

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

REPLY TO MRS. BESANT.

MRS. BESANT'S remarks in the *Star* on myself and the *Freethinker* are reproduced in full on another page of this journal. My answer is also reproduced. It contains all I thought it necessary to say in an ordinary newspaper. But there is a good reason for saying something more to the Freethought party.

No doubt many persons will wonder why Mrs. Besant chose to attack me in the *Star*, which is read by thousands who know nothing of the inner working of Secularism, and who are therefore in no position to judge for themselves on the points in dispute. For my part, however, I am not at all surprised. Mrs. Besant has been waiting for a chance of striking me, and she has found it. When I ventured to criticise her Theosophy, in order to prevent her eloquence and influence from misleading Freethinkers—the only part of the British public for which I had any special care—I knew I ran a risk of incurring her enmity, and I plainly said so, as anyone may see who turns to the fifth page of my pamphlet. I acted under a sense of duty, I believe I succeeded in my design, and I have never for a moment regretted that I took the course I did.

Of course it suits Mrs. Besant to be silent on this point. She does not wish to confess that her becoming a Theosophist had anything to do with her leaving the National Secular Society. But the majority of Freethinkers know that it had. By embracing what most of them regarded as a superstition she forfeited their confidence. They still admired her character and ability, but they felt that she had practically ceased to be a Secularist. It was inevitable, therefore, that she and they should drift farther and farther apart; and the width of the separation was painfully apparent on the Sunday morning when Mr. Bradlaugh resigned the presidency and I was elected to succeed him.

Yes, disguise it as she may, Theosophy is the real cause of Mrs. Besant's withdrawal from the National Secular Society. Her heart is in the new cause. The Theosophic temple erected in her garden at St. John's Wood is itself a sufficient explanation of her attitude towards Secularism. There is no need to seek for a further explanation in the policy of the new President of the N. S. S.

Mrs. Besant says that Mr. Bradlaugh's leadership was "marked with a wide and generous liberality." Far be it from me to deny this, but what change has taken place since his resignation? Whom have I driven, or attempted to drive, from our party? What person's right of private opinion have I interfered with? What revolution has occurred in the Society's policy? What change has been wrought in its personnel? The old workers, the old officers remain. They are not disaffected. I believe they would laugh at anyone who called me "dogmatic." Is it not strange, too, if my policy so lacks "a wide and generous liberality," that the ranks of the

N. S. S. are swelling day by day. Hundreds of new members joined when it was evident that I should be elected to preside, and the rate of increase is still maintained. It is idle, therefore, to speak of my policy as exclusive.

My policy is declared by Mrs. Besant to be "mischievous and destructive of the best interests of the Freethought party." Well, it has destroyed nothing up to the present, and I decline to discuss prophecy. What will be will be. If Mrs. Besant lives she will see it—and so shall I.

But supposing the change to be true, how strangely Mrs. Besant acts! She brings this railing accusation against me from outside, in the columns of the *Star*. It would have been braver and more honorable to have denounced the mischief and destructiveness of my policy before my election. Mrs. Besant was then a member (although she was seeking an opportunity to resign), and if she really cared for the future of the N. S. S.—which I very much doubt—she should have raised her voice against my election. But she was silent then, and it matters little what she says now.

That my policy as President of the N. S. S. is "one of insult instead of reason" is a ludicrous assertion. Mrs. Besant generalises from her own exasperated feelings. Nor is it true, I think, that I am an insulting controversialist. At any rate I have never had a definite complaint from anyone who ever broke a lance with me on the platform or in the press. Can Mrs. Besant say more? Can she even say as much?

Mrs. Besant has "always strongly disapproved the policy adopted by Mr. Foote when he started the *Freethinker*, and changed the dignified and scholarly line of advocacy he had previously followed for one of rough caricature and mockery." Let us look into this. Certainly the *Freethinker* is unique. But why complain? The *National Reformer* is an excellent journal. I have contributed to it in my time, and would like to do so again if my engagements permitted. But we do not want two *National Reformers*. The *Freethinker* struck out a line of its own, a line I doubt if any paper has a more devoted circle of readers. It has converted hundreds of men and women to Freethought. It is more widely read than any other Secular journal in England. Mr. Wheeler and I have put our time, energy, and brains into it for nine years, and we do not regret the investment. We may indulge in "mockery" of absurdities. But so did Voltaire, so did Paine, so did Mr. Bradlaugh, and so did Mrs. Besant before she took up with Theosophy. Since then she has been more sensitive about mocking the absurd.

But there is a good deal more than "mocking" in the *Freethinker*, and a good deal more than "mocking" in the books and pamphlets issued from its office. Indeed, Mrs. Besant herself must have thought so when after my imprisonment, and after I had resumed the Bible Sketches, she sent me an unsolicited article on "Bible Clothes," which she allowed me to reprint as a "Freethinker" Tract.

Finally, I have to say that I do not understand Mrs. Besant's reference to my "narrow and dogmatic materialism." That is a subject I have seldom touched upon, and hardly ever in the *Freethinker*. I certainly believe in the physical basis of life and all that it involves. But so does Mr. Bradlaugh, and so for thirteen years did Mrs. Besant. As President of the N. S. S., however, I do not press my personal views on its members. So far as I am concerned they may follow Plato or Aristotle, Berkeley or Büchner. I do not pretend to understand the universe, and Theosophy seems to me a more absurd explanation than the Book of Genesis.

On the whole I am content to let the Freethought party judge between myself and Mrs. Besant. I see no reason to alter my opinions because she has altered hers. I repudiate the epithets she applies to me, and I fancy that in her prediction of my failure the wish was father to the thought. G. W. FOOTE.

DEANTHROPOMORPHICISATION.

I HAVE no patent in this word; and since it does not appear in Dr. Murray's great Dictionary, it may be well to mention what I know of its history. It was dropped last summer in Victoria Park from the lips of a Freethought lecturer. Carefully picked up by a bystander and handed on to me for consideration, I pronounced it a curious conglomerate, whose mixed formation need not stand in the way of its utility. Should the gentleman desiderate acknowledgment of priority of proprietorship in this nonosyllabic monstrosity I waive all claim and will do my best to make good his right.

Whatever the merits or demerits of the word, the fact it is intended to convey represents an important process in theological thought. The God idea, as Feuerbach has shown in his *Essence of Religion*, is ever that of man, who has created God in his own image. The sublimest conception of deity is at bottom founded on the ghost of savage dreams. The magnified non-natural man, ridiculed by Matthew Arnold, is the true god, and those who have such a deity can justly retort on modern Theists, "Ye worship ye know not what." Yet this is an idea suited only to the infancy of the race. The more we know of nature the more we discover that its processes cannot be judged by a human standard. The idea of deity becomes subject to deanthropomorphication. One by one his human attributes are lopped off. God retires as man advances.

Who can conceive a formless person? The Swedenborgians, if I understand them aright, allow that God has a form, and that it is the form of a man. The Mormons yet more literally and plainly sing

The God that others worship is not the God for me,
He has no parts or passions and cannot hear or see.

Elder Orson Pratt, in a very astute little tract, points out that the orthodox deity is only a bundle of negations, a mere metaphysical abstraction incapable of educing the sentiments of love and worship. And this deity tends more and more to become a mere impersonal *It* spelled with a capital I. The old deities were frankly masculine and feminine. When you ask a Theist why he uses the masculine pronoun to his deity, he generally shuffles into arguments as vague as the deity him, her, or itself.

Schiller says, "man paints himself in his gods," and most of the early pictures are coarse and crude. The God of the Jews was just a magnified chief, barbarous and bloodthirsty; the head of a clan, the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob. He has the form, the appetites, movements and the imperfections of a human being. He forms man in his own image. It is plain these words must be taken literally, for a little further on we hear how Adam begat Seth "in his own likeness and after his own image" (Gen. v., 3).

