

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

BOOTH WANTS A MILLION.

"GENERAL" BOOTH is an enterprising man. He follows up the grotesque advertisement of his wife's funeral parade by the publication of a vast scheme of social reform in which he is prepared to act the rôle of regenerator of society. The book in which he sets forth his scheme was hurriedly announced to be on sale on Monday, but on application could not be obtained. Writing, therefore, simply from newspaper advance reports of the contents of the volume, I do not propose to enter into the details of his scheme, even if this were the place to do so. It appears to contain nothing new. Owen, Fourier, Cabet, and others stigmatised as infidels, have sought to establish self-supporting colonies. My friend Mr. E. T. Craig, who has shown what could be done at Ralahine, is referred to by General Booth, but he seems unacquainted with what has been done in German agricultural colonies. He appears, indeed, not to enter upon those root questions of population, heredity and education, which move thinkers like Morison, Huxley and Laing, but simply deals with those palliatives which philanthropists and charitable bodies have long attempted to apply, with nett results extremely dubious to reflecting minds. But "General" Booth is a shrewd, practical man and a capable organiser. He knows what will take, and we may rest sure his schemes will receive all the attention they merit.

What is noticeable is this. In appealing for a huge sum of money Booth finds, after long experience, he must offer something more than promotion to glory hereafter. He has to offer material means to attain secular improvement in this world. He has to offer to improve the condition of the masses. He has to enter on projects for which the Salvation Army was not designed, and from which it for some time kept aloof.

After the divine truths of Christians have been preached for eighteen hundred years, after twenty-five years of the Salvation Army preaching of the Gospel, it has come to this, that "General" Booth draws a picture of the state of vice and wretchedness in England that makes Darkest Africa almost shine in comparison. He tells us that a tenth of the population, or roundly, three millions of people, are submerged in sin. The condition of the homeless, the out-of-workers, the harlots and the drunkards, is depicted as so terrible that no one less than "General" Booth himself, with a million of money and an immense army at his command, can grapple with the problem. What is this but an indictment of the Christian churches and the religion which has left the people in so pitiable a state. It is indeed an indictment of God himself "General" Booth says, as quoted in the *Daily News* :—

"I am quite satisfied that these multitudes will not be saved in their present circumstances. All the clergymen, home missionaries, tract distributors, sick visitors, and every one else who care about the salvation of the poor may make up their minds as to that. If these people are to believe in

Jesus Christ, become the servants of God, and escape the miseries of the wrath to come, they must be helped out of their present social miseries."

Let the reader consider this. He will see much sound sense in it. Secularists have never ceased urging that the needs of this world must take precedence of all others, and "General" Booth has apparently come round to their opinion. But what does his mixture of theology mean? It means simply this, that God has left masses of his creatures in such a position that they cannot escape "the miseries of the wrath to come," unless the Salvation Army first takes care of their bodies and afterwards of their souls, for Booth is careful to qualify the secular sense of the above by saying that religion is his only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery either in this world or the next.

Booth wants a million. A good round sum. Perhaps he will get it. Thousand pound cheques are already rolling in. In this wealthy country there are hosts of people with more money than they actually know what to do with, who are lamentably conscious they did not produce their wealth and that they are living in luxury while others are starving around them. To give to any scheme which promises to do good, without investigating the ultimate results of their gifts, offers an anodyne to their consciences, and may even prepare the way to riches eternal, since "he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." I would far rather see a million spent on the effort to grapple with human misery than in the worship of God. Even if the one proved as chimerical as the other, it should at least offer a better lesson to future generations. The cash asked for by Booth is after all petty compared with the vast revenues annually wasted on religion. But there is always the danger in a secular undertaking conducted under a religious organisation, that the humanitarian will give way to the pious enterprise. This little life is so petty compared with an eternal one, that its misery must appear as nothing in comparison with the chance of eternal misery. The truth is Secularism and Religion will not mix, and Booth's blend will have no more efficacy than others which have preceded it. Either the secularism will destroy the religion or the religion the secularism. Booth's scheme will give fresh *éclat* to the Salvation Army, and make it more than ever the resort of those unfit for the conditions of modern life. But of its ultimate results being for the benefit of humanity I am not over sanguine.

"General" Booth, it must be remembered, is the tortoise on which the Salvation Army world rests. When he, in the cant phrase of the Army, is "promoted to glory," what guarantee have those who made their cheques payable to him that the work will continue? His sons and heirs may have every disposition to carry it on, yet lack that great organising power which their father undoubtedly possesses and which is essential to the success of his schemes. Many without confidence in the schemes themselves will yet look forward to their results with interest and attention.

J. M. WHEELER.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—XI.

ON "WHAT IS THE BIBLE?"

To Archdeacon Farrar.

SIR,—I propose to discuss your lecture on "The Bible: What Is It?" The lecture was delivered to an audience of young men, on a Sunday afternoon, in the City of London. It is now extensively circulated as a penny pamphlet. Its style is popular—not to say free-and-easy—and my criticism shall be equally informal.

I see by the title-page that you are Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen, Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster, and Rector of St. Margaret's. I also observe that you have been offered the Chaplaincy of the House of Commons. Without this, however, your pluralities bring you nearly £1,500 a year, and it is a matter of public information that your various writings have brought you many thousands of pounds. These facts may account for the weight you discover in no very massive arguments; and if, as your Church declares, belief is amenable to will, it is far from difficult to understand the decisive pressure of a handsome income in one of the scales of judgment.

In your exordium you bespeak sympathy on account of "the fatigues of a London clergyman's Sunday." Few men, however, can be persuaded that clergymen are a hard-worked body. Their fatigues are nothing to those of some lawyers and many doctors, nor comparable to those of millions of poor men who work laboriously for a scanty maintenance. Some men work six days and rest on the seventh; others work on the seventh day and rest on the six.

Your opening remarks on the Bible command my assent. The Bible is not a book, but a literature; not the work of one man, but perhaps of a hundred. I cannot, however, agree with your statement that it includes "all that remains of the library and the literature of God's ancient people, the Jews." The New Testament does not fall into this category, and Protestants exclude the Apocrypha from the Old Testament. Perhaps you will call this hypercriticism, but accuracy is a valuable virtue, and a well-paid public teacher should be careful in his statements.

"Many of the sacred books of the world," you say, "were written by single men." This is a sweeping allegation. You instance the Koran, but how many more could you mention, if we exclude the philosophies of Confucius and Lao-tse? Even the Koran was not entirely the work of Mohammed. Sale admits "it is highly probable that he had no small assistance in his design from others, as his countrymen failed not to object to him."

You speak of the Bible as a Jewish book from Genesis to Revelation, and of its composition as covering a period of "something like fifteen hundred years." Allow me to ask the meaning of "something like." Do you assert that any portion of the Old Testament can be dated twelve centuries before the birth of Christ? Are you prepared to maintain this assertion in debate, or even to make it in the presence of competent scholars? Will you also maintain the Jewish authorship of the whole of the New Testament, which is written in Greek? Neither you nor any man knows the real authors of half of the Epistles, and the First Gospel betrays a striking ignorance of Jewish laws, manners and customs.

David and Solomon are spoken of as Bible authors. Do you believe this, or were you following the law of "accommodation"? Would you like to assert the Davidic authorship of the Psalms against Kuenen or Wellhausen, or even against Oort or Hooykaas? Are you ready to break a lance with Renan? And if not, why not? Surely it is undignified to make rash assertions before city young men, which you would hesitate to champion before scholars and critics.

