

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

PARNELL AND THE PRIESTS.

This is a Freethought journal, pure and simple, and we have no concern with the political issues of the Kilkenny election. A very different matter is indicated in the title of our article. And in order that we may make ourselves well understood, we will first note the elements of this Irish contest. Mr. Parnell fought on the one side with desperate energy, Mr. Vincent Scully being simply his nominee, and the issue being reduced to the simple point of whether Mr. Parnell should or should not retain the leadership. Sir John Hennessey was equally a dummy candidate on the other side. Mr. Michael Davitt did most of its fighting, with the assistance of Mr. Timothy Healy and other of Mr. Parnell's revolted lieutenants. But behind all the anti-Parnellites was the solid phalanx of the priests. The Bishops had declared against "the adulterer," and the parish priests fought as ecclesiastics even more than as politicians. They spoke and preached, they canvassed and threatened, they led their flocks to the polling stations, and in several cases they acted as personating agents. All the open and insidious influence of the Church in a most priest-ridden part of Ireland was employed in the cause of "the forty-five," and Mr. Parnell's defeat was a foregone conclusion. He himself was doubtless aware of the fact. Policy bade him maintain an assurance of victory, but his eye is too keen to be deceived in such a situation. He was beaten by a majority of two to one. In ordinary circumstances a defeat like this would be overwhelming. But Mr. Parnell is not at the end of his resources. It may be doubted whether he would be defeated at all in many of the Irish towns. In the country districts the priests are a tremendous power; in the towns they are less powerful, and the larger the town the more their influence diminishes. The situation, therefore, is not so simple as it looks at the first glance. Nor is it so easy as the partisan politician imagines to forecast the issue of this Irish imbroglio. This is a matter, however, which we naturally refrain from discussing. Time will show, and what will be will be. Meanwhile we wish to point out that Mr. Parnell is fighting a duel with the Irish priesthood. Without their intervention he might possibly have swept everything before him. If he is beaten now, the priests will beat him; if he wins, he will beat the priests.

Politically we are not required to express an opinion as to which side ought to win, either as a matter of morality, or as a matter of justice, or as a matter of policy. We are simply going to look at this battle from a Freethought point of view.

In the first place, then, we should like to see the priests well beaten, even if the castigation has to be administered by a "discredited" politician. With all its pretences of patriotism, the Catholic Church is the greatest curse of Ireland. The priest allows his flock the liberty to curse the sanguinary Saxon, but that is all the freedom he permits. The people are

trained up as spiritual slaves, and this is the real secret of their political dependence. So far from being rebels, the Irish are the most easily governed, ay, and the most easily coerced, of European nations. Had the power of the priest been broken, had the Irish been mentally free, they would long ago have asserted and secured their civil liberties. Anything, therefore, that injures the Catholic Church in Ireland, or accentuates its loss of power and prestige, we shall hail with delight. We may be told, of course, that this is wishing success to a "proved adulterer." We reply, it is nothing of the sort. The Church has chosen the battle-ground, and quite irrespectively of the character of its enemy we should like to see it defeated. Debauching another man's wife is bad enough, no doubt; but it is not so bad, after all, as systematically debauching the mind of a whole nation from the cradle to the grave.

As a matter of fact, we do not believe the Irish priesthood is sincere. The bishops waited to see "how the cat jumped" before they made a pronouncement. On the other hand, they never had any love for Mr. Parnell. He is not a Catholic. When he first stood for Cork the priests opposed him, and he won the seat in spite of their opposition. No doubt they are glad to see a Protestant leader pulled down. When Home Rule is won they would prefer a Catholic Prime Minister. Besides, Mr. Parnell is a masterful man. They could never hope to control him. But they may hope to control an Irish party led by Mr. Justin McCarthy and seven or eight assistants.

The Irish priests, or rather the hierarchy, may even be playing a deeper game. Perhaps they see an opportunity of conforming to the well-known wishes of the Pope and the Holy Council. Home Rule or no Home Rule, there are the claims of Holy Mother Church. An official or semi-official envoy from England would be most welcome at the Vatican. Catholic universities are also wanted in Ireland, and when the Education question comes up for resettlement the priests would like to keep a tight clutch on the day schools. When a priest offers you anything, always look twice before taking it. He is a priest first, and a man and a citizen afterwards.

Nor is this all. The Church is hypocritical when it denounces an adulterer. While he conforms and subscribes, it would never interfere with him, unless he got found out. Some of the vilest men on earth have been pattern sons of the Church. Wealthy and powerful sinners have always found there is "accommodation with heaven." History proves this up to the hilt. So does the state of every Catholic country in the world. Even in England the outcry against Mr. Parnell in religious circles is three-parts humbug. It is not the pure who howl the loudest when a great man falls into the gutter. They are saddened, they feel more pity than anger, they look into their own hearts and deplore the frailty of human nature. True, a leader of men, a general of one of freedom's armies, should strive to keep his integrity unblemished. He should watch himself at the weak

places, not only for himself, but for the cause he represents. He should take heed to give the enemy no occasion to jeer and thrust out their tongues. But those who curse him when he slips should at least be honest. He is none the worse for being found out. That, on the contrary, is a punishment. His pride is humbled before his friends and followers. No, let the denunciation, or at least the anger, be impartial. It is the vilest hypocrisy to stone the sinner who is found out, and take the hand of the sinner who escapes exposure. Nor is the hypocrisy any the better, but rather the meaner, because the sinner is very eminent in "society." It is not for us to mention names. The law of libel is very rough on poor men who "slander" rich ones. But the American papers are beyond the reach of our judges and juries, and some of them pillory English profligates who, for all their vices, are treated with open respect by some of the foremost denouncers of Mr. Parnell.

Both the Irish priests and the English clergy teach and preach from the Bible. Now one of the most eminent villains of the Old Testament was King David, or Saint David according to the hagiology of the Catholic Church. This person married the wife of Nabal, after his mysterious death, in circumstances that would now necessitate a coroner's inquest. He also committed adultery with Bathsheba, tried to father her bastard child upon her husband Uriah, and, failing in this pious enterprise, had him basely murdered. This liar, adulterer, and murderer is held up as an illustrious example. He is called the man after God's own heart. Instead of being deposed from the kingship, he was allowed to expiate his offence by slaughtering and torturing the enemies of Jehovah. Surely, then, the priests and ministers who laud David, or elevate him as a saint, have forfeited their right to denounce any modern sinner against the laws of domestic or social morality.

Recurring to Ireland, it is a remarkable fact that one third of the Kilkenny voters went right in the teeth of their priests' orders. Whether they were politically wise or not, we are not going to discuss. We are only concerned with the fact that in a notoriously priest-ridden constituency one man out of every three defied the orders of the local priests, backed up by the unanimous voice of the Irish bishops. Of course it would be absurd to say that they did this from any love of adultery. They did it because their political sentiments were in opposition to the behests of their spiritual advisers. We are delighted to witness such independence of priestly control. We hope it will be more than imitated in other constituencies. Political battles should be fought by politicians on political grounds. If priests intervene, not as citizens but as spiritual leaders, we trust they will always be taught a bitter lesson. Their duty is to look after men's interests in another world, and they should be warned against meddling with weightier matters.

G. W. FOOTE.

OUR POSITION.

The position of Freethinkers is necessarily that of a minority protesting against the superstition of a majority. Our progress must be slow. We appeal but to the reason and sense of mankind. Only a limited number are affected by this appeal. Religionists who can appeal to inherited prejudices have a far vaster field. Birth, education, convention, and cowardice combine to uphold time-honored creeds. Few dare and can think for themselves. To shake off the trammels of early education and surroundings is no light task. Many shrink from the struggle and fall into the ranks of the time-servers and indifferent. Against us are arrayed an ancient and endowed established Church with the prestige of age, wealth, numbers and State support, besides innumerable

sectaries, each believing that his is the one true and infallible faith.