He breathes into his nostrils. He rests and is refreshed. He walks in the garden in the cool of the day. He makes coats of skins; smells a sweet savor at Noah's sacrifice, comes down to see the tower of Babel, dines with Abraham, wrestles with Jacob and shows his back parts to Moses. He is described as having head, face, eyes, nose, hands, loins, heart, bowels, etc. He has human passions, is a jealous God, loves Jacob and hates Esau, and repents frequently. Though this anthropomorphism is seen most largely in Genesis, it is found even in Malachi, where he is spoken of as wearied.

Apologists, oblivious of the fact that the same phenomena of anthropomorphism is found in all religions, as well as in the modern nursery and Sunday-school—attempt to construe this as poetry. But if God's back parts are poetic, then God himself is poetry, or, it would be best to say at once, fiction. A God who plans is just as foolish as a God who comes down to see what men are doing. It is as purely human and mistaken to picture a God as endowed with intellect and without a head as to assign him eyes, nose and mouth. It is just as much pious impiety to pretend to know what God thinks as to know what he looks like. We must give him our own thoughts for the simple reason that we have no others to give. As soon as man advances in civilisation he sees the absurdity of this. Among the Greeks the Freethinking Xenophanes wrote:

The gods of the Ethiopians are flat-nosed and swarthy,
The gods of the Thracians fair-haired and blue-eyed.
Such things of the gods are told by Homer and Hesoid
As would be shameful to any of mankind.
Could oxen and lions paint their gods as we do,
Be sure they would appear as oxen and as lions.

Ingersoll says, "An honest God is the noblest work of man," and I will add, Theists have found great difficulty in supplying the article. The whole theory of Christianity depends on anthropomorphism; a Fall, an offended God, and an Atonement to satisfy him. The Christian Father in Heaven is as much a figment as Zeus on Olympos. Men may stop halfway, but the race will go on and find out that the reasons which destroy hell and the Devil are equally applicable to heaven and to God. The process of deanthropomorphication will be applied to the whole conceptions of theology, "till by broad spreading they disperse to nought." J. M. WHEELER.

THE BIBLE AND TEETOTALISM.

A REPLY TO J. M. WHEELER'S TRACT,

By T. W. Doggart, Newtownwards, Co. Down, Ireland.

AFTER giving a short introductory paragraph the writer says, "much nonsense has been written and spoken about the nature of Jewish wines." With this statement I thoroughly agree. I would add, however, that one has not far to travel in order to find a sample of the "nonsense"; for the next sentence is both nonsensical and untrue. It is perfectly absurd for any man to affirm that "some Bible believers of the teetotal persuasion would have us believe that the wine which is a mocker and the strong drink which is raging were non-intoxicating beverages." There is not a teetotaler anywhere who would even hint at such a ridiculous idea. Teetotalers are all agreed that the drinks so described were intoxicating, and were of the nature of the wine spoken of in (Prov. xxiii., 31), upon which men are commanded not even to look. Of course some of them are careful to distinguish between wine of that sort, and the wine which is "found in the cluster," and which contains a blessing (Isaiah lxx., 8). Mr. Wheeler, like all others, who have not given the subject due consideration, does not do this, otherwise he would not expose his ignorance by writing in such a fashion. "Wine is known by its effects," he tells us, but, instead of using that truth as a rule of measurement throughout, he proceeds on the assumption that all wine, *irrespective of its effects*, is fermented and intoxicating. To support him in this, he cites an authority whom he calls "Gesenius," and he says that that personage gives it as his

opinion that the very root of the Hebrew word commonly employed for wine is "to boil up, to ferment." My reply to this is, (1st) The authority quoted is not "Gesenius," but "Gesenius," (2nd) Gesenius's statement is altogether different from Mr. Wheeler's version of it. Instead of giving an authoritative verdict upon which a theory might be based, he actually makes the origin of the word doubtful. "Perhaps from *yavan*, to boil up or bubble up, perhaps a primitive," is a miserable prop for the belief that nothing but fermented grape-juice ought to be called wine.

I should say, further, in this connection, that of late years the philology of the Indo-European tongues has made vast strides, and the best authorities no longer regard *yayin* (the Hebrew term already referred to) as in its origin a Hebrew word. The highest European authority on the Semitic languages refers it to the Indo-European root *wa*, to *weave* owing to the clustering together of the grapes and the interlacing of the vine-shoots. Thus Gesenius's opinion is absolutely worthless as a proof against the unfermented wine doctrine; and as the careful reader of the reprint will doubtless observe, no other proof is even indirectly referred to, much less given, in the whole production.

With regard to the word *Shekar*, translated "strong drink," it is not true that every Hebrew scholar knows it was exclusively a most intoxicating fluid. *Shekar* is the juice of the palm tree, and, like grape-juice, could be had and preserved in its innocent, unfermented state. Mr. Wheeler has therefore gone to the trouble of fighting with a man of straw.

Had he studied the Word of God as zealously as he has imbibed human traditions, he would have discovered passages such as (Jer. xl., 10, 12; xlvi., 33; Isaiah xvi., 10), etc., where wine is spoken of under circumstances in which it could not be fermented. Then, having before his mind the fact that the words in question are generic terms, he would have been more likely to learn that the praise or commendation of the good never altered the nature of that which mocks and which is raging. He would also have seen that if the Israelites (in carrying out the advice given in Deut. xiv., 26, had lusted after, and bought the bad liquors, they would have been so much to blame as if they had partaken of—say, swine's flesh. God spake to his people as to men possessed of intelligence; and no devout Jew interpreted the permission given in such a manner as would have given him liberty to override physical laws or ceremonial observances.

Timothy's case can be explained in the light of the same truth. Paul, it is believed, was a Nazarite (compare Acts xviii., 18, with Numbers vi., 5); and it is more than likely his son in the gospel followed in his footsteps. The law of the Nazarite is found in Numbers vi. From verses 3 and 4 it may be seen that if Timothy was doing so, he was abstaining from everything that came from the vine tree. Consequently, when the state of his health called for it, Paul advised him, as an intelligent man, to use a little wine. If, therefore, he procured and used an injurious sort, the blame was his own.

The contrast between our Lord Jesus and John the Baptist is easily understood when one remembers the Nazarite's vow. John used no wine at all. Our Lord used some wine, but none that was of a hurtful nature. Although wine is said to cheer, it does not follow on that account that it must needs be intoxicating. Zech. ix., 17, says, "Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Surely no one would say that the corn is intoxicating. The phrase "The old is better," is certainly true of unfermented wine. An explanation may be found in the fact that the original aromas of the grape being, by the act of *crushing*, mingled with the saccharine and albuminous matters, become less perceptible to the palate; but, by being kept, they mechanically separate again, and so impart a fuller and distincter flavor by first touching the nerves of taste.

The Greek word translated "well drunk" in John ii., 10, has two meanings, just as our word "full" has. One of my proofs for this assertion is that in the Greek version of the Old Testament it is frequently used in the sense which does not imply drunkenness. An instance of it being so employed is found, for example, in Psalm lxxv., 10, "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly."

The merest glance at Jer. xxv. is sufficient to show that the words of verse 27 are typical of judgment. Punishment is seldom associated with much that is pleasant; hence the plain language of the prophet is not "goody goody" enough for Mr. Wheeler.

Verses 6 and 7 of Prov. xxxi. have a parallel among our own Proverbs. We say "Set a beggar on horseback and he'll

ride to perdition." Now no one thinks for a moment that this is to be taken as having the force of a command. And so, since intoxicating drinks were not fit for those who had to think and act for others (see verses 4 and 5 of same chapter), they were only fit for those who did not want to think and act for themselves. "Give them to such,"—that is, if you give them and let them drink—they'll drink and forget their poverty, etc.

The very recital of Noah and Lot's sin and disgrace is a condemnation of them. When the Almighty writes a man's life he tells the truth about him; and there are not many persons who would want their lives printed if he wrote them. He gives us an account of the sin into which these two men fell, just as he tells us of bringing a king from his throne, and wringing from his heart the cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." And he tells us further that these things were written for our admonition, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, and in order that he who thinketh he standeth should take heed lest he fall."

Oh! that men would understand the sense in which all scripture is profitable. The Revealed Word would then be taken as in reality a message from on high, and we would hear no more about the "curious collection of undateable documents."

REPLY.