You have yourself admitted, in your *Life of Solomon*, that his authorship of the Canticles is "in

the highest degree improbable." Luther allowed, what subsequent criticism has established, that he did not write Ecclesiastes. Every scholar regards it as a post-exile production, and with this judgment you concur in the work I have mentioned. Canon Cheyne confesses, and you have not disputed his conclusion, that "it is indeed a pure hypothesis that any Solomonic element survives in the Book of Proverbs." In fact, the ascription of a volume of Proverbs to a single man is perfectly ludicrous. Proverbs have well been called the wisdom of many and the wit of one; but the one is found in different ages.

What, then, becomes of your "great King David and King Solomon, authors of the Bible?" Were I of your church, as happily I am not, I should blush to see one of its leaders practising on the credulity of an ignorant audience.

Still, your statement holds good, that the Bible was written by many hands. You declare this to be "an immense advantage." And it is so, if the writing is human. We gather, in consequence, a more faithful idea of the superstition of ages and the growth of mental and moral culture. But if the writing is divine, what advantage is derived from the multiplicity of scribes? The real author, in that case, is God, who is not susceptible of development; and, being almighty, he could as easily inspire one man to write a hundred books as a hundred men to write one.

You next proceed to declare that "the Bible is not all on the same level of value, it is not all equally sacred, it is not all equally authoritative, it is not all equally divine." I agree with a portion of this; from the rest I dissent. Different parts of the Bible, as of most other books, are of different value, and in that sense of different authority; but how can different parts of a "sacred" volume be of different sacredness, or of different divinity? If you mean that the Bible is partly inspired, and partly uninspired, partly God's word and partly man's, I ask you who is to decide their relative proportions? How is it that the churches do not separate the divine and human elements from each other, and publish them separately or print them in different types? I suspect they dare not venture on such an experiment. The attempt would only lead to acrid and endless discussion; what one party would reject another would retain; and unanimity on this matter could only be produced by the operation of a greater miracle than any which is recorded in Scripture.

"There is the greatest possible difference," you say, "between the morality of some parts of the Old Testament and some parts of the New." Precisely so, and the difference is as great between various parts of either Testament. This is to be expected in human compositions ranging over several centuries, but how strange in a volume inspired by absolute goodness and infallible wisdom! Has the Deity his moments of lassitude and indifference, or is he subject to the darker frailties of mankind?

You approve the method of picking and choosing from the Bible, and refer to reason and conscience as our guides. I acknowledge them as *my* guides, but I deny that they enable me to discriminate in any document the human element from the divine. They enable me to discriminate between true and false, and good and bad; but how am I to tell at what point the true and good rise above human capacity, or at what point the false and bad sink beneath the capacity of the Power you assert to be the ruler of the universe? I have no criterion and you afford me none. I will go still farther, and declare that I never met with a sentence in the Bible which is superior to whatever I have read in the writings of profane poets and philosophers, although I have met with many sentences that Plato or Homer, Bacon or Shakespeare, would never have stooped to write or been base enough to conceive.

You tell me that slavery was permitted in the Old Testament, but is "forbidden by the spirit of the

New Testament." The *spirit* of a book, however, is never exactly the same to any two readers. All that can be discussed is the *letter*. This is sufficiently voluminous, and I ask you to point to a single passage in the slightest degree reprehending the institution of slavery.

With respect to polygamy you grossly misrepresent Christ's answer to the Pharisees who questioned him on the subject of divorce. Nothing was said on that occasion about polygamy. "May we not marry many wives?" was not the question, and "I do not allow it" was not the reply. You have inserted these items, and it furnishes another illustration of your *accuracy*, and of the *critical* character of your audience.

Similar looseness prevails in your treatment of the Bible as an authority. You refer to "things which are no longer binding on Christians." Nay, you say of such things "They are not the Word of God to us." But the "us" is not defined, and the moment you attempted to define it you would be face to face with the fact that you are only speaking for yourself. If there are any portions of the Bible that are not the Word of God to Christians, why do they not plainly specify them? And if such portions are "no longer binding upon Christians," will you state when and why they ceased to be binding. Further, if they are not the Word of God "to us," were they ever the Word of God to others? If they were, you must allow that those who held them to be such were deceived, or that what is the Word of God in one age ceases to be so in another. The first alternative involves the possibility of *your* being mistaken, and the second is either a gross absurdity, or it "makes the Word of God of none effect" by subjecting it to earthly vicissitudes.

It is idle to put these objections aside by remarking that "We do not know" and "We do not understand." No doubt there are many things you do not know, and many you do not understand; and this is an excellent reason for silence until you are better informed and more sagacious; but it is a very poor reason for expecting inquiry to be dumb and reason to shrink abashed in your presence.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

JOURNALISM AND SCEPTICISM.

A CONFERENCE in connection with the "Christian Association" has recently taken place at Southport, and its otherwise profoundly unimportant proceedings have attracted some measure of public attention in consequence of a discussion which turned upon the question whether newspaper men are in the main a body of sceptics. Of course, the parsons—who can agree upon nothing—disagreed upon this interesting point. The president (Dr. Moore) quietly assumed *his* case, after the manner of his kind, and asked "how it was that newspaper reporters as a rule were sceptics, and that newspapers themselves were managed by sceptics?" The president was checkmated by a Cheltenham parson, who, speaking from alleged experience in connection with a number of provincial journals, contended that these at least "had on their staff a number of reverent, earnest, godly young men who were delighted to give the fairest and best reports of Christian meetings."

The rev. gentleman from Cheltenham must be a singularly ingenuous person. His acquaintance with journalism certainly cannot be of a practical character, or he would not suggest that it rested with the "reverent, earnest, godly," young reporters to decide whether their reports should be long or short. It is the editor or sub-editor who determines that question; and, in London daily journalism at least, the reporter's instructions often specify the number of lines which he is required to furnish.

What are the facts relating to the prevalence of scepticism amongst journalists? To answer this—so far as my own experience enables me to answer it—the matter must be divided into two distinct parts: (1) the management and policy of a journal; (2) the individual opinions of journalists themselves. With regard to the first point, it may be said that everything, or nearly everything, depends upon the influence of a given line of policy upon the circulation of the paper. For example, the professing Christians in this country are vastly more numerous than professing Secularists. Therefore, the editor of a daily paper will give four columns to a report of the proceedings of a Church Congress, while he will not devote four lines to a conference of the N. S. S. But imagine these conditions to be reversed: then you will find the papers competing against one another to furnish the fullest and best reports of our Conferences, while Christ and him crucified would be left out in the cold. There is one class which the editor of a daily paper invariably regards as the class to be considered, catered for, and truckled to; that is the *buying* class, to which the advertiser appeals. When the purchasing class cease to read a paper, the advertisers desert it, since their advertisements are useless. When the advertisers desert a paper, all that that paper requires is a decent funeral. If the Freethinkers of Great Britain could furnish a daily paper with 100,000 readers, capitalists would be tumbling over one another to "fill a long-felt want." When, therefore,—to quote Dr. Moore—it is found "that if some man was announced to make a speech upon agnosticism, the news reporters would all be there, and an account would appear in the next morning's dailies; whereas in the case of a Christian convention, perhaps they would be dismissed with a paragraph;" the simple explanation is that the editor believes that a full report of a lecture on agnosticism will be more interesting to his readers—and will therefore more beneficially influence his circulation and revenue from advertisements—than a full report of a Church convention. In fine, where newspaper proprietors find that the bolstering-up of religion is not commercially profitable, then they drop religion with the celerity usually associated with a hot potato. The newspaper editor believes in one God—the Supreme, Omnipresent ADVERTISER, manifesting Himself chiefly through two channels of revelation, pills and soap. Every "able editor" is concerned chiefly with the service; directly or indirectly, of this majestic Being.

