

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

ALL ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

Christmas comes but once a year.
And when it comes it brings good cheer.

Ask any ordinary Christian why he commemorates the twenty-fifth of December, and he will tell you he does so because it is the birthday of Jesus Christ. Ask him how he knows that, and he will answer "Of course it is," or "Everybody says so," or some other form of words which is an excuse for ignorance. He does not know that there is not the slightest evidence that Jesus Christ was born on the twenty-fifth of December, nor is he aware that this very day was commemorated by Pagans for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years before the days of Prophet of Nazareth.

The New Testament is silent on this point. But it relates one incident which contradicts the popular belief. It tells us that at the birth of Christ the angels sang a song which was heard by shepherds who were watching their flocks by night. Now it is an indisputable fact that Palestine is too cold in mid-winter for sheep to lie out on their pastures. It is obvious, therefore, that if the flocks were out at night when Christ was born, the event must have happened in a milder season of the year. This is overlooked by the generality of Christians, who read the Bible, when they do read it, with wonderful carelessness.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, does not appear to have mentioned his birthday, nor did his brothers and sisters. Perhaps they forgot it, having no Family Bible to refresh their memories, and no registrar's office to consult. The primitive Church knew nothing about it. According to the learned and trustworthy Bingham (*Antiquities*, bk. xx, ch. iv) various sects celebrated the birthday of Christ at different times. The Basilidians kept the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of April, others the twenty-fifth of May, and the greatest part of the Eastern Church the sixth of January. The Latin Church always kept the twenty-fifth of December, but this date was not fixed until the second half of the fourth century. Preaching at Antioch, about A. D. 380, St. Chrysostom declared "It is not yet ten years since this day was made known to us (Massey, *Natural Genesis*, vol. ii, p. 403). This is perfectly conclusive. Not until Jesus Christ had been dead for more than three hundred years was his birthday discovered; in other words, it was not till then that the Church fixed the date with an eye to its own profit.

St. Chrysostom does indeed allege that "Among those inhabiting the West, it was known before from ancient and primitive times, and to the dwellers from Thrace to Cadiz it was previously familiar and well known." But this is absolute fudge. Is it likely, is it conceivable, that the birthday of Christ should be known in the West, far away from Palestine, and unknown close to it at Antioch, where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians?

The real explanation of the case is very simple. "Some also think," says Bingham, "that the very design of appointing the feast of Christ's Nativity

and Epiphany at this season of the year, was chiefly to oppose the vanities and excesses which the heathen indulged themselves in, upon their Saturnalia and calends of January at this very time of the year." Precisely so. After the adoption of Christianity by Constantine the Church became rapidly Paganised. It adopted all sorts of heathen rites and festivals; in short, it stooped to conquer. Now, this very twenty-fifth of December was a Pagan festival; it was adopted by the Church with simply the alteration of the name; and in order to make the most of the transaction, the Church repeatedly censured those who tried to make the day a fast instead of a festival. A variety of pious reasons were assigned, but behind them all was the real reason, that only by keeping the day as a festival could the Church wean the Pagans from their old faith. It is always easier to change popular doctrines than popular observances, and the Church's policy was to make as little alteration as possible in heathen customs while entirely changing their religious significance.

Why was the twenty-fifth of December a universal Pagan festival? Why was it celebrated from the frozen North to the sultry South, and from Gaul in the West, to Syria, Persia, and India in the East? Because it was the birthday of the SUN. On the twenty-first of December—which, curiously enough, the Church has fixed as the day of St. Thomas, who doubted the resurrection of Christ—the sun reaches its nadir. The God of Day enters into his winter cave. For three days there is stagnation. Is he really shorn of strength? Has the enemy triumphed over him for ever? Will he never more assert his might, and rise, conquering, and to conquer, in the heavens? Will the earth for ever lie in the sterile embrace of cold and darkness? Will the sweet, soft grass no more spring from the soil? Will the blackened tree-branches no more burst forth with fresh green life? Will the corn no more wave in the summer breeze? Will the vines no more bear their purple clusters of prisoned nectar? Is it hope or despair? Hope! See the three full days are ended. The twenty-fifth of December has come. The sun begins to rise, faint and pale, from what appeared his tomb. Doubt is no longer possible. The pangs of rebirth are past. His strength is returning, though as yet he is weak as a suckling child. *Evohe!* Eat and drink, sing and dance; and let the temples, the altars, the houses, be decorated with evergreen and mistletoe, typifying the perennial life of things, and suggesting the buds of spring midst winter's snows.

All the Sun-Gods, including Jesus Christ, were born on this blessed day. It is not the Son's birthday, but the Sun's; the visible, beneficent, ever-fighting, ever-victorious God, whom the old heathen worshipped. And they were wise—wiser at least than the "spiritualised" and emasculated Christians. "Sir," said an Aberdeen lady to a Persian ambassador, "they tell me you worship the sun!" "Ah, madam," he replied, "and so would you, if you had ever seen him."

The Puritans who, with all their sour bigotry, had much learning, saw the Pagan origin of Christmas, and the day is still disregarded by puritan Scotland. Dr. Thomas Warmstry wrote in 1648, "It doth appear that the time of this Festival doth comply with the time of the Heathen's Saturnalia." Prynne, ear-cropped Prynne, in his *Histrio-Mastix*, lets out in fine style—

"If we compare our Bacchanalian Christmases and New Year's Tides with these Saturnalia and Feasts of Janus, we shall find such near affinity between them both in regard of time (they being both in the end of December and the first of January) and in their manner of solemnising (both of them being spent in revelling, epicurism, wantonness, idleness, dancing, drinking, stage plays, masques, and carnal pomp and jollity), that we must needs conclude the one to be but the very ape or issue of the other. Hence Polydor Virgil affirms in express terms that our Christmas Lords of Misrule (which custom, saith he, is chiefly observed in England), together with dancing, masques, mummeries, stage plays, and such other Christmas disorders now in use with Christians, were derived from those Roman Saturnalia and Bacchanalian Festivals; which (concludes he) should cause all pious Christians externally to abominate them."

And the Puritans did abominate them. Brand tells us (*Popular Antiquities*, Christmas) that on December 22, 1647, the town-crier of Canterbury, by order of the mayor, openly proclaimed that all such "superstitious festivals" should be put down, and that "a market should be kept upon Christmas Day." There is an Order of Parliament dated December 24, 1652, directing "that no observation shall be had of the five and twentieth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day; nor any solemnity used or exercised in Churches upon that day in respect thereof."

It must, indeed, strike any reflective Christian as peculiar that the birthday of his Savior should be celebrated with social festivities. What has roast beef to do with original sin, plum-pudding with the atonement, or whiskey with salvation by faith? What relation is there between carnal enjoyments and a spiritual faith? Why are wordly pleasures the commemoratives of the central doctrine of the Religion of Sorrow? Why, in brief, is Christmas a festival at all?

The answer to this question has been given already. The practices of a religion of life naturally differ from those of a religion of death. It was appropriate to worship the sun with feast and mirth, for he was the great gladdener and sustainer, giving food to the hungry and joy to the dejected. Regarded in this light, our Christmas customs are seen to have had a natural origin. Every detail is borrowed from ancient sun-worship. Christians are still Pagans without it, and, paradoxical as it sounds, Christmas existed before Christ. The celebration is of immemorial antiquity, though its name and nominal object have changed. It preceded Christianity, and will probably survive it.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

(Concluded from p. 597.)

THE Rev. J. J. Tayler comparing the Revelation ascribed to John and the Fourth Gospel says:

"The former is intensely Jewish in spirit; abounds in rich, concrete imagery; and is pervaded by a vivid Chiliasm [belief in near approach of the end of the world] from beginning to end. Its language is so broken and rough, so ungrammatical and solecistic, as to be absolutely barbarous. The latter, on the contrary, bears traces throughout of a marked antipathy to Judaism, is free from every vestige of Chiliasm; deals rather in the mystic abstraction of the later Alexandrine schools, than in the sensuous pictures of the old prophets; and like the bed of some deep river, is filled to the brim with a continuous flow, if not of pure, at least of such smooth and perspicuous Greek as indicates a long habit of speaking and thinking in that language." *

But it is the comparison with the first three gospels that is conclusive against the fourth. John gives us no parables, those most characteristic utterances of the synoptic Jesus. Nor does he know anything of the casting out of devils, the most common miracle according to the first three gospels. He never mentions the miraculous birth of Christ, but plumps the Word made flesh fair upon us without any indication of how he or it became so. He says nothing of the derogatory and farcical temptation by the Devil, knows nothing of the short aphorisms of the Sermon on the Mount, but gives instead some long mystic discourses of which the other gospels know nothing, but which are strikingly like those found in the Epistles of John. Even John the Baptist is made to talk in the same style.

