

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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OUR FATHER.

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world.
—R. BROWNING, *Pippa Passes.*

THE Apostles' Creed, with which the Apostles never had anything to do, begins with the words "I believe in God the Father Almighty." The last word, "Almighty," is an adjective which we owe to the metaphysical genius of Christian theologians; and the first words, "I believe," are the customary shibboleth of the priests of every religion. For the rest, this extract from the Creed is taken from the Lord's Prayer, which itself is a brief selection from common Jewish prayers before the days of Jesus. According to the evangelists—whoever *they* were—Jesus taught his disciples to pray to "Our Father which art in Heaven" for a number of things which no one ever obtained by that process. Nevertheless the petition is offered up, generation after generation, by millions of Christians, whose hands are first folded in the gesture of prayer on their mothers' knees, and whose lips are taught at the same time a form of words that clings to them for life.

Our Father! The words are pretty and touching. When the child hears them he thinks of some one like his own father, but immensely bigger and more powerful; and as the child is taught that all the necessities and comforts of life he enjoys, at the expense of his parents' labor and loving care, are really gifts from the father behind the scenes, it is no wonder that this mysterious being becomes the object of gratitude and affection.

Which art in Heaven! Up there in the region of dreams, beyond the sailing clouds, far away through the deep blue, where imagination builds its fairy palace of delight, and God sits on his golden throne, and swift, bright angels speed forth to execute his commands. Tell a child anything you please about that land of fancy and you will be believed, especially if the tale comes from beloved lips, or from lips that bear the glamor of authority. And what the child is to the adult, early or savage man is to the civilisee. To the African negroes the highest god is the Sky; the great deity *Dyu* of our Aryan ancestors was the Sky; the Greek *Zeus* and the Latin *Jupiter* were both the Heaven-Father; and we still say "Heaven forgive me!" or "Fear the vengeance of Heaven!"

This heaven, however, is no longer credible to any one with a tincture of science. Hard as the truth is to a child or a savage, the sky is not a reality, but an optical illusion. For forty or forty-five miles from the earth's surface there is a belt of atmosphere, growing rarer and rarer as it approaches the infinite ocean of æther. Gone for ever is the old delusion of a solid heaven overhead, with windows in it, through which God and the angels looked down upon the earth and its inhabitants. And what site is there for Heaven out in the cold blackness of space?

That heaven is gone, and where is Our Father? Science shows us a world of absolute order, in which

what we call the laws of nature—the observed sequence and recurrence of phenomena—are never broken. The world was not fashioned for man's dwelling, nor is it maintained for his benefit. Towards the poles he freezes, towards the equator he burns. The rain nourishes his crops or rots them, without asking his pleasure; the sea bears him or drowns him, with equal unconcern; the lightning slays him or spares him, whether good, bad, or indifferent, as he happens to be in or out of the line of its dazzling flight; famine pinches his cheeks if he cannot procure food; the pestilence seizes upon his nerves and blood unless he learns the antidote to its ravages. He stands amidst the play of terrific forces, and only preserves himself by vigilance, patience, courage, and industry. If he falls the enemy is upon him, and the doom of the vanquished is death. Nature shows him no mercy. His mistakes are as fatal as his crimes.

"God" has been in his "Heaven" for eternity, but all is *not* right with the world. Too much is *wrong* with the world. Man is always endeavoring to improve it, but what assistance comes from above? A Father in Heaven would be a glorious fact. But who can believe it? "Our Father" is utterly careless of his children. The celestial Rousseau sends all his offspring to the Foundling.

The late hard weather has thrown thousands of honest men out of employment, and increased the death-rate alarmingly. Where is the wisdom of this? Where is the goodness? The worst of men would alter it if he could. But God, they say, can do it, and he does not. Yet they still look up and say "Our Father." And the Father looks down with a face as blenchless as the Sphinx's, gazing forthright across the desert sands.

What father would permit in his family the gross disparities we see in human life? One gorges and another starves; one is bloated and another is death's counterfeit; one is dressed in three-piled velvet and another goes in looped and windowed rags; one is idle and another slaves; one is sated with pleasure and another is numbed with pain; one lolls in a palace and another shivers in a hovel. What human father would not be ashamed to treat his children with such infamous partiality?

Look at the physical and moral filth, and the mental abasement, in our great Christian cities, where new churches are constantly built for the worship of God, where Bibles are circulated by the million, and where hundreds of sleek gentlemen flourish on the spoils of philanthropy. Read Mr. Rudyard Kipling's story of East-end life; read the lucubrations of General Booth; listen to the ever-swelling wail over the poverty, misery, and degradation of hosts of our people; and then say if it is not high time to cease all this cant about Our Father which art in Heaven.

Man has always been his own Savior. His instrument is science, his wisdom is self-help. His redemption begins when he turns his eyes from the delusive Heaven and plucks up his heart from the

fear of Hell. Despair vanishes before the steady gaze of instructed courage. Hope springs as a flower in the path of endeavor.

G. W. FOOTE.

HOW CHRISTIANS SERVED BLASPHEMERS.

CHAIMIM or Joachim Engelsberger was a Bohemian Jew of the seventeenth century who, in 1636, became a Christian and took the baptismal name of Ferdinand Francis.* He published a work entitled *Catholischen Wegweiser*, or Catholic Guide, at Vienna, in 1640, and apparently in the same year translated into German the *Sepher Toldoth Jesu*, or Jewish Life of Christ, as *Lebensgeschichte Jesu, mit heftigen Augriffen auf die Person Jesu*, and on August 26, 1842, was put to death in Vienna in the most atrocious manner. Why he suffered is not so clear, although it is certain he was accused of theft, and that the barbarous manner of his death was occasioned by his blasphemy.

Wagenseil, who in his *Tela ignea Satanae*, 1681, answers, or seeks to answer, the blasphemies of the *Sepher Toldoth Jesu*, says that soon after turning Christian, Engelsberger turned thief. It appears, however, from the fullest account of him which I have been able to obtain, that while still a Jew he was accused of stealing from the synagogue at Prague and put in prison. Here he was visited by a Holy Father, who promised him indemnity from punishment if he would embrace the faith of Christ; and Engelsberger was soon received into the bosom of the Church with considerable splendor and ceremony.

The Jews ironically congratulated his converters on their acquisition, and Engelsberger published the *Catholic Guide* as a justification of the step he had taken. This defence of his conduct occasioned a journey to Vienna, where he became popular, and for a short time he was a favorite with the Emperor Ferdinand the Third, after whom he had been named.

But Engelsberger seems to have followed up his success with the publication of his translation of that audacious work, the *Sepher Toldoth Jesu*. Perhaps he trusted that the favor of the court would shield him in his endeavor to let it be known what the Jews really thought of Christ. But if so, he was mistaken. He was again accused of theft—we know not with what justification, and apparently he was now under no such necessity as arises from want. He was consigned to prison, and condemned to be hanged in the fish market at Vienna. He received the holy sacrament as a Christian, and apparently expected the emperor would spare him the ignominy of a public execution. On the scaffold a Jesuit offered him the crucifix to kiss. He asked if there was no earthly hope. Being answered in the negative, he suddenly dashed down the crucifix and renounced the Christian faith, which he avowed he had only adopted from motives of policy, and called every person present to witness that he died in the faith of Moses and of Israel.

The terrified priest reminded him he had just partaken of the holy eucharist. "Into my mouth," he replied, "but my throat has not yet been disgraced by swallowing it, for I immediately spat it into my handkerchief." This blasphemy occasioned a tumult, and a rush to the scaffold by those who, but for military interference, would have torn him in pieces. Disappointed in their object, the Christian crowd wreaked their vengeance on a number of Jews who were present, stoning and wounding them, and then proceeded to pillage their shops, taking their goods, money, and rings, together with their fingers, if they could not be taken without.

