

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 1891.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

CHRIST UP TO DATE.

THIS is an age of weak conviction and strong pretence. Christianity is perishing of intellectual atrophy. Its Scriptures and its dogmas are falling into more and more discredit. Mr. Gladstone may defend the Bible with passionate devotion and lofty ignorance, but better informed Christians see that the Old Testament is doomed. They say it must be read in a new light. Its science and history must be regarded as merely human; nay, its very morality savors of the barbarism of the Jews. Only its best ethical teaching, and its upward aspirations, are to be regarded as the workings of God in the Jewish mind. Nor is this all. There is a revolt against the supernaturalism of the New Testament. Christians like Dr. Abbott explain away the Resurrection itself as no physical fact, but a spiritual conception. The creed of Christendom is gradually melting away like a northern iceberg floating into southern seas. Pinnacle after pinnacle of glittering dogma, loosens, falls and sinks for ever. Only the central block remains intact, and we are assured it will never change. The storms of controversy will never rend it; the rays of the sun of science will never make an impression on its marble firmness. But Freethinkers smile at this cheap boast. They know the thaw will continue until the last fragment has melted into the infinite ocean.

The central, indissoluble part of Christianity is Jesus Christ. He will never fade, we are told. He is not for an age, but for all time. When all the dogmas of the Churches have perished, the divine figure of Christ will survive, and flourish in immortal beauty. All the world will yet worship him. "Christ" will be the universal passport in the depths of China, in the wilds of Africa, on the Tartar steppes, and among the haunted ruins of old Asia, as well as in the present Christendom of Europe and America.

This prophecy is very pretty, but it lacks precision. The prophets forget to tell us whether the divine figure of Christ is to be human or supernatural; the grandest of men or the smallest of gods. If he be indeed a god, they are playing strange tricks with his works and sayings; while, if he be indeed a mere man, they forget to explain how it is likely that the human race will ever look back to a single dead Jew as the moral microcosm, the consummate spiritual flower of humanity, the beacon of ideal life to every generation of voyagers on the sea of time.

Logic, however, must not be expected of Christians, at least in an age of dissolving views like the present. They will go on quoting Renan's prize-essay panegyric on Christ, without any reference to the rest of his *Vie de Jésus*. They will persist in quoting Mill's far-fetched eulogy, without referring to other passages in the essay *On Liberty*. But this is not all, nor even the worst. The sentimentalism of "popular" and "advanced" Christianity is turning Jesus Christ into a hero of romance. He is taking the place of King Arthur, of blameless memory; and we shall soon see the Apostles take the place of [the Knights of the

Round Table. Rancid orators and flatulent poets are gathering to the festival. Jesus Christ will make a fine speech for the one set, and fine copy for the other. The professional biographers will cut in for a share in the spoil, and the brains of impudence will be ransacked to eke out the stories of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Lives of Christ are becoming quite fashionable. Fleetwood's honest but prosaic book had fallen into neglect. The very maulers of old bookstalls thrust out their tongues at it. The still older book of Jeremy Taylor—a work of real genius and golden eloquence—was too stiff reading for an idle generation. Just in the nick of time the English translation of Renan appeared. The first edition was less scientific than the thirteenth. Renan had only just broken away from the Catholic Church. He was also under the influence of his visit to Palestine. His *Vie de Jésus* was therefore a sentimental Parisian romance. The smell of patchouli was on every page. Yet here and there the quick reader caught the laugh of Voltaire.

Renan's book set a new vogue. The severe, critical Strauss was laid aside in England, and "the Savior's" life was "cultivated" on new principles. By and bye the writers and publishers found there was "money in it." Jesus Christ could be made to pay. Dr. Farrar made thousands out of his trashy volumes, and his publishers netted a fortune. Mr. Haweis has done the same trick with four volumes. Ward Beecher spent his last days on a Life of Christ. Talmage is occupied on the same labor of love—and profit. Even the Catholic Church is not behind-hand. Père Didon has put forth his Life of Christ in two fat volumes as an antidote to the poison of Renan. And the end is not yet. Nevertheless we see the beginning of the end. It was bound to come. After the prose writers prance the versifiers, and Sir Edwin Arnold is first in the motley procession.

Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* was a fairly good piece of work. He has caught the trick of Tennysonian blank-verse, and he put some of the best features of Buddhism before the English public in a manner that commanded attention. Standing aloof from Buddhism himself, though sympathising with it, he was able to keep an impartial attitude. Further, he stuck to the Buddhist stories as he found them. All the license he took was that of selection and versification. But his recent *Light of the World* is another matter. He dishes up Jesus Christ in it, and Pontius Pilate and Mary Magdalene and the Wise Men of the East, as freely as Tennyson dishes up Arthur and Launcelot and Guinevere and the rest of that famous company. His style, too, is Tennysonian, to a certain degree. It is something like the Master's on its general level, but we miss the flashing felicities, the exquisite sentence or image that makes us breathless with sudden pleasure. Sir Edwin's style has always a smack of the *Daily Telegraph*. He is high-flown in expressing even small ideas, or in describing trivialities.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

T A B O O S.

(Concluded from p. 86.)

VARIOUS reasons have been assigned for the taboos upon certain kinds of food found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. As we have these laws they seem to represent a rough attempt at classifying animals it was beneficial or hurtful to eat. Some ridiculous mistakes were made by the divine tabooist. The hare, a rodent, was declared to "chew the cud" (Lev. xi., 6; Deut. xiv., 7). The camel was excluded because it does not divide the hoof; yet in reality it has cloven feet. But doubtless it was seen it might be disastrous to kill the camel for food. We have quoted in these columns (*Freethinker*, Oct. 19, 1890) Mr. Frazer's opinion that the pig was originally a sacred animal among the Jews.

The cause of the custom of tabooing certain kinds of food, which was in existence long before the Levitical laws were written, perhaps arose partly from reverence, partly from aversion. It may, too, have been connected with the totemism of early tribes. No less than one hundred and eighty Bible names have a zoological signification. Caleb, the dog tribe; Doeg, the fish tribe, may be instanced as specimens.

Touching the carcass of a dead animal was taboo, and the taboo was contagious. In Lev. xi., 21—25, we find rigorous laws on the subject. Whoever carries the carcass of an unclean animal must wash his garments. The objects upon which a carcass accidentally falls, must be washed, and left in water till the evening, and if of earthenware the defilement is supposed to enter into the pores, and the vessel, oven, or stove-range must be broken.