John is a product of the new faith when it had almost dissevered itself from its Jewish origin. The Christ of Matthew says he has come not to destroy the law. The Christ of John says "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers," and speaks of the Jews as children of the Devil. The Christ of John openly announced himself and is received as the Messiah, from the beginning of his ministry and in Samaria. But in the Synoptics he conceals his Messiahship and charges his disciples not to enter any city of Samaria.

The Christ of Matthew and Mark is a man who knows not when the day of judgment is. The Christ of John is one with the Father. The one is an exalted man, the other a semi-humanised God. The carpenter is put out of sight and replaced by a mysterious Logos, who talks about his flesh being meat and his blood drink. The miracles are of a different character. The turning of water into wine and the raising of Lazarus, if they had occurred, would surely have been noticed by the other gospels.

It is not only that John omits what the others insert. The difference of the occurrences are so great that they cannot be reconciled. In John (i., 35; iii., 24) the Logos commences his public ministry and the calling of his disciples before the imprisonment of John the Baptist—not after, as in Matthew (iv., 12, etc.) and Mark (i., 14, etc.) John (ii., 13-7) places the row at the temple at the commencement of his career, not at the close, as do the other three. According to the Synoptics, the public career of Jesus occupied but about one year, with but one visit to Jerusalem at the end. John extends the period to more than three years, and represents him as frequently travelling between Galilee and Judæa.

The Synoptics make Jesus, in violation of the Jewish law, crucified on the day after the Paschal lamb was slain. John, with more plausibility, fixes it a day earlier. The first-named wished to make the last supper take the place of the Paschal lamb; the last wished to substitute the crucifixion for the Passover.

Contrasting the story in the first chapter of John with that of the three, Dr. J. E. Carpenter says:—

"How many are the variations between this narrative and the synoptic tradition! There, Jesus only enters public life after the Baptist has been thrown into prison; here, he begins to exert at once his wondrous influence, and his first followers are the disciples of his predecessors. There, Simon and Andrew are called from their nets by the lakeside; here, they are among the crowd gathered on the banks of the Jordan around John. There, Simon only receives the name Peter on his declaration, after months of discipleship, that Jesus is the Christ; here it is conferred upon him at the outset. And there, above all, a certain development may be traced which culminates in the impetuous burst with which Peter claims for his Master at Cæsarea Philippi, the dignity of Messiah, of which Jesus had hitherto said not a word; here, that high function is recognised at once by the Baptist and the disciples, and assumed at the outset by the Teacher himself." *

I have dealt, though not as fully as I might, with

* *The Character of the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd. edition, p. 143.

* *The First Three Gospels*, pp. 43, 44; 1890.

the contradictions between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, because they mutually destroy each other as evidence. In the word of the author of *Supernatural Religion*, "They must be pronounced mere narratives compiled long after the events recorded, by unknown persons who were neither eye-witnesses of the alleged miraculous occurrences nor hearers of the statements they profess to report."*

It is not every one who can enter into the question of the worth of the testimony of Irenæus or Tatian or Valentinus, or estimate the comparative critical value of Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Godet, Luthardt, Lightfoot, Westcott, Salmon and Sanday, who defend the genuineness of the gospel against Strauss, Bauer, Baur, Hilgenfeld, Renan, Davidson, Tayler, and Abbot, who dispute it, save that he may note that all the former have Church appointments. But everyone can see that the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics cannot be made to harmonise, and that contradictory stories cannot be the Word of God.

Our conclusion is that John is a pure work of fiction, worthless as history, valuable only as throwing light on the influences that moulded Christianity towards the end of the second century.

J. M. WHEELER.

A HELPLESS GOD.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(From the *Twentieth Century*).

[CONTINUED.]

If you hold that Jesus Christ was God incarnate, you are plunged into the same dilemma. He came and faced the wicked men of his time, and they defeated and hanged him, proving his weakness. If you say that he voluntarily gave up his life as a sacrificial victim to the wrath of God, there again you have the absurd and horrible conclusion that God is so vindictive that he must have a victim on which to expend his wrath against sin, and so unjust that he would accept an innocent victim instead of the guilty.

If we ask a clergyman to reconcile the miseries of the world with the goodness and power of God, he tells us that through all this misery God is working out his purpose for good. But this is a conventional, theological explanation, with no fact on which to rest, and no reason by which it may be justified. Why does God have purposes that can only be accomplished by weeping eyes, and broken hearts, and bleeding arteries? Why is he so slow about bringing his purposes to a conclusion? The clergyman tells us it is wicked to have such thoughts and ask such questions; that we must have faith; that we must bow to the will of God; that

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

I reply that it is not wicked to have thoughts and ask questions; that if it is, we cannot help ourselves; the thoughts come without permission, the questions formulate themselves; that there is no mystery about it; that the clergyman's explanation is not satisfactory; that a wise and good God would know better and do better than to climb to the accomplishment of his purposes over mountains of human bodies, shattered nerves, perished hopes, and wrecked lives.

If God cannot produce one drop of the perfume of joy except by destroying the petals of hope; if he cannot distil a cask of the wine of happiness except by crushing millions of human beings in the press of misery; if he cannot thinly populate heaven without overcrowding hell, he is neither wise nor good.

The theological Devil, the theological heaven, the theological method of explaining the existence of evil (the oppression of the good and the triumph of the wicked) by calling it a mystery, are all vain attempts

to reconcile the facts of human misery with the theory of the existence of an all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful God. But to a rational mind those facts and that theory are absolutely irreconcilable.

Consumption and a Creator cannot exist in the same universe, unless the Creator is cruel. Insanity and Infinite Intelligence are irreconcilable, unless the Infinite Intelligence is infernal. Death and Deity are inharmonious, unless the Deity is demoniac. Tears and the Trinity are contradictions, unless the Trinity is tyrannical. Groans and God are antitheses, unless God is ghoulish. Hunger and a Heavenly Father are contraries, unless the Heavenly Father is hard-hearted. Poverty and Divine Power are inconsistent, unless the Divine Power is paralysed. Honesty in prison and Hypocrisy in office would be impossible if God were on a throne, unless God is a Presbyterian politician.

How can you reconcile the existence of a good God with the Czar of Russia, or with Balfour in Ireland, or with some recent decisions of courts and brutalities of the police in this country? Do you believe that a God who could do anything would fail to open the doors of Siberian prisons, or free the Irish from the inhuman landlords who drink their blood? Do you believe a God, worthy of the name, would not rescue the miners and sewing women of this country from the power that enslaves and kills them? Do you believe a God who was not utterly weak and bad would sit still and see thousands of men become thieving tramps and other thousands of young women become pitiful street-walkers, who might be good and virtuous if there was any way by which they might earn a decent living? If you believe any of these things, your faith, or your credulity and unreason, are greater than mine.

Now, when I ask some believer to explain why God does nothing to stop these outrages, he tells me it is a mystery, in which case I turn on my heel and leave him. We have got beyond the point at which such a question can be satisfactorily answered by pious platitudes. I want an answer to that question. I do not want to be humbugged.

Perhaps the believer tells me that man is a free agent, and that God cannot change these bad conditions until men get ready for the change. If that is so, then what is the use of having any God? This explanation means that God does nothing because men will not let him do anything. Well, what sort of a God is this? A helpless God! But of what use to this world is a helpless God?

(To be concluded.)

FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY.

A writer in the current number of the *Asiatic Quarterly*, said to be a veteran missionary, declares that the efforts which have been made to propagate Christianity have resulted in failure wherever those efforts were made where real religions existed. The Greeks, the Romans, and the Northern barbarians had no religion. Among them Christianity made some headway. But it failed to advance in those nations where already a vigorous religious life prevailed. Its success among the Hebrews was only partial. The attempt to convert the Zoroastrians resulted in failure. Christianity never crossed the Euphrates and Tigris in force and permanently. It practically does not exist now to the eastward of Mesopotamia. After the rise of Mahomedanism it proved its powerlessness to win the adherents of Mahomet. The victory lay with its opponents. These wrested from Christianity the whole of the north of Africa, where there were once 200 Christian bishops. Only in Spain did the cross conquer the crescent. To day it is rejected and ignored by nearly two-thirds of the human race. Its adherents, including those whose sole title to be numbered among these lies in the fact of their having been born in a nominally Christian country, do not number more than 445,000,000; while there were 560,000,000 Buddhists, 190,000,000 Hindus, and 160,000,000 Mahomedans.

* Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays, p. 163.