* On Engelsberger may be consulted Jocher's *Gelehrten Lexicon*; Fuerst's *Bibliotheca Judaica*; Huttmann's *Life of Jesus Christ*; Cornhill Magazine, August, 1875, art. "Talmud"; Loungers' *Commonplace Book*, p.p. 168-196; and *Freethinker* April 26, 1885.

The execution having been thus interrupted, Engelsberger was removed and a new sentence passed on him for his blasphemy. He was first dragged through the streets of Vienna on a hurdle; then his right hand was cut off. Upon this he said it deserved such pain for having subscribed the Christian faith, and as long as life lasted beat his bosom with that maimed hand, crying, "May my death atone for my apostacy." His tongue was cut out, pieces torn from his flesh with white-hot tongs, and then, with his body hanging by the feet from the gallows, he was roasted by a slow fire while fierce starving dogs tore his flesh from time to time. The *auto da fé* was concluded by throwing his ashes in the Danube and erecting a brazen tablet in the marketplace to tell how all this was done to the glory of God in the year 1642 of human redemption.

J. M. WHEELER.

FATHER IGNATIUS, THE SELF-MADE MONK.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(Delivered Sunday, December 21, 1890.)

(From the *Twentieth Century*.)

I PRESUME that you all know who I mean when I speak of Father Ignatius. You must all have read or heard of him. He is a monk of the Church of England who is conducting what is called a mission in this country. He has been on this side of the Atlantic for several months, preaching the gospel for the purpose of saving souls, and gathering money to help support his monastery in Wales. He has been preaching afternoons and evenings in New York for three weeks, and the papers have made him an object of prominence by reporting his sermons and describing his meetings and methods at considerable length. I have carefully read these reports, and last Tuesday I went to hear him explain why he became a monk.

In his lecture he made no allusion to his personal history. He merely developed an argument to justify his monastic life. I can tell you in a few words all his history that it is necessary to know in order to follow me in what I shall say.

He was a clergyman in the English Church. Like the rest of us, he had an ordinary name. I have forgotten what it was, but that is of no consequence. If he could afford to renounce it, we can afford to forget it, or never know it.

About twenty-seven years ago he began to desire to be a monk. There were no orders of monks in the English Church, and he did not wish to go in the Roman Catholic Church, and so there was nothing for him to do but to become a monk on his own hook. That he did. He says his decision was finally made under the influence of a woman, who told him this was what he should do.

He adopted the rules of St. Benedict, the famous founder of monasticism in the western world, who died in 543. The woman who led him into monasticism gave him a little house in Wales, and there he went in seclusion. He succeeded in gathering about him some young enthusiasts—men and women—and became the founder of the Benedictines in the English Church. The little house in Wales has become Llanthony Abbey, and there these English monks and nuns live the greater part of their time. The Abbey is not rich nor prosperous. Part of the time of Father Ignatius and others is spent in conducting missions, such as the present one, during which they mingle with the world's people, preaching the gospel and collecting money.

The rule of St. Benedict, under which they live, requires them to take a vow of poverty which prohibits them as individuals from owning any property, to live virgin or celibate lives, to be absolutely obedient to God and their spiritual superiors, to be

industrious, and not to laugh. This latter rule, however, does not prevent Father Ignatius from making his audience laugh, for at times he is quite humorous. The day I heard him he told a funny story about the Blessed Virgin Mary and her son.

The papers have described Father Ignatius as being gaunt and spare in form, as if he were half starved from fasting and worn with holy vigils. But this is not true. He is quite plump and rosy. If it were not for his monkish garments, he would look like any other rather handsome, well-fed Englishman. He wears a monk's gown and hood, not altogether unlike a lady's waterproof coat. This gown is bound at the waist with a cord, from which depends a rosary, a string of beads, and a cross to which is attached a silver Christ in the attitude of crucifixion. As the monk is very animated when he speaks, moving his body in a sprightly way, this crucifix is constantly flapped about in a manner that struck me as being rather profane.

The monk wears sandals on his otherwise bare feet, and the tonsure: that is, there is a ring of iron grey hair about an inch wide and an inch long around the crown on his head, but in the language of the old song, "There is no hair on the top of his head in the place where the hair ought to grow."

If I have seemed to indulge in a little, I trust harmless and I know good natured, levity in thus describing the appearance of Father Ignatius, it is only because the gown, the bare feet and the shaved head do not impress me with awe or reverence. Garments do not make the man, whether he is a monk, a dude or a beggar. Father Ignatius is no better and no worse because he dresses in a gown instead of trousers, and goes barefoot, and shaves the top of his head.

The man o' independent mind
Can look and laugh at a' that!

But when I think of the man in the gown and under the shaved head I am not disposed to levity. Father Ignatius impressed me as being entirely free from cant. He was simple, straightforward and earnest. I believe he is sincere. He says he became a monk because he had a direct call from the Holy Ghost, and I believe that he believes what he says. I do not think the Holy Ghost ever spoke to him, but I think that he thinks it did.

(To be concluded.)

INGERSOLL ON CHRISTMAS.

(St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Dec. 21.)

I BELIEVE in holidays—that is to say, in holy days, and by holy days I mean happy days—days when the tired may rest, when the working man may have the company of his family; days in which to cultivate friendship and the amenities of civilised life.

I believe in what is called Christmas, not because of its supposed religious origin, but because I think it well to have a time when families can come together and the ordinary business of life may be suspended, and when we can think about something besides trade and barter.

As a matter of fact, the holiday known as Christmas is far older than Christianity, and far older, I presume, than any existing religion. It was, in all probability, born of sun worship, the most natural of all religions. Just before Christmas is the shortest day of the year, and the day when our savage ancestors thought that the sun had been overpowered or conquered by the host of darkness. Then, in spite of the power of the shadow, the days begin to lengthen and the sun is victorious over the Herod of the night, and this festival is as old at least as history, and probably thousands of years older.

When we think that our ancestors lived in caves and dens—or at least many of them—when we imagine the winters through which they passed the

cloud and darkness and hunger, we can easily see how they rejoiced when the days began to lengthen, and with what feeling of gladness they greeted the rising sun. How their eyes gleamed; how their hearts throbbed! Christmas was then associated with the return of life. It was the promise of another spring, of plenty of sunshine and joy. This day has been associated for countless generations with the best sentiments, with the best feeling, of the human heart, and no matter whether it has been appropriated by some peculiar form of superstition or not, there is the same reason in nature for its celebration that there was before man ever heard what is known as the scheme of salvation.

I believe in every day that brings families together; in every day and in every institution that adds to the better feelings, to the higher nature and to the charitable instincts of the race.

I believe, also, that the world can now keep another Christmas, or a Christmas with a still higher significance. The old Christmas was kept because the reign of darkness was about to cease; because the light had again conquered. Let us hope that in the history of the human mind the light is at last the victor, that the darkness of ignorance is passing away, and that the real friends of humanity, the real friends of freedom of thought, may now, at the close of the nineteenth century, celebrate the victory of Intellectual Light.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

On the last evening of 1890 the N. S. S. Executive had a lengthy sitting. Several important matters were discussed, but one matter threw all the rest into the shade. The President asked the Executive to resolve that the time was ripe for carrying out his resolution, passed at the last Conference, as to the re-organisation of the lecture system. All agreed that the time *was* ripe, and the scheme will at once be put into operation—gradually and tentatively, but none the less decidedly.