Mr. Doggart is little versed in teetotal literature if unaware that many books, pamphlets, and articles have argued that Bible wines were non-intoxicating. He knows his fetish book too well to take this position. But is his own less false? He would have us believe that innocuous wines alone were recommended and that others were condemned. Is this so? Noah planted a vineyard, got drunk, exposed himself, and then cursed his grandson—a drunken curse the authority of which has rivetted the chains of African slaves down to this century. Lot's daughters made him drunk on wine and lay with him. Mr. Doggart says the very recital is a condemnation. Yes, to us. But was it so to the ancient writers? I want the evidence. One part of the collection of Proverbs says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." Another part, ascribed to another hand, says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more." To construe this as meaning "If you give," etc., is without authority. It is ingenious, but as disingenuous as the attempt to make Bible drinks non-intoxicants. Mr. Doggart says *shekar* is the juice of the palm-tree, and maybe innocent. He is unaware that it is derived from the Hebrew term for drunkenness. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, sub. Drink, strong, says: "The Hebrew term *shekar*, in its etymological sense, applies to any beverage that has intoxicating qualities." Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, sub. Wine, derives it from *shekar*, to get drunk, and defines it as "an inebriating drink, whether wine prepared or distilled from barley, or from honey or from dates." In confutation of Dr. Lees, one of those who contended that Bible wine was non-intoxicating, Kitto says: "Shekar may have been a sweet beverage as sugary as Dr. Lees or anyone else chooses; but it was most certainly intoxicating." This standard authority says further: "It was used as a drink-offering in the service of God (Num. xxviii., 7), and was, notwithstanding its highly intoxicating property, permitted to the Israelites (Deut. xiv. 26)." Have I set up a man of straw, or is Mr. Doggart defending his fetish with figments? In regard to the last passage, he says that the Israelites, if they took the bad liquors, would have been as much to blame as if they had partaken swine's flesh. It suffices to say the passage permits them to buy wine and strong drink, just as it permits them to buy sheep and oxen, but it does not permit them to buy swine's flesh. If God took strong wine why should not his people do so also?

As Mr. Doggart apparently thinks Hebrew one of the Indo-European tongues, I may, perhaps, be excused for preferring a renowned Semitic scholar's derivation of *yayin* to his own. I may say that in my *Freethinker* article (March 5, 1882) the name of Gesenius is given correctly. My article has been frequently reprinted, and the error Mr. Doggart kindly points out has crept into some unsupervised copies.

On the strength of Paul having tonsured himself, like the Buddhists, Mr. Doggart makes both Paul and Timothy Nazarites. Another absurdity without authority. Nazarites could not release themselves from their vows, and Paul says,

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake." That Jesus only used wine that was not hurtful, Mr. Daggart evolves out of his own inner consciousness. Paul tells us that some got "drunken" at the Lord's supper (1 Cor. xi., 21). When the apostles spoke with other tongues, the spectators said, "These men are full of new wine." But of course the twelve or eighteen firkins of new wine manufactured by the vintager Jesus for guests who had already well drunk was not intoxicating, though the ruler of the feast said it was the custom to give good wine first and afterwards set forth the inferior. Mr. Daggart says the Greek word translated "well drunk" has two meanings just as "full" has. The only corroboration is a poetic passage in the lxx. version of the Old Testament, while he conceals the fact that wherever the word occurs in the New Testament it clearly refers to intoxication (see Matt. xxiv., 49; Luke xii., 45; xxi., 34; Acts ii., 15; Rom. xiii., 13; 1 Cor. xi., 21; Gal. v., 21; 1 Th. v., 7, and Rev. xvii., 6). Alford correctly translates the passage John i., 10 by the word "drunken." In the New Testament there is no passage directly condemning the use of intoxicants.

J. M. WHEELER.

TO G. W. FOOTE.

On the Occasion of his Birthday, January, 1891.

Go on and conquer! Never yet
Did man attain to high esteem,
Or do great deeds, unless he met
Rough waves in passing o'er life's stream.

Go on and conquer! Yours it is
To place our good on surer ground,
To point to what has happened amiss
And where the balm is to be found.

Go on and conquer! Crush for aye
The Ogre of the Lying Lip,
Which fain would lead the world to-day
As it did once—with burning grip.

Go on and conquer! Truth's bright brand
Makes music to reformers' hymns,
As, whistling o'er our faith-dimmed land,
It rives the bonds on Freedom's limbs.

E. ANDERSON (West Ham).

WHAT IT HAS COME TO.

The following story is going the round of the press:—A poor country congregation found itself badly in want of hymn-books. The clergyman applied to a London firm and asked to be supplied at the lowest (Church) rates. The firm replied that on condition the hymn-books contained certain advertisements the congregation should have them for nothing. The minister sorrowfully complied, thinking to himself that when the advertisements came they could be removed from the leaves. The hymn-books arrived, and they contained no interleaved advertisements. At the thanksgiving service the parson gave out the Christmas hymn, and the congregation sang the first verse. When they reached the last line they found that this was what they had been singing: "Hark! the herald angels sing, Dash's Pills are just the thing; Peace on earth and mercy mild, Two for man and one for child."

ACID DROPS.

The *Club and Institute Journal* takes exception to our statement that "Nine out of ten London clubs were founded by Secularists, and many of them are still managed by Secularists." Our contemporary says, "We never heard any of them speak about Atheism." Very likely. But that only proves that, in conformity with the rules, they do not press their Atheism inside the clubs. We advise our contemporary to *inquire*. Information does not always *come*; it often has to be obtained.

Arthur Westcott is a cunning gentleman. He tries to prove, in the *Echo*, the decay of Secularism, and to do this he gives the number of new members enrolled by the N. S. S. for seven years, from 1883 to 1889. Of course there was a great accession in 1883 and 1884, during Mr. Foote's imprisonment and immediately after his release. Then the reaction set in, and the number gradually dropped down to the normal level. Mr. Westcott puts forward this gradual

dropping, without the simple explanation, as a proof that Secularism is declining. But had he been honest he would have taken 1890, when there was an increase of nearly fifty per cent. over 1889, as well as a financial improvement. We are happy to say that the increase is still maintained. During eight months since the last Conference the N. S. S. has enrolled more new members than during the whole of 1889.

"Urbanus" of the London *Echo*, replying to our recent paragraph, repeats the nonsense which Mr. Stead "understood" Mr. Holyoake to have said to Mr. Price Hughes, although Mr. Holyoake has politely, but firmly, contradicted it in a letter to the *Star*.

"Urbanus" also observes that "in recent years Mrs. Besant, Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Symes and others have disappeared from the scene. But this is a half-truth which is worse than a falsehood. Mr. Watts is working for Free-thought as ardently as ever, and although Canada is not in England it is still in the world. Mr. Symes is doing the same at Melbourne.

"Mr. Bradlaugh is becoming more and more a politician," says "Urbanus." Perhaps so, but he is none the less a Freethinker, as may be seen by the weekly issues of the *National Reformer*.

As for Mr. Foote, "Urbanus" allows him to be a "skilful debater," but declares him to be "one of the causes of the decline of Secularism." Those who are more intimate with the inner workings of Secularism will probably be of opinion that Mr. Foote is very decidedly "one of the causes," of its increased activity and success during the last year or two. No doubt they will also think that the leader who is worst spoken of by the enemy is likely to be anything but a hindrance to their cause.

Mr. Foote is charged by "Urbanus" with having "represented the Supreme Being as a giant with a patch on the seat of his trousers." Stuff and nonsense! It was the Jew-God, Jehovah, who was thus represented. Does not the Bible say that this deity showed Moses his "back parts"? And is not a patched pair of trousers preferable to Jehovah's naked "glory"?

Evangelist Cuff, of Shoreditch, has been speaking at Ramsgate, and one of his topics was the hackneyed "decline of Secularism." He had seen Mr. Foote's letter in the *Star* about the growth of the National Secular Society, but he knew that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant had dissolved partnership, and their shop in Fleet-street had been shut (loud applause). Now we don't know whether Mr. Cuff is as ignorant as he looks on this matter. Anyhow it is high time to tell Christian ministers to learn the facts or cease playing the hypocrite. The closing of the Fleet-street shop is simply a necessity of Mr. Bradlaugh's new situation created by his impaired health. It does not make the difference of a single straw to the Secular party. Secular journals are published as before, Secular lectures are delivered as before, and Secular societies go on as before—only a little more so.