Touching a corpse was taboo among the Greeks,* Romans,† Hindoos,‡ Parsees,§ and Phœnicians.|| If a Jew touched a dead body—even a dead animal (Lev. xi., 39)—he became unclean, and if he purified not himself, "that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Num. xix., 13). So "those who have defiled themselves by touching a dead body are regarded by the Maoris as in a very dangerous state, and are sedulously shunned and isolated" (J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, vol. i., p. 169). Doubtless it was felt that death was something which could communicate itself, as disease was seen to do.

When iron was first discovered it was invested with mystery and held as a charm. It was tabooed. The Jews would use no iron tools in building the temple or making an altar (Ex. xx., 25; 1 Kings vi., 7). Roman and Sabine priests might not be shaved with iron but only with bronze, as stone knives were used in circumcision (Ex. iv., 25; Josh. v., 2). To this day a Hottentot priest never uses an iron knife, but always a sharp splint of quartz in sacrificing an animal or circumcising a boy. In the boys' game of touch iron we may see a remnant of the old belief in its charm. When Scotch fishermen were at sea and one of them happened to take the name of God in vain, the first man who heard him called out "Cauld air," at which every man of the crew grasped the nearest bit of iron and held it between his hand for a while.¶

Women were especially tabooed after childbirth and during menstruation (Lev. xii., and xv.) Among the Indians of North America, women at this time are forbidden to touch men's utensils, which would be so defiled by their touch that their subsequent use would be attended with misfortune. They walk round the fields at night dragging their garments, this being considered a protection against vermin. Among the Eskimo, of Alaska, no one will eat or drink from the same cup or dishes used by a woman at her confine-

ment until it has been purified by certain incantations.

In the Church of England Service, what is now called the "Thanksgiving of Women after childbirth, commonly called the Churching of Women," was formerly known as *The Order of the Purification of Women*, and was read at the church door before the "unclean" creatures were permitted to enter the "holy" building. This should be known by all women who think it their duty to be "churched" after fulfilling the sacred office of motherhood.

In Hebrew the same word signifies at once a holy person, a harlot and a sodomite—sacred prostitution having been common in ancient times (see *Freethinker*, June 10, 1888). Mr. Frazer, noticing that the rules of ceremonial purity observed by divine kings, priests, homicides, women in childbirths, and so on, are in some respects alike, says: "To us these different classes of persons appear to differ totally in character and condition; some of them we should call holy, others we might pronounce unclean and polluted. But the savages make no such moral distinction between them; the conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons is that they are dangerous and in danger, and the danger in which they stand and to which they expose others is what we should call spiritual or supernatural, that is, imaginary."**

Few would suspect it, but it is likely that the custom of wearing Sunday clothes comes from certain garments being tabooed in the holy places. Among the Maoris "A slave or other person would not enter a *wahi tapu*, or sacred place, without having first stripped off his clothes; for the clothes, having become sacred the instant they entered the precincts of the *wahi tapu*, would ever after be useless to him in the ordinary business of life."† According to the Rabbins, the handling of the Scriptures defiles the hands, that is, entails a washing of purification. This because the notions of holiness and uncleanness are alike merged in the earlier conception of taboo. Blood, the great defilement, is also the most holy thing. Just as with the Hindus to this day, the excrements of the cow are the great means of purification.

Dr. Kalisch says, "Next to sacrifices purifications were the most important of Hebrew Rituals."‡ The purpose was to remove the stain of contact either with the holy or unclean taboos. A holy, or taboo, water—or, as it is called in the Authorised Version, "water of separation"—was prepared. First, an unblemished red heifer was slain by the son of the high priest outside the camp, burnt, and the ashes mingled with spring water, which was supposed to have a magical effect in removing impurity when the tabooed person was sprinkled with it on the third and again on the seventh day. It was called a "purification for sin" (Num. xix., 9), and was doubtless as good as the blood of the Lamb, if not equal to Pears' soap.

In the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Mr. J. G. Frazer says: "Amongst the Jews the vow of the Nazarite (Num. vi., 1-21) presents the closest resemblance to the Polynesian taboo. The meaning of the word Nazarite is 'one separated or consecrated,' and this is precisely the meaning of taboo. It is the head of the Nazarite that is especially consecrated, and so it was in the taboo. The Nazarite might not partake of certain meats and drinks, nor shave his head, nor touch a dead body—all rules of taboo." Mr. Frazer points out other particulars in the mode of terminating the vow. Secondly that some of the rules of Sabbath observance are identical with the rules of strict taboo; such are the prohibi-

* Eurip. *Alcest*, 100. † Virgil *Æn.*, vi., 221; Tacit. *Annal.*, 162.
‡ Manu, v., 59, 62, 74-79. § Vendid iii., 25-27. || Lucian *Dea Syr.*, 523.
¶ E. J. Guthrie, *Old Scottish Custom*, p. 149. Charles Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland*, iii., 218.

* *Golden Bough*, vol. i., p. 171.

† Shortland's *Southern Districts of New Zealand*, p. 293, sq.
‡ Leviticus, pt. ii., p. 187.

tions to do any work, to kindle a fire in the house, to cook food and to go out of doors.

We still have some remnant of the Sabbath taboo, and many a child's life is made miserable by being checked for doing what is tabooed on the Lord's Day. Other taboos abound. We must not, for instance, question the sacred books, the sacred character of Jesus, or the existence of the divine being. These subjects are tabooed. For reverence is a virtue much esteemed by solemn humbugs. J. M. WHEELER.

REMINISCENCES OF CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

By G. W. FOOTE.

(Continued.)

WHILE at Northampton with Mr. Bradlaugh, and on other occasions, I saw something of his personal tastes and habits. He struck me as an abstemious man. He was far from a great eater, and I never noticed him drink anything at dinner but claret, which is not an intoxicating beverage. On the whole, I should say, it is less injurious to the stomach and brain than tea or coffee. He was rather fond of a cup of tea seventeen years ago, and latterly his fondness for it developed into something like a passion. More than once I found him at St. John's Wood drinking a big cup of pretty strong tea, and was seduced by his genial invitation into joining him in that reckless indulgence. He used to smoke too in the old days, but I believe he gave up the practice under Mrs. Besant's influence. About seven years ago, however, he resumed it. I do not think he ever attained to the dignity of a pipe. He smoked cigars. Some time in April, 1889, I spent an hour with him at the House of Commons. He got the Speaker's leave to take me into the lower smoke-room, and we "discussed" a cigar and some claret while discussing some Freethought business. The claret he seemed indifferent to, but he puffed the cigar with an air of enjoyment.