MORE FROM HUXLEY ON BOOTH.

[Another letter from Professor Huxley appeared in Tuesday's *Times*, from which we extract the following.]

BUT it is now time to undertake a more particular criticism of *Darkest England*. At the outset of my examination of that work, I was startled to find that Mr. Booth had put forward his scheme with an almost incredibly imperfect knowledge of what had been done and is doing in the same direction. A simple reader might well imagine that the author of *Darkest England* posed as the Columbus, or at any rate the Cortez, of that region. "Go to Mudie's," he tells us, and you will be surprised to see how few books there are upon the social problem. That may or may not be correct; but if Mr. Booth had gone to a certain reading room not far from Mudie's, I undertake to say that the well-informed and obliging staff of the national library in Bloomsbury would have provided him with more books on this topic, in almost all European languages, than he would read in three months. Has Socialism no literature? And what is Socialism but an incarnation of the social question? Moreover, I am persuaded that even "Mudie's" resources could have furnished Mr. Booth with the *Life of Lord Shaftesbury* and Carlyle's works. Mr. Booth seems to have undertaken to instruct the world without having heard of *Past and Present* or of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*; though somewhat late in the day, a judicious friend called his attention to them. To those of my contemporaries on whom, as on myself, Carlyle's writings on this topic made an ineffaceable impression 40 years ago, who know that for all that time hundreds of able and devoted men, both clerical and lay, have worked heart and soul for the permanent amendment of the condition of the poor, Mr. Booth's "Go to Mudie's" affords an apt measure of the depth of his preliminary studies. However, I am bound to admit that these earlier laborers in the field labored in such a different fashion that the originality of the plan started by Mr. Booth remains largely unaffected. For them no drums have beat, no trombones brayed, no sanctified buffoonery, after the model of the oration of the Friar in Wallenstein's Camp, dear to the readers of Schiller, has tickled the ears of the groundlings on their behalf. Sadly behind the great age of rowdy self-advertisement in which their lot has fallen, they seem not to have advanced one whit beyond John the Baptist and the Apostles, 1,800 years ago, in their notions of the way in which the *metanoia*, the change of mind of the ill-doer, is to be brought about. Yet the new model was there, ready for the imitation of those ancient savers of souls. The ranting and roaring mystagogues of some of the most venerable of Greek and Syrian cults also had their processions and banners, and their fifes and cymbals and holy chants, their hierarchy of officers to whom the art of making collections was not wholly unknown, and who, as freely as their modern imitators, promised an Elysian future to contributory converts. The success of these antique Salvation armies was enormous. Simon Magus was quite as notorious a personage, and probably had as strong a following, as Mr. Booth. Yet the Apostles, with their old-fashioned ways, would not accept such success as a satisfactory sign of the Divine sanction, nor depart from their own methods of leading the way to the higher life. I deem it unessential to verify Mr. Booth's statistics. The exact strength of the population of the realm of misery, be it one, two, or three millions, has nothing to do with the efficacy of any means proposed for the highly desirable end of reducing it to a *minimum*. The sole question for consideration at present is whether the scheme, keeping specially in view the spirit in which it is to be worked, is likely to do more good than harm. Mr. Booth tells us with commendable frankness that "it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving the soul that I seek the salvation of the body" (p. 45), which language, being interpreted, means that the propagation of the special Salvationist creed comes first, and the promotion of the physical, intellectual, and purely moral welfare of mankind second in his estimation. Men are to be made sober and industrious mainly that, as washed, shorn and docile sheep, they may be driven into the narrow theological fold which Mr. Booth patronises. If they refuse to enter, for all their moral cleanliness, they will have to take their place among the goats as sinners only less dirty than the rest.

A clergyman the other Sunday followed up a stirring sermon on the speedy approach of the world's final catastrophe by an appeal for a liberal contribution for rebuilding the tower of the church.

ACID DROPS.

The Conscience Clause applies to children but not to teachers, and thus the religious party has the upper hand in public education. A profession of religion is exacted in all the training colleges and "religious instruction" has to be received by the students. The same thing goes on lower down. Pupil teachers' heads have to be stuffed with the lumber of Jewish fables which are dignified as history. We have just been looking through a couple of recent examination papers in the diocese of Winchester, in which the junior pupil teachers are asked questions about Ruth's mother-in-law, and Ittai the Gittite, Zadok, Hushai, Ziba, and Shimei the son of Gera. They are also asked "What made David leave Keilah?" and "Why was Samuel so named?" Surely it is midsummer madness to pass the future educators of the young through this mill of imbecility. Most of them have hard work to qualify themselves for their proper duties, and the gratuitous burden of Bible rubbish must be a severe tax on their strength.

It is reported that the Indians are not only going in for a Messiah, but also for a Virgin Mary. This argues that some pale-face is working the oracle.

Rénan laughs at Mr. Gladstone's defence of Scripture. He says that the great politician becomes another man when he attempts to explain the Bible.

Mr. Gladstone's new book on Homer is dreadfully slated in the *Athenæum* by a very competent reviewer, who thinks the G. O. M. quite as old-fashioned and illogical in that field as we regard him in the field of Biblical criticism.

C. L. Dodgson writes to the *St. James's Gazette* from Christ Church, Oxford, on the subject of profanity. He admits the rarity of "blue" stories among "the senior men," but deplores that "anecdotes whose point consists in a comic allusion to some Bible text, or the existence of evil spirits, or the reality of future punishment, or even the name of God, are more freely bandied about and more openly enjoyed, not only by laymen, to whom such things may possibly be mere myths and not worthy of any respect, but even by ordained clergymen, to whom, if to any living men, these things are solemn realities." This distressed gentleman goes on to say that—"No real belief in Christianity can possibly long co-exist with a general practice of making all things holy ludicrous. A section of us may still cling to the ancient Faith; but it will be a dwindling section, holding its way, as best it can, through taunts, perhaps through persecutions, in the midst of a nation of infidels." Of course the "persecutions" are the effect of Mr. Dodgson's heated imagination. For the rest, it is evident that Freethought is spreading at Oxford.

"Too much Christian Science" is the laconic verdict of Coroner Tucker in the case of a man who died at Olean N.Y., last week under the ministrations of a faith healer. Perhaps there was not quite enough science and too much Christian. —*Freethought*.

Henry Pratt, M.D., a spiritist, has written a curious work, *Jesus Bar Rabba*, in which he seeks to show that the risen Christ was a personating spirit, not actually the risen Jesus, but a false spirit teaching a different doctrine.

Mr. W. T. Stead has the universe in charge. This is so manifest that it is said that his subordinates at Northumberland Street made up the following story:—Mr. Stead died and went to heaven. He entered the door and walked up to the throne, and God Almighty got up and said, "I beg pardon, Mr. Stead, I'm sitting in your seat."

A new monthly is advertised, *The Religious Review of Reviews*. Gods and little fishes! isn't Mr. Stead's magazine religious enough for anybody?

The Church Association has unanimously resolved to appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council against the Archbishop's judgment in the Lincoln case. This action is endorsed by the *Record* and the *English Churchman*. The latter says: "The Judgment would practically undo the work of the Reformation." Even the

Ritualist *Church Times* is ungracious enough to affirm that the Archbishop's judgment has "no spiritual validity," which is exactly what the Ritualists have complained of the judgments of the Privy Council.

One writing in the *Church Times* says that if the manual acts in celebrating the communion are to be visible to all, the preacher must break the bread above his head. Of course the purport of this is that the priest shall not pretend to be working a miracle by doing the *hocus pocus* of *hoc est corpus*.

According to the *Port Elizabeth Telegraph*, the programme of the service at St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town, announced the veritable Christian creed in giving as the text of the bishop's sermon, Psalm xlvi., 1, "Gold is our refuge and strength." The printer who set up the programme and those who passed it had probably some insight into the real inwardness of religion.

"Why does the revival of belief in reincarnation and magic call itself Theosophy?" was asked a well-known Theist. "Because it has neither Theos nor Sophy; neither God nor wisdom," was his reply.

"When the unclean spirit of superstition is gone out of a person," continued this Theist, "he seeketh rest, and, finding none, saith, 'I will return unto my house whence I came out.' Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits, and when they enter, the last state of that person is worse than the first."

The absolute necessity of Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God* is strikingly exemplified by a recent lecture by the Rev. W. Pierce at Islington. From a long report in the local *Gazette* we see that this gentleman gave an extract or two from Darwin's *Life and Letters* showing a slight Theistic tendency, and deliberately kept back all the strong Agnostic passages. Every Freethinker should keep a copy of *Darwin on God* by him to show Christians what Darwin really said on theology.

