

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

## BOOTH'S BOOK.

THIS is an age of what the Yankees call "booms." Some man, or some project, gets hold of the public attention, to the exclusion of almost everybody and everything else. A few months ago we had the Stanley boom, and now we have the Booth boom. The "General's" carriage stops the way. Cockney editors find him and his doings "good business"—for the moment; ministers of all denominations are singing his praises, and begging other people to assist his projects; and the Prince of Wales himself contributes a friendly letter to the chorus, if he sends nothing more substantial.

What effect all this shouting must have on "persons of weak judgment" is easy to calculate. They crowd about the celebrity of the hour like moths around a candle. And the climax comes when a gentleman like Mr. Bancroft, the retired actor, promises to give the "General" a thousand pounds, if ninety-nine others will do the same, and artlessly prefaces the promise by saying, "I know nothing of General Booth's scheme in detail." Mr. Bancroft is like many of the ladies and gentlemen who patronise "philanthropy," which usually means giving the poor charity instead of justice. His income is larger than his sense of responsibility. He is willing to give a thousand pounds to a philanthropic scheme, without taking the trouble to see whether it is likely to do good or harm to society. It is this loose haphazard "philanthropy" which makes some of us positively sick of that prostituted word.

General Booth's book has been puffed in an unprecedented fashion, and has enjoyed an extensive sale. He is a splendid advertiser himself, and he is assisted by Mr. W. T. Stead, who thoroughly understands the art of "booming." If these two gentlemen could not make a book "go," it must be a hopeless drug in the market. Copies have been sent north, south, east, and west, apparently by Mr. Stead. Even the editor of the *Freethinker* is asked to "accept a copy," and assured by Mr. Stead, who has "had some little share in the compilation," that he "will find the book well worthy" of his "attentive consideration."

Long before the arrival of Mr. Stead's judicious present we had bought a copy of the book and given it our "attentive consideration," and the readers of the *Freethinker* shall have the benefit of our reflexions. We need not assure them that we have gone through the book in another fashion than most of our editorial contemporaries, who have simply given a few "plums" from Booth's storeroom, chiefly extracted with a pair of scissors, and devoted as much head to their criticism of his scheme as would suffice to pilot a goose across a three-acre common.

First, as to the title-page of the book. An ordinary author would sign himself "William Booth," but this one is "General" even on a title-page. In *Darkest England* is an obvious plagiarism on Stanley, and *The Way Out* is suggested by his long travel through the awful Central African forest. Still, we

have no right to complain. It concerns Mr. Stanley rather than ourselves; and, in any case, it is less objectionable than attracting publicity by the locomotion of Mrs. Booth's corpse.

In the preface General Booth acknowledges the "valuable literary help" of a "friend of the poor, who, though not in any way connected with the Salvation Army, has the deepest sympathy with its aims, and is to a large extent in harmony with its principles." The friend is Mr. Stead. This gentleman has "written up" the scheme in the manner of "the born journalist," that is, in the fashion of the "Modern Babylon" and the adventures of Eliza Armstrong. He contributes the descriptions, the gush, the hysterics, the sentences crowded with adjectives and adverbs. Sometimes he writes a whole chapter, unless our literary scent misleads us; sometimes he interpolates the General, and sometimes the General interpolates Stead. One result of this twofold authorship is that the book is twice as big as it should be; another result is that it often contradicts itself. For instance, the General states in the preface that he has known "thousands, nay, I can say tens of thousands," who have proved the value of *spiritual* means of reformation, having "with little or no temporal assistance, come out of the darkest depths of destitution, vice, and crime, to be happy and honest citizens and true sons and servants of God." Elsewhere (p. 243) he speaks of them as "multitudes." Yet in the very next paragraph of the preface Mr. Stead breaks in (if we mistake not) with the assertion that "the rescued are appallingly few," a mere "ghastly minority."

This little contradiction may throw light on the rumor that Booth has been urged into this scheme of temporal salvation. Once upon a time he was down on "Commissioner" Smith, whose tendencies in this direction were obtrusive; and how long is it since we quoted his statement in the Rules and Regulations, that the members of the Salvation Army had nothing to do with the world, its politics, its business, or its pleasures? The hand is the hand of Booth, but the voice seems the voice of Stead.

Here is another contradiction, and this time a vital one. The General curls his upper lip (p. 18) at those "anti-Christian economists who hold that it is an offence against the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to try to save the weakest from going to the wall, and who believe that when once a man is down the supreme duty of a self-regarding Society is to jump upon him." Without dwelling on the fact that this is a shocking and perfectly gratuitous libel, probably meant to pander to Christian prejudices, we content ourselves with drawing attention to a contradictory declaration (p. 44) that "In the struggle for life the weakest will go to the wall, and there are so many weak. The fittest, in tooth and claw, will survive. All that we can do is to soften the lot of the unfit and make their suffering less horrible than it is at present. No amount of assistance will give a jellyfish a backbone. No outside propping will make some men stand erect." Thus



the General, or Mr. Stead, joins hands with the "anti-Christian economists" in the doctrine that it is useless to try to save the weakest from going to the wall. Of course he does not endorse the policy of jumping on them, but that policy is merely a production of his own pious imagination.

This contradiction we say is vital. The first statement is a sneer at Natural Selection, the second is a frank admission of its supremacy. They represent two antagonistic philosophies. They mark the parting of the ways between the Christian and the Evolutionist. They are as incompatible as oil and water, and no thoughtful man would attempt to reconcile them. But Booth (or isn't it Stead?) combines incompatibles with the alkali of sentiment. And this failure to discern the distinctiveness of opposite first principles shows the book to be the work of sciolists, and vitiates its scheme of social reform from beginning to end. No work can succeed without a knowledge of materials, and every effort at improvement has in it the elements of success or failure as it recognises or ignores the special laws of human nature, and the more general laws of biology that lie behind them.

An amusing contradiction occurs in another place (p. 14), to which we call attention in order to show the chaotic character of the writing; and this time, we judge from the style, it is Stead contradicting Stead. Speaking of the harlot, he says—

"But there, even in the lowest depths, excommunicated by Humanity and outcast from God, she is far nearer the pitying heart of the One true Savior than all the men who forced her down, aye, and than all the Pharisees and Scribes who stand silently by while these fiendish wrongs are perpetrated before their very eyes."

The theology of this passage is worthy of the wild exaggeration with which it closes. The poor harlot is "outcast from God," but near the "pitying heart" of Christ; in other words, God the Father is on the side of injustice and cruelty, and God the Son on the side of justice and mercy. One person of the Trinity is played off against the other, and it is not for us to settle the difference between them. We leave the matter to the second thoughts of Mr. Stead, or the divine illumination of General Booth.

Indeed, the entire theology of this book is worthy of Bedlam, and especially of the criminal lunatic department. A personal Devil is seriously trotted out (p. 159) for the laughter of intelligent men and women, and even of decently educated children. Prosperous people, we are told, see something strange and quaint in the language of the Bible, which "habitually refers to the Devil as an actual personality," but Hell and the Devil are certitudes to the Salvationists who work in the slums.

Well, if the Devil is so active, what is God doing? Apparently nothing. Booth is going to reform our drunkards, or try to if we give him the money, but he candidly admits (p. 181), perhaps in a moment of forgetfulness, that the confirmed toper will drink himself "into a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell," unless he is "delivered by an Almighty hand." It is God alone, then, who can save the most fallen. Their fate lies in his hands. And what does he do for them? The answer is to be found in General Booth's appeal. A million of money, and the co-operation of a multitude of men and women, are requested for the purpose of saving at least *some* of the poor wretches who are beyond the power of self-help, although "the Almighty hand" could easily pluck them out of their degradation. Nor does Booth expect that *all* will be saved by his scheme, however well-supported and successful. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the God he worships will allow men and women to perish whom he might promptly save; yes, allow them to perish in this world, physically, intellectually, and morally, and afterwards torment them for ever and ever in Hell. And it is this God, this incredible monster of

wickedness, in whom General Booth trusts, and whom he bids the Atheist look up to with admiration and love. Nay, he regards "trust in Jehovah" (p. 241) as the chief credential of the Salvation Army for carrying out an enterprise which is to cost a million sterling. Let the worshippers of Jehovah support him then. As for the Atheist, he will necessarily regard this insane theology as a rottenness at the very heart of the experiment.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## THE BIBLE AND IMMORTALITY.