During the Northampton election times I used to take a good stiff daily walk. All through my youth I had plenty of exercise in the open air, and I still grow desperately fusty without a brisk tramp at least once in the twenty-four hours. Mr. Bradlaugh generally took a drive, and I remember telling him with youthful audacity that he ought to walk for his health's sake. Of course it was difficult for him to walk in the streets. His stature and bulk made him too noticeable, and mobbing was very unpleasant. But he might have driven out of town and trudged a mile or two on the country roads. My opinion is that his neglect of physical exercise helped to shorten his life. Occasional bouts of fishing were very well in their way, but *daily* exercise is the necessary thing. I do not forget the tremendous labor, physical as well as mental, of lecturing on burning questions to large audiences. All that, however, goes on in hot, crowded rooms, full of vitiated air; and it gives no proper exercise to the legs and loins or the lower vital organs.

After one of my remonstrances Mr. Bradlaugh invited me to play a game of billiards. It was the only time I ever played with him. His style with the cue was spacious and splendid. The balls went flying about the board, and I chaffed him on his flukes. He had not the temperament of a billiard-player. Still, I have heard that he played a fair game at St. Stephen's; but I can hardly believe it without first-hand testimony. I am willing to believe, however, that he was a good chess-player. Certainly he had a head for it. But chess is a vile game for a brain-worker, whose recreations should never involve a mental strain.

When I first knew Mr. Bradlaugh he was living at Tottenham. I never visited him there, but I often called on him at his later lodgings in Turner-street, Commercial-road. He occupied the ground floor,

consisting of two rooms. The back was his bedroom, and the front his library and workshop. It was what the Americans call a one-horse affair. Shelves all round the room were filled with books. Mr. Bradlaugh sat at a desk with his back to the fireplace. On his right was the door communicating with his bedroom, facing him the door opening on the passage, and on his right the street window. The room itself could hardly have been more than twelve or thirteen feet square. I once told him he was too near the fireplace, and he said it was sometimes good to have the poker handy. At that I stared, and he told me the following story.

One day a gentleman called on him and was invited to take a chair. He sat down facing Mr. Bradlaugh, and explained that he wanted advice on a very particular matter. God Almighty had told him to kill someone, and he had a difficulty in selecting a victim. Mr. Bradlaugh put his hand behind him and quietly grasped the poker. The inspired gentleman put the problem as a knotty one, and begged the assistance of the clever Iconoclast. "Well," said Mr. Bradlaugh, keeping quite cool, "what do you say to the Archbishop of Canterbury?" "The very man!" exclaimed the inspired gentleman. He got Mr. Bradlaugh to give him the Archbishop's address, and said "Good-day," with a profusion of thanks. Mr. Bradlaugh went to the door to look for a policeman, but none was visible, and the inspired gentleman was soon out of sight.

"So you see," said Mr. Bradlaugh, "It's good to have the poker handy. I never saw or heard of the man again, and I knew he couldn't get near the Archbishop. There are too many flunkeys in the way."

Those were my struggling days, and Mr. Bradlaugh was very kind to me. I remember the Sunday evening when I told him I thought of taking to the Freethought platform. He pointed out the hard and thorny path I should have to tread, but when he saw I was resolved on the attempt, he put his hand on my shoulder and said "There is no young man in the movement I would sooner welcome."

In the very same room, on another Sunday evening a little later, I first saw James Thomson. He came down to the Hall of Science with Mr. Bradlaugh, in whose employment he then was, and I gave him the article I had brought for the *National Reformer*. He shook hands very cordially, and I was delighted to meet one for whose poetry I had a profound admiration.

It was also at the Hall of Science, about the same time, that I met the eccentric Mr. Turberville, brother to Mr. Blackmore, the novelist. He was a man of parts with a bee in his bonnet. He claimed kinship with Turberville, a minor poet of the sixteenth century, and he loved to talk of poetry. His knowledge of Shakespeare was profound and minute. He admired Mr. Bradlaugh's perorations immensely, as well as his bold defence of Freethought. He made out a will in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor, but he subsequently made another will, and died in circumstances that necessitated an inquest. By agreement, however, Mr. Bradlaugh obtained £2,500 from the estate, and the windfall came opportunely, for his struggles and litigations had involved him in considerable debt. I know he often had to borrow money on heavy interest. One day, at Turner-street, he told me that a creditor of this species had coolly invited him to dinner. "Hang it," he said, "you can't dine with a man who charges you sixty per cent." G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

The *Independent Pulpit* opens with a good paper on the Astronomy of the Ancients, by C. L. Abbott, who gives evidence that in early times the sky was considered solid. Mr. J. P. Richardson replies in the negative to the question "Is Christianity a Religion of Peace?"

MR. BRADLAUGH'S ESTATE.

THERE seems to be some misunderstanding on this subject. I therefore publish the following explanation.

I have offered to co-operate with Mrs. Bonner in settling Mr. Bradlaugh's affairs. She has accepted my offer, and appointed Mr. J. M. Robertson as her representative.

Some delay is inevitable in such matters. Before the basis of any public appeal could be assured, it was necessary to see what part of their claim the debenture-holders were willing to forego. Mr. Bradlaugh's library had to be carefully valued. This has been done by Mr. C. Herbert. Finally, there were the remaining assets, in the shape of publications, copyrights, etc. All these things required to be estimated prior to taking definitive action. When this is done I shall put my name to a clear business-like document. I shall also subscribe my mite to the fund it may be necessary to raise.

No one who knows me could think me indifferent to Mr. Bradlaugh's memory. I fully recognise that his indebtedness should be settled. He incurred liabilities, not in wasteful living, but in carrying on a great public work. But I do not think the Freethought party should be expected, or asked, to bear the whole of this burden. Many political and social admirers of Charles Bradlaugh should, and probably would, contribute something to clear his name of debt, which was incurred in struggles forced upon him by those who only repented when he lay dying. Such persons, however, could not subscribe money for a Freethought Hall and Institute to his memory. I am, therefore, clearly and decidedly of opinion that the two projects should be kept separate and distinct.