(2). The private opinions of journalistic "as sich" do not affect to any great degree the policy of the papers for which they work. You will find Freethinkers and Socialists galore upon the staffs of important newspapers, writing leaders and other articles which do not express their own ideas, but the views with which the paper itself is identified. For example, a few years ago the editor of a flourishing Tory and Religious organ in the provinces told me that he personally was a Republican and an Atheist. He sold his skilled labor to his employers at the market-price; and, he added, "if the readers are fools enough to believe what I write, so much the worse for them!" I told him I considered intellectual prostitution of that kind to be more detestable than physical prostitution; and that opinion I still hold. It is to be hoped—perhaps against hope—that such cases are rare.

Amongst the rank and file of journalists I have found very few professing Christians, and I know many, who, in private at least, have no hesitation in avowing their Freethought views. But the prevailing tone is one of utter indifference. "A plague on both your houses" the average pencil-pusher would say. Some time ago a large number of journalists assembled at a press-dinner in Birmingham. The editor of the *Daily Post* occupied the chair, and, before the carnage commenced, he asked if any gentleman would volun-

teer to say grace. He waited amid painful silence for a few seconds, and then remarked that perhaps it would be as well to fall to without further delay. Methinks that little incident fairly typifies the "attitude of the press" with regard to religion. These men wanted their dinner, and woe betide the man—be he aggressive Christian, or aggressive unbeliever—who stood between them and their heart's desire!

GEORGE STANDRING.

THREE FIRE-PROOF JEWS.

LONG, long ago, when lies were true, and common things were rare,
By Babel's streams, three castrate Jews did grow on meagre fare;

Quite fire-proof, incombustible, and non-conducting too;
In fact, each eunuch was unique, but for the other two."

The King of Babylon, we read, had made a god of gold,
And set it up in Dura's plain, that all might it behold;
And said, "If any worship not, nor do as I desire,
I'll have him bound both hands and feet, and cast into a fire.

These three young Jewish neuters said, "We'll never bow
the knee

To any kind of foreign god, wherever he may be;
In short, O king! we'll only do what Judah's god permits;
And here we may remark that he can lick your god to fits."

The king got mad with rage, and swore a Babylonish swear;
Said he, "I'll show your great I AM how much for him I
care:

So light the fire! pile up the wood! and make the furnace
hot,
Then tie them up and throw them in—I'll scarify the lot!"

The king could scarce believe his eyes, when shortly he did
see

Four people strolling through the flames, where he had
thrown but three;

"The fourth must be some fire-clay god—Old Nick himself
from hell—

To stand, and make these others stand, this roasting fire so
well."

"Make haste! let Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego come
out;

Their god's the 'boss,' whate'er his name—of that there is no
doubt—

Jehovah, Satan, Yah or Nick, or any name you chose;
So glorify the fire-proof god of these asbestos Jews."

G. L. MACKENZIE.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERLY LOVE.

An American clergyman and contributor to the well-known *Andover Review* resolved some time since to suspend his pastoral duties for awhile and spend some time in personal observations of the habits and ways of the people. His experiment led to the curious discovery that the old cruel prejudice against the colored race had disappeared everywhere, with one exception, and that was the local Young Men's Christian Association. This, he bids us observe, was not in Georgia, or South Carolina, but in the great city of Topeka, in the State of Kansas. It had been asserted that the negroes were not allowed in certain hotels and restaurants, and with a view to test the truth of this statement he took with him a well-dressed and intelligent young negro. At the first respectable hotel which they visited they were treated well and exactly alike. At the next place they determined to separate. It was one of the most fashionable restaurants in the locality; still the negro customer was politely received and promptly served. So was it at another house where rumor had alleged that negroes were absolutely forbidden to enter. Then it was that, encouraged by this liberal treatment, they made bold to enter the City Young Men's Christian Association, and apply for a ticket of membership on behalf of the clergyman's colored companion. Satisfactory references were tendered;

but they were of no avail. After some conversation, admission, we are told, was politely refused "on the ground of color, and that only."—*Daily News*.

ACID DROPS.

Principal James Cusack and Principal John Gallagher, together with a pious builder named Guilfoyle, have crusaded successfully against the reading of some of Longfellow's verses by the children in Brooklyn schools. They scented improprieties in the fine "Building of the Ship." Here is one awful passage:

"And for a moment one might mark
What had been hidden by the dark,
That the head of the maiden lay at rest,
Tenderly, on the young man's breast."

Such terrible impurity is not to be allowed to corrupt the youth of Brooklyn. They should read instead, we presume, the sweet, wholesome and edifying story of Lot and his daughters, and other exquisite narratives of the Holy Bible.

The Siena cathedral has been half destroyed by fire. God's own houses are not under proper protection. Surely some of the angels "loafing around the throne" should be told off to watch these places. It strikes a chill into a really faithful Christian to learn that the Siena cathedral was insured to the tune of a million francs. A public-house (another spirit shop) is not obliged to take greater precautions.

During a children's service at the Church of St. Stanislaus, Chicago, one of the candles ignited the altar draperies. Immediately there was a rush for the doors, fifteen hundred adults sharing with the children in the stampede. The fire was quickly extinguished, but scores of children had been trampled on and several very seriously injured.

Now look at this for a moment. Nothing but religion, we are told, can take away the fear of death; and here are persons in a church, engaged in religious service, who, at the cry of "fire," not only rush to the doors in a panic terror, but trample down poor little children in their senseless, cowardly flight.

A new Bishop of Dover has just been consecrated. Several other bishops laid hands on him and gave him a special supply of the Holy Ghost. What they cannot give him is any more honesty and common sense than he had before.

A correspondent of the *Journal de Bruxelles* eulogises Cardinal Manning to the skies. "What an admirable Pope he would have made!" exclaims the writer. So far we quite agree with him. Manning is a born ecclesiastic, and would befit the papal chair. You have only to look in his face to see that he is perfectly ready, if he had the chance, to seize every heresy by the throat and throttle it, and if the heretics were throttled at the same time it would not disturb a single nerve in his body.

We differ from the Brussels writer, however, when he prophesies that the "robustness of the Roman Church" will one day draw the masses to the pale of Catholic Unity. The schoolmaster is abroad, and he is playing havoc with all churches.

The Rev. H. R. Baker is giving a series of lectures at Woolwich on Christian Socialism. If his capacity for grappling with the social problem may be judged from the following, he might as well confine his attention to the world to come. He is reported as saying: "It is said that only 5 per cent. of the working people of East London go to any place of worship. If people will not serve God, will lead godless, faithless lives, how can they expect a blessing? When a whole class live without God is it any wonder that matters go wrong with them? Have the working classes ever put this question to themselves?"

The Revision Committee of the Presbyterian Church, sitting at Pittsburgh, America, have made radical changes in their doctrine of fore-ordination. Just fancy mortal men sitting down to revise the eternal decrees of God. Truly

the spirit of blasphemy is abroad. Where will it end? Jahveh himself may yet be revised away into thin air.

Spurgeon holds on tight to everlasting hell and damnation, and an advanced Baptist in the *Christian World* calls on the Baptist Union to break away from its fear of "the threatenings of a great and godly man, who has lost touch with men and let the world go past him." All this means that people will not stand Hell as hot as they used to.

"Tuesday's ceremony," says "Urbanus" in the *Echo*, "gave many of us the first opportunity of seeing a grand march of the Salvationists. Physically they are a poor lot, and are mostly town born and bred. They are intent on saving souls; they demonstrate to me the absolute necessity of saving bodies."