This scheme involves a closer co-operation between the Branches and the Executive. It means centralisation without any interference with local autonomy. Branches that are able to stand on their own legs will be left to do so, unless they ask for assistance. But other Branches—and these are the great majority—will be invited to trust more than hitherto to the central power, which, being strictly elective, year by year, can never be despotic. At present many Branches that might do something do nothing—at least nothing to speak of; and others that do something might do a great deal more. Now in order to stimulate both classes, the Executive will do what it can to provide the Branches with more frequent lectures. The aim will be to undertake the lecturers' expenses, leaving the local expenses to be borne by the Branches themselves. This will considerably lessen their financial responsibility, and it is this very responsibility—too great for their resources—which often frightens them from attempting anything at all.

When the lectures are delivered on the free-admission plan the matter is too simple to need elucidation. When a charge is made for admission, the local secretary will make up a proper balance-sheet, and forward a copy of it to the general secretary. If there is any surplus after the payment of all local expenses, one half of it will have to be transmitted with the copy of the balance-sheet. No credit can be given, or delay permitted; the document and the half-profit must come together.

Of course the Executive does not undertake to provide any Branch with lecturers in this way at all times and in all circumstances. Every application

will be considered on its merits by the Organisation Committee, and what is possible or politic will be done. "Possible" in this sentence refers to the state of the Central Fund, and "politic" to the local circumstances.

If this scheme can be carried out to any considerable extent, it will be better for the Branches, better for the lecturers, better for the discipline of our army, and better for the general Freethought movement.

But of course the scheme cannot be carried out without money, and I venture to appeal once more to the well-to-do members of our party. I pledge them my word of honor that the expenditure shall be carefully watched. I take the chair at the meetings of the Organisation Committee, as well as at the meetings of the Executive, and do my best to supervise all important details of the Society's business. Personally, of course, I do not mean to share in the expenditure on lecturers. I shall continue to lecture on my old plan, and when there is no charge for admission I cannot receive payment. The only condition on which I could hold the presidency with any feeling of satisfaction, is that I should never touch a penny of the Society's money. I have all the more confidence, therefore, in appealing to the party for pecuniary support. One gentleman has offered to give £50 if others will do something reasonably handsome. His offer is thus contingent, and I hope the generosity of others will enable me to ask him for his donation.

This is a good opportunity to say a word to the individual members of the N. S. S. about their annual subscriptions. At the last Conference the minimum subscription was reduced to one shilling a year. This was done in order to include the poorest, and to include all the members of Freethought families. But it was not intended that those who could pay more should refrain from doing so. A voluntary Society must depend on the voluntary principle. Each member must give according to his ability. No doubt this will be done, in time; but meanwhile there seems a little misunderstanding on the part of a minority of new members. When a person joins the N. S. S., or when an old member fixes his subscription under the new rule, he should ask himself, "What can I afford to subscribe? a shilling, half-a-crown, five shillings, ten shillings, a guinea, or what?" Let him honestly answer this question, fix the amount, and give it like a Freethinker. If his circumstances change, he can alter the figure, up or down, as honestly as he first fixed it.

I expect shortly to be able to pay to the N. S. S. treasurer a sum of £100, to be equally divided between the General and the Benevolent Funds.

The Forder Testimonial Fund now amounts to nearly £100. It will be closed at the end of January, by which time I hope it will be considerably increased. Laggard subscribers are requested to notice the date, so that they may be "better late than never." Probably the presentation will be made to Mr. Forder at a complimentary supper in February.

Up to the present the N. S. S. Almanack has paid its expenses. This is an improvement on the previous two or three years, when there was an absolute loss out of pocket. Of course the sale continues in dribbles for three or four months after Christmas, and the Society will no doubt be able to congratulate itself on realising a profit on the publication.

G. W. FOOTE,
President, National Secular Society.

ACID DROPS.

On the Christian theory the weather was settled "in the beginning." This was evidently done without foreseeing the growth of great cities. Snow is a very pretty sight in the country, but in big towns it is an unmitigated nuisance. It is also a *costly* nuisance. £600,000 is the calculated cost of cleaning the streets of London after an ordinary snowstorm. Of course all this money is not expended. Vestrydom sits and looks at the mess, waiting for the Providence that sent it to take it away again. Salt is thrown down, and the cold is intensified. Boots are soaked through with the slush, feet are chilled, constitutions are disordered, the death-rate goes up, and untold discomfort, not to say misery, is inflicted on the poor citizens. Still, God is love. Base is the wretch who doubts it. Yet who can deny that he
moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform?

Writing to "Dear Mr. Tillet," Cardinal Manning says, "I have not had patience to read Professor Huxley's letters." Taking this sentence literally, it means that the Cardinal has not the patience to see what the Professor has to say on the other side. Probably, if the Cardinal had the power, he would not have the patience to let the Professor live on this planet.

"I am very sure," the Cardinal says, "what our Lord and his Apostles would do if they were in London." This is a characteristic bit of assumption. Cardinals have always been very sure of what "Our Lord" would do if he were a
and Inquisitors have burnt heretics
quite persuaded

That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

Dr. Billing, the suffragan bishop of East London, uttered some sensible words to a *Chronicle* reporter, but no word of his was so sensible as this—"I do not think, speaking candidly, that ministers of religion make the best almoners." This is not the persuasion, however, of the rest of the clerical tribe. They practically usurp the distribution of charity, and it is not desert which is relieved, but canting, whining, and hypocrisy.

A side-light is thrown on the under-side of the Salvation Army by the following incident:—A short time ago a girl was found in the streets ill, dirty and homeless. A lady made inquiries, wrote to the Salvation Army, and was desired to bring the girl to a shelter. She did so, paid five shillings for expenses, and the girl was received on Friday evening. On Saturday morning she was bundled out of the shelter and into the workhouse infirmary, which, the officials say, is crowded with people who come to them having been cast off by the Salvation Army. On inquiry, the reason given for her summary ejection was that she was so dirty the other inhabitants of the shelter would not associate with her. No attempt to visit her was or has since been made by the Army.—*London Echo*.

Frank Smith, late commissioner of the social wing of the Salvation Army, writes to the *Times* of Tuesday, that while Booth's propositions were all one way, the facts were all the other. At length Bramwell Booth told him they had decided to remove the social department to Queen Victoria-street, and place the finance of the scheme in the common financial department of the Salvation Army and its property under the army property department. It was this breach of faith with himself and public which caused his resignation.

Frank Smith threatens to tell a deal more, and as one instance of how the social wing was sought to be exploited for the benefit of the Army he mentions that the barracks of the Salvation Army at Leeds, not being a success, it was handed over to the social wing at a rent of £4 per week. This he ascertained was more than double what the Army has been charged and had been unable to pay.

Mr. Smith hints that the calls for philanthropic aid came from being in low water at headquarters, and says creditors were perpetually put off, while he had personally to give I.O.U.'s in order that salaries might be paid.

General Booth, after acquiring all the information he could from Mr. E. T. Craig, of Rahaline, gave the old veteran, by

way of recompense, an invitation to headquarters. Mr. Craig says when there he thought he was in Darkest England, for the place was so badly ventilated that he himself was blood-poisoned, and is still suffering from the effects of his visit.

The *Financial News* plays Old Harry with General Booth's banking scheme. It says his prospectus is "really one of the coolest ever issued by any company promoter," and declares "it is disagreeable, but necessary, to warn the thrifty and prudent to give the Booth Bank the widest possible berth." The main security of the investors is Salvation Army barracks, and "how is this security to be made available by the depositor?" The article adds—"A mere outline of the scheme is sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of all sensible people. In a financial sense it is fantastic and absurd."

Professor Huxley is a strong man and loves good fighting, which is very fortunate, for the religious philanthropists and the philanthropic religionists are all down upon him. He is being held up to odium as a bold bad man. His critics do not answer his attacks on Booth's scheme and the Salvation Army. They say he ought to be ashamed of himself for trying to prevent people from giving their cash to "a friend of the poor." All this is extremely simple, and illustrates the truth of Professor Huxley's old remark that the British public needs fewer appeals to its "great heart" and more appeals to its sluggish head.