THE fact that in the writings attributed to Moses, and said to have been dictated to him by God for his chosen people, the doctrine of a future life for man is completely ignored, has given rise to much controversy. On the one hand Bishop Warburton argued that since the Jews were without this support of moral order they must have been under the immediate direction of God himself. On the other hand it was argued by Voltaire and the Deists, that the fact that so important a truth was unrevealed to the chosen people, was a sufficient proof that their alleged divine revelation was no revelation at all.

What makes the matter more noticeable is the abundant evidence that the belief in immortality and future rewards and punishments existed among the Egyptians long before Moses, who is said to have been learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. This has led Mr. Froude in one of his *Short Studies* to suggest that Moses deliberately ignored this doctrine. A Freethought writer at the Antipodes has improved on this by explaining that Moses had observed that the doctrine of a future state possessed not the smallest power to affect the practical conduct of men, to make them better or keep them from crime. Moses saw that men were only really influenced by direct proximate and physical causes, that though the Egyptians held and taught the doctrine of post-mortem rewards and punishments, experience proved daily that if it affected the conduct of anyone, it certainly did not that of the criminals who most needed control, and that the only effect produced on the otherwise harmless was to make them superstitious and uncharitable. Moses, then, it is argued, deserves honor for wisely substituting temporal and immediate for distant and fictitious rewards and punishments, even though he failed to see that human law was more efficacious in preventing crime than an imaginary deity, as unnecessary in ethics as Laplace found such a supposition to be in astronomy.

But Moses probably deserves no credit, for he had no hand in the matter. There is no particle of evidence that he was possessed of all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The writings ascribed to him were composed by priests long after they had forgotten the things of Egypt, if they had ever been there. To Solomon also they ascribed the greatest contempt for the doctrine of immortality. In Ecclesiastes iii. he declares:

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceived that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"

The Psalmist, too, avers (xlix., 12) that man is like the beasts that perish. And again in Ps. cxlvi., 4, it is said on the very day man goeth to the grave his thoughts perish.

In spite of the evidence that the Egyptians, and other nations believed in immortality, not to mention Plato, it is declared that Christ brought immortality



to light. Setting aside, for a moment the fact that nothing at all has really been brought to light on the subject, for, notwithstanding our spiritist friends, the mass are notoriously as much in the dark about it as the savages who first surmised from their dreams that ghosts must exist; it would seem, then, that Christian immortality is the only immortality worth considering, and consequently the argument from the general consent of men must be given up. But what assurance of the immortality of our *souls* can be given by the resurrection of Christ's *body*, allowing for the moment that it did resurrect?

The reader who will attentively regard the passages of the New Testament bearing on the subject will find that it is the resurrection of the body and not the immortality of the soul which is taught there,\* and he will also notice that if the soul is as alleged naturally immortal and set at liberty from its trammels by death, this doctrine of the resurrection of the dead becomes an absurdity. When Christ was crucified it is said many *bodies* of saints that slept arose. The usual expression of the New Testament is the resurrection of the dead, which of course meant the resurrection of that which is liable to death, not of that which never dies. According to the account in Luke, Jesus after his resurrection expressly declared he was no spirit. "Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And it is recorded that instead of explaining the doctrine of the soul's immortality he ate broiled fish and honeycomb, which a soul without organs of digestion scarcely would have done. How such a resurrection—even suppose it built on proper evidence instead of upon undated and unverifiable reports contradictory to each other on every important point—could establish the natural immortality of those who do not rise from the dead after three days, is one of the many puzzles of modern theology. It is easy to see that the supposed resurrection was a type to the early Christians, who believed that the end of all things was at hand when those who were dead would come forth out of their graves, and they who were alive and remained would be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv., etc.)

The earliest Fathers of the Christian Church held a most literal and materialistic view of the resurrection. They look forward to drinking the new wine of the kingdom and partaking of the marriage supper of the Lamb in most literal fashion. They naturally objected to cremation. Only gradually did the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the soul's natural immortality become the accepted creed,† and now the more philosophic view has virtually supplanted that of Jesus Christ, bishops can calmly argue in favor of cremation without seeing that that sanitary practice will, in the imagination of the masses, give the *coup de grace* to the Scripture doctrine of the resurrection.

J. M. WHEELER.

A man who was sleeping on one of the seats of the Thames Embankment, says a contemporary, was wakened up and interviewed as to General Booth's scheme for the reformation of the residuum. Here is part of the conversation that ensued: "What's the pay?" "I don't know that there'll be any pay, but you'll get at least your board and keep." He grunted again: "If a man does his work he ought to get paid for it; it's worth it." "Well, but isn't it better to work for your board and lodging than sleep out here on the Embankment?" "I don't know but it is. Any bloomin' drink?" "No, nothing to drink." "That won't do; it won't do for me. A drop of gin is better than all the preaching I ever heard in my life."

\* The word translated *soul* is also rendered *life*.

† Pearson *On the Creed*, art. xi., says: "We can no otherwise expound this article teaching the resurrection of the body, than by asserting that the same bodies which have lived and died shall live again; that the same flesh which is corrupted shall be restored."

## THE EVIL THE CHURCH DOES.

By HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(From the "Twentieth Century.")

THE Christian Church, in both its great branches and all its particular subdivisions, as an organised, authoritative institution, is a curse to the world.

This remark is not meant to apply to religion, in itself, nor to Jesus of Nazareth. It is meant to apply only to the organised Church; to the Church as an authoritative institution; an institution that presumes to decide what is true by a majority vote; an institution that exercises its power to reward its subservient members with wealth, honor and offices, and to punish its recalcitrant members with poverty, ostracism, excommunication.

Before proceeding to prove the foregoing declaration I will explain what I mean by the Church.

There is no real, tangible thing corresponding to the word Church. The Church has no identity, no locality; it has no dimensions—no length, no breadth, no thickness; it is not something you can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch; you cannot talk to it, feed it, put it in prison, or cut off its head; you cannot say of it: "See, there it goes; it is green, it is white, it is black; it is long, it is short." The Church is not a thing; it is an idea. It is like the Government; it exists only in imagination.

When a number of individuals assemble and by majority vote decide that something pertaining to politics shall be done, this assembly of individuals is called the Government. When a number of individuals assemble and by a majority vote decide that something pertaining to religion shall be done, that assembly of individuals is called the Church. But there is no such identical thing as the Government or the Church.

It would be well if every one could understand this, for it would then be quite plain that such words as Government and Church are merely convenient expressions, invented for the purpose of shifting responsibility from persons to an alleged something which does not exist.

To illustrate: A custom house officer goes through a traveller's baggage and either steals his goods or compels him to pay down a sum of money to keep his goods from being stolen. The custom house officer is really nothing more nor less than a common highwayman, but he satisfies his conscience by the reflection that he is an officer of the Government. But when you clearly understand that there is no such thing as a Government; when you clearly understand that the custom house officer is an individual employed by a number of other individuals to rob travellers, you also clearly understand that the custom house officer is just a common, every-day thief. In Italy there are bandits. They have their captains, their lieutenants, and their privates. In this country we have bandits also, with their captains, lieutenants, and privates; but we call our bandits protectionists; we call their captains members of Congress, their lieutenants collectors of ports, and their privates custom house officers. We appeal to the superstition of the people by throwing over these bandits the sacred name of Government, the stealing is called collecting customs duties, and what is a crime in Italy becomes a virtue in America. But to the clear thinker the only difference between the two systems is that in Italy the bandits are few and weak, while in America they are many and strong.

