duty to Think"; 7, "The Political Situation."
 Plymouth—100 Union Street, 7, Mr. Bibbens, "The Spirit of the Age."
 Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 3, debating class, Mr. Pinhorne, "The Sermon on the Mount"; 7, Mr. Hore, "An Evening with Aristotle."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science Hockingham Street, 7, Mr. Isaac Worster, "Balloons and Parachutes" (with historical illustrations).
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, usual weekly meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3, Mr. Riley, "Has Man a Soul?" Friends are earnestly requested to support these meetings and help to preserve order.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Oct. 15, Battersea; 19 (evening) Woolwich; 26 (morning and afternoon) Finsbury Park; 30, Tower Hamlets Radical Club.
 E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—Oct. 12 Liverpool.
 H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—Oct. 18, Liverpool. Nov. 9, Liverpool.
 T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Oct. 12 (morning) Hyde Park; 19 (morning) Battersea Park, (evening) Battersea Secular Hall.
 TOLEMAN GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—Oct. 12 (morning) Finsbury Park; 26, Woolwich. Nov. 9, Battersea; 23, Woolwich. Dec. 7, Reading; 21, Woolwich.

NOW READY.

LOVE THE REDEEMER.

With reference to Count Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata," and his views on Christianity, Love, the Family, and Civilisation.

By Col. Robert G. Ingersoll.

(From the "North American Review," September, 1890.)

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