The great Socialist Congress at Halle received a lengthy communication from the Salvation Army in London, which according to the *Daily News* was "received by the Congress with derisive laughter."

More facts for the Christians who made so much of a single Atheist's suicide! Sidney Clay, a builder's clerk, residing at 216 Euston Road, London, committed suicide by taking cyanide of potassium. In a letter to his wife he said, "God bless you," and "I trust the most High and most Merciful will forgive me this rash deed."—Alfred G. Clark shot himself in a railway carriage. He also prayed "God to forgive the deed."

Orthodox Jews seem as bad as orthodox Christians. Like their London brethren, the New York Freethinking Jews decided to have a meeting and a dance on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. A hall was hired and Mr. Pentecost was engaged to speak, but when the time came the hall was closed for twenty-four hours by order of the Mayor. This little trick was worked by the orthodox Jews. They got coroner Levy to translate the heretic Jews' circular for the Mayor, and this worthy stuffed in a lot of his own composition about dynamite and the destruction of the family and private property. Such a paltry dodge is almost incredible, and the Mayor was a fool to fall into such a trap.

The Cobden Hotel, Birmingham, appears to be a Quaker institution, and according to the *Daily Mail* the servants are required to go to services held in the hotel by the Quakers, where they are kept till nearly twelve at night, whilst they are required to be up next morning at half-past five. No doubt they rise in a godly frame of mind.

It seems that the case of the ritualistic practices of the Rev. Bell-Cox will be brought again before the law courts. We do not like the prospect of conscientious clergymen being imprisoned, and hope that before the case is decided a law will be passed substituting deprivation for imprisonment in the case of contumacious clergymen.

The *Daily News*, in a recent leader, has a good irreverent story about the fellows of a certain college. They held a meeting to dispose of some windfall of college money, and at that meeting certain of the fellows did not attend. "And what did you do then?" was asked. "Oh, we confounded the persons and divided the substance," was the answer.

The Rev. W. H. Bull, vicar of Hook-with-Warsash, Hants, appears to have been following in the footsteps of King David. He is a married man with a grown-up family, but is alleged to have got his young domestic servant into the family-way and then married her to a coachman. A letter from the vicar to the bride, enclosing a £5 note, was opened by the coachman, and the Bishop of Winchester has been made acquainted with the contents of the compromising letter.

The Cape of Good Hope Bank has had to close its doors, and according to the Bishop of Cape Town the whole of the funds available for the clergy were in that bank. The bishop was so affected that he confessed himself unequal to the preparation of his sermon. Apparently he has little confidence that the Lord will provide.

Owing to the elopement of the Rev. Mr. Sanborn, pastor of the Congregationalist church at Eureka (U.S.) with another man's wife, his congregation has broken up and joined the Presbyterian denomination.

A murderer named Austin has been jerked to Jesus at Graham's Town, South Africa. He was duly prepared for the company of Joshua, Samuel and David by the dean, who appeared in full canonicals at the scaffold and read the Burial Service over the yet living man, beginning "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away." The *Cape Mercury* and the *Natal Witness* express themselves disgusted with these farcical proceedings.

At Rugby police court Rev. E. H. Barton, curate of Newbold, was summoned for assaulting his wife. The parties did not appear. Mr. Peagam, representing complainant, asked that the case might be withdrawn as a settlement had been effected. After a brief discussion the case was struck out. Great interest had been excited in the district, rumors of an extraordinary character being afloat. The defendant had been previously summoned by his wife at Droitwich and bound over to keep the peace.

Dreadful floods in Senegal have resulted in sweeping away many towns and villages and the destruction of thousands of lives, apparently of small account to their Maker.

"One in Search of Truth" sends the following pertinent query to the *Twentieth Century*: "Taking it for granted that Christ was the son of God, it is now over eighteen hundred years since there fell from his lips the Lord's Prayer, in which he asked the Father to see to it that 'Thy' (the Father's) 'will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Now, did the Father hear the prayer of Christ? and if so, why did he not answer it? Is he able to enforce his will? Certainly the prayer of Christ has not been answered by the Father up to date, and if the Father did not answer the prayer of his son, what reason have we to hope or expect that he will answer the prayers of any one else?"

The Rev. J. B. Penfold has preached a sermon against scepticism and agnosticism, which has the place of honor in the *Church of England Pulpit*. This gentleman thinks that Professor Huxley and other critics of Christianity are actuated by vanity, and perhaps by a spirit of revenge. It does not occur to him that they are possessed by a love of truth. All the best qualities of heart and head are found in Christians; unbelievers are stupid, or vain, or wicked. Who doubts it? Penfold says so, and he knows, he knows.

At the same time, we observe, Mr. Penfold no longer maintains the inspiration of all the Old Testament, which he calls the Hebrew Scriptures, as though it were not an integral part of the Christian Bible. In other words, Mr. Penfold calls the sceptics names, but he is obliged to make concessions to them. Theirs is the solid victory, and they can afford to smile at his ill temper.

Colonel John Twigg, who has been stationed in India, says: "The spreading of Christianity is a hopeless task. The few converts made come from the lowest and vilest classes, and they take up Christianity only as a matter of profit and greed. To illustrate the character of the converts or native Christians, I can only point to an ayah, or female nurse, in my family. My sister asked her if she ever thought of becoming a Christian. She said 'No;' that the 'Karastans,' as she called them, of India were given to lying and stealing. This ayah denied that we were Christians, simply because we did not commit the crimes prevalent among the native Christians."

It is said that at a Congress of Brahman priests in India it was proposed that Jesus Christ and Mohammed should be acknowledged as incarnations coming after Buddha. Perhaps they may think, however, they have got the first named already in the person of Krishna.

The Postmaster at Calcutta has, it appears, refused to transmit the monthly Freethought journal, the *Cosmopolitan*, through the post. It is surprising if an anti-Christian journal can be suppressed in this way in a country where

the majority of the people are opposed to Christianity. We hope to hear that Mr. Kavyabisharad, the editor and proprietor, has received an apology from the Postmaster. At any rate we feel sure he is not the man to submit to injustice.

The Southgate friends exhibited on Mr. Hillier's notice board a Religious Tract Society's picture of Latimer and Ridley being burnt by their fellow Christians. They headed it "See how these Christians love one another!" Some of the loving ones obliterated that picture with a tar-brush. Other orthodox pictures have had filth thrown at them. Southgate Christians cannot stand their own productions.

At a meeting of the Trinitarian Bible Society at Leicester the Rev. James Neil denounced the British and Foreign Bible Society for circulating corrupted versions of the Holy Scriptures. Ours is the only true and correct revelation, says the T. B. S., and those who add or take away from it will infallibly be damned.

The *Medium and Daybreak* treats its readers to a rignarole of absurd bosh, which is pretended to have been uttered by the spirit of Edward Easton, the suicide at St. Paul's. We never met Mr. Easton, but those who have met him find it absurdly fraudulent. The spirit says he will probably give an account of his own cremation another week; that is, we suppose, if the medium can in the meantime learn the particulars.

A pamphlet setting forth the advantages of a certain mining property in Mexico prays "May God grant that foreigners, both capitalists and workmen, may be convinced of the magnificent richness of Quanteinoc." What a beautiful mixture of piety and business. Evidently the Pecksniff race is far from extinct.

Dr. Moore, addressing an annual Conference of the Christian Association at Southport, said the London papers were in the hands of sceptics and Jews, people that really had no interest in Christianity at all, but would like to throttle and destroy it. We fancy Dr. Moore exaggerates. We wish he didn't.