Religion is not only dominant and endowed, but aggressive. Every priest naturally longs for the supremacy of his order and regards as an enemy those who would lessen its authority. Many would fain invoke the aid of laws made to repress the spread of heretical opinions. This failing, misrepresentation, and calumny are too often resorted to. Those who put themselves to the front in emancipating their fellows must be content to bear the stigmas of the deluders and deluded, and to find respectability on the side of wealth. Yet with all their wealth and influence the Churches are being honeycombed with Freethought ideas. Quite recently, for instance, Dr. Momerie has given expressions to ideas which at the beginning of the century would have been considered going further into the path of infidelity than even Tom Paine. Scepticism is creeping inside the Churches. Ministers dare no longer expound the crude notions of hell-fire and salvation through blood so familiar to our fathers. Spurgeon laments that even Baptists have entered on the down-grade that leads from the old faith. On every side we find men seeking to put the new wine of living truths into the old gospel bottles; to the permanent advantage of neither.

Religions die hard, but they die at last. There is abundant evidence the old faiths no longer suffice even for those supposed to hold them. Creeds once claiming complete control over human life now have their sphere restricted. God's dominion is becoming small by degrees and beautifully less. His worship is mainly a matter of lip-service on Sunday. Family worship is becoming a thing of the past. Prayer-meetings, even with the attraction of musical service, fail to draw. The newspaper is thought more of than the sermon. Earthly politics interest more than the condition of life hereafter. The improvement of man's bodily comfort in this world is replacing care for his soul in some other quarter. In short, Secularism is superseding religion.

To improve the state of man the baseless hopes and fears by which he has been deluded must be eradicated. In this country the main foundation of those beliefs is the Bible. To destroy therefore the false notion of the divine authority of that book is to effect a much-needed reformation. This work has been so thoroughly done that even revision cannot save the Protestant fetish. An influential party in the Church now abandon not only the inspiration but the accuracy of the Old Testament, unheeding the fact that the New Testament must fall with it. Once to cite a Bible text was sufficient authority for anything. Now we are told the Bible was not intended to teach us science. What it does teach is being gradually discredited and disregarded. Christians are abandoning all their outworks and endeavoring to entrench themselves within the citadel of the character and teachings of Jesus.

While Christianity claims to assert supreme authority to regulate this life in subordination to some other life, we must attack it. There can be no treaty or truce between Secularism, bent on making the best of this world, and religion, bent on subjecting it to a world of which we know nothing. We must assail the idolatry which elevates one teacher above all others. We must attack the iniquity of a Church endowed at the expense of the nation, and which stubbornly obstructs progress while ashamed to preach its own creeds.

We have a big work, but time and the stream and tendency of progress are with us. In the language of the old book, the stars in their courses fight for us. In every Christian land there is now a strong and growing minority protesting against the old creed and threatening it with destruction. England, absorbed so largely in the race for wealth, and but

little accessible to ideas, threatens to be behind in the race for mental emancipation. But Freethinkers will keep steadily pegging away till the old superstitions are destroyed. Let everyone who is out of bondage himself do his best during the coming year to loosen the shackles of his brethren.

J. M. WHEELER.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF GOING TO HELL.

[CONCLUDED.]

The Secularist will hardly regret the loss of heaven as described by Christians, with its slavish and incessant ceremonial and adoration. He will have the grand moral satisfaction of having been loyal to truth and of disregarding ignoble bribes and immoral threats. He will prefer hell with honor to heaven with infamy. He cannot lament that he has kept his conscience unstained and his judgment unperturbed by what seemed to him a despicable subservience to fear and falsehood. If it is true that "the mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven," he may be far happier as an exile from the courts of a celestial tyrant than ever he could be among the sycophants that spend their time in bending the knee and wearying their monarch with everlasting flattery and shouts of praise.

But Christians will protest against these optimistic views of hell. They will point to roaring flames where the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not. But the gnawing worm of remorse can never torment a man for being honest and clear-headed, or for being faithful to his conscience rather than to a lie. Even if Christian fears and phantoms prove realities and the Secularist suffers like a Prometheus bound to the rocks, he must undergo an entire perversion of moral ideas and emotions before he could wish to worship his tormentor or to withdraw his ardent protest against divine cruelty and injustice.

But will the Secularist be punished in eternal fire for honestly following his conscience and his judgment? Heathen mythologies have nobler stories than any to be found in the Christian Gospels. In one of these, from the sacred writings of the benighted Hindoos, a great king, after passing through innumerable trials and renunciations on his way to perfection and blessedness, faces his final ordeal. The flames of a terrible hell arise before him, and he is called on to renounce his dog, the faithful and only surviving companion of all his troubles and weary journeyings. He refuses, gives up all his hopes of heaven, and the final fruit of his virtues, sufferings, and toils. He plunges into hell with his dog, rather than abandon so faithful and so helpless a friend. But the flames that envelope him hurt him not. They are illusions. He passes through them unharmed, and sees his lost wife and children welcoming him to final felicity. Passing through hell was his road to heaven. If heathen superstition can thus reward the soul that accepts hell rather than desert a dog, must the Christian God torment in real flames or agonies the soul that faces the possibilities of hell rather than abandon conscience, reason, and humanity? The Christian should ask himself the meaning of the oft repeated teaching of Jesus, that he who would save his soul or life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul shall preserve it (Luke xviii., 33, John xii., 25). Might not this principle furnish the test or ordeal whereby the truer, bolder spirits are separated from the rest for distinction and reward? When they follow truth and duty for their own sakes, may they not deserve a nobler heaven and a loftier happiness than those who had to be terrified and coerced out of their sins and insincerities by the fear of hell? May the Secularist, who faces all the terrorism of hell, be treated at least as well as the saints,

who have to be coaxed and allured into the unwelcome path of truth and duty by glowing promises of an immortality of bliss in heaven?

How strange it is that the Christian never conceives the possibility of his God being *just*. His God is never just in the only sense in which the word has intelligible meaning to us—namely, in the sense in which we should apply the word to our fellow beings. He forgives a few from favoritism and from their reliance on the undeserved punishment of a guiltless person. He inflicts infinite punishment for finite faults—and this is no reformatory or purifying process, but solely a vengeance which Christians call justice in God, but would denounce as horrible cruelty in man. Yet they say their God is more than just, he is merciful. If God is just and magnanimous in the sense in which the words have meaning, if he is just and merciful and magnanimous as the best of the Roman Emperors, for instance, were just and magnanimous, he cannot punish men for disinterested devotion to truth and duty, but must honor and reward them for it. How will Christians feel if a just and honorable God really exists and should say to the believers in future rewards and punishments, "Forasmuch as your motives are neither unselfishly virtuous nor nobly conceived, ye are not worthy to enter into immortality and blessedness?" What will the disappointed self-seekers say if the sheep are selected from the goats on a totally unexpected plan, and God says to the Ingersolls and Bradlaughs and Huxleys and Darwins: "Inasmuch as ye have loved truth ye have loved me whom ye have not seen, and inasmuch as ye have worked and thought and struggled for man, ye have done the work I willed and honored: This have ye done nobly and bravely without hope or fear of future heavens or hells. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Christians will say this cannot be, for their God is the only true God and he cannot deceive them. But their God deceived Adam and Eve when he threatened that they should die on the day in which they acquired knowledge of good and evil by devouring the forbidden fruit; for in spite of the threat he allowed them to live for hundreds of years afterwards. May not his threats of hell be equally fallacious, whatever their object may be? Is it not at least better to suppose his evangelists occasionally mistaken or over-emphatic in their descriptions of hell, than to discredit Omnipotent Benificence with such frightful and revolting enormities.

W. P. BALL.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

I sent my soul through the Invisible
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by-and-bye my soul returned to me
And answered, I myself am Heaven and Hell.
—Omar Khayyam.

