

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

BOOTH'S NEW BOOM.

DEATH is always solemn, and only an unfeeling wretch would intrude on the sanctity of grief. Before the stroke of "the sword that severs all" we stand in mute sympathy with bereaved hearts. Time and, above all, earnest work, will bring an anodyne, and wounds will heal; but meanwhile the sky is darkened, life and its interests lose their savor, the blood flows languidly in the veins, there is a dull pain in heart and head, and the eyes seem to look for something that never comes. Sympathisers are tempted to speak the soft words of condolence that may loosen the spring of tears; but when they find their words in vain, they glide away and leave grief to its sacred solitude.

But when a man chooses to make a parade of his sorrow, and a display of his wounds, he invites criticism rather than condolence. This is our reason for devoting an article to the death and burial of Mrs. Booth. For the lady herself we feel the respect which is due to her for a laborious life in the promotion of what she held to be right and true. We have a certain admiration for her, not as the Mother of the Salvation Army, but as a woman who gave her life to a cause. She may have been mistaken, as we decidedly think she was; but she and her followers quite as decidedly thought the Secular party mistaken, and it is well to recognise energy and earnestness and devotion even amidst the most extreme differences of opinion.

It is to be presumed that Mrs. Booth did not arrange her own funeral. She "assisted" only in the French sense of the word. She was the occasion of the ceremony, but her corpse was dragged hither and thither by those who were bent on making the most of the occasion.

First came the lying-in-state at Clapton, the corpse being brought up for that purpose from Clacton-on-Sea. Not only Salvationists, but the general public, were invited to come and see the dead woman. Thousands did so, many of whom, as we happen to know, care not a straw for the Salvation Army. They saw the long accounts in the daily papers, and such an advertisement would have induced them to go anywhere and see anything. But the collection boxes were no respecters of persons. There was no charge to see the corpse, but there were significant hints that a trifle was expected.

Booth is an inveterate showman. He has a genius for advertising and display, and it did not desert him in his bereavement. The show was admirably planned and executed throughout; nor did the "General" lack the unstinted aid of the press (this being the dull season), and the cordial co-operation of the authorities. Radicals, Socialists, and the unemployed must look to their skulls if they go in procession; but, except for an occasional misunderstanding, Booth has only to intimate his intention of blocking the traffic in the arteries of London and the police are his very humble servants.

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After the lying-in-state the corpse was removed to Olympia—already the scene of so many shows, including that of the great Barnum, who commercially is Booth's first-cousin. No effort was spared to score a big success on Monday evening. Officers were ordered up—we presume at the Army's expense—from all parts of the kingdom. The rank and file also were strongly invited, and tickets were available for any number of outsiders. It is calculated that over twenty thousand persons were present, and considering the immense advertising, it does not strike us as a surprising assembly. With regard to the performance we have little to say. *De gustibus non est disputandum*. Tastes differ. What to one man is impressive is to another ridiculous; what is solemn to one man is farcical to another. But we cannot help observing that one part of the performance was calculated to shock every person with any delicacy of feeling. Booth and his kindred stood up to sing around the coffin the hymn they sang around Mrs. Booth's death-bed. Reticence was flung to the winds. The performers seemed to say: "Ladies and gentlemen, you were not present when we sang your Mother to glory, but just look and listen, and you will see how it was done."

Booth will never surprise us after this. We are prepared for anything. The "salvation of souls"—that is, the success of the Army—is to be paramount over everything, over the privacy of affection and the delicacy of sorrow. "Make a show of it" is Booth's advice to those who have any emotion likely to give the Army a fillip.

For a third time the corpse was shifted to Queen Victoria Street, whence the funeral procession started on Tuesday morning. Here again the showman's genius asserted itself. The procession was timed to catch the city employees in their dinner hour. By this means the presence of a tremendous crowd was secured, and the "General" could be seen standing up in his carriage (he occupied it alone) and acknowledging the salutations of the multitude. Ordinary men like to bury their loved ones in peace, and to chew the cud of their private reflections. But Booth is not an ordinary man. Even in a funeral coach he has an eye to business, and his bare head in an open carriage on a foggy day is a typical piece of theatricality.

Booth was followed by the Booth Dynasty. He has known how to marry his family well, from a worldly as well as a religious point of view, and he has managed to put them into all the chief posts. Of course, there will be no mutiny while this plan is carried out, nor, perhaps, while the whole of the Army's property is legally in the family's hands; but the leader's death will cause changes, and his empire will probably split up like Alexander's.

This little family arrangement reminds us of the insults that used to be cast at Mr. Bradlaugh. He had two accomplished and unobtrusive daughters who assisted him in his work, although they were never put into any positions of authority. This fact, however, did not prevent Christians from sneering at the

"family party." Yet they have no sneers for Booth, who runs a "family party" with a vengeance.

Well, Booth has made the most of his dead wife, and we hope the collections have defrayed the expenses. We do not blame him for being an inveterate showman. He cannot help it. But we do think he trundled that corpse about too glaringly. There are some human feelings which men of all creeds, and no creeds, possess in common, and we doubt if Booth has done the Army any good by flouting them so ostentatiously.

Nothing succeeds like success. Booth has proved that "there is money in it," and money and numbers are too much for the English press. It insults unpopular causes and slanders the successful, and its criterion of success is the cash and plaudits of the hour. Long ago we prophesied that the Salvation Army would succeed in this way. It caters for hysterical people who are sick and tired of the "respectable" forms of religion. But we deny still, as we always denied, that it reforms the thief, the drunkard, and the debaucher. Solitary cases may be adduced, but they prove nothing. The fact remains that, in the mass, the Army is recruited from other sects. Some years ago the Rev. Llewellyn Davies asserted this in a letter to the *Times*. Mr. Davies said he was prepared to prove it in his own parish of Marylebone. He was answered by "Commissioner" Railton, who indulged in the usual vague generalities, which Mr. Davies cut short by asking him to produce the notorious sinners converted in that parish by the Army. Of course they were not produced; for the most part these "converts" exist on paper.

Statistics disprove the Army's pretensions. It boasts of something like two millions. Now if these had been drawn from the moral residuum of England, a serious impression would have been made on the ranks of vice and crime. But what are the facts? Prostitutes are as numerous as ever, the regular thief sticks to his profession, and the drink bill increases.

Revival movements have always boasted of moral successes, but history shows that they make no real impression on the community. The method is unscientific and doomed to failure. A salvation meeting, with its noise and excitement, has as much effect on public morality as a savage's tom-tom has upon an eclipse of the sun. The noisy things in nature are generally futile. Whirlwinds and earthquakes affect the imagination, but it is the regular action of air and water that produces the greatest changes, and the gentle action of rain and sunshine that ripens the harvest. These "spiritual," and nearly always hysterical, agencies for human improvement are based upon a denial of the physical basis of life, and of the scientific doctrine of moral causation. They attract great attention, and their leaders are registered as heroes; but all the while the real work of progress is being done by other agencies—by the spread of knowledge, the growth of education, the discoveries of science, the silent triumphs of art, and the gradual expansion of the human mind. To descend to concrete examples, Arkwright and Watt have done more good than Wesley and Whitfield, Adam Smith than Joanna Southcote, Darwin and Lyell than Moody and Sankey, and Mill and Spencer than Mr. and Mrs. Booth. Agitation is not progress. What is wanted is a new ingredient, and that is furnished by the often obscure men, whose greatness is only known to the few, although their thoughts are the seed of future harvests of wisdom and happiness for the human race.

G. W. FOOTE.

NOTES ON WITCHCRAFT IN ENGLAND.

"THOU shalt not suffer a witch to live," is the command said to have been given by God to Moses immediately after the Ten Commandments (Exodus xxii., 18.) Adam Clarke, the great Methodist Commentator says on this, "If there had been no *witches*, such a law as this had never been made," and John Wesley declared "the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." (*Journal*, May 25, 1768, p. 318, vol iii., works 1856.) Similar threats against witches and wizards frequently occur in the Bible. See (Deut. xviii., 10.11; 1 Sam. xxviii; 2 Chron. xxxiii; Nahum. iii., 4; Matt. iv., 5; Rev. xviii., 23).