The *Methodist Times* has a high opinion of hymns; it declares that men of genius have written fine poems, but "the conception of the perfect hymn has been beyond them." The perfect hymn is generally produced by men with "no title to genius." Very true, Mr. Hughes, and why? Because, as a great German said, religion is the poetry of unpoetical minds.

"Being Honest with the Bible" is the title of a leading article in the *Christian World*. We cannot see where the honesty comes in. Our contemporary's position is this—We shall make, because we cannot help it, as many admissions as are wrung from us by scientific criticism; but we shall explain all the mistakes in the Bible by saying that there are mistakes in Nature, and faith bids us believe in a wise, good God behind both. Such an argument, if it can be called an argument, would establish the divinity of Mumbo Jumbo.

Water cannot rise above its source, but Robert Buchanan can. His father was a Freethinker and a Socialist missionary in the old Robert Owen days, and the son now rails against the "strange anarchy" of this age, and is going to start the *Modern Review* to put a crooked and perverse generation straight. "We shall speak fearlessly," says Robert, "on every subject, and on only one reverentially—that of Natural Religion, in which I hold to be the hope and salvation of the human race; and we shall endeavor to secure all voices of public opinion, except those of pot-house politicians and professional blasphemers." For our part, we very much doubt if these persons would ever honor Robert Buchanan with copy. A pot-house politician or a professional blasphemer is something above a sneak. Robert Buchanan seems to have forgotten Thomas Maitland; other people have longer memories.

Canon Hegarty, parish priest of Glanmire, County Cork, has a hatred of reporters, and on Sunday last he blazed out against a member of that tribe who sat notebook in hand.

The Canon descended the altar steps and demanded the notebook, and as it was not given up he called on the congregation to snatch it away. This failing, he called on a policeman to turn the reporter out, but the cause of all this trouble declined to leave till mass was over. Finally the constable obtained possession of the notebook.

Why this terrible fuss about a reporter? Is Canon Hegarty ashamed of having his utterances published? He stickles for "confidence between a priest and his congregation," but he can hardly be silly enough to suppose that anything said to a churchful of people can be secret.

Pope Pecci has issued another idle circular. He warns Italy of its evil ways in refusing to restore his temporal power and attending to other things in preference to the Church. "To such a pass have we come," he says, "that we have to fear for this Italy of ours the loss even of the faith." We hope the fear is well founded.

The *Tagblatt* maintains the truth, in spite of all denials of its revelations as to the Nunnery of the Buried Alive at Naples, and asserts that the Naples solicitor-general has obtained an indictment against the priests who manage the convent.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, the American authoress, wrote a fierce attack recently on the low-necked dresses of her countrywomen. Still more recently she has written, in conjunction with her husband, the Rev. Howard Ward, a story called *Come Forth*. The gentleman who comes forth is Mr. Lazarus, who is summoned from the tomb by Mr. Jesus Christ. Both personages are described at length with American freedom and gush, and the story is one of love and adventure as well as miracle. In the preface the two pious writers say they mean no irreverence to the Savior. Very likely not. What they mean is to rake in the shekels, and all (even J. C.) is grist for their mill.

Mr. Downes, the editor of *Great Thoughts*, has been lecturing at Halifax on "The greatest personage in history"—to wit, Jesus Christ. He told his audience that the existence of Jesus Christ was "testified to by the heathen writers living in his time." This is absolutely false, and Mr. Downes should know it, as perhaps he does. We challenge him to name a single profane writer, Jew or Gentile, living in the time of Christ, who so much as alludes to him. It is very easy to presume on the credulity of ignorant audiences; has Mr. Downes the courage to answer our challenge?

Baptism may be good for the soul, but sometimes it is dangerous to the body. A sick woman at Perry, Michigan, was persuaded by her relatives to get baptised in the dipping fashion, and she died soon after being taken out of the water. Her child was to have been treated to the same blessing, but was rescued by indignant neighbors.

Archdeacon Farrar is becoming a fine pluralist, and the fact is calculated to repress his best friend's sympathy with his denunciation of sweating publishers. As Canon of Westminster his income is £1,000 a year, the rectory of St. Margaret's brings him another £400, and now he is offered the Chaplaincy of the House of Commons. As the Archdeacon believes that millions of souls are going to hell, one would think he would spend his whole time in saving them from it, when he is so handsomely paid for the work, instead of writing big books for as much extra cash as he can get.

SIR RICHARD BURTON.

Sir Richard Burton, who died on Monday morning at Trieste in his sixty-ninth year, was a great traveller, a great scholar, and a great man. It will be for Mr. Swinburne to sing his elegy. Sir Richard Burton was little known to the general public. He performed his achievements before the recent developments of the art of puffery. As the translator of Camoens and the *Arabian Nights* he will live in the memory of all scholars and lovers of fine English. Judging from certain sentences in his reply to Mr. Stead, who (of all men) suggested a prosecution on account of the *Arabian Nights*, we should say that Sir Richard Burton was a decided Freethinker. He did us the honor of quoting from this journal in his vigorous apology.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Oct. 26, at the Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C.; at 7, "General Booth's Bid for a Million; and the Failure of Blood and Fire."

November 2, Nelson; 9, Grimbsy; 16, Birmingham; 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.

C. E. SMITH.—Thanks for the cuttings.

F. W. induced his wife, a thorough Christian, to hear Mr. Foote lecture on "A World Without God." Afterwards she heard the lecture "Gladstone on Moses." Her faith was shaken, and reading Freethought pamphlets finished the work. With her husband she is now a member of the North West London Branch, and their three children will be saved from a superstitious training.

W. MARTIN.—If you will arrange for a meeting at your house, or elsewhere, of persons willing to co-operate in forming a Poplar Branch, we will give it publicity.

H. J. HUDD.—See "Acid Drops."

SPIRITUAL FREETHINKER.—Christians did at one time universally believe in witchcraft, and witchcraft is still a vital superstition among the vast majority of the human race. For the rest you should read Tylor's *Primitive Culture*. No man can spin truths out of his own head without a knowledge of facts.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks for cutting. The paper has not yet arrived.

H. MILLS.—The Manchester friends must be discreet in speech and firm in action. They must stand their ground.

W. JENKINSON.—All communications for the *Freethinker* must be sent to the editor, not to Mr. Forder.

VOCALISTS and reciters willing to give their services free this Sunday evening (Oct. 26) at the Battersea Branch monthly Concert, please communicate at once with Mr. J. Martin, 32 Stanley Street, Queen's Road, Battersea; or on Sunday evening at the hall.

J. F.—The mission paper is below contempt.

W. M. KNOX.—Sorry we cannot find room. Our readers are not curious about Theosophy, nor about Dr. Hanna's views on the subject. Except for Mrs. Besant's conversion we should not have thought Theosophy worth five minutes' criticism.

T. CLARK.—Shall appear.

A. HEMMINGWAY.—See "Sugar Plums." No doubt our paragraphs will bring supporters. Be firm and yet cautious. It is only prudence that makes courage available.

A. B.—Cuttings are always welcome.

S. BARNSELY, Height Road (opposite police-station), Tottenham, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

R. WALLER.—We hope the Newcastle Freethinkers will support the candidates in favor of Sunday freedom in the approaching municipal elections. Mr. Foote cannot visit Tyneside before February. Sorry to hear you will have to give up some of your work for the Branch. So much of its success has been due to your energy.

HALTWHISTLE.—The poem has been reported scores of times during the last fifty years.