Sir Edward Clarke tries to be epigrammatic. He refers to Huxley as a pragmatic professor. This is a very poor hit after "corybantian Christianity."

The *Club and Institute Journal* is a useful paper in its way, but why does it meddle with matters it does not understand? In its last number it falls foul of anti-theological lectures and discussions, and says the London Clubs are wise in excluding such things from their platforms. At the same time it charges Secularists with caring nothing for practical progress. As a matter of fact, however, nine out of every ten of these very London Clubs were founded by Secularists, and many of them are still chiefly managed by Secularists.

Our Club contemporary says the people don't want to know "what was done thousands of years ago." Perhaps not, but they would be the better for knowing it. Still, we admit our contemporary's consistency, for its knowledge of Biblical criticism is displayed in the remark that there are more important things to be discussed than "the dimensions of Noah's Ark or the genealogy of Jeremiah." Gods and fishes! what is the genealogy of Jeremiah? We pause for a reply.

The political Clubs in London are connected with the Metropolitan Radical Federation. Let our contemporary try to discover the proportion of Freethinkers on the Council of that body. It is not a difficult task, and it will enable our contemporary to write more wisely on this subject hereafter.

Mr. Wallace, Deputy Lieutenant of County Down, Ireland, proclaims that football on Sunday is illegal in Ireland. He means to suppress it. He should begin with the menagerie at Phoenix Park, Dublin, or might come over here to stop the skating in the London parks.

Father Mathias de Yodyzsus, pastor of St. George's Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church, Brooklyn, has been accused of keeping Mrs. Dilginis in his house all night. When Mr. Dilginis called for her he was fired at for not respecting ministerial privileges. The man of God is said to have bought the husband's subsequent silence.

The Rev. W. Luther Leemas has been committed for trial for stealing pipes and books from the Army and Navy Stores during the busy Christmas season.

The Rev. James Campbell, a Methodist minister of Columbus, Indiana, has been sentenced to durance vile for three years for seducing and procuring an abortion on Miss Ida Hautsman, daughter of a prominent man in his church.

The Rev. W. J. Cole has been lecturing at Braintree on "Public Opinion and Christianity." "Public opinion," he said, "less than a century ago acquiesced in all kinds of immorality and debauchery in social life." Well, Christianity was as much extant then as now, if not more so. Whence

the change? The growth has been in intelligence, not in Christianity. The ages of faith were ages of barbarism and immorality.

Rev. Euclid Rogers, of Burlington, Ia., is in trouble for what is called "a long-continued series of brutal acts and indignities."

Another prophetess has arisen in America. Her name is Mrs. Harriet Van Hoesen. She predicts "that in February, 1891, the Mormons will rise up against the gentiles and a plague will cut off the wicked, except such as may flee to the house of refuge which she is building for those who will flee to the hills in the time of danger." Further she prophesies "that there will be only one more presidential election and that Harrison will be elected. The millennium now about to begin will be followed by 800 years during which the devil will have his innings." This may not quite coincide with Baxter or the Bible, but is just as deserving of confidence as either of them. If any one wonders that these cranks find followers he should remember that Jesus Christ prophesied that the world would come to an end in the life-time of his own generation, and that although sixty generations have passed without any sign of fulfilment, myriads yet regard him as a true prophet.

In the *Medical Weekly* of Vienna, Professor Benedikt publishes the result of the examination of the skull and brain of Hugo Schenk, the man who murdered six girls and was hanged eight years ago. The two parts of the brain, instead of being connected by a bridge, are separated by a deep fissure, a fact which is absolutely abnormal. Besides this, different parts of the brain are not developed in an equal measure, so that there cannot have been an equilibrium of different qualities. The skull is even more abnormal. A case like this opens up the question of responsibility. God made the man in this way just as he makes tigers, sharks and anacondas. And then there is the further question, was Hugo Schenk in God's own image?

The Indian Messiah craze has caused many atrocities. One unexpected attack on a cavalry regiment is said to have been the result of the agreement between the warriors and the medicine men for the purpose of testing the efficacy of the "ghost shirts," sold by the former, in warding off bullets. The disastrous result of their faith suggests how poisonous is that commodity when taken in strong doses.

Mr. Gauge, a popular Baptist minister of Bristol, has just returned from an extensive tour in India. Like other candid observers, he has no sanguine expectations as to the results of Christian missions. He saw the car of Jaggernaut rotting unused and temples falling to decay. But the natives are slowly resigning their old superstitions without taking on the new. In Calcutta Mr. Gauge had a large audience of educated Bengalee gentlemen, but he confesses that they listened respectfully to English preaching, not because they cared for the Gospel, but rather that they might improve their English.

An amusing incident occurred in connection with the Shed of Truth, the meeting place of the Battersea Freethinkers. Some coals had been ordered, and the lad who brought them, not knowing exactly where the Shed of Truth was situated, instinctively took them to the parson's house close by. "This is not the Shed of Truth," says the parson; "it's a place under the railway arch where the wretched Freethinkers meet." That coal boy won't go to the parson for Truth any more.

The *Academy* is an enlightened and able literary journal in which many reviews of a sceptical tendency have appeared. Yet we hear on good authority that an article, showing up the mistakes, misquotations, and mistranslations in Mr. Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, was refused, though written by a distinguished and constant contributor. This shows the difficulty Freethought has to contend with in even the higher circles of literature.

What sort of a father could look on while his little children were burning without one effort to save them? Yet this is the Father in Heaven who looked on while children were burnt to death at a Church bazaar at Wortly, Leeds, on New Year's day, and who, if orthodoxy is correct, will look on equally regardless when myriads of children burn in hell.

Canon Brameld, who has preached a discourse on the occasion, telling the sorrowing relatives that, though man proposes God disposes, seems not without blame. He thought it was dangerous for the children to have lanterns while dressed in cotton wool, yet, instead of stopping this death-trap, was discoursing to the upper ten in another room when the disaster occurred.

The vicar of Leeds, preaching on the catastrophe from the text, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him," said this was the heavy hand of God. We should think the relatives of the children, having once felt his heavy hand, would not feel disposed to trust him any more.

Among providential visitations is the appearance of an epidemic of black small-pox at Aigues Mortes, in the South of France.

The anti-tithe war has recommenced in Denbighshire, Llanefydd, where a squadron of lancers was recently employed to enforce State religion, was again the scene of excited proceedings. The auctioneer who went to distrain at a farm found his road blocked with a *chevaux de frise* of fence interlaced with thorn and well tarred. The tithes have not been paid for two years, and the farmers express their determination to resist payment.

Nothing is done for the poor in the parish of Stoke, near Guildford, but the senior curate has just been presented with a purse of one hundred sovereigns. This is how the Christians of that part understand the text "Feed my sheep." Perhaps they have good reason for thinking the senior curate belongs to that category.

A clergyman lately married a lady with whom he received the substantial dowry of £10,000 and a fair prospect for more. Next Sunday, while occupying the pulpit, he gave out a hymn, read the first four verses and was proceeding to read the fifth, when he hesitated, coughed, and said, "The choir will omit the fifth verse," and sat down. The congregation, attracted by his confusion, read the verse for themselves, and smiled as they read—

For ever let my grateful heart
His boundless grace adore,
Which gives ten thousand blessings now,
And bids me hope for more.

Donald Fraser, the lay church depute at Fort William, Inverness, has been arrested at South Shields on a charge of falsifying cheques and embezzling £300. He pleaded guilty, and was handed over to the Inverness police.