The Church at an early period fulminated against witchcraft, sorcery, and magic. Several early trials may be found in W. H. D. Adams's *Witch, Warlock and Magician*. Statutes declaring witchcraft to be felony, without benefit of clergy were passed under Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and that pious witch extirpator James I. Barrington estimates the judicial murders for witchcraft in England in two hundred years at 30,000. The 73rd Canon of the Church of England recognises it by prohibiting the clergy to cast out devils without episcopal authority. Sir Wm. Blackstone in his early edition of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1765-8, said: "To deny the possibility, nay, the actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages of the Old and New Testament, and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath, in its turn, borne testimony, either by example seemingly well attested or by prohibitory laws, what least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits."*

Mr. F. A. Inderwick, in his *Side Lights on the Stuarts*, p. 125, says, "For centuries in this country, strange as it may now appear, a denial of such demoniacal agency was deemed equal to a confession of Atheism and to a disbelief in the Holy Scriptures themselves." As he says further on, p. 130, "the Church even now requires a belief in the personality of the devil and in the existence of good and bad angels, and it is but a short step further to assert that Satan moves in a mysterious way through the medium of evil spirits having an individuality of their own." As late as 1813 the Church Catechism, as explained by the Rev. J. Lewis, a work which went through many editions, and received the sanction of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in answer to the question, What is meant by renouncing the devil? gave the reply, "The refusing of all familiarity and contracts with the devil, whereof witches, conjurors, and such as resort to them are guilty."

It was in the reign of James I., who had, when in Scotland, written his *Demonologie*, that a systematic hunting down of witches, in accordance with Bible law, was entered upon. "Poor old women wore walked, swum, shaved, and tortured; the gallows creaked and the fires blazed." It is appalling to think of the hundreds of hapless innocent old women cruelly tortured to death under the influence of this Bible belief.

During the ascent of Puritanism at the time of the civil wars, Matthew Hopkins, of Manningtree, Essex, the notorious "witch-finder," came to the fore, and by his infamous but holy trade caused the judicial murder of about one hundred people in the eastern counties. The test he generally adopted to tell if his victims were indeed contracted to the devil was that of swimming, which James I. recommends with much unction in his *Demonologie*. The hands and feet of the accused were tied together crosswise, the thumb of the right hand to the big toe of the left foot, and *vice versa*. She was then wrapped in a rug and put

* "Buddhism even does not allow that there is a soul distinct from the body. Practically it only recognises the combined being that is seen or is conscious of itself, and that suffers; and it has no explanation beyond."—G. T. Bettany, M.A., B.Sc., "The World's Religions," p. 277.

into a pond or river. If she sank she was innocent; if she floated, as was usually the case, as her clothes supported her, she was pronounced guilty and hanged forthwith. Dr. Zachary Grey, in his notes to *Hudibras*, states that between three and four thousand persons suffered death for witchcraft from 1640 to 1660.

In 1664, Sir Matthew Hale, a pious and upright judge, ordered Rose Cullender and Amy Dany to be burnt as witches. Bible-belief betrayed a good man into this atrocity, and has left a stain on a great name. "In New England," says Mr. Inderwick, "the account of this trial and of Sir Matthew Hale's opinion was circulated through the various states, and, coming with the authority and prestige of the Lord Chief Baron, renewed the persecution which was quietly dying out (*Side Lights*, p. 168). A curious instance of the increase of rationalism was that the test of weighing against the Church Bible frequently took the place of the ordeal by water, and thus doubtless many lives were saved.

Two pretended witches were executed at Northampton in 1705, and five others seven years afterwards. In 1716 Mrs. Hicks and her daughter, aged nine, were hanged as witches at Huntingdon. This was the last judicial execution in England, though there was one later in Scotland, at Dornoch in 1722. Juries became less apt to convict and judges to sentence, and in 1736 the punishment of death was repealed, despite the protests of the clergy and the Associated Presbytery of Scotland. Notwithstanding the law, popular investigations occasionally continued. Thus in July 1785, a woman at Mear's Abbey, Northampton, was swum for a witch, but having immediately sunk, was rescued, amid loud cries of "No witch." As late as Sept. 4, 1863, a poor old paralysed Frenchman died in consequence of having been ducked as a wizard at Castle Hedingham, Essex; and on Sept. 17, 1875, an old woman was killed as a witch by a half insane man at Long Compton, Warwickshire.

Those who believe that good alone has been the result of Bible reading, should read something of the history of witchcraft, and remember the computation of Sprenger that during the Christian epoch, no less than nine millions of persons, mostly women, have been butchered for this imaginary offence.

J. M. WHEELER.

CREED AND DEED.

As a matter of fact, is a man more or less likely to steal, or to lie, or to be false to his word or his friend, according as he does or does not lodge or otherwise entertain certain opinions? Where does it begin or end—this puzzling question? No one, surely, will contend that a Unitarian is more likely to commit forgery than a Trinitarian, or that a dairyman who is a Universalist is more certain to water his milk than his rival in trade, who is a black Calvinist. And yet how far may we push this? Where does danger creep in? Sturdy moralists of the Dr. Johnson type have been long accustomed to bid us count our spoons after the visits of Atheists. But do we? It is necessary to ask these questions, painful as they are. There are those abroad, and in high places too, who are interested in maintaining the market value of their wares, and it is only by a critical and even offensive examination into their several pretensions that we can hope to distinguish between the mendacious quacks who vend pills to cure earthquakes, and those wise physicians whose prescriptions can really cool the fevered blood and bid the lawless fancy be still.

It may be said that Agnostics are usually well-to-do, and have besides for the most part been brought up on the "Peep of Day," and the "Fairchild Family." We are told to wait awhile until the poor Agnostic makes his appearance whose childhood's hour has known no Isaac Watts, no Mrs. Sherwood. What about one's spoons then? That they may be in danger is certain, but the question is a comparative one. Will they be in any greater danger from the needy Agnostic than from the starving Christian?

M. Bourget in his famous novel *Le Disciple*, has raised this question far above spoons and the mere laws of property. He has imagined a moral monstrosity, justifying his villainies by the negations of a speculative philosophy. Because an amiable old gentleman in his study asserted there was no God, no freedom of will, and that the passions must take their course, the disciple behaves like a rogue, and has his brains most deservedly blown out at the end of the book. Thereupon all the keepers of the hen-roosts begin cackling and screaming; "M. Bourget," say they, "has turned Queen's evidence against the unbeliever. See what will happen if our young men and maidens read Herbert Spencer!"

But villains and even monsters are no new things. Some of the biggest rascals that ever lived were firm believers in a future life and judgment to come.

—"A. B." (*Augustus Birrell*), in "*The Speaker*."

A LEARNED JEW ON CHRISTIANITY.

Nearly the whole of the first five centuries of the history of the Christian Church passed away amidst scenes of strife and bloodshed, produced by attempts to enforce the new doctrines; and then came the "dark ages," during which ignorance and superstition sat on many a fair land where civilisation and art had reached their temples, long before Christianity was known. No one could take his stand at the opening of the second half of the fifteenth century, and looking back through the vista of the fourteenth hundred years passed, could reasonably infer, from the consequences which they have produced, that Messiah's reign had been going on during the whole of this period. If the prophet Isaiah had predicted that the effects of Messiah's advent would be, to let loose the worst and fiercest passions of the heart, to persecute conscience, to banish, to outlaw, and to massacre in the name of religion; to overthrow the monuments of peace, to put out the light of the humanities, and to bring back mankind to a state of semi-barbarism:—such a prophecy might have been considered to be fulfilled, in the condition to which the world had been reduced by dogmatic Christianity, practically discovered from the ethical element of Mosaism.—*Rev. Professor D. Marks, "Sermons," 2nd series, p. 81.*

GOD'S HOLY NAME.