"Look yah, yoh 'Rastus; you wants to be a good boy, yah me? So's when yoh die yoh kin go to glohry an' play on er gol'n harp." "Tain' no use," said the boy in a discouraged tone. "Why not?" "Kase I kain' play on de hahp. Ef dey'dgib me a mouf organ oh a banjo I mout git erlong."

HOW TO HELP US.

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

THE LATE CESAR DE PAEPE.

WE regret to record the death, at Cannes, of Dr. Cesar De Paepe, one of the leading Freethinkers and Socialists of Belgium. Born at Ostend of a poor bourgeois family, in 1842, he was educated at the Jesuit College of St. Michel, Brussels. He was remarkable by his devotion to work and independence of spirit. Thence he went to the University, filling up his time at the printing trade with the advanced printer Désiré Brismee, founder of Les Solidaires, now one of the oldest Belgian Freethought societies. In this way he became acquainted with J. P. Proudhon, who confided to him the correction of his works. He became a physician, and was noted by his devotion to workmen's interests. An ardent Freethinker, he established a lay corps of hospital nurses, and was a regular attendant at the International Conferences, being one of the Council of the International Federation of Freethinkers. At the Paris Conference of 1889 Dr. De Paepe was unanimously elected as spokesman when the Conference was received by the Paris Municipality at the Hotel de Ville. At that time, and indeed for many years, he has been suffering from asthma. But nothing seemed to daunt his energy. He was an indefatigable worker and a constant contributor to all the advanced journals. In him Belgian Freethought has lost a distinguished advocate and humanity a devoted servant. Dr. De Paepe's funeral was attended by ten thousand persons, including deputations from all parts of the country. A great sensation was caused in Brussels by the resolution of the Paris Municipal Council to provide for the education of his second son.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. W. E. Baxter, the East London coroner, held an inquest on Boxing day on the body of a Freethinker's wife, who had died suddenly. A post-mortem had been held, and pious Baxter asked, "Did they wish to pay for one?" His officer answered, "I don't suppose they thought about that." "I don't suppose they did," said pious Baxter, "Freethinkers do not think much about anybody but themselves. That is my impression of them." Now a coroner does not sit to give his "impressions." But as pious Baxter has given them, we may remark that *he* does not "think much of anybody but himself," or he would refrain from insulting his fellow citizens when suffering from a sudden bereavement.

Coroner Baxter appears to have looked upon himself as providentially appointed to banter Thomas Simson as a Freethinker, and the presence of the poor fellow's dead wife only added a zest to the joke. Mr. Simson did not call in a doctor for three months before his wife's death. For this he gave an excellent reason—"She was much against having a doctor. You can't make a woman go to a doctor." Here was Coroner Baxter's opportunity to air his elegant wit. He fired off a novel cracker about a gentleman named Mahomet, who went to a mountain when the mountain would not go to him. But the climax was still better. Mr. Simson said his wife had suffered from dropsy, pleurisy, and gout, and the post-mortem revealed no traces of these disorders. Thereupon Coroner Baxter remarked, "That is the advantage of being a Freethinker; think anything you like, but sometimes you think wrong." At this splendid witticism the audience laughed. It was as good as a pantomime, though it was only an inquest.

Poor Mr. Simson was called into the court again, and told he was mistaken as to his wife's malady. But he quietly remarked that his wife had been told by a doctor that she was suffering from pleurisy. This was a regular back-hander for Baxter, who uttered the idiotic observation that "doctors cannot get inside a person." Of course not. But if Mr. Simson was misled by one doctor, why all this fuss about his not forcing another doctor on his wife to mislead her again?

Whether he knew it or not, Mr. Simson scored heavily. Still, he retained his modesty, and said, "I wished for a post-mortem, as our people like to know how things are." This is really capital. Freethinkers like to know how things are. Christians don't. And they like to insult those who do.

The *Daily News*, *Weekly Dispatch*, and *Reynolds'* devoted leaderettes to this matter. Each censured the Coroner, and told him he had better mind his own business instead of meddling with other people's.

Mrs. Caroline Simson, over whose dead body Coroner Baxter was so facetious, had been for thirty years a Freethinker. With her husband she was a member of the Bethnal Green Branch. She was universally respected by those who knew her.

"Marshal" Barrington Booth, says a Dalziel telegram from New York, declares that his father wrote every chapter of *In Darkest England*, but a few statistics were probably furnished by Mr. Stead. This is contradicted by Mr. Stead's press circular and the "General's" preface. Having read the book critically, we are satisfied that the major portion is from Mr. Stead's pen. Barrington Booth is obviously no judge of style.

There are "ructions" already in the Salvation camp. "Commissioner" Smith, the head of the Social Wing, has resigned, and "Colonel" Cadman, a terrific bawler, is appointed to succeed him. It is said that "Commissioner" Smith was the ablest man the "General" had, and the only one likely to make the social scheme a success. But he has ideas of his own, and Booth doesn't want a man of that sort.

"Commissioner" Smith's resignation, or rather the reason for it, will be an eye-opener to the ordinary public. He was unable to get any satisfaction from the Booths on an all-important point, namely, whether the funds for the Social Scheme were to be kept distinct and separate from the general funds of the Army. The Grand Old Showman's will probably lump all the cash together, and use it indifferently as he pleases for social or religious purposes. This is not what he promised while begging for subscriptions. It is well that his little game should be seen through before the head of the Salvation Army becomes a millionaire.

The resignation of Commissioner Smith from the Salvation Army is of more importance than Booth will allow. Frank Smith was the most popular and best known of the army officers apart from "the family." To him it was mainly owing that Booth embarked on his social scheme. That he has given in his resignation shows that the autocrat will brook no interference with his ideas. "Colonel" Cadman who succeeds him is very unfavorably known by his bombastic reports in the *War Cry*.

Booth had a big meeting at Colston Hall, Bristol, and took away cash or promises to the amount of £4,000. His chairman was Archdeacon Wilson. This gentleman, however, has since repented. He writes to the *Bristol Mercury* to say that his doubts have deepened into mistrust. He does not think the scheme a good one after all, he is dissatisfied with Booth's answers to questions, and he believes there is no proper security as to the funds. Meanwhile the Grand Old Showman has the best of the discussion. £4,000 is a solid fact.

Dr. Parker has been making use of the fog in a sermon, though his sermons were foggy enough before. He observed that the fog hid the trees from sight, but the trees were still there. So there are men who "deny the unseen world because they cannot see it, but the trees are there, and so are the angels!"

It is pitiful to see a man talking like this to a well-dressed congregation. We know the *trees* are there, because we have seen them. But who has seen the *angels*? Perhaps Dr. Parker has. According to his own analogy, he has seen them through a fog. Yes, and he carries the fog with him.

The pious Post Office official who rejoices in the name of Blackwood is, we believe, the leading spirit of the International Postal and Telegraph Christian Association; and probably he is responsible for the four pages of religious gush, in the form of a letter, sent to all the employees at St. Martin's-le-Grand. This precious epistle concludes with the observation that the second coming of Christ "is surely drawing near." Well, we wish it was, if Christ would only take away with him the pious busybodies who thrust religion into public offices, and impudently use their positions to bribe or terrorise the subordinate officers.

Blackwood and Co. send Christmas cards with this printed letter. One of them bears the text "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." What a curious "compliment" of the season!

Providence has been killing people at an extra rate this cold weather. In Preston the death rate has gone up from 30 to 51 per thousand. In London the rate which averages 19 per thousand has risen to 28 per thousand.

Glancing through Barnard's Life of Dr. Peter Heylyn, first published in 1683, we lighted on a couple of profane anecdotes told of wanton Frenchmen, which looked very much out of place in a grave, not to say solemn, life of a doctor of divinity. The first is of a sick gentleman who, when the Host was brought to him by a lubberly priest, said that "Christ came to him as he entered into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass." The second is of a gentleman lying upon his death-bed, who when the priest had persuaded him that the Sacrament on the altar was the very body and blood of Christ, "refused to eat thereof, because it was Friday."