J. G.—We are obliged for the cutting. Mr. Brookie was a man we respected, but we fancy there was a certain intellectual timidity about him. However, he did good in his way, and no doubt he will be long remembered by many of those he helped to liberalise.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Noues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Menschenthum—Freidenker—Freethought—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—La Verité—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Der Arme Teufel—Lucifer—Open Court—Cape Mercury—Leicester Daily Mercury—Birmingham Daily Mail—Ironclad Age—Progressive Thinker—Loyal American—Portsmouth Evening News—Evening Standard—Manchester Guardian—South Eastern Herald—Thanet Advertiser—Cambrian News—Glasgow Evening News.

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.

Despite the formidable opposition in the opening of the Sunday League season at Shoreditch Town Hall, Mr. Foote had an excellent audience at the Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "Mistakes of Jesus." Two gentlemen spoke after the lecture. One was a Christian, who admitted that he thought it would be very difficult to answer the lecturer. Some one had lent him a copy of the *Freethinker*, where he saw that Mr. Foote was to lecture, and he came to hear for himself the other side of the question. He meant to think it over, and very likely he would come again. The other speaker was an elderly Atheist, who thought we ought to have a rational moral code in a little volume that even children might read.

Mr. Foote has changed the subject of his lecture for this evening (Oct. 26). The Trinity is a subject that will keep. Instead of dealing with that puzzle, Mr. Foote will lecture on General Booth's new book and his scheme of social salvation. Freethinkers who intend to hear this lecture, to which care and thought will be given, should try to bring some of their more orthodox friends so that they may see the difference between religious and secular reformation, and learn how the religious schemes have utterly broken down.

After Mr. Foote's lecture this evening (Oct. 26) a meeting of the Committee for organising the London Freethinkers' Ball on the last Wednesday in November, will be held in the committee-room upstairs. Every member should attend if possible.

Mr. Bradlaugh lectures at the London Hall of Science on the five Sundays in November. His morning lectures are to be political, and the evening lectures theological. This is his first appearance in London as a lecturer since his illness. No doubt there will be large audiences.

The *Freethinker* is slowly but steadily going up in circulation. Friends who take extra copies and circulate them, or even lend about their own copies after reading them, do us a real service. Thousands of persons, among the millions of this country, would become subscribers to this journal if only once it fell into their hands.

Last week's *Freethinker* sold right out, and we are printing a larger supply of the present number. Altogether, we may smile at the clergy's talk about the decline of Freethought.

Mr. Hillier, a North London friend, took a copy of this journal into a Turkish bath at Whitechapel. On his laying it down it was snapped up by a Hebrew gentleman, who looked like keeping it till the Jews return to Palestine. This suggests a new opening for propaganda.

A writer in the *Leeds Mercury*, describing "Sunday in London," notices the free distribution of back numbers of this "blasphemous journal" in Hyde Park. We have to thank the Hyde Park Branch for its industry in this direction.

The London Secular Federation's course of Free Lectures at the Tower Hamlets Radical Club opened well on Thursday, Oct. 16. Mr. Foote discoursed to a crowded and appreciative audience on "Is the Bible Inspired?" Mr. Haines presided, and Mr. Rowney and a few other friends came all the way from Finsbury Park to render any necessary help. Opposition of a courteous character was offered by two Christian opponents.

Mr. Pownceby, the Federation secretary, showed a brave spirit in attending to the business before the lecturer took the platform. Mr. Pownceby's sister was horribly burnt in the recent city fire, and died that very night in the hospital after fearful suffering. Poor Mr. Pownceby had been attending her night and day, and might well have been absent from

the meeting, but although tired and sorrowing he elected to do his spell of work.

The London Secular Federation's new course of Free Lectures will be given at the Peckham and Dulwich Radical Club on Nov. 6, 13, 20, and 27. The lecturers are C. J. Hunt, A. B. Moss, J. M. Robertson, and G. W. Foote. Freethinkers in the neighborhood should attend and bring as many Christians as possible.

A meeting of Leyton Freethinkers was held on Sunday evening, as a result of the announcement in our columns. It was resolved to start a Branch. Officers and a Committee were elected, and another meeting is to be held this evening (Oct. 26) at 6 o'clock, at Mr. Jenkinson's, Clark's Cottages, Cooper's Lane, Leyton. Secularists in the district are earnestly requested to attend.

Mr. Sam Standing sends us cheering reports of the progress of the movement in Tottenham, Southgate, Edmonton and the vicinity. Indoor meetings are to be held, and the friends are trying to get a chapel which is in the market. In the face of all this, a Christian Evidence Lecturer is holding forth on the "Collapse of Local Infidelity." At this rate we hope it will go on collapsing.

Mr. H. Salt's paper, read before the Shelley Society, on "The New Shelleyism," was in every way admirable, and was appreciated by an excellent audience, some of whom were brought there by the *Freethinker* paragraph. Mr. Salt briefly but adequately sketched the three stages of Shelley criticism. First, he was an incarnate fiend; next, he was a well-meaning but misguided enthusiast, who would have become a respectable Christian if fate had permitted him to outlive the follies of his youth; finally, he is being recognised as a great poet, with reasoned principles that challenge the world's attention. Mr. W. M. Rossetti, who presided, frankly confessed that Shelley was as much an atheist on the day of his death as when he wrote *Queen Mab*. Other speeches were made by G. B. Shaw, G. W. Foote, Ernest Radford, and two ladies, whose names we did not catch. It is to be hoped that Mr. Salt's paper will be published. Mr. Rossetti called it the most important paper ever read before the Society.

Owing to a press of matter we are obliged to hold over the second list of subscriptions to the Forder Testimonial Fund till next week. Meanwhile we beg to press this matter on the attention of Freethinkers. Mr. Forder's long and valuable services to their cause demand a recognition now that he is retiring from the Secretaryship. Every Branch of the N. S. S. should open a subscription list at once. Collecting forms are being printed for this purpose. Individual subscribers who prefer sending direct to London can remit to the Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E., or to the editors of the *Freethinker* and *National Reformer*. By way of adding practice to precept, we subscribe a guinea ourselves. Next, please.

This afternoon (Oct. 26) Mr. Moss delivers the last Free-thought open-air lecture this season in Finsbury Park. We hope he will have a good meeting and be well supported by the local Freethinkers. Unfortunately there was disorder again last Sunday. No doubt the rowdy element is glad of any pretext to assert itself, but for that very reason Freethinkers should be discreet in their language. Calling names very bad policy in a mixed meeting, and those who cannot control their tempers should not put themselves in the way of provocation. Hot spirits will say, "Why lecture your own side?" We answer, "Because it is the honor, dignity, and success of our own side that we care for."

The quarterly meeting of the Camberwell Branch was held in the hall on Sunday, when 200 of the members and friends assembled at tea. Afterwards the visitors from Milton Hall—Miss Vance, Miss Brown, Mrs. and Mr. Galbraith, Messrs. Roberts, Guest, Drew and Brown—enlivened the proceedings with their dramatic sketch of "Turn him Out." Some songs and dances ended the evening. The members' roll is not quite so large as last quarter, though the balance-sheet shows better than last time, and the outdoor meetings have been most successful.

The Free-thought open-air lectures at Denmark Road, Manchester, have been so successful as to alarm the bigots.

Two letters have appeared in the *Tory Courier* calling on the Corporation to suppress the meetings, although there is no pretence of obstruction. Nor is this the worst. On Sunday afternoon a disturbance was occasioned by the malignancy of the Rev. Mr. Collar, who has several times visited the Secular Hall and been treated with a courtesy which he seems unable to reciprocate. Mr. Jones, who was speaking on the Secular side, was hustled off the platform and dragged through the crowd. Mr. Collar at this moment pleaded for fair play, but he found it easier to raise a storm of bigotry than to allay it.