If animals are immortal, and as Mr. Norman Pearson points out, if Darwinism is accepted and man is immortal, his ancestry must be so likewise, we wonder what sort of immortality each looks forward to. As the Indian expects to get to the happy hunting grounds and take plenty of scalps, so the will to live in the tiger may make him look forward to an eternal jungle with plenty of deer to feed on, while to the shark, as Herman Melville pointed out in *Mardi*, "Paradise is one vast Pacific, ploughed by navies of mortals, whom an endless gale drops ever in their maws." Even the lively flea may look forward to an eternal night on some downy bed perennially quaffing the life juices of some tender children and merrily skipping from limb to limb for ever and ever.

Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P. has been telling the Christian young men of Liverpool that he is shocked at the growing neglect of Sunday observance. So are we. Only the other Sunday we saw two Christians laying "nap."

Considerable excitement has been created in the Rhymney Valley by the elopement of a prominent member of the Salvation Army with the wife of a colliery official. The Salvationist, who has left a wife and four children, was a signal-man in the employ of the Rhymney Railway Company, and the unfaithful wife, who leaves a husband and five little ones, was a member of the Welsh Baptist Chapel. The pair had often been seen together of late, and a few days ago they left the Valley from Caerphilly Station, and have not since returned. It is believed the couple made their way to Liverpool, and are now crossing the Atlantic.—*London Echo*.

The writer of "Powder and Shot" in the *Weekly Times and Echo* takes the occasion of the Guelph Exhibition to

disparage the reigning family. This is fair game. But why does he speak of George I. as "that old Atheist"? George I. was a pious enough Lutheran, like his successors. The same writer cites a very pious prayer written by George IV. and preserved in the Guelph Exhibition.

The Rev. W. Coller was to debate in the Manchester Secular Hall with Mr. Stanley Jones of Liverpool. Mr. Jones travelled over only to find that Mr. Coller had a headache which kept him away. Mr. Jones lectured instead of discussing, and we fancy the audience after all gained something by the exchange.

Illustrated Chips drops tears over "the story of Nazareth," and thanks Christianity for giving us a festival at this time of the year. One of our friends has sent the editor our article "All About Christmas," and next year, perhaps, he won't make such a fool of himself.

The vicar of Yeovil and his parishioners have been at loggerheads for two years as to who has the right to appoint an organist. The organ has consequently been silent that length of time. The organist appointed by the parishioners has been at every service, but the vicar has locked up the instrument and forbidden him to touch it. He claims his salary, but the vicar refuses, so a collection has been made for him.

A Christian may be anything, or even nothing, but a true Mohammedan is a teetotaler. Mr. Shaw Lefevre gives in the *Speaker* an account of his dining with the Sultan. There was plenty of wine for the guests, but the Sultan himself took none. He unbent over the after-dinner coffee, and probably had the clearest head in the room.

"Urbanus," who writes the weekly article on "The Churches" in the *London Echo*, has his say on "The Decay of Secularism." In one respect we agree with him. "The veterans of Secularism," as he observes, "can at least boast that all the Churches have become more secular." But, on the other hand, we differ from his statement that Secularism has been steadily declining for twenty years. What he says of London and Leicester, the two places he selects, is far from being true. Certainly there is more advocacy of Secularism in London at present than there was twenty years ago. Instead of one regular meeting-place the Secularists have half a dozen, and three of them—the Hall of Science, the Camberwell Secular Hall, and Milton Hall—are each capable of holding several hundreds of people. Instead of two or three Secular societies in London, we have now nearly twenty N. S. S. Branches; and our open-air propaganda in the summer is ten times as extensive as it was at the period "Urbanus" refers to.

Now let us turn to Leicester. It is perfectly true that Secularism was "a formidable power" in that town when Mr. Josiah Gimson and Mr. Michael Wright were its leaders. But it is a more formidable power to-day. Instead of meeting in hired rooms, the Secularists have handsome and commodious premises of their own. They have just raised a fund of £500 to cover their extra expenses for the next five years. They also exercise a great influence in local politics. In fact the position of Secularism in Leicester is far ahead of what it was in the old days of Messrs. Gimson and Wright.

Writers like "Urbanus," who talk about the decay of Secularism, do not seem to have heard of Mr. Foote or the *Freethinker*. This journal has a circulation such as no Free-thought paper approached in 1870. Of course, if the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker* are struck out of the balance-sheet, it may be possible to show a deficit.

While Messrs. Stead and Lunn are wishing, and so declaring, the decay of Secularism, we read in the *Daily Telegraph* that the Church of St. Martin's, Gospel Oak, raised at a cost of nearly £30,000, and in a parish of twelve thousand persons, recently had a congregation of six persons, who raised between them the magnificent offertory of 7d. The disgusted minister held no service the following week, nobody turning up, and a question now arises whether a couple who had the banns of their intended marriage put up twice (and who we presume were among the faithful six) are legally compelled to wait another week for their wedding because the minister did not read their banns in public a third time.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 11, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 7, "The Grand Old Book."
 Wednesday and Thursday January 14 and 15, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C., at 8, Debate with Mr. G. Bernard Shaw on "The Legal Eight Hours Question."

January 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.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—Your apprehensions are quite groundless. Mr. Foote is in excellent health. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

D. BAKER.—You slightly misunderstood us. Our circulation has not fallen off. It simply stands still at present, and we want it to go up. Thanks for your promise to order half a dozen copies weekly, leaving your newsagent to sell them if he can. Sorry to hear of your indisposition. The weather has been trying for the soundest health at your time of life. London friends would have been glad to see you at the Federation dinner, but you are better at home than running a risk. Mr. Foote will write in a few days on the last point in your letter.

A. JACKSON, newsagent, High-street, Bow, E., and Great Suffolk-street, Blackman-street, E., supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

B. HARRIS.—We must agree to differ. Your good wishes are reciprocated.

W. S.—The incident bears out our remark in this week's "Acid Drops." The religious distribution of charity is a regular form of proselytising.

C. CILWA.—Card to hand. We wish you health and success in your work for Freethought.

A. WALLER.—Glad to hear from you as one who takes six copies of the *Freethinker* weekly. We see no reason why any Socialist should object to the *Freethinker*. The policy of this journal is Freethought, pure and simple. It is neither for nor against Socialism, but quite neutral. Any freethinking Socialist who will not take this journal because Mr. Foote is not a Socialist, is displaying bigotry whether he knows it or not.

R. FARMER.—Mr. Woffendale misrepresents the matter. Possibly he does not understand it. Mr. Wheeler referred simply to the *English* of the Bible, not to its science, history and morality; and the *English* is not the work of the Holy Ghost, but of the translators. Curiously enough, Mr. Foote said the very same thing, though with serious qualifications, in an article in the Almanack four or five years ago. The novelty, therefore, is a subjective fact of Mr. Woffendale's consciousness. On the other matter, we can only repeat that Mr. Foote is ready to meet the reverend gentleman on a public platform in set debate. The reverend gentleman's braggings do not convince us that it is our duty to obey his behests in the conduct of this journal. He avoids a debate, which he can have at any time, and wants us to fill our columns with replies to his obscure paper with the illustrious title. No thank you!

B. W.—Mrs. Sowden gained a scholarship and is pursuing her studies. Mr. J. Clarke has gone into business with his brother. Thanks for your promise to take two copies of this journal weekly. No doubt many others will do the same.

C. K. LAPORTE.—The *Freethinker* is supplied from our publishing office on sale or return. Wholesale agents who tell newsagents the contrary are simply lying. Newsvendors should insist on having as many copies as they require on these terms. We have had several complaints lately, and we shall be obliged if our friends will show this paragraph to any news vendor who finds a difficulty in obtaining a proper supply.

AMANA.—Sorry to read the extracts you send us from Mr. W. W. Collins's letter. If the Sydney Secularists cannot support

him better, he might do worse than return to England. We could make good use of him here.