SCHILLER had not the courage to tell the whole truth in his weak essay: "The Mission of Moses, respecting the concoction of the name Jehovah—Yao"—which the Egyptian priests only mentioned among themselves. I translate the passage: "Moses harbored one thought, viz., to make the Hebrews acquainted with the god taught in the mysteries of Isis (!) It has been pretty well ascertained that the Egyptian mysteries flourished a long time before Jehovah appeared (*sic*) to Moses in the thorn-bush; it is therefore really remarkable that he (god!) gives himself the very same name (!) which he previously possessed in the mysteries of Isis!" Most remarkable, genial Schiller! A genuine god has only one name. An alias is dangerous, and awakens suspicion. Elohim, Yahveh! In case of the divinity, there was certainly no occasion for it.

To a philologist the matter is very simple, and stands thus: The Egyptian priests called God (esoterically)—Iao;* the old Greeks ΙΑΩ—Iao; the Assyrians, Yahu; the Chaldeans יי—*i.e.*, the eternity of eternities, which are older than the Hebrew tetragrammaton—יהוה, Yahveh or Jehovah. A claim of originality cannot be set up for the word Jehovah, nor for the god bearing that curious name. The Sanskrit root is Dyau—the air. Thus the divinity of Jehovah-Elohim vanishes into thin air.

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

BUDDHISM AND ATHEISM.

"As to the so-called sacred books of the Buddhists—which it is the fashion nowadays to praise far too highly—let me here express my opinion that they ought not to be reckoned among the Bibles of the world, for true Buddhism is no real religion. It has no God, no Supreme Being, no real prayer, no real clergy. It has no claim to any supernatural revelation.—*Sir M. Monier Williams, Speech at Oxford, Nov. 3, 1885.*

"Contrary to the opinion once confidently and generally held, that a nation of atheists never existed, the Buddhist peoples are essentially atheist; for they know no beings with greater supernatural power than any man is supposed capable of attaining to by virtue, austerity, and science. Indeed some of the Buddhist nations—the Chinese, Mongols, and Tibetans—have no word in their languages to express the notion of God as supreme ruler."—*Dr. A. Finlatter, art. "Buddhism," Chambers's Encyclopædia,* new edition, 1888.

* Or I-na-no.

VERY VAGUE SHEPHERDS.

THE debate on trade morality at the Church Congress cannot be said to have much practical value. It is in dealing with such a topic that the weakness of the average pulpit—the tendency to make religious generalities do duty for sound judgment—is brought into strong relief. Nothing is easier than to preach a sermon in the style of the worthy dignitary of the Church who favored his hearers last week with a catalogue of the evil-doers he would like to punish. There were the men who traded on other people's merits, the luxurious idlers who lived on the labor of better citizens—everybody, in short, who held some comfortable post for which he had not worked. This sort of homily can be manufactured by the yard without the smallest exercise of any practical faculty. Instead of doing good it is apt to excite irritation, and provoke awkward questions. In the list of people who ought to be brought to justice we do not find the clerical pluralist, nor the vicar who leaves his work to a curate with a miserable stipend, nor the professional ecclesiastic who, having obtained preferment by sheer worldliness, cultivates a fine disdain for poor schismatics. It would be well for parsons who discourse about commercial ethics not to lay themselves open to the retort that the Church is a business, that younger sons still enter with as much spiritual fitness as they might display in cotton, and that there is no vice in trade which, at its very worst, is so poisonous to the soul as the cant of a man who wears the uniform of a sacred calling without a spark of its genuine spirit. Clergymen should remember that the organisation to which they belong is not entirely free from reproaches of this kind, before they pass sweeping strictures on the sins of the laity. Suppose a shop-keeper were to turn on the preacher and say, "Why don't you set *your* house in order? You are the servant of an Established Church which grossly underpays some of its most zealous workers, and gives large endowments to idle people; which permits the cure of souls to be bought by the highest bidder, and sold perhaps by a reprobate who inherited the patronage from his father. Don't you think you had better reform the ethics of your own commerce before you preach to us about ours?"—*The Speaker*.

ACID DROPS.

Some candid admissions were made by the Rev. James Owen, the President of the Baptist Union. Speaking to a crowded meeting at Cardiff he said that Christian unity was a dream. "There was nothing in Christendom to indicate it or hold out the prospect of it. The sects hated each other more than they hated sin, and fought against each other more than against an unbelieving world. The church was not a temple, but a Babel, a scene of confusion and strife. It was not a fold, but many folds, and in some of them more dogs than sheep. The infidel critic pointed with the finger of scorn to the wranglings and divisions, and declared that the worst qualities of men were developed when they met under the banner of a religious faith."

The Baptist President stood up stoutly for the voluntary principle in religion, and denounced State interference and State assistance. But he certainly exaggerated the progress of Christianity during the time the primitive Church was a voluntary association. Not more than a twentieth part of the inhabitants of the Roman empire were converted to Christianity in the first three centuries from the death of Christ. It was the patronage of Constantine that secured the triumph of the new faith. Eighteen out of the other nineteen-twentieths of the population were "converted" in a century by the methods of bribery, intimidation, political ostracism, imprisonment and capital punishment.

We see from the *Liberator* that the Melbourne *Evening Standard* has called the attention of the police to a newspaper runner who haunts the streets announcing "a blasphemous publication" called *Letters to Jesus Christ*. We presume this is Mr. Foote's pamphlet. Perhaps we shall see from a future number of Mr. Symes's paper whether the bigots have succeeded in suppressing the sale of Mr. Foote's pamphlet in the streets of Melbourne. They certainly will not stop its sale at the *Liberator* office.

The Rev. C. J. Karlake, Catholic priest, of Galashiels, protests against the way in which the clergy are denouncing gambling. He does not, apparently, approve of gambling,

but he objects to "false arguments and exaggerations." As to the accusations against bookmakers, that they do not earn their living by the sweat of their brows, the reverend gentlemen said that the same remark could be applied to the ministers themselves.

It seems to us that the clergy never take up any question but they spoil it. Betting is not a thing we are inclined to. We prefer more rational forms of excitement. At the same time we believe it is not true that the majority who do a little betting are simply anxious to get somebody else's money. Probably they would rather win than lose, but what they are primarily seeking is excitement. And we believe you will never stop gambling by legislation or preaching. The only real remedy is the cultivation of a better taste, and the multiplication of more elevating forms of pleasure.

General Kiréef haughtily denied in the *Pall Mall Gazette* that any religious persecution existed in Russia. He is answered by a "Foreign Resident in Russia," who is not so foolish as to give his name. This gentleman says:—"I can testify to having seen Jews turned out of their houses by night, and driven like malefactors in gangs through the snowy streets, in obedience to 'administrative' orders issued against them, for no other crime than that of belonging to the Hebrew race and faith. I have seen husband and wife declared to be living in sin, and their offspring branded with illegitimacy, for having been married by the pastor of the faith which they professed; children torn from their parents for having been baptised under a rite deemed more holy than that of the hated Orthodox Church, while the pastors administering the sacred rite were driven into exile. Even General Kiréef, in the fashionable circles which he frequents in Petersburg, could hardly have failed to hear of the disgrace and virtual exile of a gallant soldier bearing an historic name, not for refusal to join the Orthodox Church, but for bringing up his grandchildren in the Lutheran faith of their ancestors. 'No one in Russia is compelled,' says the General. No, but the hand of the proselytising oppressor rests like Herod's on the new-born babe, and turns the helpless infant into an instrument wherewith to torture the heart of the non-conforming mother, to break down the resolution of the strong man, and to bring grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

What airs the sky-pilots give themselves when they speak of the stage! The Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, addressing a meeting in aid of the Theatrical Mission, said he had sympathy with actors but very little with the theatre. For our part, we have some sympathy with the stage and none with the pulpit. More moral benefit is produced by a good play than by a cartload of sermons. There are moral lessons enough in any one of Shakespeare's plays to give the clergy preaching material until the Day of Judgment.