A number of leading Germans at Chicago have protested against paying subscriptions to the World's Fair of 1892 until they are given positive information if the exhibition is to be closed on Sundays or not. They are decidedly opposed to Sunday closing. If the World's Fair is to be run in the interests of the promoters and the public it must be open on the general holiday. If it is run in the interests of the churches let them pay for it.

The Rev. W. Carlile, head of the Church Army, claims priority over "General" Booth for the details of his social scheme. Mr. Carlile says that a pamphlet published on March 10, 1890, clearly explained the threefold plan of city, farm and over-sea colonies. Like "General," Booth he forgets to state that all these projects have often been mooted previously.

A very stupid paragraph about the poet Keats is going the round of the press. It is stated that "Shelley and Hunt had deprived him of his belief in Christianity." Now this is absolutely untrue. Keats thought for himself in all things. For the rest, we have only to remark that if Keats' death was painful as indeed it was, this had nothing to do with "the beyond." He was loathe to leave life and love and work at such an early age.

A friend points out that we were wrong in saying the new American translation of "balloons" for angels will not fit in with the passage which speaks of angel's food. Angel's food he says is "gas."

After all the proposed translation does not go much further on the rationalising path than the revised version which in Psalm civ., 4. changes "angels" into "messengers," and "spirits" into "winds."

Mark Twain says the only way to save the redskins will be to catch their Messiah and crucify him.

It is reported that the Indian "Messiah" has been arrested. He was found to be a crank named Hopkins, from Nassau, Iowa. Some of the Indians were indignant at his arrest, but others laughed and called him a crazy fool. Red Cloud said to him: "You go home; you are no Son of God."

Poor Hopkins! He is born out of due season. A thousand years ago he might have made a name, and perhaps a pile. Now he is simply "run in" by the police.

A mad Englishman has been arrested in Canada. His name is Charles Barber, aged nineteen, and hailing from Manchester. On Christmas Day he mounted a bench and called aloud, "As God came at Christmas, so have I been sent at Christmas as a prophet from the Messiah, to teach all nations the Word of God, and that the day of judgment is now at hand." The unfortunate young man was immediately taken into custody. Another example of the beneficent agency of religion.

Tournay forests have been haunted lately, and the poor peasants nearly frightened out of their lives. But the magistrates at Tarbes resolved to investigate the affair, and the ghosts turned out to be three brothers and a sister suffering from religious mania.

St. Mary's (Roman Catholic) Church, Edinburgh, was burnt down on Sunday. When the cry of "Fire!" was

raised the congregation skedaddled as though the Devil were after them. None of them wanted to die in the House of God. Fortunately the more valuable, and probably more useful, Theatre Royal was saved by the firemen, though the flames from the wooden gospel-shop savagely threatened it with destruction.

A Cornish lifeboat and life-buoy named "The Faith" have been picked up near Camborne. The hatchways of a vessel have also been washed ashore near the same spot, and it is surmised that the ill-fated vessel foundered in the recent heavy gale. As the lifeboat has been found empty, it is feared that the whole of the crew have perished. The "Faith" was a dandy-rigged craft, and her crew mostly hailed from Cornwall. Which things, though stern fact, are an allegory.

Twelve young girls got confirmed by a Catholic bishop. On returning home they ventured on the ice of Selenter Lake, Eastern Holstein. It broke under them and all were drowned. Evidently the Holy Spirit led them astray. No doubt, however, the Catholic bishop will console the parents by telling them the poor girls are gone to heaven.

The *Weekly Register* has an article on "American Progress towards Belief in Purgatory," and congratulates Catholics that disbelief in hell is aiding belief in an intermediate state, a money-bringing doctrine for the priests.

During the Scotch railway strike a commercial traveller asked: "But if there are no men in the signal-boxes, where shall we get to though the train starts?" "Weel," replied the old railway man, taking a snuff—"Weel, am thinkin' it depends on yer reelegious opeenions."

What would the Evangelical saints of half a century ago have thought of a string band on Sunday afternoons at Exeter Hall. Yet that is what they now have to resort to to obey the injunction and "compel them to come in." The old acts enforcing church attendance are not yet expunged from the statute book, but any and every device has to be adopted to induce people to seek their own eternal salvation.

How are we expect any mercy from the Almighty Jehovah in this country from which we banished lords more than a hundred years ago? We still refer to him as the "The Lord," and "The Lord of Lords." Is he not justified in regarding this reference to him as ironical and derisive? Talk about the second coming of the Lord to a country where the very name is a reproach. We know the Lord well enough to assure the readers of the *Ironclad Age* and the clergy that he will not visit the United States in his second coming no more than he did in his first.—*Ironclad Age*.

The *Bombay Guardian* circulates a story that most of the Freethinkers at Dum Dum have been reconverted to Christianity. A full inquiry by our esteemed correspondent, Kaliprassana Kavyabisharad, shows the story to be absolutely without foundation. The Dum Dum Secular Society still flourishes, and not a single member has returned to Christianity. No doubt, however, the story of their wholesale conversion will be reproduced extensively and firmly believed. Pious frauds are not killed by contradiction. Nothing in this world, as Ingersoll says, flourishes like a good, sound, healthy, religious lie.

The *Expository Times* contends that when the Psalmist says "Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol"—or *hell*, as our version has it—"it is open for us to translate his words, 'Thou wilt not leave my body in the grave.'" This is the advantage of having a revelation out of which you can make just whatever you please.

Messrs. T. and T. Clark, of Edinburgh, have published a big work on *The Hereafter*, by James Fyfe. Mr. Fyfe contends that the Hebrew term "sheol," sometimes translated hell in our authorised version, is really identical with heaven. This may be consoling to those who never reconciled themselves to their blessed Savior having descended into hell.

Archdeacon Farrar is author of a pretentious *Life of Christ* founded on the model of the person who elaborated "Jesus wept" into the blessed Savior of mankind melted in a flood of lachrymal effusion. In his sermon on Christmas Day the

Archdeacon gave the following *resumé* of the life of Christ: "The Savior in his earliest years lived in obscurity, then was in deadly conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities of the day, after that a fugitive amongst the hills of Galilee, and at last crucified by the unanimous hatred of the world." In this picture it is as difficult to recognise the gospel Jesus as the orthodox God. Yet it is a good specimen of what the Broad Church clergy offer instead of either history or criticism.

A good letter on Christmas Customs by C. S. Baxter appeared in Monday's *Echo*, only it was not stated that nearly every sentence was taken from Mr. Wheeler's recent *Freethinker* article on the same subject.

Spurgeon is indignant at the suggestion that he is near the end of his tether. He says he may live a great deal longer than folk expect. Meanwhile he is recruiting his health at Mentone, but he "cannot get quite well." "When my enemy overcomes me," Spurgeon writes, "he takes care to entrench himself, so that it is long before he is quite turned out." Literally this refers to the gout, but indirectly it suggests Old Nick. Very pious people have the humility to think the Devil is always worrying them, though 'tis ten to one he has something better to do.

There is a pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society at Boston in Lincolnshire, and the vicar says the Devil is at the bottom of it. This is rather rough on the promoters. They have interviewed the vicar, and now pronounce him an antiquated bigot with "no possibility of growth in him." But this is rough on the sky-pilot. Some allowance ought to be made for trade prejudices. No gospel-shop keeper likes to see his customers enticed to a rival establishment.

The spectacle of a judge imploring the people for the sake of God and the sake of peace to uphold his decision is not a very dignified one. Yet this is the spectacle offered by Archbishop Benson in his recent pastoral letter. He plays the part of Mr. Facing-both-ways, and then appeals to his clergy to adopt his own Janus aspect.