If I were not confined by a time limit, I might illustrate the subject more fully, but I must content myself with merely suggesting that the clubbings by policemen are essentially as criminal as any other clubbings; the burglaries committed by sheriffs are essentially the same as any other burglaries; the murders committed by hangmen are essentially the same as any other murders. To say that these club-



blings and burglaries and murders are done by the Government deceives nobody but the ignorant and superstitious, for there is no such thing as the Government. The Government cannot club you, nor rob you, nor kill you. You can only be clubbed, or robbed, or killed by a man. A policeman is a man, hired by other men to club you; a sheriff is a man, hired by other men to rob you; a hangman is a man, hired by other men to murder you. If you do not believe what I say, start out to hunt for the Government and see if you do not run into the arms of a politician—and a politician is generally a man beside whose true biography the written life of Robin Hood or Dick Turpin would be a Sunday-school book.

What is true of the Government is true of the Church, and when I speak of the Church I mean those clergymen and laymen who meet together and do things, and then, in order to escape responsibility, when they have separated claim that they have done nothing, but that the Church has done everything.

In the first place, this imaginary thing called the Church is a curse to the world, because in the name of the Church clergymen and laymen will get together and do things that no one of them would do alone. Just as a policeman who, in his own proper person and acting on his own responsibility, would not hurt a dog, will, in the name of the Government, break open his neighbor's head; just as a sheriff, who, on his own account, would not steal a pin, will, in the name of the Government, burglarise his neighbor's house; just as a hangman, who if left to himself, would not kill a sparrow, will, in the name of the Government, kill his neighbor—so a clergyman, who, as an individual, would not lie or treat anyone unkindly, will, in the name of the Church, subscribe to statements he does not believe and cruelly cut the acquaintance of his best friend. Where is there a creed on earth that expresses the individual opinions of men who made it or subscribed to it? There is not one; and this means that a hundred or a thousand clergymen will get together, and in the sacred name of the Church declare that they believe what no single one of them believes. For themselves they are truthful. For the Church they will lie. Where is there a clergyman who would say to one who differs with him in opinion: "Depart, sir; you are a heretic; you shall not sit in my parlor, nor eat at my table, nor travel in the same coach with me?" There is not one. But a hundred or a thousand clergymen will get together and excommunicate a man whose only offence is that he will not sign his name to a creed he does not believe. In their personal relations they are kind, but in the sacred name of the Church they are as cruel as Calvin's God.

In the second place, the Church is a curse to the world because it tries to paralyze the brain. It forbids men to reach conclusions contrary to the creed, notwithstanding that no thinking person in Church believes the creed. The moment a clergyman begins to question the creed and to honestly state his doubts, that moment he begins to be treated like a criminal. Promotion is impossible to him. His name is left off all committees. He begins to receive the cold shoulder. He is made to feel that he is unwelcome whenever the Church comes together. He is regarded with suspicion. He is treated as a traitor. The iron is thrust into him. His feelings are lacerated. More than one honest clergyman has died without ever having been struck, or stabbed, or shot. Died from contumely, and coldness, and ostracism.

(To be concluded.)

"Christian Evolution" is a phrase we see in the *Christian World*. Evolution we know, but what is *Christian Evolution*? Is there also a Buddhist Evolution, a Brahmin Evolution, and a Mohammedan Evolution? And if not, why not?

## ACID DROPS.

Hugh Price Hughes has been figuring largely at the anniversary meeting of the West London Mission. "Sister Mary" spoke too, and "Sister Annie," and "Sister Lily," but nothing was heard of the Sister who converted that Atheist Shoemaker.

Come now, Hugh Price Hughes! Open confession is good for the soul. Don't go to the grave—for you will go some day—with a five-chapter lie on your conscience. Make a clean breast of it. Tell the truth and shame the Devil.

Poor Spurgeon is fallen on evil days. He sees the Ark of God in danger and its holy champions rushing into the enemy's arms. Reviewing a recent book by Mr. Gladden, who says that theology is dropping the doctrine of original sin, he valiantly stands up for this derelict, and stoutly objects to any "flavoring of the modern school." Nevertheless the modern school is winning, and it will be succeeded by a still more modern school, which will drop some more doctrines of the good old creed.

"As the world grows in mass," says Cardinal Manning, "it grows in malice; and if our forecasts are true, I might even say—forasmuch as what is foretold is certain—the warfare of the world against all who believe in God will grow in spread and in power, for its final conflict, and its final destruction."

These be big words, containing a good deal of sound and fury. "Mass" and "malice" are pretty alliteration, but very little else. The world is growing more populous, because science and civilisation enable more people to live, but the statement that it grows in malice is only the language of a disappointed priest. As to the "final conflict," it has always been coming, and what is more, it has always been going on; but whether the world or the Church will eventually triumph is a matter of opinion. Cardinal Manning is sure the Church will win, but his feeling of certitude is a subjective fact which may be out of harmony with the objective reality. He backs the Church. We say it is ten to one on the world.

According to a correspondent of the *Christian World* this is how a minister in one of the Western States of America spoke at a lady's funeral: "I don't know whether this woman has gone to heaven or not. I'm rather afraid she hasn't. But when I don't feel certain, I always give the corpse the benefit of the doubt." Evidently this sky-pilot is not so sure in such matters as the Salvation Army bosses, who officially notified the "promotion" of Mrs. Booth "to Glory from Clacton-on-Sea."

Bishop Ryle, of Liverpool, in his triennial visitation charge to the clergy of his diocese, says: "We live in perilous time. Partly from the spread of infidelity and partly from the facilities afforded by railways for Sabbath travelling the Devil is getting more help in his campaign against the Lord's Day than he has done since the reformation." He urges their motto must be "No surrender"; in other words, No interference with our Sunday monopoly.

Bishop Ryle is "amazed, pained, troubled, grieved, and astounded," that even clergymen are found to assist in breaking the fourth commandment, and still more so doubtless to find they received some countenance from his brother "father in God," Bishop Jayne, of Chester.

According to the Dean of Achonry "in 115 churches in London that ought to be Protestant vespers were offered for the dead." The Dean is alarmed at the progress of Popery, but the people think Catholic mummery no worse than Protestant mummery.

Another death in God's house. Mary Warner, a widow, suddenly slipped from her seat in Moseley Church, Leicester, on Sunday afternoon, and when picked up was discovered to be dead.

Swift defined a nice man as a man with nasty ideas. What a satire he would write on pious Mr. Coote and the



Rev. Dr. Lunn. These gentlemen belong to a Vigilance Society, and appear to have smut on the brain. If there is any nastiness in London they will find it out, and if they cannot find it they will make it. Seeing the advertisement of a Rabelais Exhibition in London, they scented a tid-bit, and the two pious worthies visited it together. They paid a shilling each and saw all they could for their money, even walking into the inner room where the most Rabelaisian pictures were only to be seen by gentlemen who presented their cards. Some of the ladies on the walls of this room had very little on; in fact, they were very much as they left the hands of their maker. Coote and Lunn exploited the show and went out groaning. Subsequently they repaired to a magistrate and obtained an order for the seizure of certain of the pictures; and now these French illustrations of a great French writer are to be adjudicated upon by a stolid English "beak."

Such fussy morality will make sensible men smile, if it does not make them groan at the hypocrisy of Protestant England. Piccadilly and the Haymarket at night make foreigners wonder at us. What must they think of us, then, when they read of a seizure of pictures in an art exhibition? And what is the result of the Coote-and-Lunn advertisement? Why this. Booksellers tell us that crowds of people are inquiring for copies of Rabelais. Many of them care nothing for literature, but are simply in quest of something blue; and as you cannot suppress a great classic, a large number of persons will probably read Rabelais who are quite unfit to read him, and will revel in the blueness which belonged to his age without appreciating the profound wisdom which was all his own. Surely it would be better for Messrs. Coote and Lunn to mind their own business, but if they *must* crusade against the improper why don't they begin with the Bible?