The *Jewish Chronicle* rejoices in the forward movement of Elsmereism, because, it says, the religion of Jesus divested of supernaturalism is simply Judaism. The Elsmereians may answer that Judaism divested of supernaturalism is simply Secularism.

The vicar of Harwich complains that boys and girls who are being prepared for confirmation are attracted away from him by Salvation Army handbills announcing: 3 p.m. "Popping the Question and a few Hints to Young Ladies," "A Kiss in the Dark," "Hobgoblins," and other choice subjects. The Army attractions must be tame, however, after a course of Bible reading.

"Sequah" was all over the back page of Monday's *Echo*. The space was crowded with testimonials from Christian ministers. "The Churches Speak," says Sequah. Yes, it is one Sequah patronising another.

Booth's scheme, as might be expected, is attracting tramps from the country. A man charged with begging at Coventry told the bench that he was making for London to get his share of that hundred thousand pounds. The police superintendent stated that the Warwickshire roads swarmed with vagrants, all going up to London to get something from General Booth.

Dr. Parker has been criticising Professor Huxley's letter on Booth's scheme. Carefully evading every other point, the City Temple oracle made fun of apprehensions of danger from the Salvation Army leader a hundred years hence. This is a gross misrepresentation of what Huxley said, but it is near enough and honest enough for Dr. Parker.

Reaction is setting in. The *Christian Commonwealth* is already talking of "the Booth craze."

Miss Eva Booth has been promoting Salvationism at Bolton. The chief attractions appear to have been Chinese lanterns, a converted Hindu lawyer, a converted Buddhist priest, and a child of four who sang a solo and made a little speech. This precocious moralist told the

meeting he was trying hard to be a good boy, and the meeting, instead of hissing this nauseous display of juvenile cant, applauded it lustily. What a glorious thing is religion when it primes up little children who ought to be in the nursery, and puts them on public platforms to teach grown-up people the way to glory!

J. H. Aitkin, writing on "The Mission Field" in the *Reaper*, says: "A well-known missionary, now gone home, once persuaded the writer to stay at home and help to quicken the life of Christians, rather than enter the foreign field as a missionary." Mr. Aitken also cites a letter from Mr. G. Pearse, who says: "When I look round on all the laborers of Morocco, Syria, and North Africa (now about 100), I am greatly struck with the apparent folly, to all human ideas, of such a mission to the Mohammedans. It is a dead wall immovable to our efforts, and without the present interposition of our God in filling all the laborers with the Holy Ghost, they will not break through it, nor the words they speak enter hearts." Rather a poor look out for the one divine religion.

Shortly before Mrs. Percy's trial for the murder of Mrs. Hogg she wrote a letter to her mother, protesting her innocence, and using many pious expressions. Her trust, she said, was in the Lord, and she advised her mother to rely on the same support. Curiously enough, the ruffian M'Donald, who confesses to having murdered Miss Holt, the Bolton schoolmistress, is also of a pious turn of mind. He has written to a friend to say that he is making his "peace with God," and he adds—"Will you offer up a prayer for me now and again?"

Somehow the religious journals are silent on these interesting matters. They do not care to advertise the piety of murderers. But how many sermons have been preached on the piety of the penitent thief!

Truth points out that Canon Rawlinson, who holds a stall at Canterbury worth £1,000 a year, with house, the sole duty being two months of cathedral residence every year, virtually presented himself with the living of All Hallows, Lombard Street, which is worth quite another £800 a year. The church is useless, and is to be pulled down, but Canon Rawlinson is to retire on his full stipend. This comes of writing trashy histories to support Holy Scripture.

A funny incident occurred at Reading. After one of Mr. Haslam's lectures a collection was made for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, and twopence was put into the box by a well-known excitable Christian. As luck would have it this gentleman had unconsciously sandwiched between the pennies a sovereign which was given him by Messrs. Sutton, the seed merchants, towards the expenses of a lecture against Freethought. Of course the Secularists returned him the piece of gold, and as the lecture against Freethought is sure to advance our cause they have the pleasure of knowing the money will be usefully expended.

Philander and Olive Brown, professional spiritist mediums, of Elmira, N.Y., persuaded Paul Hill, a farmer, that his deceased wife needed funds to purchase "spiritual clothing." The poor old dupe placed various sums, amounting to £600, between the leaves of a Bible, from which they speedily disappeared. The "mediums" for some time persuaded the farmer that the money had reached his wife's spirit, and had been expended in heavenly clothing, but he ultimately became suspicious, and sued the two impostors in the States Courts. It came out in evidence that the "mediums" had granted Mr. Hill peculiar privileges, for he "heard railroad trains running in heaven," and recognised the sounds made by "sawmills turning out lumber with which to build the heavenly city."

Hearing that the Rev. E. T. Scammell, of Teignmouth, was going to discourse on Booth's book, one of our readers in that town sent him copies of the *Freethinker* containing our articles on the subject. Mr. Scammell referred to the matter in his sermon, calling this paper "scurrilous," and stating that he put the second copy into the fire—which by the way is a good old orthodox fashion of answering "infidels."

Not satisfied with this, Mr. Scammell displayed his Chris-

tian charity by describing the gentleman who sent him this journal as "the most cringing and abject individual in the town." The only foundation for this charge is that the gentleman in question had his shop burnt out when he was uninsured, and a subscription was talked about on his behalf, but nothing came of it in consequence of local bigotry. He did not receive a single penny from any one, and Mr. Scammell kindly county-courted him for a small debt, which was scraped together—although there was a contra account which could not at the moment be established.

The new Chief Rabbi's salary is not yet determined. The recommendation of the committee is £2,200 a year. This is a small figure beside the income of an Archbishop, yet large enough to show that the preachers of Kingdom-Come are invariably fond of the mammon of unrighteousness. Forty pounds a week is "a good round sum," and some of the poor East-end Jews will have their own reflections on this matter.

Celestine Edwards, the black preacher, recently lectured for the Christian Evidence Society in the Shoreditch Town Hall. In concluding his address he contended that Christianity had "been the means of softening the passions of men." Afterwards several Freethinkers asked questions, and were "loudly hooted" by the devotees of the creed which softens the passions.

The *Eastern Argus*, which reports Mr. Edwards' lecture, gives no report of the discussion, though it records the hooting. In this way the editor helps his colored friend. But what can be expected from an editor who is flat enough to advocate the earth's flatness?

Edward Vollans, of Hull, is a pious father who believes in the divine precepts "He that spareth his rod hateth his son" (Prov. xiii., 24), and "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. xix., 18). Mr. Vollans thinks these texts apply also to daughters and he has accordingly come under the notice of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. When arrested he was found reading the Bible. He is now committed to prison for three months for brutal ill-usage, and at the end of the time will have to find sureties to keep the peace.

"The Fool of Fools" is the title of a lecture by the Rev. C. Bond, vicar of St. Nicholas, Brighton. The subject seems suited to that gentleman's capacity. By "the Fool of Fools" he means the Atheist. He told a story—or shall we say a fib?—about Mr. Bradlaugh lecturing at Hanley. "In the course of his remarks he made use of the phrase, 'There is no God!'—an expression which, up to that time, he had never deliberately used before. But he was excited with his subject, and in heated language he used these awful words, adding 'The man's a fool who thinks there is.'" Noticing the artfulness of the assertion that this was an expression never used before, and the insinuation that Mr. Bradlaugh, when excited with his subject, makes assertions opposed to his usual utterances, we fancy Mr. Bond must be graduating for a place in the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire.

Mr. Bradlaugh's audience, continues Mr. Bond, "discussed the question afterwards, and one man said, 'When I heard that expression I felt chilled. I have often used it myself, but I didn't like the way Mr. Bradlaugh said it.' Several of the others concurred, and they decided to turn it over in their minds. After arguing it out among themselves, some turned Deists and some Christians." After this Mr. Bond may quietly apply to himself the language of Paul, "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"

Price Hughes says the true Liberal party is a religious party and the sooner the other sort leave it the better. Well, if the Liberal party consisted chiefly of Price Hughes the "other sort" would never want to join it. Perhaps the dressing this shallow, bumptious Methodist prophet received in the last number of the *Speaker* will help to convince him that the Liberal party does not absolutely depend on the Bethelites.

A religious journal boasts of the fact that Christianity raises annually the sum of several hundred million dollars for religious purposes. This merely shows that a great deal of good money goes to a bad purpose. Our motto is: Millions for man; not a cent for God.—*Boston Investigator*.