The Christians at Reading evidently do not believe in the decline of Secularism. They have had the Rev. Dr. Harrison to carry on a Christian Evidence Mission there. According to a local report, Dr. Harrison spoke of the Bible in a way which should provoke the Reading Christians to cry, "Call you that backing of your friends?" He said the Bible must be judged by the standard of the time when it was written; it was not fair to judge it by the standard of the present time. Exactly so. But that is the Freethought position. If the Bible is God's Word it should come up to the standard of any time.

Replying to a question by Mr. T. Reed, a local Unitarian, Dr. Harrison said that Buddha and Confucius got their light from Jesus Christ. But as they lived several centuries before him, the answer is—to put it in the mildest way—somewhat metaphysical.

Dr. H. O. Thomas, of Liverpool, recently deceased, was a good Freethinker, though his relatives gave him a religious funeral. Soon after his death the following conversation was overheard between two ladies:

Mrs. A.—Good morning! How are you?

Mrs. B.—Very well, thank you.

Mrs. A.—Isn't it sad about Dr. Thomas? Many will miss him. He was such a good man and so kind to the poor.

Mrs. B.—Yes, they will miss him. But do you know, Mrs. A., they say he was an Atheist?

Mrs. A.—Oh, no, he was an Agnostic.

Mrs. B. (after a reflective pause)—Oh, indeed he wasn't. He was a Welshman. He used to talk to his servants in Welsh. He wasn't Agnostic. I'm sure he was Welsh.

Dyfrig Davies of Wrexham is more signalised as a lover of the Lord than of the lady's maid to whom he plighted his troth. She had to sue him for breach of promise and put in a batch of pious epistles in which he exhorted his betrothed to join him in striving to live a godly life," and such exclamations as "If our hopes is in this world only, it would have been better we had never been born." At last in a letter teeming with devout references to the Deity good Dyfrig, plainly jilted the perhaps too worldly lady's maid, who will now have a solatium out of his pocket of £150.

In the inquest on the sad calamity to little children at the Church school, at Leeds, the jury censured the Rev. Canon Brameld, the Rev. R. Buckton, and Mr. J. R. Williams for not exercising such forethought, care, and supervision as their duty imposed on them.

Ex-Rev. Charles Robbins has been sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment for what is becoming known as the clerical offence.

The Rev. E. St. Maur Stocker, rector of Titchwell, Norfolk, and formerly of Kilburn, which he left on account of some scandal, was severely reprimanded by the grand jury of the Norfolk Quarter Session for the way in which he gave his evidence in a case of alleged indecent assault. He admitted having severely thrashed his son with a whip, but this he might have pleaded was entirely in accordance with the discipline prescribed in the Bible.

In the disputed will case of Miss Hampson, who left some £14,000 to a sisterhood who "took her in" through a partition between her house and the convent, it was decided that undue influence was exercised by the nuns, and that the testatrix did not know and approve the contents of the will she was induced to sign. The nuns will have to bear the costs. This is as it should be. The Church would be far poorer had it to surrender all property acquired in a similar way.

According to a story in the *Graphic*, an English Catholic, who had entered a monastic order, fell in love with a young English lady, and married her at St. George's in July, 1890. Returning to Rome, he was induced to see the sacrilege he had committed and rejoined his order, his wife, who was staying penniless at a hotel, receiving a letter stating that he could not betray his Church.

This case, which is but one of many, illustrates the difference between religious and secular morality. From the standpoint of the latter the man who deserts his wife at the command of the Church is a scoundrel. From the standpoint of religion he did quite right, for no human duty can compare with the eternal salvation of a soul, and Jesus Christ exhorts his followers to leave father and mother, wife and children for his sake.

The Rev. Mr. Guilding, vicar of St. Mary's, Reading, is one of the good old fossils. In introducing the Rev. A. Harrison to lecture on the existence of God, he expressed himself sceptical of the existence of Atheists. He did not believe one could exist in the full sense of the word. Mr. Guilding would have done well to consult Mr. Harrison on this point before making out that his arguments were directed against non-existent persons.

Here is a pretty advertisement from the *Daily Telegraph* (London):—"Comfortable Home, without salary, is offered to a lady (Church of England) in return for companionship to a young lady, and instruct in music, French, drawing, and assist the lady of the house.—Apply at 61 Philbeach-gardens, Earl's Court."

"Without Salary" is good, but it might be improved. Why not ask the lady to pay for the situation? No doubt

there are hundreds of ladies who would teach music, French and drawing, and assist in the housework, and pay besides for the sublime privilege of breathing the air of a Church of England home.

Some American missionaries who went out to West Africa, depending on providence to take care of them and miraculous aid to resist the climate, have sickened and died. Attacked with malaria, they relied on the prayer prescription of St. James and refused medical aid. In view of such cases increasing, the Governor of Sierra Leone has issued a proclamation that the climatic conditions there are not suitable for believers in faith cure, and hereafter white people, when ill, will be compelled to accept the services of a physician.

It is amusing to note that the Ritualists, who, while the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln was going on and they were afraid of the Archbishop of Canterbury's judgment being against them, continually disputed the jurisdiction of the Archbishop's Court, now that the judgment has been appealed from by the anti-Ritualists, claim that the Archbishop alone has spiritual authority and that her Majesty's Privy Council has no jurisdiction in Church matters.

Said Jones, when he heard of Bishop Magee's elevation, "Well, the usual way to York is through Peterborough."

The Robert Elsmersians will hardly attract the populace by getting the Rev. G. Chavannes, pastor of the Walloon Church, Leyden, to lecture in French at University Hall on the Old Testament. Had he been a Parisian some might attend for the sake of a lesson in pronunciation.

The new Bishop of Jerusalem writes very disconsolately about his prospects. He says: "It would surely be a matter of regret [to whom?] if the bishopric were allowed to die." Apparently he expected subscriptions as well as a salary, and doesn't see his way to do much without.

Archdeacon Denison sees clearly enough that to surrender the authority of the Old Testament is to undermine that of Jesus Christ. He therefore proposes to the Convocation of the clergy of the Province of Canterbury that they shall censure the dangerous errors of *Lux Mundi*, as exhibiting irreverence towards J. C., perfect God and perfect man, and corrupting men's minds from the simplicity that is in Christ.

God's visitation, in the shape of the cholera in South Russia, has reduced a large settlement of the Mansas by one half, and it is expected the epidemic will sweep off the rest.

They are trying to raise cash from the simple for the creation of a new bishopric at Sheffield, though the subscriptions for the proposed bishoprics at Birmingham and Bristol have decidedly hung fire.

A correspondent of the *Independent* points out that, while other causes are making progress, "hundreds of half empty Congregational churches still keep up their traditional routine of worship and work almost unchanged from the days of the first Reform Bill."

Principal Caird recently defended the doctrine of the Trinity on the ground that it relieved the Deity from the loneliness of spending an eternity by himself. Logically carried out this leads, like all consistent Trinitarianism, to Tritheism. Tritheism is disavowed by all modern Christians, but is said to have been maintained by John Ascunage, a Syrian philosopher of the sixth century; and to have been supported by John Philoponus, a grammarian of high reputation in Alexandria.

The *Saturday Review*, referring to the book on the *New Papacy*, by Mr. Summer, which was published at Toronto and the whole edition promptly bought up and destroyed by the Salvation Army, asks, "Is there no expurgatorial *Index* in the *New Papacy*?"

The Rev. J. G. Medland, of St. Martin's, Gospel Oak, where they cannot maintain an audience of six, puts all the blame on his churchwarden, Mr. Fox. *Credat Judæus.*

Overheard in a railway carriage.—First Passenger: "I had a very curious dream last night. I dreamed that I was taken both to heaven and hell." Second Passenger: "Indeed!