The National Secular Society's Executive, in my opinion, is more than justified in the course it is now pursuing. No other course seems possible and prudent. The Memorial Committee has been greatly enlarged by the vote of the Executive, though strictly confined to members of the National Secular Society. Any Freethinker on the face of the earth can subscribe, but the disposition of the funds, the appointment of trustees, etc., must lie with the only Freethought organisation that exists in England. That is the view of the Executive, and it is the only basis on which I could feel any satisfaction in working.

G. W. FOOTE.

"BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL."

TO THE FREETHINKERS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

Following the example of our American brethren, who have raised a "Paine Memorial Hall" in the city of Boston, the Executive of the National Secular Society has resolved to raise a fund for erecting a Freethought Hall and Institute in memory of Charles Bradlaugh, whose name will thus be continuously associated with the spread and maintenance of those principles which were the inspiration of his life.

Thousands of Freethinkers are mourning the loss of their great leader, and anxious to express their feelings of admiration, gratitude, and affection towards him. What better opportunity could they desire than the one which is now offered?

Although the present state of the law does not allow of a Freethought Society holding any kind of property, there are methods by which this project can be satisfactorily realised.

Donations will be held by the National Secular Society, or by the appointed Treasurer on its behalf, until the project is ripe for execution; when the total amount will be invested in the Hall and Institute in the names of a sufficiently large number of elected persons, who will act as Trustees for the Freethought party.

The remainder of the required amount will consist of shares in a Building Company. These will be fixed at One Pound each, so that the poorer Freethinkers may participate in the commemoration of their lost leader.

The subjoined names are those of a Committee appointed at a special meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive on Thursday, February 12. As soon as possible the Committee will be increased, so as to include a larger number of Freethought workers throughout the country.

Mr. Robert Forder has been elected as Secretary to the Committee, and donations or applications for shares can be sent to him immediately.

Further particulars will be given in subsequent announcements. Meanwhile, we have the honor, ladies and gentlemen, to remain,

Yours very truly,

G. W. FOOTE, *President, N. S. S.*

G. J. Holyoake, R. Killick, E. Pownceby, W. H. Reynolds, J. Robertson, J. M. Robertson, F. Rutt, J. Samson, R. O. Smith, Thornton Smith (Mrs.), Geo. Standring, E. Truelove, E. M. Vance (Miss), J. M. Wheeler.

ROBERT FORDER, *Secretary.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO TUESDAY, MARCH 3.

H. L. (first instalment), 2s. 6d.; E. Gage, 2s.; G. H. Webster, 6s.; Alpha, 1s.; H. Long Jacob, 5s.; Ball's Pond Auditor's fee, 5s.; A. J. Marriott, £1 1s.; S. Holmes, £1; W. H. Harrup, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Samson, £5; T. Hearne-Seymour, £1; E. O. (an Irishman), 5s.; J. P. (per Geo. Standring), £2; G. Bernard Shaw (per R. O. Smith), £2 19s.; L. Smali, 5s.; G. R., £20; W. H. Roe, 2s.; G. Brittain, 6s.; J. G. (per Mrs. Bonner), £1 1s.; Mrs. and Miss Hull, £5.—R. FORDER, sec.

[Other sums have arrived too late for acknowledgment.]

PRESENTATION TO MR. ROBERT FORDER.

A SELECT company of Mr. Forder's friends dined together on Monday evening at the Manchester Hotel. After the repast a goodly number of songs and recitations were given by Miss Stevens, Miss Vance, Mr. Moss, Mr. Trevillion, junr., Mr. Fowler, Mr. Trevillion, senr., Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Truelove, the united ages of the last three veterans approaching 240 years. Mr. Standring gave selections on the piano, in which he introduced the strains spoken of in another column as "anæmic."

Mr. FOOTE, who presided, in presenting Mr. Forder with a cheque for £127 13s. 9d., spoke of his long, earnest, loyal, and invaluable services to the Freethought movement in troublous times. The few who were present were only typical of numbers throughout the country who would have been glad to come. Mr. Bradlaugh's recent death had kept many from coming to London again. But Mr. Bradlaugh would thoroughly approve of what had been done, and were he present he also would extend his hand to Mr. Forder and say "Well done."

Mr. FORDER, in returning thanks, alluded to the time when he first applied for the post of Secretary, and was chosen, by the advice of Mr. Bradlaugh, contrary to his own expectation. They had had troublous times when he was stronger and younger, and he had done, to the best of his ability, the work required of him. The movement had a past to be proud of. He thanked the friends who had urged him to reconsider his resignation, but he felt a younger and stronger man was needed, and he should not satisfy his conscience, since he could not give the same time and energy as before. He should ever consider himself a soldier in the Freethought ranks, and when no longer secretary, should devote the labor of his life in the endeavor to extend Freethought principles.

They are having a controversy in the *Jewish Chronicle* as to whether it is necessary for Jews to have on their hats while swearing in courts of justice. It seems this draws undesired attention upon the witnesses, and may even subject them to suspicion, there being too many black sheep among the chosen people, whose evidence magistrates have too much cause to suspect. At any rate, putting on the hat and asking for the Old Testament always puts an antagonistic lawyer on the *qui vive*, and some good Jews desire to be relieved from this invidious position.

The German imperial princes are baptised in Jordan water. All that is not used of one supply is carefully reserved for the next christening. Superstition is superstition, but the German mind is thrifty, and thinks it better to use stale Jordan water than to send too many commissions to Palestine.

Polygamous Mormons are emigrating to Mexico. Two hundred families have gone already, and two thousand more are going during the spring and summer. Thus the people who stick to the teaching of the Bible, and try to imitate Jehovah's favorites, are being chivvied by mock-Bibliolators from place to place. Abraham, the friend of God; Jacob, the man he loved; David, the man after his own heart; and Solomon, the wisest fool that ever lived; would all be spit at if they lived to-day by the very Christians who pretend to admire them. And if they carried their "morality" out to the bitter end, Jehovah himself couldn't save them from the treadmill.

Booth has been lecturing abroad on "The Extinction of Pauperism." Jesus said the poor would always remain, and Christianity, after an innings of 1800 years, has failed to extinguish poverty. Booth may beat Jesus, but we much doubt if he is on the right track.