Father M'Fadden, of Glena, rebuked his congregation for intimidating and persecuting each other on account of paying "rint," and while he was speaking a pair of scissors was snipping round a girl's dress at the waist. Such is the power of religion in controlling men's passions.

The chairman of the Wellingborough School Board has been telling his colleagues that the Bible is the best code of morality. Well now, we undertake to find whole chapters, and scores of passages, which this gentleman would never have the courage to read aloud to his own children.

We are glad to hear, however, that the Board's fresh action in this matter, as well as the chairman's language, is due to the fact that religious education in the schools is frequently shelved. This is a rock on which religious education will ultimately split. The teachers won't give it.

In his first address for the season, before the Society for Ethical Culture, Sunday, Oct. 19, Prof. Felix Adler said: "I am an Agnostic, but I am, nevertheless, convinced of the existence of the beautiful and the good." The significance of that sentence is not quite clear to me. What has Agnosticism to do with "the existence of the beautiful and the good?" Might not Prof. Adler as pertinently have said: "I am an Agnostic, but I believe in the existence of the sun and the moon?" Probably the speaker had in mind the idea that he was an Agnostic, but, nevertheless, believes in something that may somehow be regarded as God. The beautiful and the good are well known facts, before which the most positive Atheist need not hesitate nor doubt. Agnosticism pertains to the existence of God, but it has no relation to the existence of the beautiful and the good.—*Twentieth Century*.

Says the historian Buckle:—"The clergy, with a few honorable exceptions, have in all modern countries been the avowed enemies of the diffusion of knowledge, the danger of which to their own profession they, by a certain instinct, seem always to have perceived."

Calcutta Theosophists have discovered something worth knowing in the Yogi-Shaster. Here it is—"He who can by inserting old cotton make the breath flow through the left nostril by day and through the right nostril by night successively for twelve years shall enjoy health and youth up to a great old age, and shall not be affected by any

poison." Will Western Theosophists devote themselves to this high attainment?

Sir Lepel Griffin, writing in the *Fortnightly Review* for November on "The Burman and his Creed," shows the difference of real Buddhism from what he calls "the extravagances of Esoteric Buddhism which, with Madame Blavatsky for prophet, and Messrs. Olcott and Sinnett for assistant priests, attempted to impose itself upon a foolish generation, seeking everywhere for a sign, as a new revelation, the evidences of which were cabinets with sliding backs and third-rate conjuring tricks."

The Shans of Burmah are Buddhist barbarians. As described by Mr. Scott, superintendent of the Shan States, these poor heathens, not having the benefit of Christianity, are distinguished by an incapacity to steal. There are villages in which people build their granaries on the roadside and at long distances from their houses and their fields. The reason given is that they are afraid of fire, but that they have no need to fear thieves. Mr. Scott quaintly observes that "an increase of civilisation will teach them that their property is in greater danger than their persons."

There seems to be a real General Booth, though we confess to never having heard of one except the "General" who leads the Salvation Army. At any rate, "Holbein's Visitors List" of Folkestone, Nov. 5, puts down at 6 Castle Hill Avenue—one of the most aristocratic quarters—"Booth, General and Mrs." Now so many valuable subscriptions are being sent in, this similarity of description may occasion some embarrassment. The "General" should dub himself Commander-in-Chief.

The *Christian Commonwealth* urges the union of the Baptists and Congregationalists with the simple term Christian. Meaning absolutely nothing, this will be a capital name for covering up differences of opinion.

The Welsh Baptists beg the Prince of Wales, in a written address, to set his face against gambling and betting. For our part, we are indifferent whether this podgy gentleman goes to the races or goes to church; but we feel inclined to ask the Welsh Baptists what is Christianity itself but gambling on a big scale. The real Christian—not the bastard sort so prevalent nowadays—stakes this life in the hope of winning the next. It is a heavy venture, but as the odds are billions to one he thinks it worth his while. Who are the bookmakers? Well, the bookmakers are the priests. They make a winning book whoever loses or wins.

The Rev. Albert Vedder, a Presbyterian clergyman, was sentenced at New York to five years' imprisonment for abducting Mamie McCann, a fifteen-year-old girl.

The railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem will, it is said, be finished in the spring of 1892. Meanwhile the Catholics are busy buying up land in Jerusalem with a view to an expected rise. They have secured some choice portions of the Holy City.

The American correspondent of the *Church Times* points out that the Catholics have largely obtained consideration in America by their consummate tact in acquiring property, to which object they bend their most earnest endeavors.

At the annual meeting of the London Congregational Union, Dr. Parker preached a satirical sermon "from the text in the Epistles of Lord Beaconsfield, No. 10, line 7, 'How are you all to-day.'" He recommended that preachers should boldly make use of sermons written by abler men than themselves. But why doesn't Parker try the effect of South, Taylor, Fuller, Barrow or Hooker at his own City Temple, where the text is always from the Book of Parker from the first to the last verses.

What John Stuart Mill most admired in Secular Societies was their recognising no distinction of sex in membership or office. Ladies have always been welcomed in the Secular party; they have been elected on committees, they have sometimes taken the secretaryship and even the presidency of Branches, and they have stood by the side of men as equals on Secular platforms. In fact, the equal right of the sexes to every position of usefulness is a mere common-



place among Freethinkers. They have always thought that if a woman has anything to teach, the man who won't learn it is a fool.

Well now, the Churches, which are always a century or so behind Freethought, are beginning to discuss whether women may not be allowed to come to the front, at least a few at a time. Of course St. Paul suffered not a woman to teach (cock-a-doodle-doo!), but the women won't be kept back any longer, and when they make up their minds to have anything there is no power in heaven above, on earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, to say them nay. So the Churches are obliged to give St. Paul the go by, and yield to necessity what they would never have conceded to justice and common sense.

The old old story has to be dished up anew for the American market. This is evident from the recent publication of three lives of Christ in the form of fiction. There is *Emanuel*, by Mr. Cooley; *A Son of Issachar*, by Mr. Brooks; and *Come Forth*, by E. S. Phelps and Mr. Ward. In these romances Jesus is presented with a number of other fictitious characters, and in the last volume mentioned performs a few additional miracles to those recorded in the gospels.

If after the selection of the canonical gospels the Church had not sternly anathematised those who circulated apocryphal writings there would have been a good chance of verifying the statement that the world itself could not contain the lies that should be written.

The Rev. A. Lyttleton, one of the writers in *Lux Mundi*, is engaged as Christian Evidence Lecturer at Manchester Cathedral. The fact that he is connected with that now famous heretical volume is conspicuously mentioned on the placards. He is, however, repudiated by the Christian Evidence Society of London, which always regards the orthodoxy, if not the character, of its advocates.

In the agony column of the *Christian Commonwealth* a correspondent signing himself "Anxious" begs advice in a terrible difficulty. During business hours he is in close connection with "a young man who is an Atheist and hates religion." This young man "continually reads extracts from the *Freethinker* and other sources," and "Anxious" wants to know what books he should read to fortify his faith. Our pious contemporary recommends its own columns as the best antidote to scepticism, and after them the profound writings of the great J. H. Mitchell. Let us pray!

"The Turkish peasant," says Mr. Beatly Kingston, "is the most hardworking, sober, continent, and orderly man of his class in Europe—a model of laboriousness, honesty, and general good conduct." Of course this exemplary peasant is not a Christian. He is a Mohammedan.