I referred last week, says *Truth*, to the detestable conduct of a congregation of snobs at Leicester, who petitioned their vicar to dismiss a new curate for no other reason than that his family were not of sufficiently exalted station to satisfy this aristocratic parish. If I may trust sundry communications which have reached me from the parish in question, the objection to the curate was that he is the son of a gardener. A pretty satire, this, on a vicar and congregation who worship, or profess to worship, the Son of a carpenter, and who are—one and all—descended from a gardener and his wife.

The Rev. J. R. Webster, minister of Ebenezer Church, Chatham, recently destroyed by fire, gave a discourse on the event in Jubilee Hall. He did not take any text, though "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii., 29) would have suited admirably. But only that Sunday morning God sent over much water, bursting the pipes and flooding Jubilee Hall. Under these circumstances Mr. Webster could only mander about God moving in a mysterious way and thank him for not having consumed any lives when he consumed the building.

A writer in the *English Churchman* complains that even the publications of the Christian Knowledge Society are tinged with Romanism, and finds a trace of Jesuitism in the fact that in a book for boys entitled *Success in Life* three of the heroes seek to see the Pope.

A telegram from Sofia states that the investigation into the murder of the pope Stojan at Podgoritza has revealed an extraordinary state of things. It has been shown that Stojan himself led the life of a bandit, and roamed about the country with well-armed companions, and was most probably killed in an encounter with other robbers. Several Turkish bandits who were caught, and are still kept in prison, are believed to be implicated in the murder. Stojan is known to have committed four murders, that of his sister being among them.

The *Harvest*, a Roman Catholic monthly organ thus celebrates Irish faith: "O, indestructible Irish Faith! They may, as they have done, rob Ireland of her wealth: they may

rob her even of her very language—that musical tongue in which Patrick preached, and Bridget prayed; but there is one thing which will never be, and which no power on earth can accomplish—Ireland can never be robbed of her grand old Faith." Thus do Irishmen celebrate and rejoice in the root of their country's misfortunes.

The Archbishop of York is dead. The poor man left £10,000 a year behind him. This must have been a dreadful reflection. What is worse, he had no prospect of entering heaven, for the camel has not yet gone through the needle's eye. Threading a needle with a camel is very difficult.

Mis Alice C. Fletcher, for many years stationed at the Nez Percé Indian Agency, says the Messiah craze among the Indians began with the nominal conversion of an Indian to Christianity. He became very enthusiastic, saw visions, and announced himself as the forerunner of a Son of God, who should deliver his people.

A thousand railway men at Deadwood, Dakota, celebrated the birth of their Savior by getting splendidly drunk. They threatened to lay the town in ashes, probably as a token of peace and good will. Deadwood, however, still survives; only the biggest hotel and several adjoining houses want rebuilding.

The Sultan of Turkey (through his aide-de camp, Woods Pasha) has written to Mr. W. H. Quillian, the head of the Liverpool Moslem Society, promising a gift of books, in reply to a letter congratulating the Sultan on his action in preventing the production of the play of "Mahomet," as an instance of his efforts in behalf of "religious toleration."

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

AFTER serving for fifteen years as Secretary to the National Secular Society, Mr. Robert Forder is resigning the post. His best days have been spent in the party's service, and his health is now precarious. In these circumstances, it has been deemed an act of justice to present him with a testimonial in recognition of his invaluable work as a lecturer and organiser, and to assist him in the freethought publishing business, to which he will devote the remainder of his life. The Testimonial has the hearty support of Mr. Bradlaugh, who held the Presidency during the period of Mr. Forder's service.

Geo. Collins, 2s. 6d.; J. Albright, 5s.; F. Lester, 1s.; Annie Besant, 20s.; J. S. Smith, 1s.; W. J. Bowman, 1s.; Mrs. W. J. Bowman, 1s.; Mr. Weatherburn, 2s. 6d.; A. Friend, 2s.; Ralph Henderson, 2s. 6d.; Anthony Brydon, 2s.; W. Robson, 2s.; Spennymoor Branch N. S. S. (2nd subscription) 1s. 6d.; J. F. Haines, 2s.; G. Warren, 2s. 6d.; E. Bowles, 6d.; Mr. Wilkins, 6d.; Peter Gibson, 1s.; Hy. Courtney, 1s.; F. Schaller, 6d.; J. Tapp, junr., 2s. 6d.; H. Seal, 20s.; Finsbury Branch N. S. S., 5s. 6d.; A. T., 2s. 6d.

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

It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword, then they did so, and the stake and the faggot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner.—Thomas Paine, "Age of Reason," part ii.

If we can live during all eternity without the physical body as well as with it, why did God (or nature) bestow upon us this "crowning work" for only a few paltry years? Surely, in that case, a lamentable waste of energy for no purpose!—Otto Wettstein.

ETERNAL TORMENT.

If any human soul at all
Must die the second death, must fall
Into that gulph of quenchless flame
Which keeps its victims still the same,
Unpurified as unconsumed,
To everlasting torments doomed;
Then I give God my scorn and hate,
And turning back from Heaven's gate
(Suppose me got there!) bow, *Adieu!*
Almighty Devil, damn me too!

—James Thomson (B.V.), "Vane's Story."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 4, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town: at 7.30, Mother Mary and Little Jesus."

Thursday, January 8, The Athenæum, Tottenham Court Road: at 8.15, "Freethought and the Bible." Admission free.

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

February 1, Hull; 8, Leeds; 15, South Shields; 22, Newcastle.

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Hall of Science.

April 12, 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. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear your visit to Grimsby was successful.

D. WILLIAMS.—You are quite right. It was Dr. Aveling who edited both the *Freethinker* and *Progress* during Mr. Foote's imprisonment. Mrs. Besant was on the Committee that supervised the business arrangements, and of course its leading spirit. Mr. Forder took the position of danger in the shop. Of course the danger was reduced to a minimum by Mr. Foote's written prohibition of the Bible Sketches during his absence. These were promptly resumed on his release, but he was resolved to thrust no danger on others, nor even to let them be led into it by any feeling of chivalry.

R. ROBERTSON.—The names of the Scotchman and Welshman are discreetly omitted, also their addresses. Mr. Foote has not visited Glasgow for a long time. Most Freethought lecturers live in London, and the travelling expenses to Scotland are so heavy. Still, Mr. Foote would like to visit Glasgow and Edinburgh again, and this year if possible.

KALIPRASSANA KAVYABISHARAD.—Accept our best thanks for the information. See "Acid Drops"

J. DIAS.—The Branch nearest you is the N. W. London Branch. Its meetings are held at the Milton Hall. See Lecture Guide.

A FRIEND AT WORCESTER wishes to be put in communication with local Freethinkers. Mr. Forder, Secretary of the N. S. S., will act as intermediary.

C. KINGSTON.—Thanks for your good wishes. Mr. Foote is in excellent health. He finds the weather more trying to the temper than to any other part.

W. H. MORRISH.—We reciprocate your good wishes. If you return the Almanack wrongly bound, Mr. Forder will supply you with another. Thanks for your promise to distribute our Booth pamphlet, which is now ready. See "Acid Drops" *re* enclosure.

W. GILMOUR.—Cuttings received with thanks. We hope to have a happy new year—anyhow a useful one. It would be happier if our friends would push the sale of the *Freethinker* as we suggest in another column.

W. H. HUTCHINSON.—Mr. Foote will be glad to see you. The authorities at Melbourne have no right to confiscate any back numbers of the *Freethinker* you put in your box. Many thanks for your brave letter. Freethought is spreading quietly but surely by a policy like yours.

T. MAUDE.—Figuiet's books are hardly what we should recommend.

S. STANDRING.—Celestino Edwards is constitutionally inaccurate. We do not print the indecent parts of the Bible and sell them for a few pence. We should no more think of doing it than of flinging the contents of a cesspool into the public streets. What we have done is to give the *references*, so that Christians may turn to their Bible and see what it contains for themselves.

A. BAKER.—We hope the Wigan Secularists will form a strong working Branch.

FREETHINKERS' BENEVOLENT FUND.—We have received:—Huddersfield Branch, £1 2s. 6d.