George Renwick eases his soul in the *Newcastle Daily Journal* on the unholy alliance in that district, and presumably elsewhere, between Nonconformists and Atheists for political objects. He says the Atheists profit most by this alliance, and declares there is no half-way house between true blue Conservatism and Infidelity. Probably the gentleman is half right. A true blue Conservative sometimes talks a little sense. When Balaam's ass did speak she was for once, at any rate, in the right.

According to Baxter it is just five years before the second coming of Jesus Christ—March 5, 1896, when 144,000 virgin Baxterites will ascend to heaven. Plenty of time to rake in the shekels before then.

Prophet Baxter has been having a lively time at Reading, his lectures on the near approach of the end of the world being attended with tumultuous disorder, for which several youths have been brought before the magistrates. Baxter was asked if some events he prophesied years ago to take place in 1890 had not come to pass. The prophet admitted he might be a little out as to the exact date, but "that the things would happen there could be no doubt."

Here is the Prophet Baxter's latest Biblical discovery:—"The name Parnell contains 666 as the sum total of the numerical value of the letters composing it in the Greek language, *Parnellos*: thus, P80, a1, r100, r100, n50, e5, l30, l30, o70, s200—666. This may be taken as a fulfilment of Revelation xiii., 18." Mr. Baxter was wrong about Napoleon III. and Prince Jérôme and General Boulanger, and takes no notice of the fact that his own name contains the number of the beast.

"Blasphemers" are being savagely treated in Germany for opposing the Christian faith in popular language. Meanwhile the Christian gentleman who sits on the throne is reviewing his troops and inspecting his engines of destruction. Lunching with a body of officers on Monday, he told them that artillery was the very backbone of an army. Thus while the Freethinkers, who desire and work for international amity, are rotting in gaol, the imperial disciple of the Prince of Peace is gloating over the weapons of destruction which are to pound hosts of living men into masses of raw, bloody, agonising flesh.

A Plymouth correspondent informs us of a wonderful faith case wrought in Norwich on the person of a lady. Her address is given as Mrs. Thorn, 33 Mill Hill-road, Earlham-road. Perhaps one of our Norwich friends will gain a little amusement by investigating the affair. Our Plymouth correspondent doesn't believe the story, but it is trumpeted about there, and is "vouched for" by Mr. W. Hey, 4 Saltram-terrace, Plympton.

Mr. Spurgeon recently gave an illustration of how Christianity was good news for sinners. He told of one Bill, a regular "bad 'un," a sort of Bill Sykes. The missionary had a deal of trouble with the man, but at length he said, "Bill, Jesus Christ took upon himself the sins of men who believe on him." Bill answered, "If I believe in him, did he take mine?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then if he took 'em, I've not got 'em." "That's just it," said the missionary; "and he suffered for them." "Then I shan't have to suffer for

'em," exclaimed Bill, and he embraced the glad tidings. At which Mr. Spurgeon rejoices and a thinking man will reflect.

This is the good news according to Spurgeon:

You may rob, you may cheat, you may lie,
Or do any foul deed that you will.
No odds, in the sweet bye-and-bye
'Tis Jesus will settle the bill.

The suggestion made at a Conference at Middlesborough on the eternal question, "Why don't the working-men go to church?" that they might be brought in if the parsons only offered beer, reminds us of some lines by William Blake, the painter-poet:

Dear mother, dear mother, the church is cold,
But the alehouse is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides, I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in heaven will never do harm.

But if at the church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the church to stray.

The great visionary was so enraptured with the prospect that he saw in it the beginning of the great reconciliation of good and evil. He continues:

And God, like a Father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,
But kiss him and give him both drink and apparel.

Such an affecting scene as this between God and the Devil deserves to be illustrated, though no artist but William Blake himself could do the subject justice.

One of the most ingenious explanations of the Trinity we ever heard was that of an oriental mystic. He said God was Love, Jesus the Loved One, and the Holy Ghost the Lover.

That Love, the Loved One, and the Lover
All three are only One, discover!

We recently came across a curious book called *Divarigation of the New Testament*, by Thomas Wirgman. It was published in 1834, and seems devoted to showing that the New Testament is a compound of the word of God and the word of man. Part of the book has half of the page colored yellow and headed "word of God," the other half blue and "word of man." The former gives the moral precepts and the latter the narrative portion. It seems a curious attempt at rationalism by a believer.

Dr. Westbrook gives a good illustration of how the so-called non-sectarian reading of the Bible in the schools can be made to work. He knew a lady-teacher who, being a devout Trinitarian and deeming that a cardinal point of the Christian faith, read daily the passage 1 John v., 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," so that her pupils might be troubled with no doubts on that subject. But she found these words were not in the Revised Version, and on inquiry discovered they were a forged interpolation. She became a Unitarian, and now reads, "There is but one God the Father."

Hugh Price Hughes claims all the Labor representatives in the House of Commons, including Mr. Thomas Burt, a Methodist. We beg Mr. Hughes to be good enough to tell us what Methodist church Mr. Burt ever belonged to. Our impression is that Mr. Hughes is, as usual, stating as an absolute fact what is only an agreeable rumor.