A pretty quarrel is that between Archdeacon Farrar and Messrs. Cassell. Stung by something he said at the Church Congress, the great publishing firm declare that they have paid him £2,005 for his *Life of Christ*, £1,333 for his *Life of St. Paul*, and £2,400 for his *Early Days of Christianity*. These are handsome figures, far in excess of the real value of the works, which contains a vast quantity of respectable padding. But on the other hand, the Archdeacon asks Messrs. Cassell to be good enough to state *their* profits on the books. They advertised them in a most extraordinary fashion, and the Archdeacon protested against some of their methods as "vulgar and unworthy." This is to his credit, but he did not decline a share of the proceeds.

This at least is very clear. Religious gush pays. It is a capital method of serving the Lord and putting money in your purse. Our sympathy is with the poor dupes who were led by the "vulgar and unworthy" advertising to invest their cash in such worthless books as Dr. Farrar's.

From the *War Cry*—"Mrs. General Booth, the beloved Mother of the Salvation Army. Promoted to Glory from Clacton-on-Sea, October 4th. 1890." Promoted to Glory from Clacton-on-Sea is delicious. It beats Sir Timothy Reginald Algernon Bug.

This "Promotion" of Mrs. General Booth is signed by

Commissioner Railton, who appears to hold the keys of heaven, or else to be on very intimate terms with St. Peter. The impudence of this gentleman is quite superb. Even the Pope of Rome would never undertake to decide whether any soul, even of the greatest saint, had gone to heaven. But Railton is equal to anything.

The Salvationists make nearly all their own things, such as clothes, concertinas, trumpets, tamborines and drums, but it appears that they do not make their own coffins. There would sure to be an immense demand for Salvation coffins. No doubt the General would take weekly payments. Every purchaser would be sure of a front seat in heaven.

After some delay the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's deemed it expedient to hold a special reconciliation service at St. Paul's after the suicide of Edward Easton on Sept. 28 had "polluted and defiled" the building. We do not know if the Holy Ghost has, in the mean time, been absent from the house of God and what was the consequent effect on the services held in the interim. Bishop Temple, in conducting the service, was charitable enough to say "they knew not whether any sin of the deceased contributed to the confusion of the brain." If the Bishop read the report of the inquest he would have learned that Mr. Easton suffered from paralysis, and that he was respected by those who knew him. His Christian insinuation was uncalled for and cowardly.

The Rev. Angus M'Innes, D.D., minister of Clunie, Perthshire, has drowned himself in the Tay. We commend this fact to the attention of the stupid Christians who are still talking about poor Easton.

Mr. Churton Collins has been lecturing before the Working Men's College on the Religion of Shakespeare. He is reported as saying that Shakespeare is characterised by great reverence for religion. This only shows what different notions may be derived from the myriad-minded dramatist. Most pious people who read him find him characterised by a shocking profanity, a profanity irreconcilable with any real belief in religion.

A collector of curiosities at Bombay has a Chinese god marked "Heathen Idol" and a gold coin marked "Christian Idol."

The Rev. Webb Peploe thinks the end of all things is near at hand. All that is wanting is the 144,000 male virgins spoken of in Revelations. It is a long while since addle-headed John of Patmos prophesied the time was near at hand, but the requisite number of virgins have not been gathered together yet.

The Church party has held a big meeting at Exeter to promote the cause of Religious Education. The Bishop of Exeter presided, and the platform was thronged with lesser sky-pilots, prominent Tories, and pious ladies. The Bishop expatiated on the dangers of intellect with "a darkened and defiled conscience." One would think he believes the morals of young people will be destroyed if they are taught the multiplication table without the doctrine of the Trinity or the number of Jacob's sheep. The Earl of Morley followed in a similar vein. The Bishop of London candidly admitted that many school-teachers did not believe the religious instruction they gave. Sometimes they found a splendid schoolmaster who would not say anything about his religious opinions, but he should be put aside for an inferior master who was sound in the faith. Such a declaration is worth noting. It shows that the Church is ready to sacrifice everything else to its own dogmas.

A long speech was made by Mr. A. H. A. Hamilton, who dilated on the way in which Christianity had been attacked and ridiculed by "a man who had occupied one of the highest positions in the State, who aspired to occupy a still higher one, and who might very likely have power to shape the policy of England, to control the education of the country, to appoint Bishops and Deans, and to influence the Church as well as the State." This refers, of course, to Mr. John Morley, and we gain from Mr. Hamilton's speech that the Church party will strain every nerve to prevent Mr. Morley from obtaining power. But we venture to

prophesy that they will fail. Mr. Morley is undoubtedly a coming man, and some day or other we hope he will have a hand in wiping the Church of England, as a State religion, entirely out of existence.

The St. Pancras *Guardian* has a gird at the Rev. John McNeill, who wants a big tabernacle like the English Spurgeon. Canny John cannot get the Regent Square deacons to embark in such an enterprise, but he thinks if the Lord would send them a cheque for £50,000 they would be converted. "If the Lord would only pour out his grace upon the world in that fashion," says the *Guardian*, "the conversions would be very rapid; in fact, we fancy such sinners as Messrs. Bradlaugh and Foote, and that swashbuckling controversialist, Bob Ingersoll, would soon come round to Christianity." Of course the *Guardian* is entitled to its joke and free to "fancy," but it does not understand Messrs. Bradlaugh, Foote, and Ingersoll. If the Lord were to send us £50,000 we should push the Secular cause with fresh energy, if that were possible, and probably with greater success; and if he wanted the money back, he would have to wait till the morning of the resurrection.

The Bishop's Court at Derry, after investigating charges against the Rev. Mr. Irwin, rector of Kilrea, in connection with one Jane McKeown, finds that he, being a married man but separated from his wife, received the said Jane into his house in the evening and that she stayed with him until the morning. The Bishop has made arrangements for filling Mr. Irwin's pulpit pending the decision of the Diocesan Court in Dublin.

Rumney Parish Church, near Cardiff, has been the scene of a nice little scrimmage between the vicar, the Rev. Morgan Morgan, and his churchwarden. It was all about the blessed trinity of £ s. d. The churchwardens wanted to count the collection and take possession of the triunity. Mr. Morgan objected to this infringement of his holy prerogative.

After the benediction the vicar took up the plate containing the collection bags, and entering the vestry hastily closed the door, putting his back against it to prevent Mr. Bulgin, the people's warden, from entering. That gentleman, however, forced his way into the vestry. The vicar at once dropped the plate on to table, and crammed the collection into his breast pocket. The warden seized the clergyman by the surplice, and an exciting struggle for the possession took place. The choristers, however, rushed to the vicar's assistance, and a disgraceful scrimmage ensued. The vicar was able to escape into the chancel, and thence to the vicarage with the money. It is likely that several cases of assault will arise out of the affair.

The Rev. J. Ramsden, rector of Uffington, has been fined seventeen shillings at the Stamford Police Court for being drunk and disorderly. He appears to be a weighty divine, for it took three constables to convey him to his carriage.

This bibulous parson has an income of £800 a year and a house, and the duty of piloting 462 souls to heaven. Nearly £2 per head is a stiff price. A family of eight would find £15 a handsome addition to its income. The sky-pilot should be settled with, like other pilots, on reaching port.

"I think I have said enough," said the Rev. James Chalmers while delivering an address at Manchester on the needs of Methodism. At that very moment he fell forward, and in a few minutes, without speaking again, he expired. Was this a divine call?

Another minister, the Rev. P. J. Forfar, of Oldham Street Scotch Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, died in the "House of God" on Sunday morning. He was just commencing the communion service when he fell, and he died in an hour without recovering consciousness.