And which place do you consider you would prefer to go to?" First Passenger: "Well, heaven for climate, but the other place for society."

The Bishop of Salisbury has been holding forth on impurity, on which he is no doubt an authority. He says the villages are worse than the towns, and that in some parishes there is scarcely one pure marriage in the whole course of the year. What a beautiful result of eighteen centuries of Christianity! And in villages, too, where the power of the clergy is almost absolute!

The Rev. A. Finerty, of the Sacred Heart Church, Dayton, Ohio, took the handsomest young woman of his flock, to spend the night with him at an hotel in the neighboring town of Richmond. Here he registered as R. A. Renner and wife, but was recognised by some Dayton people, who gave the thing away, unheeding that it would cause jealousy among the fair members of the Sacred Heart congregation. The upshot is that Father Finerty has been removed to a better pastorate.

Father Ignatius says, when Jesus was on earth bad people were attracted to him. He still draws about the same kind of an audience that he did nineteen centuries ago.—*Boston Investigator*.

After hearing a sermon on slander, at Brooklyn, New York, Mrs. Catherine Thorpe became crazed by religion and attempted to cut her tongue out. The physicians are seeking to remedy the work of the preacher.

If you have caused one poor family to have a square and substantial dinner to-day, where good food is apt to be scarce, and have made the children happy by some little inexpensive presents, you have done more good than all the prayers that ever were prayed and all the sermons that ever were preached.—*Marlboro' Times*.

Two country girls, who might be enjoying a holiday from domestic service, were lately observed walking down the aisles of St. Paul's Cathedral. Under the magnificent dome, one of them stood and gazed around her with an air of such wonder that her silence conveyed to an onlooker the impression that her probably limited vocabulary did not furnish her with the wherewithal to convey her impressions. A feeling of sympathy kept him within earshot during the delightful pause. At last the spell was broken. "Oh, dear, Sarah! wouldn't this place take a long time to sweep out?"

The Rev. T. Rhonda Williams has a curious but not unusual notion of God and his intentions. Lecturing at the Green-field Congregational Chapel, Bradford, he declared "he did not believe God intended a family of five or six to live on a sovereign a week, while others were making their fortunes." Are God's intentions then frustrated? For families of five or six or more do have to live on less than this, while others are making fortunes. Does God intend the deaths from starvation of beasts, birds, and even women and children this severe weather; the famine in Anguilla, or the thousand and one ills that flesh is heir to? If God does not intend all this what a pitiable being he must be if he cannot prevent it, what a contemptible one that he does not.

Mr. William Wheeler, of 17 Moor Street, Cambridge Circus, W., keeps a copy of the *Freethinker* for the use of his customers. The other morning, a disciple of "the meek and lowly one" watched a customer reading it, and when it was laid down he picked it up and put it on the fire. Mr. Wheeler's daughter, who saw this pious performance, asked him what he meant by it, and the answer was "Burn old Foote!" Happily that sweet, charitable Christian lacks the power to cremate the editor of the *Freethinker*, and will have to wait until the process is performed at Woking.

"King Solomon," the head of the Army of the Lord, which some year or two ago made a sensation in Brighton, has, despite the suppression of the "glory hole" in that town, still several disciples. Two of them are at Ryde, Isle of Wight, and one has communicated to the *Portsmouth Evening News* a prophecy by King Solomon that Brighton shall be destroyed by an earthquake. He says, moreover, that the man-child spoken of in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation was born four months ago at the abode of King Solomon

and his disciples at Portslade, and this means the beginning of the end.

Discourses on the speedy coming of the Lord are again largely advertised in London. The Lord has been speedily coming for over eighteen hundred years. But then he has a very long journey to travel.

This journal appears to be about the only paper that pays any attention to the Messiah craze in California. Last week Thursday was especially devoted to the delusion. Labor was suspended throughout the state in order that believers in the Messiah might celebrate the alleged birthday of their savior. Some of these believers attended church, where they ate bread and drank wine which they strangely imagined to be the body and blood of the Messiah; others feasted, while some drank ardent spirits to such excess, that in this city alone, more than one hundred and fifty persons were taken into custody by the police and incarcerated until they could sober off. In Oakland fifty-six celebrants of the Messiah appeared in court to answer to the charge of being drunk and disorderly. There were more arrests for this sort of extravagant conduct on the Messiah or Christmas Day than during any other twenty-four hours of the past year, and several affrays in which blood was shed were reported from various quarters. When General Miles gets the Indians subdued, he might be called to this coast to suppress the messianic orgies that are indulged in here.—*Freethought*. (San Francisco).

The Rev. C. Aked, of Liverpool, has a horror of war, which does him credit. He went to a meeting in support of the Boys' Brigade, and moved an amendment against the military element in their training. But the Bishop, who was in the chair, would not take the amendment; Canon Rycroft shouted "Call in the police"; and the poor apostle of peace had to leave the platform.

Archdeacon Wilson of Rochdale, has had another meeting to express his views on miracles. We pointed out that his theory of Christ's subtle power over the minds of other people, and through their minds on their bodies, could not account for a miracle like that of the loaves and fishes. This the Archdeacon now admits, and falls back upon the "mystery" from which he did wrong to emerge. We observe, that Archdeacon Wilson was freely heckled, and we hope he will continue the meetings until he has shown how little can be said in favor of the supernatural.

Mr. George Wise, the Christian Evidence lecturer at Liverpool, has been disporting himself recently in a Kensington Baptist chapel, where he discoursed on "Apes, Atoms and Men." The proceedings closed with the Benediction, and it was certainly needed, for Mr. Wise's lecture, as reported in the *Protestant Standard*, was a most extraordinary farrago. His remarks on Darwinism suggest that the Christian Evidence Society should supply its lecturers with elementary manuals of biology. His chief witticism was this:—Mr. Wise said he believed in Adam (loud applause). What color was the first man? Well, he did not know whether he was a white man, a red man, or a black man. Anyhow he was not a Secularist, or he would have been a green man.—This was the hit of the evening. The Christians were wild with excitement over this exquisite joke.

Some of the scientific terms, and some scientists' names, are awfully misspelt in the *Protestant Standard's* report. But we do not lay the blame on Mr. Wise. It falls upon his editorial friend, who reads the Bible too much and more sensible books too little.

Ritualism has extended since the Lincoln judgment. The policy of all High Churchmen is to give their congregations as much sacerdotalism as they will stand.

"We understand," the *Star* says, "that the City Charities Commission contemplate spending something like £20,000 on the renovation of the City churches. The money might be spent in making the alterations for turning them into night shelters. No objection can be offered to this on the ground that the churches are used for any other purpose, and the City parsons will, we feel certain, jump at the idea, because it will introduce a novelty in their pastoral experience—a congregation."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 25, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.; at 7, "The Trinity Puzzle."

Thursday, Jan. 29, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; at 8.15, "Heaven and Hell." Admission free.

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.

J. BURRELL.—We hardly understood the cutting. As you explain it, Mr. Wheeler has done a first-rate piece of work in obtaining a rise of 1s. per week and a week's holiday for his fellow workmen under the Gas Company. Such men as he are a great credit to our cause.

J. WALLER.—There is a juggle in the word "responsibility." Men are *responsible* for their actions when they can be called to account, and this responsibility is entirely the creation of political and social law. Outside this, the word responsible is illegitimate, philosophically; but it is loosely used to express the law of *consequence*. Materialists know as well as spiritualists that actions produce results, and that the results must be faced. Mr. Foote dealt with this matter in his debate with Dr. McCann. It is also dealt with by Ingersoll in his replies to Dr. Field and Mr. Gladstone.

E. HANNATH.—Sorry to find you are so hard to please; still more to find you are bent on being uncivil. Any further communication you desire to make must be made through your Branch.

J. HERBERT.—Forty-one Roman Catholic peers have seats in the House of Lords.

STUPID AWE.—Thanks. Always glad to receive cuttings.

"THE FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—N. H. (Sowerby Bridge), £1.

B. WEHRLE.—Mr. Foote replied in the *Star* to as much of Mrs. Besant's attack as required an answer in that journal. A further answer appears in our own columns.