The Rev. T. T. Berger, B.A., vicar of St. James's, Bolton, teaches that Christians are not to go to law one with another. Yet he sued Henry Hendry for 7s., representing two weeks' rent of his poor cottage. Defendant's wife appeared, and stated that only a week's rent was owing, but that the plaintiff had refused to accept it and had threatened to put the furniture into the street. There was no money at all coming into the house. Her husband was bedfast, and had not worked for nearly twelve months. She also had her mother in bed. She had one child. All of them are dependent on her for subsistence, and it was only now and then that she could get a bit of washing or charring to do. She produced a certificate from Dr. Garstang showing that her husband was in an advanced stage of consumption. His Honor said the case was one of hardship, and he was bound to take into consideration defendant's circumstances. He would make an order for the money to be paid at 2s. per month.

It is well to be a clergyman's son if you are tried at the Guildhall. A young man named John Wynne was recently charged with stealing two dozen pairs of gloves from his employer. In consideration of the young man's parentage Alderman Renals let him off easily, merely binding his father to bring him up for judgment when called upon. Two other persons implicated in the robbery, not having parsons for fathers, will pay the whole penalty.

Rev. gentleman (reproachfully, to drowsy member of his flock): "How can you sleep in church every Sunday, Mr. Jenkins?" Mr. Jenkins: "Well, sir, that's what puzzles me, too, for you do talk powerful loud at times, to be sure, sir."

A good woman presented three reasons for objecting to a preacher. She said that in the first place he read his sermons; in the second he did not read them well; and in the third place they were not worth reading.

By the casting vote of the chairman, the Liverpool City Council decided not to open the Art Gallery and Museum on Sunday afternoons. Alderman Livingstone, as usual, distinguished himself by the virulence of his opposition. The Partingtons of the Council will not much longer mop out the Atlantic. Parties are evenly balanced just now, and next year victory will declare itself with the progressives.

Veracity is not a Christian virtue. We are not surprised, therefore, by what we learn from a Croydon correspondent. Receiving a card, stamped by the Young Men's Christian Association, with the invitation "Will you come, brother?" he went to a Special Gospel meeting for "Men Only." About fifty shop assistants were present, but not a single one of the clergymen and purists announced as speakers. Our correspondent gave the principal singer a copy of the *Freethinker*, and hopes he rescued a soul from the lake of humbug and credulity.

"H. J. W.," a ratepayer of Clapham Junction, writes to the *South-Western Star* complaining of the admission of the *Freethinker* to the reading-room of the Public Library. He regards it as likely to poison the minds of the pure and innocent, but he does not say how many of that class are to be found in Clapham. This pious busybody had better leave the *Freethinker* alone, for it contains nothing of an impure character. It is, indeed, very far from our intention to imitate the Bible in this respect. We may also observe that if "H. J. W." wishes to turn the *Freethinker* out of a public library, he should at least give his name and address, and not deal out his slanders from a place of cowardly concealment.

"The history of religion displays but too plainly the proneness of mankind to relapse, in spite of reformation, into the lower and darker condition of the past."—*Dr. E. B. Tylor, "Primitive Culture: Animism, vol. i., p. 421.*

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, December 14, Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints, Manchester; at 11, "Mistakes of Jesus"; 3, "Reason and Faith"; at 6.30, "Heaven and Hell."

Dec. 21 and 28, Hall of Science, London.

January 4, Milton Hall; 11, Hall of Science; 18, Huddersfield; 25, Hall of Science.

February 1, Hull; 16, South Shields; 23, Newcastle.

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Hall of Science.

April 13, Camberwell.

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.

A. MASON.—Mrs. E. C. Stanton is not a Christian in any accepted meaning of the term. We have several times during the last year or so, printed heterodox utterances from her lips or pen.

NEW YORK "TRUTHSEEKER."—No copy to hand for a fortnight.

A. S. RICHARDSON.—"To rationalise morality" means to strip it of theological prejudices and establish it absolutely on the basis of secular utility. An active member of the N. S. S. should work with a Branch or help the cause in ways often indicated in the *Freethinker*.

J. W. H.—Cuttings are always welcome.

J. A. W.—We did not intend to reprint our Booth articles, but it might be done if many of our readers desire it.

A. HORSMAN.—Sorry we cannot avail ourselves of your help in that direction. We have already more copy than we can find room for.

J. BURRELL.—Glad to hear our Booth articles have been so heartily approved in Westminster. A reprint will depend on the number who express a wish for it.

W. G. RENN.—We think the Finsbury Branch is hardly well advised to open a lecture-room at the back of the Hall of Science. You cannot expect to prosper there, unless at the expense of the old meeting-place.

H. F. SMART.—We have already dealt with H. L. Hastings's libellous nonsense on Colonel Ingersoll. Ingersoll himself never condescends to answer or notice these gutter controversialists. They only seek to provoke the lion's roar in order to draw attention to their existence, but up to the present they have not even caused a frown on his brows. What Hastings says about Paine is a downright lie, and he knows it. We defy him to substantiate it on any public platform, and we are willing to find him one gratis for the purpose.

T. H. EVANS.—There is nothing to prevent an Atheist from sitting in Parliament.

W. AMEY.—Thanks for the cuttings. Glad to see the Portsmouth *Evening News* speaking out on Canon Rawlinson's pluralities.

G. C. W. AND H. H.—Unfortunately such cases are common. Christianity shows itself a religion of hatred the moment you begin to think for yourself. Let the bigots go and live your own free, honest life.

J. FRASER.—Arrived under-stamped. See "Sugar Plums."

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—We have received the following: J. Chamberlain, 5s.; G. A. Henning, 5s.; E. W. Osborn, 2s. 6d.; H. Croughan, 2s.; V. E., £2.

MR. FOOTE thinks he gave the second Sunday in February to some Branch, but he has omitted to enter it in his engagement book. Will the secretary of the Branch in question (if any) communicate with Mr. Foote at once?

J. SAUNDERS.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

J. BENNETT.—We are sorry that the Darlington friends had not a little more patience. The work always falls on the shoulders of a few in every movement.

No. 12.—That sky-pilot must be a miserable skunk. See our paragraph.

TOLEMAN-GARNER.—Glad to hear of your successful meetings at Reading.

R. BROWNE.—It is Dr. Adam Clarke who contends that the nachash or serpent of Genesis iii. was an ourang outang.

CALEB WILLIAMS.—The Quakers in America are far more liberal in opinions than those in England. The majority of them reject the doctrine of the Trinity and the Atonement. W. T. G.—Newman's *Phases of Faith* can often be picked up second-hand for a couple of shillings. We are grieved, though not surprised, at the story of your persecution by Christian bigots. When clergymen go to the employers of a poor old workman only able to earn a few shillings a week, and try to get him discharged, they show the usual fruits of Christian charity. You are evidently a brave man, but quite as evidently you will be driven to starvation if you continue to propagate Freethought, and we advise you to temper your courage with discretion. Oh that the bigots, who say that heaven is their home, would go home, and cease making earth a hell for honest thinkers.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren — Liberty — Freethought — Open Court — Menschenthum — Lucifer — Neues Frereligioses Sonntags-Blatt — Freidenker — The Liberator — Der Arme Teufel — Secular Thought — Boston Investigator — Western Figaro — Sheffield and Rotherham Independent — Hull Critic — Bolton Evening News — Port Elizabeth Telegraph — Cape Register — Devon Evening Express — Teignmouth Times — Hull Daily News — Northern Daily Telegraph — Australian Republican — Lancashire Evening Post — The Reaper — La Verite Philosophique — Fraser's Comic Annual.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call 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.

A *Virgin Mother*, the new instalment of "Bible Romances," will be ready next week. This is a double number, price twopence. As it presents a lot of information as to the Incarnation, the Immaculate Conception, the paternal Ghost, the intermediary Gabriel, and the birth of the baby God, it will be very appropriate to the Christmas season. Mr. Foote has taken great pains with this pamphlet, and will doubtless be recompensed by a large sale.

Our centenary edition of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* is at the binder's and will be ready next week. It is printed in good type, on good paper, and the work is prefaced by a political biography of Paine by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, who has unearthed some new and interesting facts. The paper copies will be sold at one shilling.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake has almost recovered from the effects of his late accident at Charing Cross, where he was knocked down by the pole of an omnibus, and narrowly escaped being killed or mutilated. The good news from Brighton, where Mr. Holyoake resides, will be grateful to his many friends throughout the country.

N. S. S. Branches should complete and return to the Treasurer their collecting lists for the Forder Testimonial Fund. Up to the present the amounts acknowledged have almost entirely been received from individual subscribers.