Now this Manchester station must be maintained. This afternoon (Oct. 26) the Branch will endeavor to carry out its programme, and the local Freethinkers should support its efforts. A ring should be formed round the platform and kept unbroken. The chairman and the lecturer must be cool and avoid all irritating remarks. If the bigots still resort to violence the duty of the Freethinkers will be to maintain the platform. If a policeman is near he should be called upon to restrain or arrest anyone committing a breach of the peace.

The Newcastle Branch is going to have a Prize-Drawing, and will be glad to hear from any friends who can present books or other valuable articles. The second annual Tea and Concert of the Branch will take place on Boxing Day at the Arcade Assembly Rooms. The Branch is drawing up questions on the Blasphemy Laws to be put to all parliamentary candidates in the district.

At the Catholic Congress at Saragossa Padre Llanas deplored the success of the Freethinking press in Spain, which no doubt he would like to see once again under the control of the Holy Office.

La Vérité opens with a notable paper on *Peuple Athées*, by Dr. C. Letourneau, dealing with Atheistic tribes and nations, and, among its contents, gives also a little biography of M. Emile Pasquier, the Secretary of the French Federation of Freethinkers. *La Vérité* is certainly improving, and we hope its circulation will enable it to maintain a high standard of excellence.

The current number of the *Quarterly Review*, in a notice of Mr. Renan's complete works, describes him as the most influential intellectual force in France. Yet M. Renan was brought up a priest, and has year by year severed himself more completely from the creed of his youth.

Ella E. Gibson tells a story in *The Ironclad Age* of a sea captain who was flogged by the Puritans for kissing his wife on Sunday morning. When about to leave on his next voyage he invited the legal dignitaries of the place on board his vessel to a grand entertainment. As the time arrived for them to depart, he told them he had a painful duty to perform; they had one and all broken the laws of his vessel, that he allowed no one to pass over a chalk mark on the floor of his deck, there before their eyes, without punishment, and he must flog them the same as other transgressors. In vain they protested they did not know no one was allowed to cross that chalk line. He told them that made no difference whether they knew it or not, the laws of his ship had been violated, and they must suffer the penalty. So he had them strung up and forty stripes save one laid on the back of each with a cat-o-nine-tails.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

WENDELL HOLMES ON HELL.

THE experiences we have had in common lead us to talk over the theological questions which at this time are constantly presenting themselves to the public, not only in the books and papers expressly devoted to that class of subjects, but in many of the newspapers and popular periodicals, from the weeklies to the quarterlies. The pulpit used to lay down the law to the pews; at the present time, it is of more consequence what the pews think than what the minister does, for the obvious reason that the pews can change their minister, and often do, whereas the minister cannot change the pews, or can do so only to some limited extent. The preacher's garment is cut according to the pattern of that of the hearers, for the most part. Thirty years ago, when I was writing in this magazine, I came in for a very pretty share of abuse, such as it was the fashion of that day, at least in certain quarters, to bestow upon those who were outside of the high-walled enclosures in which many persons, not naturally unamiable or exclusive, found themselves imprisoned. Since that time what changes have taken place! Who will believe that a well-behaved and reputable citizen could have been denounced as a "moral parricide," because he attacked some of the doctrines in which he was supposed to have been brought up? A single thought should have prevented the masked theologian who abused his incognito from using such libellous language.

Much, and in many families most, of the religious teaching of children is committed to the mother. The experience of William Cullen Bryant, which I have related in his own words, is that of many New England children. Now, the sternest dogmas that ever came from a soul cramped or palsied by an obsolete creed become wonderfully softened in passing between the lips of a mother. The cruel doctrine at which all but case-hardened "professionals" shudder comes out, as she teaches and illustrates it, as unlike its original as the milk which a peasant mother gives her babe is unlike the coarse food which furnishes her nourishment. The virus of a cursing creed is rendered comparatively harmless by the time it reaches the young sinner in the nursery. Its effects fall as far short of what might have been expected from its virulence as the pearly vaccine vesicle falls short of the terrors of the confluent small-pox. Controversialists should therefore be careful (for their own sakes, for they hurt nobody so much as themselves) how they use such terms as "parricide" as characterising those who do not agree in all points with the fathers whom or whose memory they honor and venerate. They might with as much propriety call them matricides, if they did not agree with the milder teachings of their mothers. I can imagine Jonathan Edwards in the nursery with his three-year-old child upon his knee. The child looks up to his face and says to him,—

"Papa, nurse tells me that you say God hates me worse than he hates one of those horrid ugly snakes that crawl all round. Does God hate me so?"

"Alas! my child, it is but too true. So long as you are out of Christ you are as a viper, and worse than a viper, in his sight."

By and by, Mrs. Edwards, one of the loveliest of women and sweetest of mothers, comes into the nursery. The child is crying.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

"Papa has been telling me that God hates me worse than a snake."

Poor, gentle, poetical, sensitive, spiritual, almost celestial Mrs. Jonathan Edwards! On the one hand the terrible sentence conceived, written down, given to the press, by the child's father; on the other side the trusting child looking up at her, and all the mother pleading in her heart against the frightful dogma of her revered husband. Do you suppose she left that poison to rankle in the tender soul of her darling? Would it have been moral parricide for a son of the great divine to have repudiated the doctrine which degraded his blameless infancy to the condition and below the condition of the reptile? Was it parricide in the second or third degree when his descendant struck out that venomous sentence from the page in which it stood as a monument to what depth Christian heathenism could sink under the teaching of the great master of logic and spiritual inhumanity? It is too late to be angry about the abuse a well-meaning writer received thirty years ago. The whole atmosphere has changed since then. It is mere childishness to expect men to believe as their fathers did; that is, if they have any minds

of their own. The world is a generation older and wiser than when the father was of his son's age

In the more intelligent circles of American society one may question anything and everything, if he will only do it civilly. We may talk about eschatology,—the science of the last things—or, if you will, the natural history of the undiscovered country, without offence before anybody except young children and very old women of both sexes. In our New England, the great Andover discussion and the heretical missionary question have benumbed sensibility on this subject as entirely, as completely as the new local anæsthetic, cocaine, deadens the sensibility of the part to which it is applied, so that the eye may have its mote or beam plucked out without feeling it, as the novels of Zola and Maupassant have hardened the delicate nerve-centres of the women who have fed their imaginations on the food they have furnished.

The generally-professed belief of the Protestant world as embodied in their published creeds is that the great mass of mankind are destined to an eternity of suffering. That this eternity is to be one of bodily pain—of bodily "torment"—is the literal teaching of Scripture, which has been literally interpreted by the theologians, the poets, and the artists of many long ages which followed the acceptance of the recorded legends of the Church as infallible. The doctrine has always been recognised, as it is now, as a very terrible one. It has found a support in the story of the fall of man, and the view taken of the relation of man to his maker since that event. The hatred of God to mankind in virtue of their "first disobedience" and inherited depravity is at the bottom of it. The extent to which that idea was carried is well shown in the expressions I have borrowed from Jonathan Edwards. According to his teaching,—and he was a reasoner who knew what he was talking about, what was involved in the promises of the faith he accepted,—man inherits the curse of God as his principal birthright.

What shall we say to the doctrine of the fall of man as the ground of inflicting endless misery on the human race? A man to be *punished* for what he could not help! He was expected to be called to account for Adam's sin. It is singular to notice that the reasoning of the wolf with the lamb should be transferred to the dealings of the Creator with his creatures. "You stirred the brook up and made my drinking-place muddy." "But, please your wolfship, I couldn't do that, for I stirred the water far down the stream,—below your drinking-place." "Well, anyhow, your father troubled it a year or two ago, and that is the same thing." So the wolf falls upon the lamb and makes a meal of him. That is wolf logic,—and theological reasoning.