J. R. WIDDUP.—Your order is handed to Mr. Forder. Glad to hear the *Freethinker*, though it shocked you at first, has brought you over to Secularism at last. Mr. Foote's *Creation Story*, the first number of Bible Romances (2d.), will give you information and references. Prof. Huxley's *American Lectures* would also be useful, and his articles in the *Nineteenth Century* in reply to Mr. Gladstone. You had better get an elementary manual of astronomy (say Lockyer's or Herschel's) for information as to the stars, their distances, etc. Geologists are all agreed as to the immense antiquity of the earth, only the orthodox ones try to show that this is somehow in harmony with Genesis. Mr. Ball's remark, which you refer to, is quite correct. The Mosaic Law alludes to kings, when the first king was Saul, who lived about 350 years after Moses, according to the Bible chronology.

J. BENNETT (Darlington).—The 10s. was acknowledged by us in the *Freethinker* for January 4. We took it to be for the Forder Testimonial Fund. It shall be transferred to the Benevolent Fund.

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—We have received the following: T. Cussen, 6d.; C. Simson, 2s.

J. F. ECCLES.—Much obliged, but don't trouble to send.

F. LAWTON.—Console yourself by reflecting that bigotry is dying, though slowly.

D. WOODHOUSE.—Thanks for the budget of clippings.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—J. Dean sends 2s. 6d., saying "I was unable to be present at the dinner, so send donation instead, and no doubt others will do likewise."

IRONMONGER.—We hardly understand. Do you mean a technical dictionary?

J. CHERRY.—Mr. Forder has executed what he can of your order and returned the balance. Whateley's *Logic* and Bain's *Logic* are both good. There are any number of good Grammars. Bain's *English Composition* might suit you.

COCKNEY.—Not by any means bad, but more might be made of it, and it wants polishing.

W. WHEELER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

AGNOSTIC.—We have made use of it. Thanks.

J. SAUNDERS.—See our paragraphs.

J. P. C.—It was not easy to acknowledge an anonymous contribution. The copy was not equal to the previous piece of yours to which you refer.

J. ROBINSON.—You need not send a letter—"please insert," etc.—with your Lecture Notice.

A. HINDLE (Tyldesley).—We have no belief in such phenomena. Spiritualists assert a number of things which they are unable to demonstrate to unbelievers.

T. SHAW.—Mr. Forder will send content's-sheet.

W. V.—Cuttings are always welcome.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Neues Frereligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Flaming Sword—Loyal American—Two Worlds—Star—Der Lichtfreund—People's Press—Freethinker's Magazine—Club and Institute Journal—Protestant Standard—Lynn News—Grimsby Express—Knaresborough Post—Reading Observer—Daily Chronicle—Rochdale Observer—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Portsmouth Evening News—Northampton Daily Reporter—Cape Register—Dundee Advertiser—Glasgow Herald—Watts's Literary Guide—Lloyd's News.

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.

Despite the severe weather, Mr. Foote had good audiences at Huddersfield on Sunday, and there was discussion after each lecture. The Huddersfield Branch is carrying on a vigorous propaganda with very gratifying success. The new secretary, Mr. Dobson, evidently has his heart in the work. We are happy to learn that the sale of the *Freethinker* steadily increases there. It is now supplied by four newsagents, one of whom has run up his sale from four to twenty copies weekly.

After Mr. Foote's evening lecture a broad genial Yorkshireman handed him a sovereign for the *Freethinker* Circulation Fund. This journal had converted the donor from Methodism after twenty-three years' experience as a local preacher—a fact which may be commended to the attention of some folk who fancy, or affect to fancy, the *Freethinker* a danger to Secularism.

The West Ham Secular Hall was strained to its utmost capacity last Sunday on the occasion of the Quarterly Meeting, followed by a Social Tea and Entertainment. The Committee's report stated that fourteen new members had been made during the quarter, and the balance-sheet showed a continued advance in the finances. The decision of last quarter's meeting to call upon each member for three shillings to clear the debt had not been entirely successful, but £5 5s. was available to reduce it, and this brought the amount owing to under £10. It is hoped that this will be cleared during the present quarter. Next Sunday evening Mr. Forder lectures on the "Signs of the Zodiac," and a collection will be made for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund. If any member is unable to attend I shall be glad to receive any donation during the week to include in the collection.—E. ANDERSON.

The annual meeting of the East London Branch N. S. S., was held on Sunday. The balance-sheet shows our liabilities have been reduced to 10s. 11d. The undersigned was re-elected secretary and treasurer; and Messrs. Haines Turner, Neate, Webber, T. B. Smart and G. H. Smart as committee. The Secretary was instructed to write the M.P.'s, of the Tower Hamlets, asking their support of Mr. Bradlaugh's motion on the 27th inst. Resolutions were adopted respecting the secretaryship of the N. S. S., and the School Board Election next November. Four new members were enrolled at the close of the meeting.—G. J. WARREN.

The Quarterly Tea and Meeting of the Camberwell Branch was held in their hall on Sunday, Jan. 18. The Branch is now in a good strong position, the various reports showing considerable progress for the last twelve months, and the

balance-sheet a balance on the right side larger than any since the commencement of the Branch, which will allow the executive to commence the financial year with renewed vigor. After the meeting some 300 members and friends sat down to tea, and a very enjoyable evening was spent. Songs by members, the Milton Hall Glee Union, and visitors from the Battersea Branch, a few dances, and short speech by Mr. Thomas closed our quarterly tea and soiree without the doxology.—R. G. LEES, Sec.

The London Secular Federation's course of Thursday evening Free Lectures at the Athenæum, Tottenham Court Road, are successful in spite of the severe weather. Mr. C. J. Hunt gave the second lecture; Mr. G. Standring gives the third on Thursday, January 22, and Mr. Foote winds up the course on the following Thursday with a lecture on "Heaven and Hell."

The Duke of Bedford did one good thing. He ordered his body to be cremated. The process was duly performed at Woking.

The Free Library Committee having refused to carry out the Sunday-opening order of the Leicester Town Council, definite instructions have been given, the hours of opening and closing being fixed by vote. The bigots of the committee left the Town Council in a huff, but the order will have to be carried out.

In *La Verité Philosophique* Dr. C. Letourneau concludes his interesting papers on Peuples Athées. He gives much evidence in support of the opinion that many races have no definite idea of God, and concludes by showing how the theistic idea gradually diminishes as science advances.

Curiously enough the authority of Wesley may be cited by those who think man naturally atheistic. He says, "after all that has been so plausibly written concerning 'the innate idea of God'; after all that has been said of its being common to all men in all ages and nations, it does not appear that man has naturally any more idea of God than any of the beasts of the field; he has no knowledge of God at all. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought by his own reflection, he is, by nature, a mere Atheist."

The evidence goes to show that while the belief in God is certainly not innate, it is developed from the belief in spirits, which obtains amongst nearly all savages, and is probably founded on their dreams.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* opens the New Year well. It is enlarged to sixty-four pages, and gives as frontispiece a portrait of Moses Harman, editor of *Lucifer*, of Kansas, and there is an editorial sketch of his life. Among the contents are some straightforward hitting at theology by Harry Hoover and a striking bit of verse by Voltairine De Cleyre.

The Grimsby press is still finding space for long letters on the New Testament. The Freethought side is ably maintained by Mr. J. W. Wittering, who gives his opponents a lesson in politeness.

The Hull Branch celebrates its second anniversary by a social gathering on January 28. There is to be a tea, concert, and ball. The tickets are 1s. 6d. each. We hope the gathering will be a great success.

A new monthly Freethought paper called the *Chicago Liberal* has been issued for January, 1891. It is edited by Mrs. Mattie Freeman.

The *Knaresborough Post* contains a very good letter from G. Hullah in reply to the alleged statements of the decline of Secularism, which has been going the rounds of the provincial press. Our friends in the country will do well to notice these statements in the local press, and demonstrate that we are not quite buried yet.