S. T. T.—See "Acid Drops." You have a hard task to do anything for Freethought in such a hotbed of bigotry.

S. STANDRING.—Glad to learn you heard nothing but satisfaction expressed on Monday evening. The Federation dinner was a great success.

T. JAMESON.—Circulate the Tracts you do like, and leave the rest alone. Tastes differ. Thanks for the cuttings. You may rely on it that the Mayor's story of Mr. Holyoake is a pious fabrication. The safe working rule in such matters is—Never believe anything a Christian says about a Freethinker, unless he furnishes proof.

T. R. H.—Your copy was under consideration in its turn. No doubt you could edit this paper a great deal better than we do, but as we don't mean to resign the editorial chair just yet, you will have to display your genius in a journal of your own. We await its advent with the feelings proper to the occasion.

B. DAWSON.—Pleased to hear of the success of the Spenny-moor Branch. You are lucky in having a good secretary. That is one of the chief secrets of success.

W. HOLLAND.—We have from time to time given criminal statistics from India, but we cannot search through the file at this moment. For Christians to set about improving the morals of Buddhists is a huge joke. In India, which is not a Buddhist country, by the way, a frightful percentage of the criminals are Europeans. *The Statesman's Year Book* will furnish you with useful information.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—We have received the following: T. A. Williams, 1s.; S. D. Headlam, £1 1s.; Three Poplar Friends, 5s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschentum—Echo—Neues Frereligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Evening News and Post—New York Sun—Essex Telegraph—Phonetic Journal—Flaming Sword—Twentieth Century—Leeds Daily News—Bolton Evening News—Leicester Daily Mercury—Cambria Leader.

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.

Sunday (Jan. 11) is Mr. Foote's birthday, and he will celebrate the event by lecturing at the London Hall of Science on "The Grand Old Book," for bringing which into "disbelief and contempt" he spent one birthday (and a good many other days) in Holloway Gaol.

Next Wednesday and Thursday the debate on the Legal Eight Hours Question between Messrs. G. B. Shaw and G. W. Foote comes off at the Hall of Science. A large gathering is expected. The question is a burning one, and Mr. Foote hopes his friends, on either side of the question, will do their best to keep order wherever they happen to be sitting.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake's letter to the London *Star* is a satisfactory answer to what Messrs. Stead and Lunn "understood" him to say to Mr. Price Hughes. Mr. Holyoake points out that the secularisation of the Churches is the triumph of Secularism, and that good secular work on the part of professed Christians is no certificate of the truth of their theology.

The London *Echo* printed an excellent letter on this subject from the pen of Mr. Dipper, a member of the Battersea Branch. We suspect that, by this time, Messrs. Stead and Lunn are sorry they spoke.

The Rev. S. D. Headlam, in sending a guinea to the Forder Testimonial Fund, writes to us: "We Christians owe much to the N. S. S. in the past; it has helped us to overthrow many idols and to sweep away much rubbish. Moreover, whenever I presented myself I always received a courteous and unprejudiced hearing from its platform. I am glad, therefore, to be able to send a small contribution for the Secretary, who did much for the well-being of the Society."

Mr. Headlam is a gentleman with whom we have had disagreements, but we have always thought him brave, conscientious, and generous. If all the Christians who can afford it would send a trifle in acknowledgement of the services of the N. S. S. in rationalising the Churches, the

Forder Testimonial Fund would far exceed our most sanguine expectations.

This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of many of our London readers before the opening of the Free Course of lectures at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road. Mr. Foote opens and closes the course. The other lecturers are Messrs. C. J. Hunt and G. Standing. As these lectures are intended for the benefit of Christians, it is hoped the Secularists will try to induce their orthodox friends to attend. Discussion is invited, nay courted. The more of it the better.

Lord Byron, in his fine lines on a devoted Newfoundland dog, reproaches mankind for aspiring to an exclusive heaven. The poet thought a good dog deserved paradise more than a bad or indifferent man. This opinion has been held by a good many persons in all ages. Even Bishop Butler inclined to it. Nor is it dead yet, for Mr. Norman Pearson, in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, argues for Animal Immortality—on the ground that “if the human mind-structure is held to be immortal, it is impossible to deny immortality to the lower animal mind-structure from which it has been evolved.”

The Paris correspondent of the *Weekly Dispatch* writes a long and appreciative account of the late Dr. Casar de Paepe, but forgets to say anything about his Freethought, and almost represents him as a Christian. Dr. de Paepe was an ardent Freethinker, and would have been indignant at any attempt on the part of his professed friends to claim him as an admirer of the faith he detested.

South London Freethinkers will remember the genial face of Mr. R. S. Seago, formerly secretary of the Camberwell Branch. Mr. Seago is wooing fortune out at Johannesburg, and is doing well. He has just sent over two years' subscription to the old Branch, and desires to be remembered to all his old friends.

Next Sunday (Jan. 18) Mr. Foote lectures at Huddersfield. As the weather seems likely to keep somewhat severe, Mr. Foote hopes his friends in the district will make a special effort to render his visit a success.

James Lick, the Infidel philanthropist, left 150,000 to San Francisco for free baths—a real wash-house for the working poor, who have no baths at home. The institution is now ready and open. It has sixty rooms for men and forty for women.

With the New Year *Secular Thought*, of Toronto, commences its ninth volume and fifth year. We are pleased to note that its editor, Mr. Watts, is able to say that from its birth it has gone on increasing in strength and influence, and its circulation has steadily improved. The paper has had a Sustaining Fund from its infancy.

The Californian State Liberal [Freethought] Union holds its annual convention at Union Square Hall, San Francisco, on Thursday, Jan. 29, beginning with an address by Samuel P. Putnam, President, on “The Dangers Ahead,” and closing with a festival in honor of Thomas Paine's birthday.

A Convention of Ethical Societies, at which the leading exponents of Ethical Culture attended, has been held in New York. It was resolved to establish a Summer School of Ethics with a department dealing with comparative religion.

An entertainment will be given at the Battersea Secular Hall on Tuesday, Jan. 13, at 8 p.m. Tickets of admission (sixpence each) can be had at the hall, or at 28 Stonecutter Street. The proceeds are to pay off an old debt of the Branch. Friends in the neighborhood should buy tickets, and thus give the Battersea Freethinkers a helping hand.

Mr. W. J. Birch has opened up a controversy in *Notes and Queries* on Leather and Atheism—Walter Besant, Lord Lytton and others having written of a fancied connection between the two. One writer explains that such a sedentary occupation as that of shoemaking gives more time for thinking.

Fortunately the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund is being well supported, for there are many demands upon it in this trying season. Sometimes help is not required, but Freethinkers fall sick (and even die) and wonder why no one calls to see them. Mr. S. Standing reports such a case in his district. Now the sick person (or, if he be dying, his relatives) should apprise the secretary of the local Branch, and someone would call and speak a word of sympathy. Freethinkers may be ever so anxious to comfort the distressed, but they cannot learn the facts by intuition.

The South Shields Branch held its annual Tea, Concert, and Ball on New Year's Day. There was a large attendance. Mrs. Moir, Mrs. Clements, Mrs. White, Miss Moir and Miss Haynes presided at the tea-tables, and Mr. S. M. Peacock and Mr. Thompson made good speeches. The after entertainment was much enjoyed, and the company broke up with the inevitable Auld Lang Syne.

El Motin is one of the most popular of the numerous Spanish Freethought Journals. It publishes an *Almanaque Para 1891*, illustrated with numerous caricatures of the priests. The reading matter is very lively. It opens with a letter from Fray Torquemada lamenting the days of good Philip II. and advocating the re-establishment of the Holy Brotherhood of the Inquisition, and is interspersed with numerous jokes, and satirical verses on the priests.