G. J. DOBSON.—Thanks. Contents-sheet shall be posted weekly.

H. O. T., who sends a cheque for two copies of the *Right of Man*, is desired to send his full address, or the order cannot be executed.

F. J. PARKER.—Mr. Symes, at the *Liberator* office, will give you information as to Secularism in Melbourne.

J. KEAST.—See "Acid Drops."

W. T. GRIFFITHS.—Thanks. See acknowledgment this week.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—We have received the following: J. Dias, 1s.; C. Kingston, 2s. 6d.; R. Robertson, 1s.; W. T. Griffiths, 1s. Manchester: Collected at Mr. Foote's lectures, £1 13s. 6d.; J. Watts, 2s. 6d.; A. Smith, 1s.; Darlington Branch, 10s.

J. BRUMAGE.—Sorry to hear you must postpone your visit to London and cannot be present at the Federation dinner.

G. B. (Leicester).—Mr. Slater may be able to help you. Taylor's *Diegesis* will furnish you with some useful information.

READER.—The best plan is to see for yourself. Attend a few *séances* and keep your wits about you.

S. W. CHAPMAN.—Thanks for the cutting. Perhaps a child could understand that parson's account of the Trinity. We can't, and he says *he* can't.

S. P. W.—See "Sugar Plums." You pay us a mighty compliment in saying that the *Freethinker* is, in your opinion, the best written paper in London. What we feel sure of is, that there is more hard, honest work put into it than into most other papers. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

J. GRAHAM.—You cannot withdraw a child from instruction in geography. Why should you wish to?

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Open Court—Menschentum—Lucifer—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Liverpool Football Echo—Truthseeker—Echo—Rochester Guardian—Harvest—Expository Times—Twentieth Century—Independent Pulpit—Annual Report Liberty and Property Defence League—Ironclad Age—Two Worlds—The Flaming Sword.

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.

A NEW YEAR'S WORD TO OUR READERS.

THIS number of the *Freethinker* begins a new volume, and we take the opportunity of saying a word to our readers. Of course they all like the paper, or they wouldn't take it. We like it too—naturally. Some of the best years of our life, and some of our best energy and ability (such as it is) have been put into this journal. As a commercial venture it is not a blazing success. But we never looked for a fortune out of a Freethought paper, so we are not disappointed. If ever there was a labor of love this is one. We worked for nothing in founding the *Freethinker*. We were money out of pocket on the special number which brought us twelve months' imprisonment. This was a splendid advertisement, and for a while the paper yielded some profit. But after the reaction we had to work for nothing again. Then we increased the size of the paper and lost money every week. But the circulation began to improve, and it went up steadily until three or four months ago. Since then it has stagnated. At present it yields the editor—who is also the proprietor—about enough to provide him with meals (modest ones—a chop, say, and a bit of cheese) during the three days a week he gives to the work. Now we don't grumble. We chose this work and mean to stick to it, whether it bring poverty and imprisonment, or power and prosperity. But we venture to make a new year's appeal to our readers, though many of them, perhaps, are out of temper with the weather and "damning the nature of things." Some friends of the *Freethinker*, who have helped us hitherto, will probably go on helping us. Others might do a little more, and some might make a beginning. The *Freethinker* (though we say it that shouldn't) is worth twopence a week. A thousand readers, say, can afford to pay twopence for it. Well, let them take two copies instead of one, and give the extra copy to some poor benighted Christian. This will help us, and probably the Christian. At least a hundred of the thousand could take three, four, five, six, or even a dozen copies weekly. We ask them to do it. This journal is a flag in the great

battle for freedom. One man's fingers may get a little weary with holding it, though his heart be ever so high.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Salvation Syrup; or, Light on Darkest England is the title of Mr. Foote's reply to General Booth. The pamphlet runs to thirty-two pages. In addition to the *Freethinker* articles, which have been carefully revised, it contains an equal quantity of fresh matter. Freethinkers should do their utmost to circulate the pamphlet among Christians. Mr. Forder will forward any quantity above a dozen to private purchasers at the trade price of eighteenpence for thirteen copies.

Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Star of Christ in the Night of Faith" drew an improved audience to the Hall of Science on Sunday evening, despite the wretched weather. The applause at the end was very enthusiastic. One opponent defended Christianity—a fervid but inoffensive old gentleman, rather fonder of exhortation than argument.

Monday evening at 7.30 is the time of the London Secular Federation's Annual Dinner. Place, the Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge. Mr. Foote presides. There will be a good dinner, good speeches, good music, and a "good time" for everybody. Whoever misses this occasion will regret it to the day of his death if he outlives Methuselah.

Secretaries of Branches, and others who have been selling tickets for the Federation Dinner, must please let Mr. Pownceby (7 Finsbury Street, E.C.) know how many they have disposed of by Sunday night; that is, he will require to know by the first post on Monday morning.

The Forder Testimonial Fund will be kept open till the end of January, as several collecting-sheets are still unreturned. It is to be hoped that all sums will be forwarded by that date.

This year's edition of the N. S. S. Almanack has sold better than last year's, but there are still some copies left. Members of the N. S. S. who are yet without a copy should provide themselves with one, as it contains a mass of interesting and useful matter. The profits go to the Society.

Our centenary edition of the *Rights of Man* is especially valuable on account of the Political Biography of Paine by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, which contains some important facts not accessible in any other biography. The volume is well printed on good paper, and is a remarkably good shilling's-worth.

The debate on the Legal Eight Hours Question between Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. G. B. Shaw is now being advertised in the usual way. Any of Mr. Foote's friends, whatever their views on the subject of discussion, who will take the trouble to circulate handbills can obtain them from Mr. G. Standing, 7 Finsbury-street, E.C., or from Mr. Forder, at 23 Stone-cutter-street. The debate takes place at the Hall of Science on Wednesday and Thursday, January 14 and 15. The chairman is not yet fixed upon. General Booth is too busy and Mr. Spurgeon is at Mentone.

St. James's Hall was suggested by the *Star* as the proper place for this debate, and the heavy expenses could have been met. But the debaters did not care to pay a big rent to a landlord, and the lowest price allowed for admission at St. James's Hall is a shilling. This would have been prohibitive to the democracy. Other halls were either not big enough or too costly for their size, so Messrs. Foote and Shaw, who are both Freethinkers, are going to the Hall of Science, at the risk of getting no press reports.

Of course it will be clearly understood that Mr. Foote is not debating this Legal Eight Hours Question as a Secularist, still less as President of the National Secular Society. He is debating as a private individual. The presidency of the N. S. S. does not involve the loss of a right to have strong opinions on outside matters; nor, on the other hand, is any Secularist committed by what Mr. Foote may say upon them.

Mr. Bradlaugh long ago expressed his determination to follow John Wilkes in demanding that the resolution virtually

expelling him from the House of Commons should be expunged. He is not the man to forget his resolution, and we are glad to see that he has obtained first place on Jan. 27 for the following motion: "That the resolution of this House of the 22nd day of June, 1880, That having regard to the reports and proceeding of two Select Committees appointed by this House, Mr. Bradlaugh be not permitted to take the oath or make the affirmation mentioned in the Statute 29 Vic. c. 19, and the 31 and 32 Vic. c. 72, be expunged from the Journals of the House, as being subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors of this kingdom." All Freethinkers should write to their representatives in Parliament to vote with Mr. Bradlaugh on Jan. 27.

The Battersea Branch held its quarterly meeting last Sunday afternoon, Mr. Pearce presiding. The balance-sheet showed a small sum on the right side. Nearly all the old officers were re-elected. Good work had been done by the Branch during the quarter, eleven new members having joined during that period, and several old members rejoined. At 5.30 about sixty members and friends sat down to a substantial tea; after which a concert was held, and at 10 o'clock dancing commenced, which was kept up till a late hour.