Still another death in church on Sunday! Mr. Thomas Evans, a Calvinistic Methodist deacon, at Chapel Mawr, Denbigh, went to evening service as usual. He was seen to lean backwards suddenly, and it was found that his heart had ceased to beat.

The church choir of East Barnet threatened to strike if their surplices were not washed by a favorite washerwoman. They gained their point, and now they are "whiter than the snow."

Strikes are extending. They have just had one at a Notting-Hill church. The choir boys struck against the system of fines, and the elders were compelled to surrender. Even religion will not be allowed to sanctify injustice.

In the discussion on betting at the Church Congress, Mr. Sharrock told a good story which did not get generally reported. A bookmaker of whom he knew, who was a regular attendant at church, was one day missed from his accustomed seat. The clergyman met his wife and asked the reason. "John won't be at church to-day," she said. "He has a little betting to do, but he told me he would be with you in spirit."

Wales is more thoroughgoing in its nonconformity than England. It seems that in the gallant little principality there are some seventy Board schools where there is no religious instruction. In England there are only twenty-one, and in most of these the Bible is read, while in many Board schools the Apostles' Creed is taught, though such sectarian teaching is quite contrary to the spirit of the Education Act.

The *Daily News* says of the French priests: "The impudent mendacity which represents them and their Church as living under constant persecution has now ceased to impose on those English and American readers, for whose benefit the reports were well nigh exclusively concocted. Compulsory toleration is about the worst hardship inflicted by the Republic on the Church of Rome in France. Thought is free, religious profession is free, but there is a firm determination to put the priesthood on precisely the same footing as all other Frenchmen in regard to their rights and duties towards their fellow citizens, and towards the State." This is what the Catholic organs have always called persecution. They cry out for toleration and they mean supremacy.

Mr. E. Crossley, M.P., presiding at the Halifax Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, pitched into the Rationalists and authors of *Lux Mundi*. There were men, he said, who professed to be Christians, and yet contended that the Book of Daniel was written in the time of the Maccabees. "Such a statement as that was cutting at the very root of the veracity of the Book of Daniel, and could not be allowed upon any consideration whatever." Not even, we suppose, upon the production of strong evidence in its favor, for does not J. C. speak of Daniel as having spoken of the abomination of desolation?

Amid a rigmarole of much nonsense Mr. Crossley gave utterance to one truth. He said "he was afraid we lived in an age when the Bible was never more spread and never less read in proportion to its position and the numbers in which it is distributed." Yet he was appealing for funds to distribute it further. If Mr. Crossley looked more closely into this he might find that the Jew books are comparatively so little read because the world has outgrown them.

Mr. W. T. Stead has a weakness for "knowing" eminent persons. Apparently he had the custody of the late Canon Liddon. Now he tells us of "a leading Freethinker and eminent politician" who once told him that the Atheists, Agnostics and Secularists were all on the wrong tack, and that both had done more than all of them put together. Now who is the "leading Freethinker and eminent politician"? He must be one of two, if he is anybody at all—Mr. Bradlaugh or Mr. Morley. We are sure it was not Mr. Bradlaugh, and we do not believe it was Mr. Morley. May be it was Mr. Stead, who said it to himself, in one of his moments of hallucinative fervor.

A South London Freethinker called one morning on a certain firm doing business with the house he was employed in. The principal of this firm is a fanatical Christian, and having noticed his visitor at a Secular open-air meeting on the previous Sunday, he asked him if he "belonged to that lot." "Yes," was the reply, "I have been a Freethinker for years." "Ah," said the Christian, "I was afraid so.

No infidel shall cross my threshold with my knowledge. I won't tell your employer, but if he wants to do business with me he must send someone else." To this the Freethinker replied, "Sir, you may tell anyone. I counted the cost beforehand. This infidel will not cross your threshold again. Good morning!"

The *Times* recently had a letter from one "George B.," who was horror-struck at hearing the comments passed upon a German oleograph of the crucifixion exhibited at the West-end of London. One working-man—possibly with a touch of humor—said he thought it had something to do with the Bulgarian atrocities. Another, "a cabby," is reported as saying "I should like just to know now who was there to see the thing done." "George B." was shocked at this display of ignorance in Christian England. But possibly after all the working man and the cabby knew just as much, or a little more, as to the unreality of the crucifixion as "George B." himself.

There are many pious ways of raising the wind, and the Rev. A. Collier, of Chiswick, seems by his extensive advertising to have hit on a successful one. He offers cash prizes of from £5 to 5s. to all correctly counting the letter "h" in the first four chapters of Luke. The entrance fee is only 1s. Apparently this is an easy method of adding to one's income by a simple sum in addition. The question is, how does the Rev. A. Collier pay for his advertisements and devote any surplus to the Church Building Fund, on whose behalf the "easy Biblical competition" is said to be started.

"Consistency," in the *Evening News and Post*, draws attention to the fact that Bibles, Prayer Books, and many religious journals, are printed by "sweating" houses, while Secular journals like the *Freethinker* and *National Reformer* are printed by firms that pay good wages. The *Pull Mall Gazette* also draws attention to the fact, which was set forth in a circular by the secretary of the London Compositor's Society.

Dean Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*, published towards the end of the seventeenth century, is a sample of learned lumber, yet sometimes it mentions something worth noting. Thus he tells how Al Masaudi exposes "the fraud which the Christians of Jerusalem are guilty of about lighting candles at the sepulchre of our Savior on Easter Eve. For there three lamps being placed within the chapel of the sepulchre, when the hymn of the resurrection is sung at the evening service, they contrive that these three lamps be all lighted, which they will have believed to be by fire from heaven, and then a multitude of Christians of all nations are present with candles to light them at this holy fire, which hath been a fraudulent practice kept up among them for many hundred years."

It appears that the Naples nunnery case has been greatly exaggerated. We gave currency to the newspaper report, and we give the same currency to the correction. It remains true, however, that the Prefect declares the rules of the nunnery to be too severe; in other words, the poor spouses of Christ are subjected to gratuitous mortification and suffering.

The *Times* correspondent still states, however, that the nuns were absolutely isolated, destitute of any occupation, and forbidden all intercourse with friends. Some were apparently in a state of idiocy.

The Great Premier-ship—Noah's Ark.

What are the "net" profits of fishers of men?

Solomon says "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." Yet there are many idle poor who prefer to go to their uncle.

A minister who had been drinking tea at the house of one of his flock, was asked by a little girl what he had been saying before beginning to eat. The minister told her that it was our duty to thank the Deity for his daily mercies. "Oh" said the little one, "my pa just says Goddle mighty, what a supper!"

"George," asked a minister of one of his parishioner's little boys, "Where is your sister Minnie?" "Gone to heaven, sir." "What! is she dead?" "Oh, no, sir; she went to buy a box of matches." "Why, you said she'd gone to heaven." "Well, you said last Sunday that matches were made in heaven, so I thought she went there."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Oct. 19, at the Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C.; at 7, "Mistakes of Jesus."

October 26, Hall of Science, London.

November 2, Nelson; 9, Grimsby; 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.

J. MILNER.—The book referred to is included in the so-called Apocryphal Gospels. Hone's edition sells for a few shillings.

S. STANDRING.—The application was remitted to the Organisation Committee in the usual way, and sanction has been given for a Branch at Tottenham.

A. ANDREWS.—Do you mean that Reuben May, or any such man, has a moral right to get cash from subscribers by pertinacious begging, and to stick to as much of it as he pleases without giving an account? This kind of "charity" no more commends itself to us than it does to Mr. Labouchere.

A. WRIGHT.—Surely the break up of poor Easton's health, consummated by paralysis, is sufficient to account for any "unhappiness" his mother saw. Pious mothers are apt to see great "changes" when their sons turn Freethinkers.

W. WATSON, jun., 120 Upton Park Road, Upton, Forest Gate, E. is frequently at Poplar, and will be happy to hear from C. Turner and others as to forming a Branch there.