There was some pretty skirmishing on the London School Board when the School Management Committee brought up its syllabus of Bible teaching. In the fourth standard the children were to be instructed in "the law of Moses with reference to the poor, strangers, fatherless, widows, parents, and children." But Stewart Headlam, who is warm on the land question, proposed that the children should be taught all about the year of jubilee—which, by the way, does not appear to have been once commemorated in the whole course of Jewish history. Of course Headlam was beaten by a large majority. Our own sympathy is with neither side in this dispute, but rather with the poor children who, if they are to be taught political economy, should be taught it scientifically and not from the played-out "law of Moses."

Headlam fought another round and won. He got the Committee's little harmony of the gospels rejected for the four gospels in their entirety. But the four gospels are a patchwork in their way, although Headlam thinks them a perfect revelation of his "Master."

Then came a squabble about Amos and Jeremiah. The Committee submitted "lessons from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah." Headlam proposed to substitute Amos as a gentleman of stronger democratic tendencies. He

thought the children of the poor should know that a poor man had been inspired by God to utter such denunciations of greed and tyranny. Of course Headlam was beaten again. The Board preferred the more "respectable" prophet.

What a sight at this time of day! A lot of ladies and gentlemen wrangling over Amos and Jeremiah, instead of teaching children the plain laws of social life, which would not be in the least affected if Amos and Jeremiah were not only dead and buried, but forgotten.

Boycotting is not confined to Ireland, as the following incident, reported by a correspondent at Canterbury, will show. A lady went into the shop of a baker in Burgate, after having seen a bill in his window relating to some anniversary in connection with a dissenting chapel. She said to him, "Mr. W., I always thought you were a staunch Churchman." "So I am," he replied. "Oh," she said, pointing to the obnoxious bill, "you must remove it. We always make it a rule never to deal with tradesmen who show Dissenting bills."

The *Methodist Recorder* will not insert an advertisement of the *Crusader*. How these Christians love one another!

General Booth allows it to be stated that he never draws a penny from the funds of the Salvation Army. Perhaps he doesn't. But he draws money from somewhere. He does not live on the air, and a £4,000 house has to be paid for in solid cash. Evidently there is hocus-pocus in Booth's protestations. It would be interesting to learn what he *does* live on. Does he, for instance, pocket the profits of the *War Cry*, or any of the other publications, which the Army officers sell at meetings and hawk in the streets.

Celestine Edwards, the black preacher, has been discoursing at Morley Hall, supported by Mr. John Lobb and other distinguished friends of the human race. From a report in a local paper we see that Mr. Edwards's subject was "The Foes of Christianity," and among them he found, in the early days, "Pagans, Platonists and Eclectics," which reminds us of the famous division of animals into men, horses, quadrupeds and ponies. The remarks on the Aristotelians were particularly brilliant. Mr. Edwards does not seem to know that the Christian Church regarded the Aristotelian philosophy as one of its main pillars. Nor did he explain how Christianity triumphed over Paganism. The actual method was the burning of Pagan books, the demolition of Pagan temples, and the suppression of Pagan worship. Of course his audience applauded his nonsense, but their ignorance was probably more than a match for the lecturer's.

According to Mr. Stead, Mr. John Morley is a very good Christian without knowing it. Surely this is a piece of cool impudence. Mr. Stead is a clever man, but few people think he knows Mr. Morley's mind better than the right honorable gentleman knows it himself. Mr. Morley is essentially a thinker, and for that reason he is not a Christian.

Last week's *Sunday Chronicle* had a venomous article on Mr. Bradlaugh. It is becoming the fashion to gird at him in certain "advanced" circles. He seems to be paying the penalty of outspokenness, especially on the subject of religion. Some concealed Atheists on the anonymous press cannot forgive him for avowing his Atheism to the world. It makes them feel so mean.

There is no end to the cant of sky-pilots about Jesus Christ. That "popular preacher," Mr. R. F. Horton, for instance, talks of J. C. as dividing his days between teaching moral truths and "ministering to the needs of the suffering and starving." Where is Mr. Horton's authority for this statement? It is certainly not in the Gospels. Jesus did do a trick with certain loaves and fishes at one of his own meetings; he also turned the best part of a hundred gallons of water into wine to keep up the spree at a marriage feast. But what has this to do with the starving? Did he befriend the starving when he cursed the fig tree and made it wither? Did he help to feed them when he destroyed a whole herd of pigs at one fell swoop? If he wanted to do something for the "starving" Jews, he should have turned the pigs into bullocks, and cut them up amongst the crowd. A good joint is a lot better than a bad miracle.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, November 16, Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham; at 11, "Mistakes of Jesus" at 3, "Heaven and Hell"; at 7, "A World Without God."

Thursday, November 20, St. Pancras Reform Club, Prince of Wales's Road, Kentish Town, at 8, "The Blasphemy Laws, and Why they Should be Abolished." Admission free.

November 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. K. LAPORTE.—This journal is supplied to the trade on sale or return. We cannot help your newsagent's being sold out. You should tell him to order more, or to keep you a copy.

W. SCROXTON.—Thanks for the cuttings. We hope the prospect at Rushden will improve.

W. GILMOUR.—The "Scotch Thistle" notes will be continued from time to time. Thanks for the cuttings.

W. H. S.—Merci bien.

J. NRATE.—Cuttings and marked papers are always welcome.

J. W. CHAPMAN.—The Rev. C. J. Whitmore is dead, but his lying tract lives after him. A halfpenny postcard won't reach him now. "T. C." (Thomas Cooper) and "J. B." (Joseph Barker) were converted a whole generation ago. Some of the other cases are imaginary, and to call the rest infidel "leaders" is to abuse the credulity of the Christian multitude. It is a curious thing that these converts have all such an ancient and fish-like smell.

W. P. BRENT.—Mistakes will occur sometimes. The secret of infallibility has not yet been discovered. *Letters to Jesus Christ* should be fourpence; the twopence got into the *Freethinker* list while the printer nodded. If you send us your full address the twopence you did not intend to invest shall be returned.

II. PORTER.—The contents-sheet shall be forwarded. Thanks for all your trouble.

JACK.—It certainly is a scandalous thing that sailors should be made to attend "divine service," whether they desire to or not. Some day the question will be raised in Parliament. Meanwhile Jack must grin and bear it. We are glad to know that the *Freethinker* is doing good work in the navy, and we take the feverish distribution of anti-infidel literature as a compliment.

REX REGES.—We regard theosophy as a far more contemptible superstition than Christianity. Some of the older theosophists were a bit cracked; some of the modern ones have a good deal of method in their madness.

H. T. BAILEY.—The extract may be useful. We will think over the suggestion of a pamphlet on Christmas. We hardly know about issuing a Christmas Number this year. We have always lost money on special numbers. Our inclination is to make the Christmas week number a double one.

S. ACROYD.—We are glad to hear of the progress at Huddersfield, and hope the open-air propaganda will be still more successful next summer. Your suggestion should be sent to the secretary of the Yorkshire Federation.

R. CHAPMAN.—Questions on the Blasphemy Laws for parliamentary candidates shall be printed in our next.

S. STANDRING.—Delighted to hear of Mr. G. Anderson's gift of £5 to the Old Southgate Branch. Your Federation should succeed with a secretary like yourself and a president like J. M. Robertson.

W. PICKLES.—It is pleasant to hear that Mr. Foote's lectures at Nelson have "done much good." Pray get the Branch in working order and communicate with Mr. Forder.

R. GREEN.—We congratulate you on your successful candidature for a seat on the King's Lynn Town Council.

YOUNG FREETHINKER (Birmingham).—Thanks for your interesting letter. Colenso's book on the Pentateuch (People's edition) would give you what you seek. In our own reading we have to consult rare and expensive works. Glad to hear your newsagent finds a sale for the *Freethinker*.

B. HARRIS.—We fear you have a taste for the wonderful.

J. SIMS.—Shall have a paragraph next week.

W. TODD.—Our space is full of other matters this week, and Parson Woods must pass.

B. O. BRIDGER.—The reverend gentleman has been told again and again that he can have a public debate whenever his courage is ripe for the encounter. Meanwhile we decline to advertise him in our columns.