In France during the last twelvemonth 355 religious schools have been laicised and 66 monastic schools closed. Since 1886 1,575 schools and 465 classes have been secularised. No wonder the Pope feels very wrath with France. The Church is having her stronghold wrested from her.

Professor Huxley has reprinted his *Times* letters on General Booth's scheme in the form of a shilling pamphlet, under the title of *Social Diseases and Worse Remedies*. The collection also includes a reprinted article on Industrial Development.

Professor Max Müller's second course of Gifford lectures will be ready for publication in a week or so. It will be duly noticed in our columns.

Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers* gives a good account of Dr. Cooper, an Englishman by birth, who went to America in 1795, and resided there until his death in 1840. Dr. Cooper was a pronounced Materialist, and was obliged by religious bigotry to resign the presidency of South Carolina College. It is this very Freethinker, we take it, who is referred to in Edwin de Leon's *Thirty Years of My Life on Three Continents*, just published by Ward and Downey. Mr. De Leon says his creed was more than Voltairian, which is quite true, but adds—"a purer or a higher life no man ever led than he; a strange contradiction which I have also seen subsequently in other professed infidels."

The *Speaker* calls this "a limitation of view, hardly to be expected from a man who has seen so much of the world as Mr. De Leon." "Surely," our contemporary says, "it is now well enough known that creed has often little to do with conduct; indeed, it has been roundly asserted that mere creed never yet influenced conduct except for the worse."

The writer of "Varia" in the *Church Times* discusses Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling*. He says: "The volume as a whole impresses you with the idea that the biographer wishes you to understand that it was he who made shipwreck of Sterling's faith, and that he was very proud of having done it." Certainly this book most clearly lets out Carlyle's heresy and indifference as to whether his views were called Pantheism or Pottheism.

Elder F. W. Evans, the leader of the Shakers in America, wishes to see Colonel Ingersoll nominated as President of the United States. He believes he is the man needed to uphold the Republic against the Catholics and all who seek to effect a union of Church and State.

Good West-enders on their way to church last Sunday must have been awfully disgusted with the carnival on the Serpentine, with its gay flags, charcoal stoves and skating matches. The other parks presented similar scenes.

In the instalment of "Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life" in the *Newcastle Chronicle* for Jan. 17 Mr. Holyoake gives some reminiscences of good old Robert Owen, and therein of Thomas Holcroft, the actor, one of the pioneers of necessitarianism. An account of Holcroft will be found in Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

Secular Thought, which has reached its ninth volume, keeps up a high standard. It reprints part of Mr. Foote's article on Christmas, and is giving the debate on the gospels between C. Watts and the Rev. A. Stewart, of Aberdeen.

The late George Bancroft, the distinguished American historian and statesman was the son of a Unitarian minister, and was designed for the same profession. He did not see his way to do this however, and American literature has been the gainer.

The Leicester Secular Society has issued a new and handsome circular with a view of their hall, calling attention to the position of their Special Fund to replace the bequest of Mr. Gimson, which will lapse in 1893. For this Mr. Thomas Allsop munificently offered a sum of £100 on condition that £500 was raised by the end of last year. On Dec. 15 £435 had been raised, and Mr. Allsop extended the term until the end of March. About £65 is thus left to complete the amount, and a debt of £120 also needs to be cleared off to render the hall and institute self-supporting. Sydney A. Gimson, Esq., Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, will be happy to send the circular to any friends and to receive subscriptions.

The career of William Barnes, of Leicester, who has recently died in that town, shows the efficacy of resisting oppression. Half a century ago Mr. Barnes refused to pay

Church rates, and his determined refusal led to his imprisonment. But his imprisonment led to an agitation throughout the whole country, and at the end of eight months he was discharged without either paying the rate or the costs.

The Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society has had an average attendance of 1,900 persons. Sabbath superstition is slowly breaking up.

MRS. BESANT ON HERSELF AND OTHERS.

LAST Friday's (Jan. 16) *Star* contained a long article by Mrs. Besant entitled *Apologia Mea*. The following paragraph will be of interest to our readers.

"THE SECULAR SOCIETY.—I resigned my position in this when Mr. Foote was elected President, a year after I had become a member of the Theosophical Society. I have always strongly disapproved the policy adopted by Mr. Foote when he started the *Freethinker*, and changed the dignified and scholarly line of advocacy he had previously followed for one of rough caricature and mockery. He has as much right to choose his weapons as I to choose mine, and I have no desire to dictate his policy nor to limit his liberty. But I have an equal right to refuse to serve under a leader whose policy I believe to be mischievous and destructive of the best interests of the Freethought party. Mr. Bradlaugh was a chief under whom anyone might be proud to serve, whether or not one agreed with all his opinions, and his leadership was marked with a wide and generous liberality. But when he was replaced by a President whose materialism is narrow and dogmatic, and whose policy is one of insult instead of reason only, I felt it was necessary for me to resign. I continue to lecture for Branches of the National Secular Society who keep their platforms free for the discussion of all advanced questions."

Mr. Foote lost no time in replying to Mrs. Besant, as far as an answer seemed necessary in a newspaper. The following letter appeared in Saturday's *Star*.

"I see myself held up to public odium in a conspicuous part of your paper. Mrs. Besant chooses to denounce me under cover of 'apologising' for herself. My 'materialism' is described as 'narrow and dogmatic,' though it is no narrower than the materialism which Mrs. Besant herself advocated with much vehemence for thirteen years, while its dogmatism seems to lie in the impossibility of my being convinced by the jargon of Theosophy. I am also accused of indulging in 'rough caricature and mockery,' and of pursuing a policy which is 'one of insult instead of reason.' Now, epithets are usually matters of opinion, and taste is hardly susceptible of discussion. I will therefore refrain from occupying your space and boring your readers on these points. With your permission, I will draw attention to three facts:—

"1. Mrs. Besant's becoming a Theosophist, and my plain criticisms on her new faith, antedated my election as President of the National Secular Society, and may be assumed to have had something to do with her resignation.

"2. My policy, whatever it is, did not prevent Mr. Bradlaugh from nominating me as his successor, or the Society from unanimously electing me—Mrs. Besant being seated on the platform when the vote was taken.

"3. My policy is somehow consistent with the growth of the Society in regard to funds and numbers.

"I let these facts tell their own tale."

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

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

"Doan hang on to de ragged edge ob religion, chillun; de man wot says he'll be pufflickly satisfied if he gits jus' inside ob de gate ob hebben wen he dies, an' wot goes fur life on dat plan, will berry likely hab his nose smashed by collidin' wid de outside ob de gate wen St. Peter am a slammin' it shot for de las' time."

A PLEA FOR TRUTH.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY, M.A.

CHARITY is due to every sincere man, but not to proven error. If a man be in error, the more I love him the more will I hate the falsity that misleads him. When the wolf pleaded for compassion, the shepherd replied, "Mercy to you were cruelty to the lamb." It is difficult to see how it can be consistent with love to our fellow-beings that we should be tender to the errors that afflict them, or the superstition that devours them. Clemency becomes cruelty when it parts from common sense.

All this is too plain to require argument. But of late its force has been escaped by another plea. We are now told that in the progress of the world the old beliefs have lost their darker features. The old talons of persecution have been pared away; fanaticism has become unfashionable; hell has been spiritualised; and creeds that once roused agony, fear, and consequent intolerance are now softened into unrealised words or mystical meanings. Superstitions may remain, but they are now pretty superstitions, like a child's belief in fairies. And we are asked, Is it not unnecessary, nay cruel, to take away such sweet illusions, when they are so harmless? A gentleman who takes his family to church regularly, said to me, "I know as well any one that the clergyman preaches fables, but I do not care to worry my children by telling them so. When I take them to the pantomime, I don't tell them, All that scenery is only daubed pasteboard, the fairy there is merely a painted woman, and her jewels only glass, bought for a penny. Whether at church or theatre I prefer to humor their pleasant illusions, and let them remain happy in them as long as they can." It appeared to me strange that this gentleman should not see the great difference between transient illusion and permanent delusion. He humors the illusions of the pantomime, because he knows very well that his child will outgrow them. It would distress him very much if he thought that, when his child grew to be twenty years of age, it would still believe in the reality of fairies. But, in encouraging the pulpit fables, he is fostering things that, from being the illusions of childhood, harden into the delusions of the whole life.