HUMANITAS.—Shall appear.

P. W. BALDWIN.—No two persons will express the same thought precisely alike. There is such a thing as hyper-criticism.

D. WOODHOUSE.—Jokes are always welcome.

J. R. WILLOCK.—We hope the old lady was satisfied with the answer.

J. NEATE announces a meeting at the Mitford Castle Assembly Rooms, Wick Lane, this evening (Oct. 19) for the purpose of forming a Branch for the district of Bow, Homerton, and Old Ford.

F. WESTERN.—See "Acid Drops."

A. J. FIELD.—It is always a few who do the work in every society. Never mind the other matters; look to your own Branch first. We are sorry, though not surprised, to hear of the refusal of halls for Freethought lectures near Finsbury Park.

HOTSPUR (Motherwell).—Delighted to hear from you as a convert through reading the *Freethinker*. We shall be happy to give publicity to any efforts to form a Branch in your town. Mr. Gilmour is secretary of the Glasgow Branch. See address in Lecture Guide.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION'S FREE LECTURE FUND.—Hall of Science Club and Institute, £4.

W. GILMOUR.—Glad to hear Mr. Bradlaugh's anti-theological lecture at Glasgow was so well attended. Thanks for the cuttings.

QUIZ.—For the facts as to the Alexandrian Library see *Crimes of Christianity*, vol. i., pp. 43, 44, and the references in the footnotes to Gibbon. The library was destroyed by the Christians early in the fifth century, and there is not the slightest proof of the shelves having been refilled. We note your desire to have Mr. Foote's replies to Mr. Gladstone in book form, and a collection of Mr. Wheeler's best articles.

E. HANNATH.—Thanks; but we have seen the report already.

H. STEPHENSON.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

J. H. ROGERS.—We do not know how Mr. Tennyson reconciles the sentiment of "Too late, too late" with "The Larger Hope." (2) Presbyterianism distinctly teaches "eternal torments" in its Confession of Faith, ch. 33. See also *Larger Catechism* answer 29. Many of the Presbyterian Churches in England in the last century became latitudinarian on the subject of the deity of Christ, and some of them fell into the hands of Unitarians.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt—Menschenthum—Freidenker—Freethought—Truthseeker—Federation Française Bulletin Mensuel—On and Off Duty—Northern Whig—Society—Church Evangelist—Fritankeren

—Western Figaro—Halifax Free Press—St. Pancras Guardian—Cambria Daily Leader—Echo—Colerain Constitution—Belfast Weekly Star—Watts's Literary Guide—Ensign—Portsmouth Evening News—Open Court—Loyal American—Bulletin des Sommaires—Der Arme Teufel.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish our attention. 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, and Mr. Standring reports a large sale of Freethought literature at the bookstall. Mr. Foote delivers the third of the special lectures this evening (Oct. 19), the subject being "Mistakes of Jesus." This is an entirely new lecture, and should afford the Christian Evidence champions a fine opportunity.

Mr. Forder delivered the third Free Lecture at the Hall of Science, his subject being "Christian Legends." It was a very interesting discourse, and delivered to a good audience. Mr. Foote wound up the course, lecturing to a splendid audience on "Christian and Secular Morality." Some questions were asked, but there was no formal opposition.

Mr. Engstrom declined to send representatives of the Christian Evidence Society for the insolent reason that he would not bring the Secularists an audience. As a matter of fact he never did so; the audience was furnished by the Secular party. The absence of Mr. Engstrom and his colleagues has not affected the meetings, which have been all that could be desired, and the collection at the last was the largest yet taken up.

Mr. S. Standring reports that he has been asked to assist in forming a Branch at Finchley. Mr. Sutcliffe, an active, zealous, business like man, takes the secretaryship of the new Tottenham Branch.

The Assembly Rooms, Old Southgate, have been secured for five Sundays in November. A meeting to make arrangements will be held at Mr. Mison's this evening (Oct. 19) at 7. About £5 will be required for the expenses. Subscriptions can be sent to S. Standring, 9 Finsbury Street, E.C.

The Sunday Lecture Society resumes its afternoon lectures at St. George's Hall, Langham Place, London, to-day (Oct. 19) at 4 p.m. Professor Silvanus P. Thompson, lectures on "Waves of Light." Other lectures, on following Sundays, will be given by eminent scientific and literary men.

The Elsmere Institution, of University Hall, Gordon Square, is organising a number of advanced theological lectures, of which the first series are being delivered by the Rev. J. E. Carpenter in the Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand, on "The First Three Gospels and the Early Church."

This Sunday Oct. 19th, a Congress of French Freethinkers is held at the Salle de l'Ermitage, 29 Rue de Jussieu. The means of effecting a complete separation of Church and State will be the principal topic of discussion.

The Belfast *Weekly Star* gives a long account of Mrs. Besant and her recent lectures in Belfast. Of course, her lectures against Christianity are not reported, but much space is devoted to her lecture on "Why We Preach Socialism." We may remark that "We" is misleading. As the lecture was delivered under the auspices of the Belfast Branch of the N. S. S., it seems to imply that the Secular party is committed to Socialism, whereas the Secular party, as such, is purely neutral. Secularists have a right to be Socialists, but Secularism is not identified with any particular form of social agitation.

Since Mrs. Besant became a Theosophist the press has given her plenty of advertisement. You are all right if you have some kind of religion. Still, as of old, the conspiracy of silence is against the pronounced Freethought which opposes all forms of supernaturalism, even when they disguise themselves as "supernormal."

The Hyde Park Branch has for several months conducted lectures at Hammersmith with such success that it is now decided to take that station in hand permanently. The open-air lectures, which will be discontinued at the end of this month, will be resumed next March, and in the meantime lectures will be delivered indoors, commencing with the first Tuesday in November in the Hall of the Hammersmith Club. It is also intended to start an open-air station at Kilburn next March—many promises of assistance having been received from local friends, who will shortly be invited with others to attend a meeting to further consider the matter. In view of these extensions of its work, the Branch has decided to change its name to "The West London" Branch. Friends in Kilburn, or Hammersmith and environs, willing to assist in either district are requested to communicate with either Mr. C. Durrant, 16 Andover Place, Kilburn, or Mr. H. Courtney, 8 Norland Road North, Notting Hill, or with the secretary, Mr. J. F. Henley, 24 Dunster Gardens, Brondesbury.

There are a number of Freethinkers in Walthamstow, many of whom are desirous of doing propagandist work in that district. We have several members of the N. S. S. there, and one of our friends, Mr. H. Maers, 26 Marion Villas, Union Road, will be pleased to hear from others willing to form a branch.

Mr. E. S. Jones, who has again secured a scholarship at University College, Liverpool, occupied the Branch platform on Sunday evening and delivered an interesting lecture on "Has God Revealed Himself to Man?" He was answered by Mr. George Wise, of the Christian Evidence Society, in a manner which a facetious correspondent calls "not well, but too wisely."

A gentleman in the West of England orders some of our pamphlets. "I see them advertised," he says, "in the *Freethinker*, a copy of which was put in my letter-box." We hope this fact will encourage the friends who try to promote our circulation.

Frau Hedwig Henrich Wilhelmi has a long letter in the *Freidenker* on the persecution of heretics in Germany. It is strange that there should be so little freedom of speech in the land of Goethe, Kant, and Schopenhauer. We cannot help thinking that German Freethinkers would be safer if they kept their propaganda distinct from Socialism. Frau Wilhelmi is an enthusiast who has done excellent work among the more prepared Germans of America. We venture to remind her that Freethought needs workers rather than martyrs.

The National Secular Society's Almanack is in the press. Mr. Wheeler has spent a great deal of labor on the Calendar. In every respect the utmost accuracy is being aimed at. Among the contributors of articles are O. Bradlaugh, J. M. Robertson, R. Forder, G. Standring, A. B. Moss, S. Standring, and the two editors, G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler.