Humanity and Dogma, by Amos Waters, and *Agnosticism and Immortality*, by Samuel Laing, two penny propagandist pamphlets, are sent to us by Watts and Co. Both are well worthy of circulation, especially the second. Mr. Laing destroys all the arguments for a future life, but he leaves hope in the bottom of the box, without apparently seeing that hope and fear are inseparable twins.

Shelley's *Cenci*, translated by M. Rabbe, is to be produced at a Paris theatre. It cannot be produced in England. The Lord Chamberlain blocks the way. He prefers short skirts and pink tights.

Our Swedish friends have had some difficulties. Since the Socialist conference at Halle, the Socialists in Sweden have striven to make the Freethought movement a mere appanage to their own. This we are glad to say has been stoutly resisted by Mr. Lennstrand and Captain Thomson, and they have thereby incurred some scurrillity from a few dissatisfied Socialists.

We take this opportunity of stating that the interest taken by English Freethinkers in the Freethought movement in Sweden was mainly aroused by Captain Thomson's letters, and

that he was made the medium of receiving the funds collected because we have every confidence in his integrity.

The Battersea Branch gives a Children's Party next Tuesday, Dec. 16. Any Freethinker in Battersea and district can have tickets for his children by applying to Mr. Martin, 32 Stanley Street, Queen's Road, Battersea. A substantial tea will be provided, and endless amusements will follow. Donations and toys can be sent to above address.

On Sunday a meeting was held of the shareholders of the new Liverpool Hall of Science Company. Directors were appointed and a large number of additional shares taken up. No time will be lost in securing a site and commencing operations. We press upon all Liverpool Freethinkers the duty of prompt assistance in this matter.

The *Hull Critic* gives insertion to a smart letter from the pen of the indefatigable Mr. G. E. C. Naewiger on "Christianity or Humanity: Which?"

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* for December gives as frontispiece a fine steel engraving of the late Alfred Theodore Lilly, who has often done much to befriend the *Magazine*. Mr. Holyoake concludes his discourse on "The Sorrows of God" and Mr. T. B. Wakeman on "Our Unchurched Millions." Mr. Wakeman says that, according to the recent U.S. census, the rate of increase of the secular over the church population is very large—nearly double; but accurate figures are not obtainable.

The *Echo* of Tuesday gives an account of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, mentioning that when young and in Dublin he boldly avowed himself an Atheist.

Mr. C. Voysey has devoted six of his Theistic Sermons to a criticism of *Lux Mundi*. They are now published in pamphlet form, and may help to show how untenable is the theory of Bible inspiration.

Old Radical Reformers and Chartists will be interested in Mr. Holyoake's reminiscences of Ernest Jones in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* of Dec. 6.

La Verité Philosophique for Dec. 5 gives a portrait and sketch of Gustave Adolphe Hubbard, deputy and President of the Friends of Secular Education.

We gather from the *Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt*, that there are now five indictments pending against Dr. Voelkel for his Freethought lectures, two in Berlin, and one each in Halle, Muhlhausen and Bernburg.

Mr. Symes, in his interesting paper on "The Gospel of the Blackfellows," in the *Liberator*, says: "Beveridge notes one point that is worthy of remark, namely, that it is the greatest scamp of the tribe that usually offers himself for the post of priest. To read the history of Christianity is to be forced to the conclusion that the blacks are by no means singular in having the worst man in the post of priest. As in the Bible, so amongst the blacks, every stage and kind of insanity is venerated as a manifestation of something divine. Strike out all the insanity from the Bible, and you will find you have scarcely a trace of the supernatural or of inspiration left. I do not mean this to be taken as a jest or mere sarcasm, but as sober truth. For a man now to behave as Abraham did (in attempting the life of Isaac), Jephthah, Saul, Elijah, Isaiah, (going naked three years), Jesus, John (Revelation John), would unquestionably land him in the asylum. But amongst blacks and ancient Jews etc., such characters were revealers of the gods—as if the gods were all mad. Indeed, this superstition is at the base of all revelation. The less a man knows of this world the more he is supposed to know of some other. To-day we put lunatics under restraint, to balance our conduct in worshipping those of Bible times."

Over twenty years after the occurrence, M. Renan is charged with want of patriotism for having said of the Germans at a private dinner in 1870, "They are superior to us. The Catechism stultifies individuality; the education of the Jesuits and of the Brethren of the Christian Doctrine, cramps all the independent faculties of the intellect, whereas Protestantism develops them." If M. Renan used the words

quoted, he but deserves praise for preferring truth to the prejudice which shelters itself under the name of patriotism.

Our friends in Bombay are making satisfactory progress. Mr. J. Balfour informs us that the Society has a fair balance in hand and has at length arranged for a course of public lectures. He reports that the Catholics and Protestants are alike bewailing the "spread of infidelity" in India. By way of counteracting it they are circulating a disgusting libel on Colonel Ingereoll. Happily, however, this dirty weapon is not so useful as it was. People are growing wiser and less disposed to accept personalities for arguments.

Fraser's Blythe and Tyneside *Comic Annual* is a big two-pennyworth. There is a Freethought vein in some of the items, showing that the editor knows his public, and recognises that wit and "profanity" are first cousins.

THE DEVIL WITHIN.

OF late the doctrine of original sin appears to have been quietly dropped by all save a very limited number of Christians. Respectable people do not like to be perpetually reminded that they are "miserable sinners"; that they have the taint of the old Adam in their blood, and that their best actions, their most unselfish deeds, are but as "filthy rags" in the sight of God.

And yet the doctrine of original sin is at the root of the Christian Creed. If man were not a sinner he would not need salvation. But what is sin? An ordinary Christian will answer "disobedience to the will of God." But if we are to obey the will of God surely we have a right to know precisely what it is? "It is contained in the Bible" say one set of believers in Deity; "it is contained in the Koran" say another; it is contained in the *Zendavesta* cry a third; it is contained in no book at all proclaim the Theists—but it is written in the grand volume of Nature which all men can read and understand alike.

Now if sin means disobedience to any alleged written will of God, the sinner may be ignorant of it, or he may not understand it, or he may not possess the power to obey it;—in either case he would not be responsible for any infringement of an alleged will he did not understand or was incapable of putting into practice. If God is Almighty and all-wise he knows that his alleged will is disputed by learned and thoughtful men, how then can he expect it to be understood and believed by the ignorant and thoughtless? Besides God, being the author of man, is responsible for all the defects of his constitution and character.

It is admitted by Christians that God at the start made man perfect. But man was perfect for less than twenty-four hours. While he was yet a mere babe the Devil spoilt him. At one stroke the serpent of temptation—the Devil within—ruined the supreme achievement of an omnipotent and all-wise God. But is not God the author of all the desires of the human heart, or only some of them? Is there another being more powerful than God, who suggests all actions of an immoral tendency? And how does this evil being know what are the desires of men unless he also is all-wise? In which case we should have a plurality of infinite, omnipotent, and all-wise beings, which is a flagrant absurdity. Recognising in some measure the contradictory character of their own teachings, it is no wonder that the Christians from time to time silently drop some of the more objectionable dogmas of their creed.

Circumstances, however, sometimes arise that give the more earnest and zealous among the orthodox an opportunity of resuscitating dogmas that had almost died of neglect and inanition. Mr. Parnell does a wicked and dishonorable deed which few who knew anything of the cool, calculating character of this politician would have suspected. Without thinking

for a moment of the numerous temptations that beset the path of men who are the natural leaders of their fellows, the majority of Christians swoop down upon Mr. Parnell and assail him with all the strong and bitter epithets in the vocabulary of abuse. Forgetful of the teachings of their alleged Master, who bade only those who were absolutely sinless to cast the first stone, they assail him day by day with terrible remorselessness, so that the Secularist who prefers to leave Mr. Parnell to "those thorns that in his bosom dwell to prick and sting him" is forced to exclaim:

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun.

Some few earnest Christians, however, have found a little ground for excuse for their fallen brother. He was tempted by the Devil, they say—the Devil within; and the Devil overcame the better promptings of his heart. But the old question of the poor Zulu arises once again. Why doesn't God kill the Devil? or, if the Devil is only a power and not a being, why does not God destroy it?

The truth is, Christians understand as little about sexual questions as they do about the doctrine of evolution. They do not understand that in some the sexual passion is more developed than in others; and that some men and some women would risk everything—reputation, nay, even life itself—for the gratification of their lowest instincts. Philosophy teaches us that the chief lesson of life is to learn to understand ourselves; to regulate and control all our passions by reason. But if the Devil within prompts a believer like Mr. Parnell to sin, who, according to the Christians, prompts unbelievers like Mr. Samuel Laing and the Marquis of Queensberry to send money to help General Booth in his gigantic scheme? Christians regard the action of these latter gentlemen as good, though in my judgment they are only expending their money in promoting the crassest superstition; in attempting to do away with one set of evils they are deliberately promoting the development of another.