Under the title *Good Bye, My Fancy*, Walt Whitman is going to collect his fugitive pieces of later years.

Carducci, the Italian poet, a translation of whose Freethought *Hymn to Satan* we presented to our readers last autumn, has taken his seat in the Italian Senate as one of the Supreme Council of Education and as an “*illustrazione Italiana*.” The Queen of Italy has sent him her portrait, with an autograph inscription, celebrating his genius. When such a man as Carducci is honored, there is little fear of the Court of Italy coming to terms with the Vatican.

There was an immense attendance, estimated from 4,000 to 5,000, at the opening of the Museum and Art Gallery at Leicester on Sunday. The majority were working men, many of whom took their wives and children. All were well behaved.

Mr. Foote's pamphlet on General Booth's new boom is selling well, and a second edition will probably be required. Freethinkers should take this opportunity, and circulate the pamphlet among their orthodox friends and acquaintances. As we said before, it is a case of striking the iron while it is hot.

OBITUARY.

We have to record the death of Mr. John Temple, of Balham, after weeks of great suffering, which he bore with astonishing fortitude, his one desire being to give as little trouble as possible to those about him. His mind was clear and calm to the last. He was frequently visited in his fatal illness by Mr. Forder and Mr. Foote, to the second of whom he more than once expressed the sustaining power he felt in the teachings of Marcus Aurelius, whose incomparable book had been for many years his daily companion. Mr. Temple was a member of the N. S. S., whose interests he had at heart on his death-bed. His body was cremated at Woking on Wednesday afternoon, the funeral ceremony being conducted by Messrs. Foote and Forder.

On Monday, Jan. 5, we lost an old Freethinker in Southgate after a short and painful illness. Mr. J. Lief was formerly a resident of Hoxton, and was well known to many of the older Secularists. Though in a sad state of destitution he was staunch to his principles, refusing the proffered help of the Christians to the bitter end, and dying, as he lived, a consistent member of the N.S.S., and respected by his friends and neighbors.—SAM. STANDING.

The funeral took place of Mrs. Caroline Simson, on Sunday, January 4, at Manor Park Cemetery. Mr. W. J. Doughty read the Secular burial service. There was a large number of friends present, including some Christians, who were much impressed by the service written by Austin Holyoake.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION'S ANNUAL DINNER.

THE big dining hall of the Bridge House Hotel was bright and gay on Monday evening. Despite the cold weather, which kept some of the older and more delicate persons in the snugness of their own firesides, nearly two hundred Freethinkers assembled and spent a most enjoyable evening. Many ladies graced the festive board, and the company included all sorts of the other sex, from veterans like Mr. Truelove, Mr. Umpleby, and Mr. J. H. Ellis, down to the latest recruits of the Secular army. Mr. R. O. Smith, the silent treasurer of the Federation, sat at one table; and Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the equally silent treasurer of the N. S. S., sat at another; both of these good workers being handsomely referred to in the course of the speeches. Mr. Thomas, a very active member of the dinner committee, sat at one end of the room; and Miss Vance, another active member, sat elsewhere among her little band of musicians who contributed to the evening's pleasure. After justice had been done to the spread, Mrs. Samson played a pianoforte solo, and then the President rose to deliver his address. He gave a good report of the Federation's work—greatly in excess of the previous year's, like the income and expenditure; begged hard for increased financial support for the ensuing year; and wound up by ridiculing the nonsense of Messrs. W. T. Stead and Price Hughes about the decay of Secularism. Mr. Foote's concluding remarks went straight home, and were enthusiastically applauded. After a capital song from Mr. A. Guest, the toast of "Success to the L. S. F." was felicitously proposed by Mr. A. B. Moss, and humorously responded to by Mr. G. Standing, who put in a lawful claim to be one of the fathers of the Federation. Then came a delightful quartette by the Milton Hall friends. This was followed by the toast of the National Secular Society, genially proposed by Mr. S. Standing, and eloquently responded to by Mr. R. Forder, who told the meeting that both as to members and income the N. S. S. had greatly improved during the past six months. Next came a humorous recitation by Mr. B. Hyatt. Madame Burgwitz should have followed with a song, but was unfortunately too unwell to be present. Mr. J. H. Ellis, in a very neat speech, proposed the toast of Our Speakers and Writers, which was responded to by Mr. C. J. Hunt, who gave a few illustrations of what open-air lecturers have to put up with, and by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, whose modesty made him too brief. Mr. H. A. Kemp sang another good song, after which Mr. Foote toasted "The Ladies." Miss Vance responded on their behalf. Her speech was a bit of prepared verse, which was heartily applauded. Mr. and Mrs. Samson gave a tasteful duet, the Milton Quartette gave Pinski's "Good-night, Beloved," and the company broke up with Auld Lang Syne. Every one seemed delighted with the proceedings, and the President's begging enabled the Treasurer to go home with a good sheaf of paid-up or promised subscriptions for 1891. One little alteration, perhaps, will have to be made at next year's dinner. The speakers might be confined to a certain time by the watch, and a couple of ten-minute intervals be devoted to conversation. This would get the proceedings through by eleven instead of quarter to twelve.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

Council Meeting held at Hall of Science on Thursday, Jan. 1, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. After the minutes of the previous meeting had been read and passed, the Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1890 were presented, this being the Annual Meeting. Mr. J. M. Wheeler moved and Mr. J. Rowney seconded that these be adopted; carried. Some ordinary business having been disposed of, the election of officers for the ensuing year took place. The following gentlemen were re-elected to their respective offices: President, Mr. G. W. Foote; Vice-Presidents, Messrs. R. Forder, A. B. Moss, John Robertson, G. Standing, and J. M. Wheeler; Treasurer, Mr. R. O. Smith; Secretary, E. Pownceby. The Council then adjourned till first Thursday in February.—E. POWNCEBY, Secretary.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—G. Armitage, 3s. 2d.; F. Smallman, £5; H. Seal, £2; J. Unsworth, 2s.; T. Crook, 2s. 6d.; A. Tripp, 10s.; surplus Freethinker's Ball (per J. Anderson), £4 11s. 9d.; D. Clements, 5s.—R. FORDER, sec.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE AND STYLE.

IN some brief Hints to Young Secular Advocates, contributed to the "National Secular Society's Almanack for 1891," I used these sentences: "Read the best books and take notes of what you read. Know your Bible, know your Shakespeare; you will then have the foundation of a good English style." It is amusing to find this quoted in a pious contemporary with a magniloquent title, as "Startling Admission from an Atheist," and with another head-line, "The Bible the First and Best of Books." Some may wonder whether it is sheer folly or deliberate misrepresentation which makes this the occasion of saying:

"Mr. Wheeler, the sub-editor of the Infidel paper, is not one of the most virulent of the rampant Atheists. He has had a bitter experience in ill health, so that in his better moments his judgment trends, with that of all rational men, towards the belief in God. The exigencies of his present position and the general bias of his sceptical surroundings occasionally topples him over into the darkest ranks of the godless. It is clear though that his mind is not utterly impervious to the workings of conscience, or to a sense of the immense good attached to Christianity."

Knowing the writer, I attribute this nonsense neither to ignorance nor to knavery. It is all owing to a perfervid piety, which occasionally topples him over into the ranks of the unscrupulous. I say nothing of the exigencies of his present position or the general bias of his Christian surroundings, though these may hinder him from seeing that I was commending, not the alleged Word of God, but the work of his English translators. Had I been writing a treatise instead of brief hints, I should have pointed out that the diction and cadence of Elizabethan literature, both in verse and prose, when the language was in the vigor of manhood, and books were written for the thoughtful and not to be read in hasty snatches, were best suited for the study of a style to be addressed to the thoughtful. I might have illustrated this theme from Chapman or Sir Thomas Browne. But I referred to the Bible and Shakespeare as pre-eminent and accessible. Much of the beauty and force of our authorised version is due, not to the Holy Ghost, but to an actual misrendering of the original. The English Bible is decidedly superior to the alleged Word of God, and were a literal translation made and proclaimed the authorised one, all the gilt would be off the gingerbread.