Two fresh numbers of Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" are now ready—*Jonah and the Whale* and *Bible Animals*. Both have been entirely rewritten, and contain a great deal of matter useful to Bible students as well as the usual exposure of Scriptural absurdities.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
John H. Powe	0	10	6	Samuel Seal	3	0	0
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H. C. B.	0	10	0				

W. H. Reynolds (Treasurer), New Cross, S. E.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT.—If an angel of the Lord were to strike the balance whether the domain ruled by Severus Antoninus was governed with the greater intelligence and greater humanity at that time or in the present day, whether civilisation and national prosperity generally have since that time advanced or retrograded, it is very doubtful whether the decision would prove in favor of the present.—Theodore Mommsen, *History of Rome*, vol. v., p. 5.

BIBLE TOMFOOLERY: END OF WORLD: MODERN PROPHECY. (From the "Liberator.")

[CONCLUDED.]

And now let us note the leading events foretold, the leading points in the tragedy of the destruction of the universe that ancient and modern saints have gloated over so much. What raptures they have been in over the horrible subject!

They expect Christ to "come down" or descend to earth! Up and down have no meaning out in the universe; but Christ, who made the universe, never knew that. He will appear to all nations at once; "as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv., 27). "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him" (Rev. i., 7).

Nothing could be more paltry and childish than all this. No cloud could be seen beyond 40 or 50 miles probably; no lightning flash would be seen so far; and how far could a man, Jesus or any man, be seen? A couple of miles perhaps. It would take some years for every eye to see Jesus, if he did come—not reckoning the blind eyes.

Oh, this stuff about the end of the world and the coming of Christ is so unspeakably silly that no language can adequately express it. The babies who wrote it were as ridiculous as those innocents who reach after the moon. Christ and his disciples had no idea the world had another side to it. They considered it a small surface that could be seen all at once from a tall mountain or from the clouds. Poor babies! And those are things people worship. If Jesus had been taught geography, we should never have had his predictions of the end of the world. He made them because he knew no better, and because his vanity got the better of the little judgment he had.

The stars shall fall upon the earth! O, gemini! Could the roof of the Exhibition Buildings fall upon a flea? As well as one star, not to name them all, could fall upon the earth. Even the planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, are each far larger than the earth, Jupiter being 300 times as big.

Many of the stars are far larger than our sun. Were the sun but pushed away to the same distance as an average-distance star, he would appear to be only as bright as one of them. Distance would not lend enchantment to the view, but the reverse.

And when all this is considered, we see the absurdity of the talk about the stars falling upon the earth as figs from a tree shaken by the wind! This implies that they were supposed to hang on to the firmament, another absurdity of the Bible.

Worse still. Jesus evidently had no conception of gravity. What is it? A magnet attracts bits of iron filings, say; and they fall in upon it from every quarter; and the earth is somewhat similar—it attracts things to it; and those things near its surface fall to the ground. Jesus thinks because figs fall, the stars may also! Being totally ignorant of gravitation, he had no idea that a thing or a person falling towards the earth from a good distance outside the atmosphere, would go round and round the earth as the moon does. The moon can never reach the earth; nor could anything else, except it came down in a straight line.

Poor Jesus thought men could fly up to heaven and fly down again because birds could fly about over our heads. The birds can fly in a dense atmosphere, but not in the upper regions of it, because there it is too thin, and too cold as well. Jesus never knew this.

Thus we show the absurdity of the Bible respecting the end of the world.

And further, the Bible writers expected the heavens would pass away with a great noise and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works to be burnt up. (2 Peter iii., 10.)

This is grandiloquent nonsense. There are no heavens to pass away; and can therefore make no noise in going. There are no elements there to melt. The stars are all fervently hot as it is—all not merely melted, but in a state of vapor. And you cannot melt vapor! The earth burning up is another absurdity. It is cooling down. Once it was incandescent; and may be again; but it cannot burn up and be consumed.

And what would become of the refuse? If the earth burnt up, a large quantity of oxygen would be required to burn it; and when the process was complete the earth would be much larger and heavier than before.

If Jesus and his friends had but known astronomy and the rudiments of chemistry, they could not have made such fools of themselves and others; and this stuff about the Judgment Day would never have been heard of by most people.

The effects of this teaching has been most disastrous and demoralising. It has led people to prepare for it—by neglect of everything earthly, to the enormous enrichment of the priests, who have netted unnumbered millions of money by this gross and ridiculous superstition. It has driven millions mad both morally and intellectually, and millions of others have gone to bed every night for years expecting to hear the midnight trumpet announcing the end of the world.

For nearly 2,000 years the quacks have preached it and grown rich upon the spoil; again and again has the date been postponed; on hundreds of occasions have people been mad enough to go out to meet Jesus from heaven, only to return home in disappointment and despair.

Fortunately, the very Churches are sick of it or treat it as a joke, forgetting that they treat Jesus as a joker in so doing. Never was a greater quack known than Jesus. And if you reject the doctrine of the end of the world, you treat him as a quack.

Whether men should be permitted to preach such rubbish is a question. I think they should; but all rational men should laugh them to scorn. In this way the fanatics may in time be relieved of their nonsense, or at least the next generation produce a smaller crop of them.

When a man preaches the end of the world and begins to expound prophecy, you may be sure he is a rogue who ought to be imprisoned, or a fool that should be sent to an asylum.

JOS. SYMES.

THE PROPHET AND THE WIDOW.

Tune—"Lord Seaforth's Strathspey."

Of all the holy men of God
We read of in the Book,
You'll hardly find Elijah's match
Who dwelt by Cherith's brook.
We know nought of his parentage
Or where he went to school;
But if the tale we read be true
Elijah was no fool.

He never was in love with work,
He scorned to plough and sow;
But sat upon the streamlet's bank
Depending on a crow
To bring him wherewithal to fill
His godly little pod.
Dame Fortune always seemed to smile
Upon the man of God.

To show his loving kindness in
The best way that he knew,
The Lord cut off the rain supply
And settled many a Jew,
And horses, oxen, sheep and goats
Were dying by the score,
To prove his tender mercy which
Endureth evermore.

Was this because their ancestors
Had climbed an apple tree?
Or was't because to gods of wood
They'd learnt to bow the knee?
Perhaps some "brother in the Lord"
Will work the problem out,
And rid such simple minds as mine
Of "philosophic doubt."

The prophet sat beside the brook
Till it was nearly dry,
When lo! a word came down to him
From out the cloudless sky,
"Arise Elijah, take your hook.
In Zarephath you'll find
A buxom widow, young and fair
Exactly to your mind.

I've told her to supply your wants,
But mind what you're about,
For nearly all my fav'rite sons,
Though ever so devout,

Fall victims to the women's wiles
And set Dame Scandal's jaw
A-wagging at the holy men
Who so forget the law."

The prophet soon was on his pins,
His togs were always packed,
His luggage never hampered him—
He'd none at all, in fact.
When he arrived at Zarephath
Said he "I'm in a fix,
Where is that widow? Oh! she's there
Out picking up two sticks.

"What ho! good dame, some water, please,
My burning thirst to slake;
But first, pray, bring me in thine hand
A little piece of cake."
"As God the Lord shall be my judge,"
The widow sadly said,
"I've hardly got sufficient meal
To make a loaf of bread."

Elijah struck an attitude—
"Go make the cake," cried he;
"The Lord of Hosts will find the meal
To feed thy boy and thee."
The widow did as she was told,
And, says this wondrous tale,
Her meal-tub wasted not at all,
Nor did her oil-can fail.

And, till God in his mercy sent
The rain upon the earth,
The prophet made himself at home
Beside the widow's hearth.
Though holy men have somewhat changed
This fact remains, at least,
That now, as then, the women-folk
Sustain the Godly priest.

T. CLARKE.

THE JEWS AND THE PIGS.