Is not the Devil or evil tendency of superstition as harmful as the Devil of drink, of lust, of vice, of crime? Granted, drunkenness has caused much misery and crime in the world, but superstition has caused much more. The fact is, every virtue may be converted into a vice; it requires education and knowledge of the facts of life to act as bridle and reins to the human passions, so that each individual, by knowing the road and keeping the passions well in check, may drive down the narrow path that leads to his own happiness and the well-being of humanity.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

J. Laws, 10s. 6d. Per J. Robinson: M. Stiff, 5s.; J. Robinson, 1s.; J. Pearse, 1s.; W. Dent, 1s.; F. Roose, 6d.; J. Hulme, 1s.; T. Smith, 6d.; J. Roose, 1s. Ox Hill Branch N. S. S., 5s.; H. Trummell, 2s. 6d.; Gerald Massey, £1 1s.; H. Underdown, 2s. 6d.; P. Baldwin, 2s.; P. V. Le Lubez (per C. Bradlaugh), £5; F. Margetson, 2s.; W. T., 6d.; H. Chadwick (per W. H. Harrop), 5s.; W. H. Harrop, 5s.; R. Hunt, 2s.; A. Woodroop, 2s.

Collecting lists sent on application.

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

Professor Stölze, of Wurzburg, who recently discovered some of Giordano Bruno's manuscripts, is now said to have found the heretical treatise of Abelard on the Trinity.

Miss Power Cobbe writes on "Two Religions" in the current number of the *Contemporary Review*. She sums up all faiths as consisting either of the worship of Power or the worship of Goodness, without seeing, or without declaring, that the service of God belongs to the former category and the service of man to the latter.

CHRIST'S FAREWELL SUPPER.

CHRIST JESUS gave, it has been said,
To some old chums a farewell "spread,"
And asked them, o'er the parting cup,
To try to keep his mem'ry up,
And, sometimes, o'er a glass of wine,
To think of him for "Auld lang syne."

But listen! and I'll tell you how
This farewell supper raised a row:—
There, later, rose a fierce ferment
About the kind of bread Christ meant
His friends to eat at each love-feast—
Unleavened cakes or dough or yeast.
Fermented bread, some said, was best,
No! unfermented, said the rest.
And rows enough to rouse the dead
About the wine, or white, or red;
Some thought diluting was discreet,
While others said, "We'll take it neat,
And drink, in mem'ry of the dead,
Good wine that warms both heart and head."
In fact, these friends were taken up
Less with their chum than with the cup.

Some others had a pious dread
Of using common baker's bread;
They said it would profane the feast
To symbolise Christ's death with yeast.
In this they were, no doubt, unwise;
For yeast is just the thing to rise.
A few declared there would be harm
In using even German barm;
Our motto is, they boldly said:
"Eschewing leav'n in chewing bread."

But, stranger still—now hold your breath,
This is a fact as true as death—
Some said that ev'ry blessed crumb
Was really Jesus Christ, their chum!—
His very corpse, be't understood,
And that the wine was really blood!
They called it "Transubstantiation,"
And backed it up with hot damnation.

The bread and wine which Christ did "stand"
Were doubtless racy of the land:
That is, as Jesus was a Jew,
The "bill of fare" was Jewish too;
But, if he'd been more west or east,
It would have been a different feast:
Instead of bread perhaps some rare-bit;
Instead of wine, perhaps some sherbet;
Or, if an Irishman he'd been,
The "tippie" would have been "poteen";
The "grub" had been quite Irish, too—
Some "murphies" or some "Irish stew."
If he'd been Scotch, I'll lay a stake
The bread had been good oatmeal cake;
At any rate, 'twixt me and you,
The *other* had been "mountain dew."
The supper might have been—who knows?—
A haggis and some "Athole brose";
A "tankard-cool"—wine, lemon, borage—
Or whiskey neat with oatmeal porridge.

All this will clearly show, I think,
That Christ, in asking folk to drink
A glass to him for "Auld lang syne,"
Ne'er meant to say it *must* be wine.
Besides, though he was not well read,
He surely must have heard it said
That in some lands there grew no vines,
And that their people had no wines.
Depend upon't, he meant we should
Use any sort of drink and food;
He merely wanted folk to link
His mem'ry with their food and drink.

For why should we just draw the line
Of imitation at the wine?
Ought we to seek a "pub" or inn
To celebrate this supper in?

And hire a room that must be "upper"
 Before we can set out the supper?
 And must we—so to follow him in
 Ev'rything—exclude all women,
 And, just to make the thing complete,
 Have wherewithal for washing feet?

Though some folk are, by crafty priests,
 Debarred from joining these "love-feasts,"
 They need not feel left in the lurch:
 Christ never held one in a church.
 Why care for any priestly snub?
 Like Christ, go eat it in a "pub,"
 Or, better still, go home and eat
 Your ordinary sort of meat—
 Roast-beef or lobster, chop or whelk,
 With wine or water, beer or milk.
 The "elements" might surely be
 A roll and butter and some tea;
 Or, when a public-house is near,
 A sandwich and a glass of beer.
 Why not? It's not the drink or meat,
 It's what you think of while you eat.
 You merely have of Christ to think
 While thus you eat, and thus you drink.

Poor Christ! although his head was cracked,
 His honest heart but little lacked,
 When, in the face of curse and ban,
 He tried to raise his fellow man.
 Although he failed he did his best;
 His scheme was bad, so let him rest.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING, Hall of Science, Thursday, December 4th, the President, G. W. Foote in the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, the Secretary presented financial statements *re* Tower Hamlets and Peckham courses of Free Lectures; and reported arrangements for course at Athenæum Hall in January next. Miss Vance, Messrs. Forder and J. Robertson were elected a sub-committee to arrange Children's Party in February. The question of Free Lectures in Battersea district was discussed. Mr. Anderson's motion to alter time of meeting was met by an amendment, and it was decided to meet in future at 8 o'clock. Progress was reported on Annual Dinner, and detail arrangements were discussed. The lecture list for January was ordered to be printed, and Messrs. H. Lupton and E. Anderson were elected auditors of accounts for 1890. It was decided to print and issue Report and Balance Sheet for 1890 in time for Annual Dinner. The Council adjourned till Jan 1, 1891.—E. POWNCEBY, Sec.

Tickets for Dinner (which will take place at Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge, on Monday Jan. 5, 1891) price 2/6, may be obtained of the Branch Secretaries, at Hall of Science, of Mr. Forder, or the Secretary, 9 Finsbury Street, E.C.

REVIEW.

Sceptical Musings and Other Verses. Birmingham, 1890. —The author is evidently a Freethinker, and many of his utterances are pithily put. Witness the following:

Our spirits, so the preachers say, survive
 The bodies death in some immortal sphere;
 Methinks man's spirit often dies while here,
 Quenched in the struggle to maintain alive
 The toiling body in its hard career.

Many are in lighter vein, as for instance—

That God the tribes of Israel made their own
 Was fierce and cruel; war was his delight
 And reeking altar smoked before his sight
 With burning beasts, while butchering priests, fell prone
 To mitigate his wrath or foil his spite.

If he and Christ be one, as it is said,
 The obvious conclusions then remain
 That either God, the Son, doth now disdain
 The peaceful ends to which his teachings led,
 Or else Jehovah has been born again.

SCOTCH THISTLES.

Rev. John MacNeil, the clerical buffoon, has again been revisiting the glimpses of the moon in bonnie Scotland. He recently preached before a large congregation in Glasgow, and availed himself of the opportunity to rail at sceptical scientists like Tyndall and Huxley and Spencer. The Rev. John chose for his text the feeding of the 5,000, and evidently thought that he had for ever silenced the sceptics when he assured his hearers that his answer to those who doubted this miracle was "that they [the speaker and his hearers] saw the 5,000 jaws going their best." Was there ever a more childish statement made or deeper-dyed lie told by hard-pressed apologist? Men of the John MacNeil stamp are hardly worth secular powder and shot, and their ravings would be quite beneath our notice were it not for the fact that thousands of intelligent men and women are still so trammelled by their early training or present surroundings that they accept without question whatever a popular preacher says. MacNeil and Company know this, and trade upon it. Many Christians and all Secularists will, however, agree with Mr. MacNeil when he says that "Christians ought to have a little more common sense than to write great big volumes to explain the miracles and to defend the supernatural in them"—both parties will agree with him, but probably upon very different grounds.