A letter in the *Spectator* gives as a specimen of the way in which texts get muddled by attending three services per Sunday the reply of a person as to what were the Sunday texts. He answered, "And Nathan said unto David, out of the fish's belly; almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Emphasis counts for much in oratory. We have heard of a congregation sent tittering by the way in which the parson read the account of God and the angels dining with Abraham (Gen. xviii.) He read the eighth verse with full emphasis on the last word but one, thus: "And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they *did* eat."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Friday, March 6, Fabian Society, Bloomsbury Hall, W.C., at 8, "The Case Against an Eight Hours' Bill."
 Sunday, March 8, Hall of Science, Old-street, London, E.C., at 7, "Christianity and Science."
 Friday, March 13, Temperance Hall, Doddington Grove, Battersea Park-road, at 8, "Heaven and Hell." Admission free.
 March 15, 22, 29, Hall of Science.
 April 5, Birmingham; 12, Camberwell; 19, Belfast; 26, Liverpool.
 May 10, Camberwell; 24, Manchester.
 June 7, Camberwell; 14 and 21, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.
 SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.
 If 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. THURLOW intimates his change of address from that printed in the *Almanack*. It is now 34 Wetherell-road, South Hackney.
 S. HARTMAN.—Your excellent suggestions shall be laid before the Memorial Committee. We note your contingent promise to subscribe two guineas quarterly for two years, and to collect if possible the sum of £50.
 W. HUNT.—Our phrase is explained by the context in our article.
 G. V. BALL.—The suggestion shall be borne in mind.
 J. MELLING.—It is a domestic squabble. Let the Christians fight it out among themselves.
 P. BALDWIN.—Shall appear.
 J. M. STEELE.—Thanks. See paragraph.
 T. PHILLIPS.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Foote's lecture has caused such a stir in Spennymoor. Canon Taylor's articles appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for, we think, October 1888.
 J. S. KITCHING.—The word *Atheism* does not occur in the Principles of the National Secular Society.
 J. TOMKINS.—Your excellent letter is too long for our columns. We shall be glad to see the Rev. J. Cunningham's answer if it appears.
 J. SAUNDERS.—Your suggestion shall be considered.
 E. GWINNEL.—"Devil-dodger" has already been used in our columns. We are astonished to hear you say that it was used in a play at Toole's Theatre the other night. The phrase comes from America.
 W. S.—Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* is a good book, but expensive.
 J. COLLINSON.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."
 The *Freethinker* and other Secular literature is supplied by Mrs. Mayo, Pinner; and T. Wackett, St. Alban's-road, Watford.
 E. PACK.—It can hardly be expected that the N. S. S. can tell off a special speaker to oppose every lecturer of the Christian Evidence Society in every part of London. We see no reason why Mr. Dunn should be specially followed up.
 R. BEDFORD.—We earnestly hope the Bradford Freethinkers will unite and form one strong society. Those who stand in the way, if there are such, should be thrust aside or ignored.
 E. ANDERSON.—The resolution is a little hasty.
 W. HOLLAND.—He is the younger brother of the late Charles Bradlaugh.
 G. NAEWIGER.—Salvationists have no right to close the doors of any meeting to which the public have been invited, and refuse to let any one go out. It is a piece of illegal, barefaced impudence. They have a right to prevent disturbance, but none to stop people from going out in an orderly way.
 C. SEDGWICK.—Politicians and social reformers might contribute to the Northampton Memorial. It seems to us that Freethinkers should support the Secular Memorial and the Fund for settling Mr. Bradlaugh's affairs.
 QUIZ.—(1) No one ventures to ascribe the oldest manuscript of the Gospels to earlier than the fourth century. Mr. Wheeler will shortly write upon this point. (2) Some apocryphal works were read in the churches, and are spoken of by early Christian fathers as "inspired." (3) The passage in Josephus which says Jesus did many wonderful works,

is generally allowed to be spurious, and there is no other corroborative evidence of the gospel miracles of any value. C. F.—God calls David "a man after mine own heart" in Acts xiii., 22. See also 1 Sam. xiii., 14, and 1 Kings xv., 5.
 A. RENNOLLS.—See paragraph.
 G. DALY.—We are too busy to answer such letters by post. All that remains of the writings of Papias are the passages quoted by Irenæus and Eusebius. Of course Eusebius could not have known any one who knew Jesus or the Apostles. He lived in the fourth century.
 DUBITANS.—Colonel Ingersoll is not bound to reply to every critic. He is essentially a gentleman, and perhaps he could not descend to the level of Father Lambert. He has always eschewed personalities.
 J. C. (Sheffield).—Glad to hear you have started a shop at 48 Attercliffe Common for the sale of advanced literature. We shall do our best shortly to stir the local Secularists into greater activity.
 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—Auckland Times and Herald—Daily News—Spennymoor News—Echo—Redditch Indicator—Bacup Times—Chat—Accrington Times—Croydon Times—Reading Observer—Faithful Words—Johannesburg Standard and Digger's News—Mid-Surrey Gazette—Leeds Mercury—Newcastle Journal—Northern Daily Telegraph—De Dageraad—Fair Play—Truthseeker—Open Court.
 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.

The London Hall of Science was crowded on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered his Oration on Charles Bradlaugh. The oration was followed with profound attention, and there was extraordinary enthusiasm at its close. A good collection was taken for the Children's Party.

During the four remaining Sundays in March a special course of lectures will be delivered at the London Hall of Science by Mr. Foote. They are very comprehensive, and he will take pains to make them both instructive and interesting. The subjects are (1) Christianity and Science, (2) Christianity and Morality, (3) Christianity and Political Progress, (4) Christianity and Social Progress. Some fair discussion may reasonably be expected after these lectures.

Mr. Foote's free lecture at the Temperance Hall Doddington-grove, Battersea, drew a crowded meeting on Friday, Feb. 27. Mr. J. H. Ellis took the chair. The lecture was on "The Grand Old Book." There was plenty of questioning and discussion. The collection jumped up from five shillings to a pound. Mr. Moss was to follow, on Friday, March 6, with a lecture on "The Glory of Secularism," and Mr. Foote will wind up on March 13 with a discourse on "Heaven and Hell."

Our American exchanges have of late arrived fitfully and much behind date. We have only just received the *Investigator* and the *Truthseeker* with obituary notices of Charles Bradlaugh. The *Investigator* calls him "the greatest citizen of England." But it adds—"The political fame of Bradlaugh has of late somewhat served to hide that greater fame which he won as an iconoclast in earlier life, but it is as the champion of Freethought principles, as the opponent of Christian superstitions, that he will be immortalised."

The *Truthseeker* publishes a portrait and a biography of Charles Bradlaugh. The biography is very well done, but there is a curious falsehood in the last paragraph. It is there stated that "few men were more loved," which is true; but what is not true is that he "boasted he could summon an army of one million men to level Westminster at his command." This is probably founded on the apocryphal story that he said he could have brought a quarter of a million men to his aid, when he was ejected from the House of Commons, by merely raising his hat.

The Leicester Secular Society sends us its annual report. We commend it to the attention of the Christians who prate about the decay of Secularism. The Society is progressing,

financially and otherwise, and has raised nearly £500 to carry on its work to the end of the century.

Mr. Gimson informs us that in inclosing a cheque of two guineas to the Leicester Secular Hall, Professor Huxley says he sends this small subscription "as evidence of his full sympathy with the objects of the society." The society still wants about £40, which it hopes to obtain before the end of the month.