JOSEPH TAYLOR.—The application should be made, through the Secretary, to the Benevolent Committee.

J. BROWN.—We are sorry to hear that the reactionists on the Sunday question have won all along the line in the municipal elections at Newcastle. More success to your gallant efforts in the future! You are quite right; there is no remedy but an active Freethought propaganda. We must, as Voltaire said, Crush the Infamous.

W. CARLILE.—The tract would influence no one fit to become a Freethinker. Suppose half a dozen Secularists in fifty years *did* return to Christianity; is that a fair offset to the thousands who don't? Six Secularists are converted to Christianity; does that outweigh sixty thousand Christians converted to Freethought?

D. HUGHES.—We are obliged to you for sending the *Freethinker* to scores of people in your district. Such action makes the paper known, and being known always means an increase of its circulation.

J. W. GOTT.—Thanks for your efforts to introduce this journal to fresh readers. Good reproductions are expensive, and poor ones are not worth inserting. We printed a few portraits about eighteen months ago, but they were too heavy a drain on our resources. By-and-bye we may repeat the experiment.

T. PHILLIPS (Spennymoor).—We hope the meeting to-night (Nov. 16) will be well attended and include fresh faces. Unfortunately you are too late for the Almanack. Write to Mr. Forder, the N. S. S. secretary, on matters of business.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—We have received the following subscriptions:—E. Bradlaugh, 2s.; H. Haigh, 1s.; P. French, 2s. 6d.; G. French, 2s. 6d.; J. Jones, 2s. 6d.; A. C., 5s.; D. Hughes, 4s.; J. W. Gott, 10s.; A. Pope, 2s. 6d.; A. Policeman, 2s. 6d.; H. J. Thorp, 4s.; H. G. Shepherd, 1s.; H. Howard, 2s.; S. R. Stephenson, 10s. 6d.; R. Green, 5s.; M. A. Watson, 4s.; Edward Clare, £1 1s.; S. Stalder, 10s.; Joseph Taylor, 10s.; James Marsh, 2s. 6d.; J. Rawlinson, 2s. 6d.

L. CLIFTON.—Dr. Harrison is clever, but his lectures will never convert a single unbeliever. He has met both Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote in public debate. His debate with Mr. Foote was fourteen years ago at Newcastle.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Open Court—Menschenthum—Lucifer—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Leicester Daily Mercury—Barnett Press—Echo—Nelson Chronicle—Rochdale Observer—Midland Weekly News—Temperance World—Western Figaro—Star—Yorkshire Evening Post—St. Pancras Guardian—Nelson Chronicle—The Quill—Scottish Pulpit—Canterbury Press—Tit-Pits—Wolverhampton Express and Star—Holbein's Visitor's List and Folkestone Journal—Evening Standard—Birmingham Daily Gazette—Manchester Courier—Sussex 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 he reply stands over till the following week.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Grimsby is not noted for big Freethought meetings, and Mr. Foote is satisfied with the fair audiences he had there on Sunday. Judging from the laughter and applause, the audiences were also satisfied with the lectures. Mr. S. Alward, a member of the County Council, presided in the morning, and his brother George in the afternoon. The evening chairman was Dr. Spring, also a member of the new County Council, despite the cry of "Atheist!" raised against him at the elections. He has been a passive member of the N. S. S. for some time, and he now joins the active list. We understand there were three other doctors at the evening lecture.

Grimsby furnished but one opponent, a ranting, raving, though well-meaning gentleman named France. What he said was beneath criticism. The audience showed remarkable forbearance to this eccentric Christian. Fortunately the meeting was saved from breaking up in disorder, and a good collection was taken for the Benevolent Fund.

The Grimsby Branch will take Mr. Foote's advice to keep pegging away. Mr. Wittering is an excellent, active secretary, and the member's roll is slowly but surely increasing. Next summer the Branch will push on with its open-air propa-



ganda. Meanwhile several courses of lectures will be given in the Hall of Science.

We find the sale of the *Freethinker* is gradually increasing in Grimsby. Mr. Wittering gives our literature special attention in his shop. He began with three or four copies of this journal and now disposes of a quire.

Secularists of "the modern Babylon" should remember the London Freethinkers' Ball at the Hall of Science on Wednesday, November 26. Only members of the N. S. S. and their friends will be admitted. The tickets are one shilling each, and any surplus after expenses will go to the Benevolent Fund. Those who don't dance will have a concert provided for them. Mr. Foote hopes to see a big gathering.

The London Secular Federation's annual dinner will take place early in January. This festal gathering is now regarded as a permanent institution. Mr. Foote will preside as usual, and will be well supported by the leading lecturers and organisers. Miss Vance, Mr. Forder, and Mr. Angus Thomas are the dinner committee, so the arrangements are in good hands.

The wretched weather hindered the success of the first of the Free Lectures at the Peckham Radical Club. The audience was small, but Mr. Hunt had some lively discussion. Mr. Moss delivers the second lecture on Thursday (Nov. 13) and we hope he will have a larger meeting. Freethinkers in the district should beatir themselves.

Mr. J. M. Robertson finished the Tower Hamlets course, and his audience was also thinned by the rain. Some lively and profitable discussion, however, gave spirit to the proceedings.

The debate at Edmonton between Mr. C. J. Hunt and Mr. Dunn was largely attended, and the Secularists are quite satisfied with the result. Mr. J. M. Robertson begins this evening (Nov. 16) a course of five lectures on Secularism in its various aspects. The other lecturers are to be Mrs. Samson, Mrs. Thornton Smith, and Messrs. J. Rowney and S. Standring.

Secularists living in Kilburn are earnestly requested to attend a meeting at 17 Andover Place, Kilburn, on Monday evening, Nov. 17, at 8.30, to make arrangements for open-air work in that district during the coming season in connection with the West London (late Hyde Park) Branch of the N. S. S.

Mr. A. B. Moss's engagement at Rushden is cancelled owing to the strike and lock-out in the district. The mishap is regrettable. We hope the Rushden friends will not be disheartened.

Mr. J. Oliver stood as labor candidate for the Welsh Ward, Shrewsbury. His nominator was the Rev. E. Myers, an advanced Unitarian minister, who supplied Mr. Foote with some biographical materials, for his *Darwin on God*. Mr. Oliver's opponents raised the cry of "infidel!" one sky-pilot being especially active outside the polling station. Nevertheless Mr. Oliver was successful. The Shrewsbury working men are not to be deluded by the bigots of an intolerant faith.

Mr. Forder lectured at West Ham on Sunday evening. £1 1s. 6d. was collected for the Benevolent Fund.

The Spennymoor meeting called through our columns was a success. A Branch of the N. S. S. was started with ten members. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed and the new Branch will take immediate steps to carry on a Freethought propaganda in the district.

The *Nelson Chronicle* gives a brief report of Mr. Foote's recent lectures and notes the "large attendances." The same paper prints a capital letter from "Rusticus" in reply to the Rev. Mr. Barnes. Freethinkers do their cause a real service by contributing well-written letters to the local press.

Dr. Stöcker, the pious Conservative and bigoted Prussian Court Chaplain who distinguished himself by hounding on the anti-Jewish and anti-Socialist crusades, has been dis-

missed by the Emperor, and this removal, we trust, argues the advent of more tolerant times in Germany.

A discussion on the formation of a Gallican church is to take place at the Perpignan theatre between Father Hyacinthe, the eloquent married priest, and the Abbe Roca. The Abbe was formerly a canon of the Catholic Church, and at present edits a paper called the *Anti-Clerical*. Abbe Roca left the Church a few months ago to become a Freethinker, and has written many articles against the Pope and the bishops and priests.