"THE attitude of the Jews to the pig was as ambiguous as that of the heathen Syrians towards the same animal. The Greeks could not decide whether the Jews worshipped swine or abominated them. On the one hand they might not eat swine; but on the other hand they might not kill them. And if the former rule speaks for the uncleanness, the latter speaks still more strongly for the sanctity of the animal. For whereas both rules may and one rule must, be explained on the supposition that the pig was sacred; neither rule must, and one rule cannot, be explained on the supposition that the pig was unclean. If, therefore, we prefer the former supposition, we must conclude that, originally at least, the pig was held to be sacred rather than unclean by the Israelites. This is confirmed by the fact that down to the time of Isaiah some of the Jews used to meet secretly in gardens to eat the flesh of swine and mice as a religious rite (Isaiah lxv., 3, 4; lxvi., 3, 17). Doubtless this was a very ancient rite, dating from a time when both the pig and the mouse were venerated as divine, and when their flesh was partaken of sacramentally on rare and solemn occasions as the body and blood of gods. And in general it may be said that all so-called unclean animals were originally sacred; the reason why they were not eaten was that they were divine."—J. G. Frazer, "The Golden Bough," vol. ii., pp. 52-53.

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REVIEW.

Congrès Universel des Libres-Penseurs Tenu à Paris du 15 au 20 Septembre, 1889. Compte-Rendu Officiel de la Commission du Congrès. Paris: E. DENTU, 1890; pp. 384. Four Francs.

THOSE who took part in the Freethought Conference held in Paris in the centennial year of the great Revolution, will naturally be pleased to see this bulky momento of the labors of the Congress. Others may doubt if there is any sufficient justification for the great expense attending such a publication. We suppose this will, in part at least, be defrayed by the generous contribution of the Paris Municipality, towards the promotion of the Congress.

The *Compte-Rendu* gives a report not only of the business of the Congress, but of what may be called its diversions in the shape of the reception by the Paris Municipality, the visits to the monuments of Dolet, Diderot, and Voltaire, and to M. Guimet's Musée des Religions; the presentation of the bust of Paine by Mr. Truelove, and the banquet and ball which concluded the affair.

It gives the full list of 235 Societies and Federations represented, with the names of delegates, and an abstract of the papers, reports, and speeches brought before the Congress. Some of these were of considerable value. Others might have been omitted without much detriment.

Among the affirmations of the Congress were that religions had become obstacles to human progress, ("*Toutes les Religions sont Immorales*" is inscribed as a motto on the cover of the report); that the method of observation is the one method of discovering truth; that morals must have in view human welfare, the extension of human life and conscience; and that education must be given without any mixture of the supernatural. Resolutions were also passed in favor of the equality of women in civil and political rights, and in favor of the secularisation of hospitals, funerals, and institutions now partially religious.

It will be seen that the International Freethought Congress of 1889 was like its predecessors, frankly atheistic. Although very much was not done in the way of putting International Freethought on a business footing, the Congress at least brought Freethinkers from all parts of the world into inter-communication, and has left as one of its results the establishment of a new French Federation of Freethinkers. The volume, like all the publications of E. Dentu, is excellently printed, and although we note a few misprints of foreign names, these are neither numerous nor serious.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

Great surprise seems to be manifested because the social question has absorbed so much of the attention of the Church Congress. Yet it is but a harking back to the old lines of the Church of England when such prelates as Latimer protested against the greed of the nobles who were starving the peasantry—perhaps we might say it is a harking back to the still older lines of the Early Church, when Christianity was spread over the Roman Empire quite as much by its Socialism as by its divine inspiration. These were times when a St. Ambrose declared that "usurpation had created private property," and when St. Jerome averred that "every rich man is either an evildoer himself or the son of an evildoer." We need not, however, fear that the bishops of our time will go as far as St. Jerome. They are themselves rich men. But it is quite clear that the regular and irregular priesthood—the bishops and dignitaries as well as officers of the Salvation Army—now admit that Christianity will no longer be accepted by the working classes unless, like the proverbial pill, it is thoroughly well sugared. Hence the rivalry between the Church and the Salvation Army in devising means for making life comfortable for the poor before they attempt to convert them. The old idea of using the Gospel as a social anodyne, by which the working man might be reconciled by the pleasures of hope to the miseries of experience is dead. The Church finds that it is a failure to offer the Catechism instead of bread to labor, or to preach a gospel to the working man the leading idea of which is that he must, in a spirit of Christian self-sacrifice, acquiesce in his own degradation. In our own time a similar attempt to graft the ideas of Socialism on Christian teaching was made not long ago by Kingsley, Maurice, Hughes, and Ludlow without satisfactory results. In Germany the late Baron von Kulleler, celebrated as Bishop of Mayence, started recently a Catholic Socialistic movement. But the main result is that when the priests make the Christian individualist a convert to Socialism, the Socialists soon develop him into a stiff agnostic.—*Weekly Dispatch*.

A quiet animal not in the Ark—a clothes horse.

Mr. Mayhew, in his *London Labor and the London Poor*, gives an account of a conversation on religion with a costermonger girl, who said, "They do say as God made the world in six days. Now I should have thought it would have taken him a fortnight to make England alone."

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. C. J. Hunt, "The Christian Creed."
Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "The Religion of Jesus and the T. of Death." Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting. Friday, at 8, Mr. Dipper opens discussion on "Trade Unionism: Old v. New."
Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 4.30, quarterly meeting; 6, tea and soiree (members 6d., non-members 9d.)
Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Mistakes of Jesus."
Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mrs. Besant, "The Life of Jesus Christ." Monday, 8.30, social gathering for members and friends.
West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 10.30, members' quarterly meeting: 7.30, The President, "Secularism and Christianity."
Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Poets of Progress."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. T. Thurlow, "All about the Devil."
Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. W. Norrish, "Christianity and Progress."
Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. H. Snell, "From Creeds and Priests good Lord deliver us."
Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 3.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Freethought in Manhood."
Finsbury Park (near the band-stand), 11.15, Mr. J. Rowney, "Genesis"; 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "God: Where and What?"
Hammersmith Bridge (Surrey side), 3.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."
Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Christian Creed."
Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: are they True?"
Old Southgate—At Mr. Mison's, 7, Mr. Sam Standing.
Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "The Origin of Religion."
Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Man's Place in Nature."
Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "The Jews' March from Egypt."
Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam. Standing, "Sermons from Shakespeare, I—Who Steals my Purse?"

COUNTRY.

Glasgow—Waterloo Rooms, Waterloo Street, 6.30, Mr. J. Macluskay, "Individualism and Socialism."
Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, Mr. J. Hooper, 11, "Birth, Life, and Death of Jesus Christ"; 7, "How I became an Atheist and why I remain one." Two children to be named after the evening lecture.
Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, Mrs. Thornton Smith, 11, "Perpetual Pensions: Now and 1974"; 3, "Hypnotism"; 6.30, "Responsibility from a Secular Standpoint." Admission free; discussion invited.
Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—3, discussion class: 7, Mr. Harry Smith, "Daniel."
Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, Mr. H. Smith (of Leeds), "Social and Anti-Social Reforms."
Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mr. A. Clifton, "Agnosticism: From an Inquirer's Point of View."
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 3, debating class, Mr. Hore, "Hypnotism"; 7, Mr. Pinhorne, "City of the Sun."
Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, 11, "The Eight Hour's Movement, For and Against—by Law or Civilisation, Which?"; 3, "Myth in Religion"; 7, "The Political situation."
South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3, Mr. H. Smith (of Leeds), "Devolution v. Evolution."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Oct. 19 (evening) Woolwich; 26 (morning and afternoon) Finsbury Park; 30, Tower Hamlets Radical Club.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—Oct. 19, Liverpool. Nov. 9, Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Oct. 19 (morning) Battersea Park, (evening) Battersea Secular Hall.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—Oct. 26, Woolwich. Nov. 9, Battersea; 23, Woolwich. D.C. 7, Reading; 21, Woolwich.

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