The Finsbury Branch is going to celebrate Good Friday jovially. It has arranged for a tea party and smoking concert at the Hall of Science. Tea will be served at 5.30. The tickets are one shilling each. As there are four chairmen for the evening, the Branch evidently expects "good business."

The second annual conversazione and dance of the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. will be held on Good Friday, March 27. Tickets are now for sale, to be had from the Secretary, Mr. J. Tullin, 137 Burt-terrace, Gateshead, or Mr. Peter Weston, newsagent, 77 Newgate-street, Newcastle; price—single, 2s.; couples' tickets, 3s. 6d.

The North-Eastern Secular Federation made a net profit of £9 out of Mr. Foote's recent week-night lectures. This is after paying the lecturer and all local expenses.

An effort is being made to reorganise the Freethought cause in Bradford. This afternoon (March 8) at 3 o'clock, a meeting of the Bradford Branch and the Yorkshire Secular Federation is to be held at Laycock's Temperance Hotel, Kirkgate. We strongly urge our Bradford friends to attend.

The *Redditch Indicator* prints a two-column report of a paper on General Booth's scheme, read at the Liberal Club by Mr. H. Guise. The paper makes large drafts, with acknowledgement, from Mr. Foote's *Salvation Syrup*.

The *Spennymoor News*, reporting Mr. Foote's recent lecture there, says "the lecturer's style of presenting his case was to be admired, his language and power of utterance being at times very fine." Evidently the bogie-man of Freethought is not such a dreadful creature after all.

"Mr. G. W. Foote, of London, lectured in the Central Hall on Thursday evening, on 'Is Christianity True?' Mr. Foote is a splendid cut-and-dried orator, elocutionist, executionist, attitudinist, and has every quality about him of a leading man in the public world except his subject. He was ably tackled by three or four old Primitives, the captain of the Gospel Mission, etc., and in the end they seemed to be just as far forward as at the beginning. What a pity! Why were not all our ministers present to defend their cloth and Christianity?"—*Auckland Times and Herald*.

Permission has been obtained to lay the *Freethinker* and *National Reformer* on the tables of the two public libraries of Battersea, members of the local Branch providing the same each week.

Was Jesus Christ a Socialist? is the title of a penny pamphlet published at 15 St. Nicholas-street, Aberdeen. The writer is Mr. James Leatham, who is a pronounced Freethinker. Mr. Leatham writes vigorously. He is a Socialist, but he contends that Christian Socialism is pernicious nonsense.

The Scandinavian Freethinkers in America are pretty active. Mr. N. S. Johnson, author of *Er Bibelen Gud's Ord?* (Is the Bible God's Word?) has put forward a new booklet, entitled, *Preston og Fritænkeren* (The Priest and the Freethinker).

Mr. Bancroft rarely attended church. He was a prominent Agnostic in his religious views. So was General Francis E. Spinner, ex-secretary of the treasury.—*Truthseeker*.

A crowded public meeting was held last week in the Shore-ditch Town Hall, to promote the Sunday opening of the Bethnal Green Museum. Sir Charles Russell made an able speech, and was supported by Mr. Pickersgill. Mr. Lawson, who presided, has secured March 20 for his motion on the subject, and members of Parliament should be looked up to attend on that date and support him.

Professor Huxley's *Nineteenth Century* article in reply to Mr. Gladstone will be dealt with in our next. Meanwhile we give this quotation:—"Whether the twentieth century shall see a recrudescence of the superstitions of mediæval papistry, or whether it shall witness the severance of the living body of the ethical ideal of prophetic Israel from the carcase, foul with savaged superstitions and cankered with false philosophy, to which the theologians have bound it, twine upon their final judgment of the Gadarene tale."

"WHY WORKING MEN DON'T GO TO CHURCH."

A DENSE and evil-smelling fog held London in its foul embrace as I made my way to the Bethnal-green-road Congregational Church on Feb. 18th. I was attracted thitherwards by an announcement that a "Brotherly Conference" would be held that evening on the subject which is given at the head of this article. The notices convening the meeting bore the words "The Church and Social Questions" in conspicuous type, and Ben Tillett, of strike fame, was to be the chairman of the evening.

The Congregational Church I found to be a large and handsome building, with a spacious gallery and an organ that filled my heart with joy. For while we sat, awaiting the opening of the conference, a skilful player flooded the chapel with sweet melody, thus pleasantly beguiling the tedium of passive expectation.

At eight o'clock the pastor of the church—a gentleman whose name I did not catch—took his seat at a table in front of the pulpit, and solemnly announced that Ben Tillett could not attend. He (the pastor) had received a "wire" from Cardiff to that effect, and "Strike detains" explained everything. Since the promised chairman could not be present, the rev. gentleman asked the audience to elect a president for itself. Somebody connected with the place at once proposed M. le Pasteur, and of course we all voted for him forthwith.

In formally opening the conference, the chairman explained in a breezy way that we had assembled to discuss the question why working-men abstained from church-going—or, speaking more widely, from public worship. He wanted to hear as many speakers as possible, and working-men especially were begged to take part in the debate. The speaking should in all cases be "straight," but not malicious. He (the pastor) was a working-man, and in early manhood had labored for six years in Portsmouth Dockyard. His sympathies were wholly with the workers, and he was above all things desirous that the true causes of the artizans' absence from public worship should be made known. Then, by sundry showings of hands, we decided that until nine o'clock every speaker should be allowed ten minutes; and after that hour, five-minute speeches should be the rule. Intending speakers were required to send their names in writing to the chairman, who would call upon each person in the order of receipt. With the view of giving us an opportunity to send up our names, a young chapal-gentleman sang us Jordan's anæmic "Song that Reached my Heart."