The Oregon State Secular Union has had a successful Convention at Portland, presided over by C. Beal. Among the visitors were S. P. Putnam, Mrs. Mattie Krekel, Professor Seymour, J. E. Remsburg, and W. S. Bell.

Two more indictments have been made against Dr. T. A. Voelkel for blasphemy in Muhlhausen and Neinburg. Altogether he has had ten processes against him, but has not as yet, we believe, been imprisoned.

Dr. Specht, editor of *Menschenhum*, Gotha, has been taking a lecturing tour, visiting Leipsic, Jagerndorf and Vienna, where he has had good audiences listening to the principles of the German Freethinkers' Union.

The monthly Bulletin of the French Federation of Freethinkers for November gives a report of the proceedings at the National Congress of French Freethinkers held at Paris on Oct. 19.

#### LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING, held at Hall of Science, Thursday, Nov. 6, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the liabilities in respect of Hall of Science Free Lecture Course were ordered to be discharged. The secretary reported as to Tower Hamlets and Peckham and Dulwich lectures. The question of assisting at West Ham was dealt with; and the secretary was instructed to arrange for a course of Free Lectures at Tottenham Court Road in January next. Mr. Martin suggested that the Federation give a course of lectures in Battersea district, and the matter was deferred till next meeting. Mr. Renn moved, and Mr. Forder seconded "That the Federation undertake the management of a Children's Party," February being the month decided upon. The election of a sub-committee to arrange details was left till next meeting. The matter of the Annual Dinner was next discussed; and, on the motion of Mr. R. O. Smith, it was decided to hold it on the first Monday in January next. Mr. Forder moved "That the Bridge House Hotel be the venue, and the price of tickets be 2s. 6d."; carried. Miss Vance, Messrs. Forder and Angus Thomas were elected as a sub-committee to arrange details. Mr. Anderson (West Ham) gave notice that he would move, at the next meeting, "That the Council meetings be called for 7.30 p.m., instead of as at present." On the motion of Mr. Renn (Finsbury) it was resolved to print the Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society on the next monthly programme of lectures. The Council then adjourned till first Thursday in December.

EDMUND POWNCEBY, Secretary.

#### FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
G. R.	1	0	0	N. M. Knox	0	10	0
E. Truelove	1	0	0	C. W.	0	10	0
J. Umpleby	0	10	0	J. Tonkins	0	2	6
S. H. Munns	0	10	0	Chas. Sedgwick	0	2	6
J. Swagman	1	1	0	J. Payne	0	2	6
W. Stuart	0	5	0	J. Cheesewright	0	5	0
Geo. Anderson	5	5	0				

Collecting lists sent on application.

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

A negro Baptist said to his Methodist master, "You've read the Bible, I s'pose?" "Yes." "Well, you've read in it of one John the Baptist, hasn't you?" "Yes." "Well, you never saw nothing of John the Methodist, did you?" "No." "Well, den you see dere's Baptists in de Bible, but dere am no Methodists, and de Bible's on my side."



## MIRACLES.

## AN UNSPOKEN ADDRESS.

THE subject of this address should be of absorbing interest to the Secular Society, as it is the Holy Land in which their theological opponents entrench their forces and against which their crusade is carried on. The members of the Secular Society are endeavoring to bring the minds of their fellow creatures out of this region of chimera and unreality, back to the stern and rugged facts of this world.

The Christian has wandered away into a superstitious, Eastern mysticism, he has lost the spirit of his Viking forefathers whose motto was, "Be brave!" and whose first lesson to children was to speak the truth. If the Christian finds the world too harsh a place for his pampered selfishness, let him lead on and undertake the task of self conquest which his master had so often on his lips, and not store up for his private felicity joys which will never be realised. His hope may be a glorious one, the value it sets upon man may be magnified and soothing to vanity, but what good is in it, if, as Carlyle said of the fiery eloquence of an orator, it is not true.

Searching for the definition of the word "miracle," we find many varying as to their relative merits, but agreeing fundamentally in this; a miracle is an event the law or cause of which cannot be conceived by the human mind, or an event of which we cannot predict with certainty the recurrence, when the same conditions which led to its occurrence again prevail. Another definition is that miracles are contradictory to the laws of nature; the laws of nature are powerless or suspended when a miracle occurs, and some other force, law, power or what you will, comes into operation. The result is that there is an effect upon material substance without a natural cause, which is an absurdity. Some upholders of the miraculous may say that miracles are only the effects of laws of nature hitherto undiscovered or not properly investigated. We shall be ready enough to admit that all the laws of nature have not yet been discovered, but that is only of minor importance; but if an occurrence is said to take place contrary to a law of nature of which we know the existence, then the reporter of such an occurrence is a near relation of that gentleman known as the "Father of lies." For instance, it is a well-known law that all organisms, man included, die, and when they are dead no power in nature can, without a process extending over years, and depending on the dissolution of their elements, bring them to life again. So when we are coolly informed, that a man has been dead, his body laid in the grave, and decomposition set in, and then again we are told he was once more endowed with life, the blood circulating through his body, the secretion of the gastric juice, bile, etc. going on, the waste and repair of tissue taking place, we may be inclined to exclaim, "Has the torch of science gone out, or was it but a will o' the wisp?"

The arguments for the non-existence and incredibility of miracles may be classed under two heads, the one scientific, and the other historical. In *The Mystery of Miracles*, written by a very orthodox person, Mr. J. W. Reynolds, who is also the author of *The Tabernacle of Nature*, which once caused much jubilation in the Christian camp; it is stated that "Miracles are creative acts of God, supernatural operations in nature's domain, new things of which unaided nature is incapable."

Now these three assertions I deny *in toto*. No one can truthfully say that such an act as creation ever took place—that is the formation of something out of nothing. Our experience, or science teaches us that all events and existences are but the modification of something that has had a prior existence. No one can prove and maintain the existence of God. The second proposition of this dealer in miracles, that his wares are "supernatural operations in nature's domain," is very misty and phantasmal. Every event which repeats itself is natural, and we know of nothing beyond nature, nor can know; nature is the sum total of all that is. We may push our inquiries further and further into the ocean of immensity, we may scrutinise with ten-thousand magnifying power the microscopic world, and yet be within nature's domain. We may discover new laws, new facts may be brought before us, but still they will be working in perfect harmony with those already known. But the last assertion of this philosophical Christian is the most unfounded of all. Miracles, he says, are new things of which nature is incapable. Who shall set bounds to the capabilities of nature? Once nature was thought to require the assistance of demons, angels, or spirits, to effect her purposes. For the creation of

man it was thought necessary to have an Almighty God, and for his corruption an almost equally almighty Devil, but now good old nature is beginning to receive justice, men are finding out that these devils and gods are but masqueraders in the plumes of our natural mother, and that she is capable of producing grander results than the whole spiritual universe, according to Mahomet, John or Christ, which, according to those who seem to know most about it, is in a most chaotic and anarchical state, it being an open question as to whether God or the Devil will ultimately win. It was a new step in the orderly progress of nature when man first appeared upon the scene, but this step did not remain unique, for a race of men followed. A new step was taken by nature, it may be said, when Christ rose from the dead clothed in a semi-human form. This might be no more startling or marvellous than the appearance of the first man, the first plant; but we soon see where the analogy between the two cases fails. When the first man was brought into being, the same causes still operated and brought other men into being, thus establishing the natural law that men should exist. But when Christ rose from the dead, nature seemed to have exhausted her power in that direction, no similar effects followed where the same conditions were present. Other men have fulfilled the same physical conditions as Christ; crucifixion was not a new mode of punishment initiated specially for the Nazarene, other men suffered the agony of the cross; other men have fulfilled the same mental or moral conditions, conquering self, and have risen to as high a level as Christ; and yet good as they were, wise as they were, needful as they might be for the welfare of humanity, still they sleep in the tomb. The only immortality that we know they possess is that left in their memory and words. Therefore these two events, the origin of man and the resurrection of Christ, are not analogous. The one developed into a natural law or method, the other, if it ever existed, was sterile, abnormal, unnatural. I do not say nature is not capable of producing a higher being than man, but before I can believe it has been done, it must occur not once or twice, or a thousand times, but wherever and whenever the causes which operated to bring it into effect are at work.