Mr. C. J. Hunt's recent lectures at Newcastle-on-Tyne gave great satisfaction. No one came forward to discuss with him, however, and the Branch fancies the enemy has little heart left for further encounters.

Mr. Naewiger, the energetic secretary of the Hull Branch, has blossomed into an author. His first pamphlet, published by Mr. Forder, is entitled *God is Love*. Mr. Naewiger writes vigorously, and a Christian would hardly like to answer his indictment of Jehovah.

Our Swedish friends have put out a calendar, entitled *Ljus och Frihet*—Light and Freedom, edited by Viktor E. Lennstrand.

M. de Freycinet, the French Minister of War, at a meeting of Senatorial electors on Monday, said: "We have secured the emancipation of the State as regards religious beliefs and realised advances which are an approach towards that separation of the Churches and the State considered by philosophical minds as the last form of modern evolution. The precise formulæ of this emancipation are to be found in our scholastic and military laws, which we will defend against our adversaries without ever consenting to go backwards." This is a rubuff to the clericals after Cardinal Lavigerie's overtures to the Republic.

The *Truthseeker* of Dec. 6 gives a large cartoon, in which Humanity is depicted as Prometheus bound to the rock of ignorance, on which is erected superstition and theology. The vulture of priestcraft is gnawing at his vitals, but the sun of Freethought is rising as a token of the dawn of deliverance.

Sir Edwin Arnold, writing on the cholera in Japan in last Monday's *Daily Telegraph*, says: "Fear is not a vice of this high-hearted and admirable people, whose religion has never taught them to dread the inevitable. At no time has there been the slightest difficulty in procuring nurses, bearers, and people to disinfect and carry away corpses; in fact, the service seems to be popular." These are the poor heathen so much money is asked for in order that they may be Christianised.

The *Speaker* prints an interesting letter from its Melbourne correspondent. This gentleman says that Mr. Monro, the premier, is supposed to be a Secularist at heart. He also states that most of the teaching staff are "strong Secularists." The clergy are finding out that secular education is destroying their influence, and they are "moving heaven and earth to get religious teaching re-established." There is going to be a big fight over this, but in all probability the reactionists will be badly beaten.

Under the heading "A Secret Religion," the *Cornhill Magazine* gives an account of the Ansairei, a sect in the neighborhood of Tarsus, who, while nominally Mohammedans, really hold a secret cult, in which remnants of sun and moon worship are apparent. By the way, the crescent symbol of Mohammedanism seems, like our week, to point to some remnant of moon worship.

The *Cambrian Daily Leader* inserts long extracts from Mr. Foote's article "All About Christmas." The extracts are furnished by a correspondent who signs himself "One in Doubt," and asks "Will some of the clergy or ministers of the gospel put my doubts to rest?" We guess they won't.

A book has been published by Brentano, of New York, entitled *Christ: the Pupil of Buddha*. A comparative study, founded on Lillie's "Buddhism in Christianity," giving in parallel columns the traditions relating to Jesus and Gautama, and some of their doctrinal teachings.

Prof. Odon de Buen, editor of *El Radical*, and representative of Spanish Freethinkers at the Paris Congress, is forming a Federation of the Spanish Freethought and Anti-Clerical Societies to unite in the reception of the next International Congress at Madrid in the coming autumn.

Under the old régime in Brazil, the product of a vast lottery was granted to the bishop to erect a grand cathedral in the capital. Over 200,000 dollars were paid to the bishop without any signs of the cathedral commencing. The government has now decreed that 100,000 dollars of the said lottery be devoted to a State Normal School, and the cornerstone of the new building has been raised.

M. Pierre Lafitte, the chief of the French Positivists, has been lecturing on Shakespeare to a large audience at the College de France. He finds our great dramatist superior to all the prejudices of his period, so that you cannot say he is either Protestant or Catholic.

The Wigan Secularists are going to re-organise. A meeting for this purpose will be held this morning (Jan. 4) at 11 o'clock in the Miners' Hall, Millgate. Secularists, please attend.

The Huddersfield Branch had a merry gathering on Christmas Day, and realised a profit of £1 2s. 6d. for the Benevolent Fund.

STOCK-TAKING.

In all the big City firms of which I have any knowledge it is customary at least once a year to take stock—i.e., to take a note of all articles unsold, write off bad debts, balance up accounts and determine the probable amount of profit or loss for the year. Undoubtedly this is a useful custom, and might be profitably followed in moral as well as commercial undertakings. I grant at once that the results of a commercial undertaking when measured in pounds, shillings and pence, may be more accurately determined than the moral results of purely intellectual labor, the utility of which is only to be seen in the high standard of well-being reached by those who come under its influence. Still, as moral influence makes itself felt in the world, intellectual and moral force being as irresistible as physical force, I maintain that, just in proportion as mankind becomes enlightened respecting nature and man, so the ground is cleared for higher achievements, the errors of religions are weeded out, the false and pernicious being cast aside for ever, while whatever good there may be associated with religions—ancient or modern—is preserved and consolidated, and becomes the common property of humanity.

In taking stock, the Secularist has to ask himself how much intellectual force he has expended, how many facts he has imparted and to how many people—in other words, what amount of intellectual and moral light he has shed in the world during the year. Has he brushed away any theological cobwebs from the human mind, or destroyed the fear of Devil or hell in the bosom of any human being, or inspired any man to think for himself, or pointed out with unflinching courage the narrow road to human happiness? If he has done any of these things they count as work done, which will assuredly produce good results—or profit. But if he has neglected to do his share of the work towards the intellectual and moral emancipation of his fellows from error and superstition, or if he has done his work badly, then such omissions or bad work will count on the other side of the ledger, and will as certainly result in loss—loss to the individual and to the race.

This much then I say on the general question, and now I propose to give a brief account of my own work in illustration of what I mean. Let it not be imagined for a

moment that I set myself up as a pattern for others to follow. I am as conscious as any man can well be of my own shortcomings, intellectual and otherwise. I only claim to be an ordinary soldier in the great Freethought Army. Such teaching ability as I possess, such knowledge as I have acquired, such art as I have learned, I have given unreservedly to the service of the cause.

And what during the past year have I done? In the first place I have given eighty-five lectures, several of them free. I have travelled to the North of England, spent some time in going from town to town, village to village, speaking in the open air to multitudes of people, many of whom have listened to a Freethought address for the first time. I have spoken in halls and theatres as in parks and other places of public resort. Probably I have addressed as many as twenty thousand people during the year, sometimes to the same people twice or three times. How many have I influenced for good? I do not know, but I certainly claim that my work has not been fruitless. I have written numerous articles for English and American Freethought journals and circulated my works in all directions. Surely I can count some of this on the profit side of the ledger, to weigh against my losses? And losses I have had undoubtedly. All of my work that has been unproductive of good I count as loss. It has meant loss of time to me, loss of energy. Time that might have been more usefully occupied with wife and children at home, time that might have been employed in study or amusement.

And what of our other lecturers? Some of them have had too much work to do, others have had too little. There is, however, plenty of work for all if judiciously arranged, and if some secretaries were more methodical and business-like in the performance of their duties, dates would not be so frequently lost to lecturers during the year as they now are.

It is often alleged that the Freethought Party contains fewer orators to-day who can draw paying audiences than in former years. This may be true; but it certainly is not true that the Freethought Party is deficient in teaching ability. The lecturers of to-day are certainly as well educated and as well informed as those of the past. And I am not quite sure that oratory is the one thing needful, although it is a splendid quality when possessed by those with a large knowledge of human affairs. Real eloquence, however, is not always allied with dramatic power. The Freethought Party in the past has been singularly fortunate in its speakers. It has had—and now has—some great orators and excellent teachers. But it may not always be so. Our duty, therefore, is to train our young men to teach, to fill their minds with facts. Oratory, being a natural gift, will depend more upon dramatic instinct than anything else for its development. This I say in respect to our duty in the future; but I am quite sure that if each of our lecturers were to give an account of his or her labors during the year, a good account of work done could be shown, of which our party need not be ashamed.