Mr. Tennyson has put this common notion into rhyme, and his verses are the favorite quotation of the school we are considering.

"O thou that after toil and storm
May'st seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,
Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,
Her early heaven, her happy views,
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days."

These verses are nearly the only ones which the poet and his friends might wish obliterated from his fair pages, as representing (one must believe) his first timorous and unsteady step on a path which we may hope has since led to heights that shame their faithless fears. Passing their undertone of contempt for the female intellect, of which the poet was probably unconscious, let us consider what our duty is to that praying sister, or brother either, whose illusions we are called upon to spare. If our sister is praying in earnest, if doubt has not crept into her heart—we must not call it her intellect, I suppose—then her faith does not merely include

"Her early heaven, her happy views,"

but also her early hell, and some most unhappy views. If her prayer be not a mere attitude, she is probably imploring an angry God not to send her children, brothers, or friends into everlasting anguish and despair. If that be her creed, she can hardly be leading such melodious days that it should be cruel to hint that her apprehensions may be unfounded.

But the poet might remind us that he asks us to leave her the pleasing side of her creed only—to remove her fears, but humor her hopes though they be false. Our sister must be feeble indeed if this be possible; her powers must be very weak if she does not perceive that her Bible and her Prayer-book tell her as much of God's wrath as of his love, correlate hell and heaven, and that she has no better authority for her hopes than for her fears. But granting that the process be possible, and that we find her living in an atmosphere of rosy delusions, the question arises, ought we to avoid disturbing them? Do not let us confuse that question with any other. It is not whether we should

obtrude our opinions on others, but whether we should sanction their opinions when we believe them false; it is not whether we should be rude, but whether we should be sincere. One who loves truth will not need exhortation to try and make it attractive instead of repulsive. The danger is the other way, that truth will be so smooth and polite as not to be recognised for what it really is. The real question is whether truth should be concealed and suppressed out of consideration for any one's pleasant prejudices.

It is perfectly easy to show on general principles that such tampering with truth is disloyal and more dangerous than honest error itself. It is easy to show that to suppress truth is to suggest falsehood; that it is to foster a malarious atmosphere which brings forth not only pretty superstitions but ugly ones, and leaves the mind to be overgrown not only with gay weeds but rank poisons; that where a pleasant fiction finds shelter a dangerous error may nestle at its side; and that if the great souls of history had smoothed over falsehood because it was agreeable, and remained silent before the pet prejudices of weak minds, we should all be worshipping to-day the painted fetish dolls of the world's infancy.

But I propose at present to look at the matter from another and somewhat lower point of view. This theory of suppression is not only immoral, but rests upon an essential delusion. That delusion is that truth is hard, cold, unlovely, and that all the beauty rests with the illusions. The prevalence of this notion is easily explained. It is the natural tendency of an existing dogmatic system, when it finds some of its points coming into collision with common sentiment, to smooth and explain them away, cover them with velvet, so as to make itself as attractive as possible; and one of the oldest tricks of dogmatic art is to paint the opposing view in as dark colors as possible to make itself more pleasing by the contrast. The early Christians painted their own saints with beautiful tints on church windows, but the saints of other religions they painted as demons with terrible horns and flaming eyes; and the descendants of those early Christians have not lost their art. We know their skill in painting the infidel on his death-bed surrounded with horrors, the materialist given up to sensuality, the man of science living in an Arctic sea of negation, perishing without hope. It is no wonder that with these forbidding pictures in the distance so many are frightened back from the search for truth, and beg that the realm of delusions may be spared.

But there is one suspicious circumstance about all these pictures of the results of beliefs so invested with horrors; they are depicted by those who have never held those beliefs, who have no experience of their real bearings, and who must therefore have drawn upon their imagination for their facts. We do not hear the actual materialists complaining that their belief is hopeless, nor the real heretic crying out that he is in icy despair. They seem about as hearty and cheerful as other people. In one of our popular dramas, a rigidly righteous old lady is troubled because a certain blind youth is constantly cheerful; regarding blindness as sent by an afflicting providence, she shakes her head at the young man's happiness, and says that when tribulation is sent to us we ought to tribulate. This old lady, who, never having been blind, knew nothing of its resources, seems to have written a good deal of modern theology. I do not deny that there is a certain naturalness about her inferences concerning things she knows nothing about. When she appears in the guise of a popular preacher or a doctor of divinity, he sits down to consider what he would be and do if he (otherwise, of course, retaining his present views) were a materialist, or a sceptic, and how Paine and Voltaire must have died—if they died logically. But having never tried it, he is compelled to evolve each result out of his inner consciousness. The image so evolved must sooner or later be brought face to face with the fact, and the contrast between the two is sometimes astonishing. Let us review a few examples.—*Reprinted.*

(To be concluded.)

"On what did Mr Hicks preach this morning?" "On the platform." "I mean about what?" "About thirty minutes." "You never understand. I want to know what was the subject of his discourse?" "I don't know. He didn't say."

A little girl asked a minister, "Do you think my father will go to heaven?" "Why yes, my child; why do you ask?" "Well, because if he don't have his own way there he won't stay long I was thinking."

PAST A JOKE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the current week's *Fun* there appears an ironical quotation at the head of an article as follows:

Query: What is Faith?

Answer: Faith is that faculty which enables the Christian to believe that which *he is quite sure cannot be true.*—"*Sunday-school Examination Book.*"

It is surely a sign of the times when the comic papers begin to make jokes and fun out of the gross absurdities of the Christian belief. This is going further than any "profane joke," for it is ridiculing a mystery.—Yours, W. M. Knox.

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. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Medium that Fills All Space."

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 8, Concert by members and friends. Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8.15, Mr. W. S. De Mattos (Fabian), "The New Radical Policy." Thursday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, E., 7 30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Christian Socialism."

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7, dramatic recital; 7.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Superstition and Want, Twin Sisters." Thursday evening, debate between Mr. F. Millar (Liberty and Property Defence League) and Mr. Hubert Bland (Fabian) on "Is it Desirable that Land and the Means of Production should be Under Collective Control?" Friday, at 7.45, Science Classes (Hygiene and Chemistry).

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

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, Grove House, 1 The Grove, Broadway, Tuesday at 8, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Uselessness of Prayer."

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

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7, musical evening, orchestral band, ballads, etc. Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic class (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7, Mr. R. Forder, "Signs of the Zodiac." Tuesday, at 8, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Free will and Responsibility."

West London—Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court Road, Thursday, at 8.15, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Heaven and Hell." Free.

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "The Life and Times of Robert Owen."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road), 7.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bruno, Freethought Hero and Martyr."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. J. Rowney, "The Resurrection."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street, Mr. E. Stanley Jones, 3, "Theories of the Soul"; 7, "The Struggles of Science."

Crook—35 Gladstone Terrace, Sunnyside, 6.30, Mr. Dent, "Burns—with Selections from his Works."

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street, 12 noon, debating class, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "The Theology of Burns,"; 6.30, Mr. F. Taylor, "Hobbies."

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street.—11, Tontine Society; Discussion Class; 7, Mr. Doeg, "The Star of Bethlehem."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints', 6.30, Mr. Wainscott (of Bury), "Land Nationalisation." Free. Wednesday, at 8, dancing (admission sixpence).

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

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room, 6.30, Mr. J. Needler, "What we can Know of God."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea, 3, debating class, Mr. Jannaway, "Nature"; 7, Mr. Ho e.

Reading—"The Fox," Oxford Road, 7, meeting of members to receive annual report, etc., and elect president and committee for present year.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street. Hospital Sunday. Two series of special musical and other recitals: at 3 by lady friends, and at 7 by gentlemen (collections); tea at 5.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street, 7, Mr. S. M. Peacock, "Tennessee's Partner," a reading.

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street, 3, Mr. T. Phillips, "Early Christian Heresy."

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

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 1, Rushden; 8, Camberwell; 15, Woolwich; 22 (morning), Battersea. March 1, Woolwich.

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