How shall we characterise the doctrine of endless torture as the destiny of most of those who have lived, and are living, on this planet? I prefer to let another writer speak of it. Mr. John Morley uses the following words: "The horrors of what is perhaps the most frightful idea that has corroded human character,—the idea of eternal punishment." Sismondi, the great historian, heard a sermon on eternal punishment, and vowed never again to enter another church holding the same creed. Romanism he considered a religion of mercy and peace by the side of what the English call the Reformation. I mention these protests because I happen to find them among my notes, but it would be easy to accumulate examples of the same kind. When Cowper, at about the end of the last century, said satirically of the minister he was attacking,

"He never mentioned hell to ears polite,"

he was giving unconscious evidence that the sense of the barbarism of the idea was finding its way into the pulpit. When Burns, in the midst of the sulphurous orthodoxy of Scotland, dared to say,

"The fear o' hell 's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order,"

he was only appealing to the common sense and common humanity of his fellow-countrymen.

All the reasoning in the world, all the proof-texts in old manuscripts, cannot reconcile this supposition of a world of sleepless and endless torment with the declaration that "God is love."

Where did this "frightful idea" come from? We are surprised, as we grow older, to find that the legendary hell of the Church is nothing more nor less than the Tartarus of the old heathen world. It has every mark of coming from the cruel heart of a barbarous despot. Some malignant and vindictive Sheik, some brutal Mezentius, must have sat for many pictures of the Divinity. It was not enough to kill his captive

enemy, after torturing him as much as ingenuity could contrive to do it. He escaped at last by death, but his conqueror could not give him up so easily, and so his vengeance followed him into the unseen and unknown world. How the doctrine got in among the legends of the Church we are no more bound to show than we are to account for the intercalation of the "three witnesses" text, or the false insertion, or false omission, whichever it may be, of the last fourteen verses of the Gospel of St. Mark. We do not hang our grandmothers now, as our ancestors did theirs, on the strength of the positive command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."—From "The Atlantic Monthly."

WEST HAM SECULARISM.

The West Ham Branch held a well-attended quarterly meeting at Plaistow Secular Hall, on Sunday morning. The balance-sheet showed that the subscriptions, donations, and collections made a considerable improvement, and the number of members had increased to 117. By reason of some heavy expenses nothing has been paid off the small balance still owing to the Treasurer, but it was resolved that next quarter's balance-sheet should be clear of debt. For this purpose a number of members expressed their willingness to give 3s. each, the average amount per head required to wipe off the debt. Mr. Long promised half a sovereign if fifty members' names be obtained before next Sunday. Twenty-seven names were immediately handed in. If any other friend desires the honor of being amongst the first fifty, I shall be glad to take his name either on next Thursday or Saturday. In the evening the President ably lectured on the principles and objects of the N. S. S., comparing them with the teachings of Christianity and other creeds, and drew some good opposition.—E. ANDERSON, Secretary.

AN EPISCOPAL MANGLER.

EVERYONE knows how the present Bishop of Exeter treated Newman's "Lead kindly Light." He took another man's work, saw the "fat" in it—we use a vulgar word about a low trick—but decided that, as it stood, the poem was hardly suitable for admission to the "Hymnal Companion"—an honor which its author had no notion of claiming. So the Bishop of Exeter "conveyed" what there was to convey, added a miserable verse of his own, and stuck the result into the "Hymnal Companion."

This injury, plus insult, to Newman is well-known. But it is only one out of many manipulations for which the Bishop is responsible. A delicious story appeared the other day in one of the papers published in his diocese—we think it was the *Western Daily Mercury*. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould once wrote a hymn which has become famous. It was "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and the burthen of it ran as follows:—

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before."

So it was written, and so it appears in "Hymns Ancient and Modern." But this did not suit the Bishop, who (for reasons that he might usefully explain) objected to the "cross of Jesus" and calmly substituted some words of his own.

Now the story goes that once on a time the Bishop was to preach at a certain church in Devonshire, where they used "Hymns Ancient and Modern." And the service was to be opened by a "processional," and the hymn chosen was "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and a cross, of course, was to be carried at the head of the procession. But the Bishop, spying the cross, objected to its use; and the incumbent gave way. Then came a difficulty. The cross was left in the vestry, but its absence would make the burthen of the hymn utterly meaningless. What was to be sung? The Bishop was naturally anxious to coach the choir up in his emended version, and was proposing this, when the incumbent slyly suggested, "Don't you think we might change it to

'With the cross of Jesus
Left behind the door?'—*Speaker*.

One of the deacons of a missionary church asked the clergyman if he usually kissed the bride at weddings. "Always," was the reply. "And how do you manage when the happy pair are black?" was the next question. "In all such cases," replied the clergyman, "the duty of kissing is appointed to the deacons."

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. A. Barnes, dramatic recitals, comic and classical, interspersed with music.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, free concert by members and friends. Monday, at 8, dancing class (3d. per lesson). Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Friday, at 8, discussion.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, dramatic recital: 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7. Mr. G. W. Foote, "General Booth's Bid for a Million; and the Failure of Blood and Fire."

Mile End—Tower Hamlets Radical Club, 13 Redman's Road, Thursday, at 8, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Was Jesus God or Man?"

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band: 7.30, a lecture.

Old Ford—"Mitford Castle" Assembly Rooms, Wick Lane, 7.45, Mr. J. Rowney, "The Resurrection Fable."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11.30, Mr. J. Rowney, "Jesus Christ"; 7.30, Mr. John B. Coppock, "The Condition of the Earth's Interior."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. Toleman Garner, "My Religion."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "The Fall of Man."

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, a lecture.

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "The Fall of Man."

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 3.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "Freethought in Old Age."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand), Mr. A. B. Moss, 11.15, "Inspired Nonsense"; 3.30, "Brain and Soul."

Hammersmith Bridge (Surrey side), 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Christian Creed."

Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "The Life and Times of Robert Owen."

Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "All about the Devil."

Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Nuts to Crack."

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christian Evidences."

Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Prayer."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam. Standring, "Sermons from Shakespeare, III.—Macbeth on Dogs and Men."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. R. S. Bransby, "Secular Education."

Glasgow—Waterloo Rooms, Waterloo Street, 6.30, Mr. R. Shaw, "The Heathen Origin of the Trinity."

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

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—3, discussion class: "The best means of promoting Secularism"; 7, Mr. Gowland, "The Pursuit of Happiness."

Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, a grand entertainment: dramatic recitals by Mr. C. Conway, and songs by Lawrence Farley. Free.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30, Sunday Music League; 3, N. S. S. Branch financial meeting.

Nottingham—Mechanic's Lecture Hall, Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "The Inadequacy of Materialism"; 3, "Socialism and the Middle Class"; 7, "Christianity and Woman."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, Mrs. Thornton Smith, 3, "Prayer"; 7, "Forgiveness of Sins"; Miss Stapely will preside at pianoforte.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, 7, Dr. Hardwicke, "Personal Experiences of America and Americans."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, business meeting.

Sunderland—Mr. Chipperfield's, Nile Street, 7.30, Mr. Stansell, "The Poetry of Longfellow."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, a Freethought meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Oct. 26 (morning and afternoon) Finsbury Park; 30, Tower Hamlets Radical Club. Nov. 9, Woolwich; 13, Peckham Radical Club; 30, Woolwich. Dec. 28, Camberwell.

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

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Oct. 26 (morning) Mile End Waste. Nov. 3, Reading; 19 and 26 (Tuesday evenings), Plaistow.

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

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