There are few movements that can boast of such brilliant exponents of its principles, or such able teachers as Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Foote, Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, Mr. Touzeau Parris (whose sad accident we all deplore), Mrs. Besant, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, all of whom are still with us; among the younger members of the party, Mr. William Heaford, Mr. C. J. Hunt, Mr. George Standing and Mr. Robert Forder may certainly claim that they can hold their own in debate with the best informed among the clergy, and further that they have been trained in the best of all possible schools for such polemical work as that in which they are engaged, viz., the school of hard experience in the world, and incessant intellectual turmoil. I name these gentlemen because I have heard them lecture and have therefore had an opportunity of judging of their ability; but there are others of whom I have heard good accounts, and who certainly give evidence of good work in the future.

With such talent as we undoubtedly possess, who can say that the future of the Freethought Party is not a bright one? But it will depend very largely upon those who take official positions in the various Branches in London and the provinces. It will depend upon their enterprise, their tact and their wisdom in carrying on the work in their own particular district; for the strength of our movement must not lie in the future in being strong at the centre, in London—there must be no weak links in the chain—our movement must be strong in its Branches all over the

country. If we all work with a will, if our lecturers strive to make their lectures more and more interesting and instructive, if our meetings are made more attractive, by vocal or instrumental music, our halls brighter by pictures and statues of our great leaders, past and present, we shall certainly be taking steps towards greater and more permanent success.

Who will help us in fresh undertakings? If any, let them come forward. We have a good President, a grand cause, and good workers—all we want is more of them. With a stronger army of warriors, fighting with increased zeal and skill the insidious and formidable foe of superstition, with unity of action and steadfastness of purpose, success is certain. Let us be hopeful, then; ready to respond at any moment to the call of our leader; and next year when we take stock we shall each be prepared to present a solid, substantial record of work done towards the happiness and progress of humanity.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ANOTHER FALSEHOOD NAILED.

Messrs. Stead and Lunn's last weekly letter in the *London Star* contained the following paragraph:—

THE DECAY OF SECULARISM.

The increased attention given by evangelistic Churches to social Christianity in all its phases, has been one amongst many causes which has tended to the decay of the secular organisation. Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who was, I believe, Mr. Bradlaugh's predecessor as president of the Secularist Society, frequently attends Mr. Price Hughes's social conferences at St. James's Hall, and I understand remarked on one occasion to Mr. Hughes, that if the Churches had given the attention in his early days which they now devote to social problems, his organisation would never have come into existence. A further indication of the low water mark reached by the Secularists is to be found in the announcement just made in the *National Reformer* that the partnership between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant is dissolved by mutual consent. The announcement goes on to state that Mr. Bradlaugh is obliged to close the Fleet-street shop, as it does not pay. Mr. Bradlaugh states, moreover, that the *National Reformer* needs pushing, and concludes his pronouncement by emphatically denying that he is a rich man.

The following reply by Mr. Foote appeared in Monday's *Star*.

IS SECULARISM DECAYING?

Kindly allow me to correct the nonsense of Messrs. Stead and Lunn, on "the decay of the secular organisation." In the first place, Mr. Holyoake never was "Mr. Bradlaugh's predecessor as President of the Secularist Society." Mr. Bradlaugh himself founded the National Secular Society, and always remained its president until early in the present year, when he resigned on account of his impaired health, and I was unanimously elected as his successor. Secondly, the N.S.S. is not decaying. I am ready to satisfy anyone who wishes to inquire that our financial position is improving, and that we have enrolled more new members during the last twelve months than during any similar period of our history. Thirdly, the closing of Mr. Bradlaugh's shop in Fleet Street, and the dissolution of his partnership with Mrs. Besant, are due to causes quite independent of the success or failure of Secularism. Fourthly, if Mr. Bradlaugh's paper "needs pushing" (Messrs. Stead and Lunn say nothing about my paper, the *Freethinker*) it is probably like other journals that are the organs of ideas and not the purveyors of news. Fifthly, every Secularist will mistrust what Mr. Stead or Mr. Lunn "understands" Mr. Holyoake to have said to Mr. Price Hughes. Our party has excellent reasons for disbelieving Mr. Hughes's word on such matters, unless very strongly corroborated, and Mr. Stead or Mr. Lunn's "I understand" is hardly corroboration.

G. W. FOOTE.

NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

The Second Annual Social Gathering, held under the auspices of the above organisation, in the Arcade Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, on December 26, proved a phenomenal success, the number nearly doubling that of the similar gathering held last year. The president, Mr. Peacock, presided. A splendid repast was provided by Mr. Greenwell, the proprietor. After full justice had been done to the good things provided, by the large company, which included Freethinkers from Newcastle, Sunderland, South Shields, and Spennymoor. A capital programme, which included songs,

piano solos, recitations, etc., was rendered by a number of ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Puviv, of Newcastle, creating quite a *furor* by her two songs in character. Dancing and other amusements was kept up till 4 a.m., when the party separated, after one of the most successful reunions ever held in the north. I beg to acknowledge the following donations:—Spennymoor Branch, 5s.; Mr. John Robinson, 1s.; Mr. J. Ross, 6d.; Mr. T. Ross, 6d.—JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec.
86 Durham Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

PROFANE JOKES.

Why are two young ladies kissing each other like an emblem of Christianity? Because they are doing unto each other as they would that men should do unto them.

Mrs. Angelica—"Won't it be just too lovely for anything to have wings and harps forever!" Mr. Angelica (a dyspeptic)—"I don't want any of it in mine. We wouldn't be there a week before you'd want my wings to put on your hat."

Mrs. Fidgett—"Going to church didn't improve your father's temper. He came home like a wild beast." Dutiful Son—"After his prey!"

A certain gentleman is very particular in instructing his children to speak politely on all occasions. The result of his teaching is sometimes amusing. One day he asked the youngest boy the question, "Who tempted Eve?" The little fellow, after a moment's thought, with an air of confidence, replied, "It's the gentleman who lives in hell; I've forgotten his name."

Johnny (just returned from church) to his father—Does the minister practice what he preaches? Papa—I presume so, my son; what did he preach about to-day? "Gamblin' and hoss-racin'."

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. S. Standring, "Some New Years' Thoughts."

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. Rosetti, "Ru-sian Gods." Monday, at 8.30, social gathering. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, E., 7.30. Capt. Pfoundes (accompanied by a Buddhist Priest in his robes), "Buddhism by the Propaganda."

Edmonton—Angel Assembly Rooms, 7, Mr. L. Keen, "The Incarnation of God."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant, "The God of Israel—I."

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Mother Mary and Little Jesus." Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic class (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Life's Duty, from a Freethought Point of View." Tuesday, at 8, Mr. A. B. Moss "The Bible and Evolution."

West London—"Duke of York," Kensington Place Silver Street, Notting-hill Gate, 8, half yearly general meeting of members of West London (late Hyde Park) Branch.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Why Booth Must Fail."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates 11.15, Mr. Rosetti, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

COUNTRY.

Blackburn—Mr. T. Duxbury's Commercial Temperance Hotel, meeting first Friday in each month at 7.30.

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

Plymouth—100 Union Street, 7, members' half yearly meeting. Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea; 3, debating class, Mr. Hore, "Colonel Ingersoll's Oration on Wal Whitman"; 7, Mr. Martin.

Sheffield Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, 7, Mr. Jonathan Taylor will lecture.

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street, 10.30, general meeting; 6, Mr. T. R. Fox, "Witchcraft: its Relation to Christianity."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Jan. 4, Woolwich; 5, Annual Dinner; 6, West Ham; 18, Rushden; 20, West Ham. Feb. 1, Rushden; 8, Camberwell; 15, Woolwich; 22, Camberwell. March 1, Woolwich.

STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Liverpool.—Jan. 18, Liverpool.

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