Freethinkers do know their Bibles. That is often the reason they are Freethinkers. They know that sprinkled amid the absurdities and barbarities of Hebrew literature there are some splendid poetry and some pithy sayings. But they give the credit where the credit is due; not to a fancied god, but to the men who originated these things, and to those who rendered them into pregnant and harmonious English.

J. M. W.

THE "ATHENÆUM" ON GLADSTONE.

Mr. Gladstone draws a parallel between Moses and Lycurgus, which is probably true, but in a sense and degree which he is far from intending, and he observes that "no one doubts the existence of the Spartan lawgiver," and further that "it would be irrational" to do so. Now Mr. Gladstone may well be excused if he shows only the partial and superficial acquaintance of an amateur with the scientific literature dealing with the Old Testament; but his readers have surely a right to expect him to be well read at least in English works on Greek history. However, as a matter of fact, Sir G. Cox, in his *History of Greece*, does in the plainest manner precisely what Mr. Gladstone says no one does, and that it would be irrational to do. "On the application," says Sir George, "of historical tests the form of Lycurgus vanishes away. . . . He is one of that band of ideal lawgivers who are common to most of the Aryan nations, and whose names denote their origin or their office. . . . Lycurgus is removed from the period of genuine history by a gulf of centuries. . . . The Spartan lawgiver must be banished to the cloudland." Of the same character as this blindness to what lies, after all, within the range of the tyro is Mr. Gladstone's disposition to assign more weight to Wellhausen speaking behind the mask of another than when he utters his own conclusions in his own name. In short, the book as a series of essays must be pronounced a failure; but it will be read with pleasure by such as need only to be edified.—*Athenæum*.

REVIEWS.

My Uncle Benjamin. By CLAUDE TILLIER. Translated from the French by Benjamin R. Tucker. Boston: B. R. Tucker.—Mr. Tucker is a practised translator, and he has achieved this task admirably. Tillier's novel is a brilliant one. This writer was alive to the finger tips. The story is not great, but is capitally told; the characters are beautifully drawn; and the pages are profusely sprinkled with wise, witty, and tender sayings. We have read the book through with a decided relish. Claude Tillier was a fine pamphleteer, and an account of his life, with some noble extracts from his political writings, is given in an appendix. Some of the personal passages from his latest writings seem written in hearts-blood, and Mr. Schumm's translation of them is a perfect triumph.

A Woman in the Case. An address delivered at the annual commencement of the National Medical College Washington, by ELLIOTT COUES; Boston, 1890.—Dr. Coues, is an ardent advocate of the equality of the sexes, and his address made same stir in America as it led to his resignation of the chair of anatomy which he had held for ten years. First among the stumbling blocks in woman's way Dr. Coues names religious intolerance, which says to every woman: "You cannot be trusted with your own soul; therefore I will take charge of that and tell you what you are to believe and how you must feel in your heart towards God and man."

Are the Effects of Use and Disuse Inherited? By W. P. BALL. London: Macmillan and Co.—Mr. Ball's modest little volume is as full of matter as an egg is full of meat. We were glad to see it highly praised in the *British Medical Journal*. When we add that Mr. Ball was encouraged to publish by Mr. Francis Darwin, Mr. Galton, and Professor Romanes, our readers will see that his book is worthy of serious attention. Mr. Ball maintains that the effects of use and disuse are *not* inherited; that only congenital powers and faculties are transmitted to offspring. With great patience and accuracy he goes through the evidence for the contrary position, and endeavors to show that all the changes thought to result from parental habits are really the result of natural selection. How far he succeeds we do not profess ourselves able to decide, but he obviously makes out a very strong case. Mr. Ball is not silent as to the social issues of this discussion. If his position be sound, and it is the one which is prevailing, there is no hope for the race in proposals that ignore the necessity of competition and natural selection; indeed, on this ground it is with the human race as it is with the lower animals—the problem of progress is essentially one of *breeding*, not one of training. Mr. Ball's book cannot be neglected by any serious sociologist. The question he deals with is primarily biological, but its social implications are of transcendent importance. Alike in the interest of truth and stable progress, therefore, we commend this volume to the earnest attention of our most thoughtful readers.

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

A Kentucky gentleman, who recently came to Washington to consult with his member of Congress about an office under the new administration, was asked recently by a gentleman from Boston whether it is really true that the people of Kentucky are so very bibulous. "Bibulous!" said the Kentuckian; "bibulous! I don't reckon you could find a dozen Bibles in the whole state!"

PROFANE JOKES.

"Who are the peacemakers?" asked the Sunday-school teacher. "The police," was the reply.

"What blessings children are?" as the parish clerk said, when he took the fees for christening them.

The Rev. Aminadab Kingdomcum was so philanthropic that when he went as a missionary to the cannibal tribes he always wore a pepper and salt suit that he might be seasoned to taste.

House Owner: "How many children have you, madam?" House hunter: "Five." House owner: "That alters the case. I can't let you have the house." House hunter: "You are more particular and exclusive than the kingdom of heaven." House owner: "Possibly, madam, possibly; we must be select. Good-morning."

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. R. Forder, "The Bible and Ancient Monuments." Members' quarterly meeting after the lecture.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Capt. Pfoundes, a Buddhist sermon (accompanied by a Buddhist Priest in his robes). Monday, at 8.30, social gathering. Tuesday, at 8, Concert (tickets 6d. each). Thursday, at 8, dramatic and singing classes. Contributions now due.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, E., 5, quarterly meeting of members; 7.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, dramatic recital; 7.30, Mr. A. G. Hilliar, "The Struggles of Labor." Friday, at 7.45, Science Classes (Hygiene and Chemistry).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, 8, Mr. J. Rowney, "The Bible against Civilisation."

Edmonton—Angel Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Koran."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "The Grand Old Book."

Leyton—Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisey Villas, Manor Road, 7, a meeting of members and friends, important business.

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "The External Evidences of Christ as a Man." Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic class (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Substance that Fills Space." Tuesday, at 8, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Church of England and Hell Fire."

Westminster—"Duke of Ormonde," 13 Prince's Street, 7, half-yearly general meeting.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "Religion and Secularism Contrasted."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Christ's Forefathers."

COUNTRY.

Chester-le-Street—Gray's, Old Pelton, 6.30, meeting to arrange for amalgamated supper with Ox Hill Branch.

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street, 12 noon, debating class, Mr. F. Taylor, "Hobbies"; 6.30, Mr. Macluskay, "The Policy of Freethought towards Christianity—what should it be?"

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room, 6.30, Mr. G. E. C. Naewiger, "Thomas Paine: his Life and Labors."

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—11, Tontine Society; 3, Discussion Class; 7, Mr. Harry Smith, "The Mystery of the Gospel." Committee meeting before lecture.

Manchester N. S. S.—Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saint's, 6.30, Mr. Ernest Evans will lecture. Wednesday, at 8, dancing (admission sixpence).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 3, fortnightly meeting of members.

Plymouth—100 Union Street, 7, adjourned members' half yearly meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 3, debating class, Mr. Hore, "Colonel Ingersoll's Oration on Walt Whitman" (continuation); 7, Mr. Pinhorne, "Charles Lamb."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West Street, Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "The Life of Jesus Christ"; 3, "The Marvels of Hypnotism"; 7, "Freethought: its Use in Society."

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

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street, 6, Mr. B. Dawson, "Burns's Holy Willie's Prayer."

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street, 7, Mr. J. Marr, "Gospel of Atheism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

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