GEORGE ARMATAGE.

(To be concluded.)

## WEE DAVIE.

Tune—"Robin Samson's Smiddy."

Wee Davie was an active chie  
As ever cut a thrapple,  
Could loup and rin the Diel himsel'  
And wie a lion grapple.  
But what think ye o' his exploit  
Wie yon auld pagan giant?  
Wha struttit oot in fecghtin gear  
And shook his spear defiant.

CHORUS.

At their fal the ral the ri-doe,  
An' a' their brag an' blether,  
Their battle-god and holy priests  
And prophets a' thegither.

Wee Davie made himsel a sling  
And stored wie stanes his pockets,  
Then faced the unbelievin gowk  
And slung the stanes like rockets.  
Ane strack him fair atween the een  
And felled him like a plover,  
Then Davie hackit aff his head  
For fear he might recover,

Chorus—Frae their fal the ral, etc.

Wee Davie took the head to Saul,  
Wha gied him muckle credit,  
And a' the lassies in the camp  
Were singing hoo he did it;  
And Saul gied him a harp to strum  
To gliff awa the deevils,  
Wha plagued him sair baith e'en and morn  
When in his drucken revels.

Chorus—Wie his fal the ral, etc.

T. CLARK.

Lapman (to revivalist)—I hear that several members of the church have gone crazy over the subject of religion. Revival gatherings are meeting with glorious success.



## A BAPTISM OF FIRE.

Colonel Fitzsmithers, the editor of the Kentucky *Greased Lightning*, and a member of one of our most prominent families, was baptised and was received into the Second Baptist church, last Sunday, under most auspicious circumstances. The colonel and the Rev. Mr. Horntooter had just descended into the water preparatory to immersion, and the minister was repeating those solemn words which begin, "Brother, dost thou promise to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil?" when the colonel, raising his eyes in rapt devotion, happened to spy on the bank the familiar form of Major Blatherskite, the editor of the *Derringer*. Now, these two gentlemen had a political discussion, during which the major published in the columns of the *Derringer* some rather caustic truths in regard to the colonel. This affair had never been satisfactorily arranged, so that when the colonel observed the major, he leaned over until he could catch the ear of the minister without being noticed, and whispered: "Go right along with the service, parson. Don't let any of them critters suspect I'm a-talking to you, but I'd be obliged if you could give me the loan of your shootin'-iron for a moment, as I left mine on the bank." The minister, taking in the situation at a glance, managed to slip his six-shooter into the colonel's hand without being seen by the crowd, and then, by a quick movement, he gained the bank, and the firing began. After three or four shots had been exchanged, with no other result than killing a negro, who was standing on the opposite bank, the colonel happened to get the drop on the major while he was trying to escape, and thus ended the dispute. After this little incident, the minister once more descended into the water, and the ceremony was concluded. Before the assemblage dispersed, however, the major and the negro were buried, and the colonel in a few touching words extolled the virtues of baptism, saying that its effects were to abolish all feelings of violence, and to teach that beautiful precept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself!"—*Life*.

## CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS.

Dr. A. J. Harrison has been lecturing at Wolverhampton against Scepticism. His discourses were addressed "to men." Apparently the reverend gentleman is careless about women. For our part, we regard these lectures "to men" as a trick below Dr. Harrison's dignity. It suggests something spicy, which the presence of ladies would prevent the lecturer from uttering.

We have looked through the reports of Dr. Harrison's lectures, and we find them of such a nature that to criticise them would be like fighting a cloud or punching a pillow. His observations on miracles, and his conundrums on free will and necessity, seem to show that he was playing with his audience. Dr. Harrison is too able a man—or at least he was—to be the dupe of such poor sophistry.

An Eastern United States Senator tells this about his little girl: He says that when his family had gathered for dinner little Clara was too busy with her playthings to suspend, and her mother called her to come. "Yes, in a minute," was the response. "But we are all waiting," said my wife, "and your papa is waiting to ask the blessing." She came in, climbed into her chair, folded her hands demurely, bowed her head and said in a low voice: "Let her go, Gallagher?" "I am afraid," said the Senator, laughing, "that the blessing I invoked at my table that day was slightly incoherent."

A clergyman in a recent address on the propriety of doing the right thing at the right time, said that when he was chaplain in the army, at a certain battle he came upon a man who was horribly wounded, over whom a comrade was kneeling endeavoring to supply religious consolation by reading a standard catechism to him. The dying man, as the clergyman reached him was having this heart-searching question out to him: Who gave you this name?

"How customs change!" exclaimed Jones the other evening to his better half. "I see the Jews used to employ hewers of wood and drawers of water, whereas we use ewers of water and drawers of wood."

"Now, children, who was the strongest man?" asked the Sunday-school superintendent. "John L. Samson!" yelled a little fellow whose knowledge of sacred and profane history was somewhat mixed.—*Texas Siftings*.

"Shall we have clothes in heaven, Mamma?" "No, child." Well, mamma, won't it be funny to see the black servant and the red face big-bellied cook walk in heaven, arm in arm."

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## 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, "Intelligence in Nature."

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. Rossetti, "Is Christianity Reasonable?" Monday, at 8, dancing class (3d. per lesson). Tuesday, at 8, social evening. Thursday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes. Friday, at 8, discussion.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, 7.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Biography of Herbert Spencer."

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, dramatic recital; 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "And they Crucified Him." Friday, at 7.45, Science Classes (Hygiene and Chemistry).

Edmonton—Angel Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Mission of Secularism."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., Mr. C. Bradlaugh, 11.15, "My Political Programme now and a Quarter of a Century since"; 7, "Life, Death, and Immortality."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, Grove House, 1 The Grove, Tuesday at 8, debate between Mr. C. J. Hunt and Mr. W. O. Drake, "Materialism v. Spiritualism."

Leyton—W. Jenkinson's, Cooper's Lane, 6.30, Mr. W. Jenkinson, "An Hour with 'Dagonet.'"

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Christ and Christians." Monday, at 8.30, social meetings. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic class (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11, Mr. C. Ivatts will lecture; 7, Mr. J. Coppock, F.C.S., "How Science tells what a Star is made of" (with experiments). Tuesday, at 8, Mr. T. Thurlow, "The True History of the Bible."

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. S. Soddy, "Other Worlds than Ours."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. R. Forder, "A Night with Old Nick."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. R. Rosetti, "Is the Bible an Immoral Book?"

Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3, debate between Messrs. Clarendon and Keen on "Creation."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Sermons from Shakespeare, V.—'All the World's a Stage.'"

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street, Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "Mistakes of Jesus"; 3, "Heaven and Hell"; 7, "A World Without a God."

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street, 12 noon, debating class, a member, "The Ulster Loyalists"; 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmore, "The Socratic Method."

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room, 6.30, Mr. W. Anyan, "Evolution."

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—11, Tontine Society; 3, discussion class, "The Scientific Basis of Morals"; 7, Mr. Bergmann, "Does the New Testament Teach the English Morality?"

Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 3, meeting of sub-committee of North-Eastern Secular Federation; local delegates and vice-presidents are requested to attend.

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mr. James Hooper, "Miracles Critically Examined."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 3, debating class, W. M., "Christ's Life and Teachings"; 7, Mr. Welch, "Macaulay." Music by Miss Payne.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, 7, a local gentleman will give original readings.

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

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street, 6, Mr. B. Dawson will give a reading.

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street, 7, Mr. W. B. Stansell will lecture.

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Nov. 23, Hull; 30, Woolwich. Dec. 28, Camberwell.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Nov. 19 and 26 (Tuesday evenings), Plaistow.

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