Wily parsons avoid the palpable contradictions in the Bible unless they are forced upon them; but what are we to think of the fearless one who boldly faced the difficulty in Glasgow last Sunday? A candidate for the pastorship of one of the City churches took his stand upon the triple text of "Bear ye one another's burden," "Every man shall bear his own burden," "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Surely any sermon built on this foundation must have been as edifying and instructive as one would be which had for its groundwork an attempt to make clear how three persons are one and one person three.

General Booth had a bumper meeting in Edinburgh on Thursday last, and his appeal for funds to support his latest project has met with some success, although the cautious ones are looking askance. One canny Scot, when asked by an acquaintance who was collecting subscriptions "What may I put you down for?" promptly replied, "If I give you anything at all you may put me down for a fool."

Apropos of Booth's scheme, the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, in an able article upon "How the Masses are Reared," remarks: "Morally the responsibility weighs most heavily and most immediately upon the heads of the paid professional keepers of the social conscience—the clergy. What are the clergy doing to signify their sense of responsibility? Most of them are engaged in commercial enterprises for the exploitation of superstition at home and abroad. Some find it a lively, interesting, and remunerative occupation to pitch half-crowns into the gutter, for which the masses scramble; some coin reputation and dollars by alternately preaching cant about cant, and denouncing with passionate vehemence the less impure and more harmless forms of common amusements and recreations."

The feelings of the Scotch divine who recently received a testimonial from the members of his flock may be better understood than described when he heard the following eulogium passed upon himself by the well-meaning elder appointed to make the presentation: "We hae aye admired your twa outstanding features—your independence and your eloquence—and, speaking for mase! I can honestly say that I hae aye lookit on ye as ane wha feared neither God nor man; and every time I hear ye preach I feel mair and mair convinced that ye come as nearly as mortal man can come to the Bible ideal o' a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal."

He must have felt as much flattered as did the country parson, who, having asked his beadle how he was pleased with the minister who preached last Sunday, received for reply: "Weel, his preaching was far ower plain and simple for me; onybody could understand what he was driving at. I like a sermon that jumbles the sense and confounds the judgment. And, though I dinna like tae flatter ye, I'm bound tae confess that I never heard ane that could come up tae yoursel' at that."

R. M. R.

CORRESPONDENCE.

UNITARIANISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. J. M. Wheeler certainly knows a thing or two about Unitarianism, but there are several other things concerning it which he does not know, and he has made at least four very important blunders. One of these I ask you to be good enough to correct. Mr. Wheeler says, after remarking that it has little hold upon the people, that "it lacks a popular class of preachers," . . . "but no powerful orator capable of attracting the masses." Without referring to America, where we have such men as Robert Collyer and Brooke Herford, who are capable of attracting the masses, it is right that it should be stated that we have, I might almost say, dozens of ministers who can attract, and have attracted, and still are attracting "the masses." We remember what the late Chas. Beard did a few years ago in Liverpool, over and over again. I have before me a report of "Services for the People," in Liverpool in 1885, when the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, and the Rev. W. Carey Walters addressed during six months, in a Roman Catholic and Orange district, Sunday after Sunday, on an average 2000 persons. We also know what Mr. John Page Hopps of Leicester has done on Sunday afternoons over and over again, what Dr. Crosskey has done and even now is doing in Birmingham. Does your sub. not know what Mr. Broderick of Ipswich is doing there on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and has been so doing during three or four years? Why, in each of these cases fully a thousand of the masses are addressed each time. I could also refer to what Mr. W. Mitchell—an ex-Secular lecturer and editor, did in Leicester, Glasgow, and elsewhere, and what Mr. Lazenby is at present doing in Glasgow, and Mr. Webster in Aberdeen—addressing in fact hundreds and thousands of the masses. Let Mr. Wheeler and your readers refer to the last report of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, especially to the part "Special Services for the People"—and go in time that they may get a seat to one of these services, and they will find out how far they are mistaken.

No, we will not become such as you are in order that we may be popular. The tendency of Unitarianism is not towards Materialism and Agnosticism, let that be understood distinctly. When I went in and out among the Secularists, you only had six or so lecturers who could attract the masses, and two of these have since left you. Have you any more now, and do you do any more now for the fruitful service of man? I trow not.—Yours truly,

W. RODGER SMYTH.

Bridgwater, Nov. 26.

[Mr. Wheeler has heard five of the ministers named, and does not consider one of them a powerful orator.]

PROF. TYNDALL ON GENERAL BOOTH'S SCHEME.

Professor Tyndall has addressed the following letter to the editor of the *Llangollen Advertiser* with reference to a series of articles in that journal on *Darkest England*:—

"Hindhead House, Haslemere, Dec. 4.

"Dear Sir,—I am very much obliged to you for the newspaper which you have been good enough to send me, and I have read your account of your visit to the slums of London. Your description, being that of an eye-witness, is particularly vivid and interesting. I have no doubt that what you say regarding the present action of the Salvation Army is a perfectly accurate record of what you witnessed, but the permanence of the action cannot be ascertained or deduced from a flying visit of a few hours. During the lifetime of General Booth matters may move smoothly, but there is not the slightest guarantee that they will continue so to move after he is gone. The engine he has evoked might, in the hands of less scrupulous successors, prove to be a curse instead of a blessing to humanity. Two or three days ago two letters appeared in the *Times* criticising the scheme of General Booth. The one was from Professor Huxley, the other from Mr. Loch, secretary to the Charity Organisation Society. Those letters ought, in my opinion, to make any sensible man pause before committing himself to the scheme of General Booth. I end as I began, thanking you for your friendly remembrance of, yours faithfully,

JOHN TYNDALL."

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, Newington Green Road, N. 7, Mr. F. Millar, "Christ and Christianity."
 Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "General Booth's Scheme for Pauperising Labor" Monday, at 7.30, dancing class (3d. per lesson); 8.30, social gathering. Tuesday Children's Party. Thursday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes.
 Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, E., 7, Mr. R. Rosetti, "Is Christianity Reasonable?"
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, dramatic recital: 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Dreams: their Nature and Meaning." Friday, at 7.45, Science Classes (Hygiene and Chemistry).
 Edmonton—Angli Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. Sam Standing, "Secularism: a death unto sin and a new birth unto Righteousness."
 East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, 8, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity Compared."
 Finsbury—Loyal United Friends' Hall, Banner Street, St. Luke's, 11.30, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Meaning of Secularism." Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 11.15, Mr. Herbert Burrows, "Socialism and Political Programmes"; 7, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Christ Hallucination."
 Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, Grove House, 1 The Grove, Broadway, Tuesday at 8, Mr. R. Forder, "The Exodus from Egypt."
 Leyton—Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisey Villas, Manor Road, 7, Mr. W. Jenkinson will read from Dagonet "Ballads."
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. Bennet Burleigh, "My War Experience in the Soudan." Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic class (practice).
 West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 11, a lecture; 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith will lecture. Tuesday, at 8, a lecture.
 Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death."
 Woolwich—Sussex Arms, Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxev Road), 7.30, special general meeting of members, election of officers, etc.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Design in Nature."
 Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road, 3.15, a debate between Messrs. Keen and Lockyer, "Can we Follow Jesus?"
 Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill, 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "The Protestant Reformation: its Career and Triumph."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street, 7, Mr. R. S. Bransby, "Christianity and Science—a Reply to Dr. Harrison."
 Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street, 12 noon, debating class. Mr. W. Gilmour, "The Jesuits"; 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "An Hour with the Microscope" (lantern illustrations).
 Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—11, Tontine Society; 3, debate between Mr. Gowland and Mr. Ingham, "Secular Morality Superior to Christian"; 7, Mr. Haslam, "Nuts to Crack."
 Manchester N. S. S.—Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saint's, Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "Mistakes of Jesus"; 3, "Reason and Faith"; 6.30, "Heaven and Hell."
 Nelson—Queen's Hall, Mr. T. Slater, 11, "Life, Mind, Soul and Spirit"; 3, "What is Morality?"; 6.30, "The Advantages of Freethought."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 3, fortnightly meeting of members.
 Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, 3, "The Night Side and the Day Side of the Bible"; 7, "What would Follow were the Effacement of Christianity Possible?"
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, 7, Prof. Wilson, "Ventriloquism—what is it?" (with surprising practical illustrations).
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, a reading.
 Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street, 6, Mr. B. Dawson, "Eighteen Years of Freethought—a Retrospect and a Comparison."
 Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street, 7, Mr. Taylor, "Socialism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Dec. 21, Grimsby; 28, Camberwell. Feb. 22 (1891), Camberwell.

STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Liverpool.—Dec. 14, Sheffield; 21, Liverpool.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—Dec. 21, Woolwich.

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