The first speaker, W. Powell, described himself as a laborer, and was clearly a working-man. Here it may be well to say that almost all the persons who spoke were obviously wage-earners, and their views may be taken as fairly representative. The majority of them, however, were militant Socialists, evidently men accustomed to public speaking, and one or two of their names were familiar to me as workers in the Socialist movement. They practically monopolised the evening, and, indeed, I did not hear any but the slightest reference to the Freethought party throughout the discussion. But to return to my first speaker. The burden of his complaint was, that the Church had done little or nothing for the workers. A short time since a deputation of unemployed men had gone

to Canon Gregory at St. Paul's Cathedral, asking for advice or assistance in obtaining work. What was Canon Gregory's reply? He said that he could not attend to the deputation; but expressed his opinion that any working-man could get employment if he really desired it. Now he (the speaker) did not blame the Church for this one parson's fault: but was it not the fact that religious people generally were on the side of capital as against labor? The shareholders in Bryant and May's were men of the Church; the owners of slum-property in Spitalfields were church-goers. The speaker intended to quote some precept of Christ to the confusion of his latter-day followers; but he confessed to having forgotten the text, explaining that he was "not very well up in the Bible."

I have given the speech of Mr. Powell at some length, for in reporting one I have practically reported all. Every speaker that succeeded him played a fantasia, more or less skilfully, on the same theme. And there was reason for this. Mr. Mowbray, at a very early stage of the proceedings, speaking from the Socialist point of view, incidentally referred to present-day religion as a "living lie." Thereupon uprose the pastor, in righteous wrath, and hotly demanded the withdrawal of the obnoxious phrase. In angry tones he pointed out that we had gathered to hold a brotherly conference; and was insult in the nature of brotherliness? Then he declared that it was not desired that *opponents* of religion should take part in the discussion. If a man believed that religion was a delusion, and that the lives of religious men were a living lie, then there was no need to inquire why *that* man did not go to church. What they wanted to know was, why did men who were not unbelievers abstain from public worship? Mr. Mowbray adroitly extricated himself from the position in which the chairman's intervention had placed him, and concluded his speech on orthodox Socialist lines.

But for me all the life had now gone out of the conference, the salt had lost its savor. I had intended to seek an opportunity of indicating the results of Freethought propaganda as *one* reason—and a very good one—why working-men don't go to church; and I was amazed to hear that that would be ruled out of order. One might as well hold a conference on the important question: "Why don't ducks swim in the Desert of Sahara?" and rigidly exclude all reference to the fact that there are no pools of water there.

However, when one is in church one must do as church-goers do; and I submitted meekly to the ruling of the pastor. But the remainder of the conference was to me a fantastic maze of words, ever changing their order, but ever the same in import. The whole thing was inadequate and unreal. An intelligent New Zealander might have inferred from the various speeches that the dogmas and doctrines of religion had never been challenged in this country. The pastor, in excluding the Secularist factor, had shut his eyes to the vital element of the problem. The majority of the Socialists of to-day were unbelievers before they adopted their special views upon economic questions. The Secularist propaganda had been established for many years in England while the word "Socialism" was yet regarded either as a relic of Robert Owen or as a foreign fad. Every Socialist advocate of importance is an avowed Freethinker, and some of the most prominent members of that party have sacrificed their social positions as the penalty of their theological heresy.

If, then, the clergy really desire to know why working-men don't go to church, they must face *all* the facts of the case. They must deal with intellectual questions as well as with social questions. They must not expect that the workers will flock into their deserted temples if only they show an opportune "sympathy with labor." The people have learned

the hollowness of theological pretensions: their estrangement is due to the head as well as to the heart. They have discovered that the superstition is false, and the clergy must justify their creed to the enlightened mind of the workers—if they can. One of the speakers at the Bethnal Green conference stated in pithy terms the problem which parsons must face. He spoke of the futile teachings of the pulpit for 1900 years, and concluded by saying: "The death of a Jewish peasant, twenty centuries ago, bears no relation to the needs and aspirations of to-day." Let the clergy address themselves to *that!*

GEORGE STANDRING.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE MEETING, February 25, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith; Messrs. Baker, Bater, Heaford, Ivatts, Killick, Moss, Beadle, Courtney, Samson, Smith, Reynolds, Roger, Standring, Truelove, Umpleby, Wheeler, Warren, and Forder, secretary. The Secretary reported the cash statement, there being a balance in hand of £254 16s. 6d., the largest monthly cash balance for three years. Mr. Reynolds moved, and Mr. Moss seconded, "That the Executive of the N. S. S. is deeply grieved at the loss of Charles Bradlaugh to the cause of Freethought, and desires to express its great sympathy with his daughter in her bereavement"; carried. The Secretary reported that two towns were nominated for the Conference, Birmingham and Portsmouth. Mr. Reynolds moved, and Mrs. Smith seconded, "That voting papers be sent to Branches to decide on place for Conference"; carried. The Secretary reported that there were sixteen applications for the post of secretary. Mr. Wheeler moved, and Mr. Bater seconded, "That the applications be referred to the Organisation Committee"; carried. Mr. Heaford moved, and Mrs. Smith seconded, "That permission be given for the formation of a new Branch at Lambeth"; carried. The report of the "Bradlaugh Memorial" Committee was received, the Secretary reporting that £150 had been subscribed in cash, and promises received for 150 shares. Miss Vance moved, and Mr. Truelove seconded, "that Mr. George Anderson be treasurer to the Fund"; carried. The Committee proposed adding largely to their number, and the secretary was instructed to write to various ladies and gentlemen, whose names were suggested, inviting them to join the Committee. A long discussion took place as to the advisability of electing to the Committee non-members of the N. S. S.; eventually the admission of non-members was negatived by eleven votes to six.—R. FORDER, sec.

HERETIC TO THE LAST.

[Extract from a lecture by Charles Bradlaugh at the Hall of Science on Nov. 2, 1890, entitled "My Heresy now and thirty-six years since."]

One curious thing has happened that I could hardly have thought possible. It was suggested that some change had come over my views. Some newspapers printed it with a great deal of precision and audacity. . . I was told my religious views had undergone change. Well, I have selected for the course of lectures here during this month topics which cover every reasonable form of opinion in connexion with any propositions which orthodox or unorthodox people may put before me.

I am not conscious even of the slightest change or the slightest *possibility* of change if I keep a sane man's brain.

I owe it to those whom I have persuaded; I owe it to those who have permitted me to be their mouthpiece; I owe it to those who have stood by me; I owe it to them to say that my mental grip is as firm as ever, and I hang on to the wheel as steadily as ever, and the ship shall go as true as ever."

FORDER TESTIMONIAL FUND.

Anonymous, 5s.; Mrs. Hopkins, 1s.; W. Black, 2s. 6d.; E. E. Ross (Calcutta), 15s. 6d.; E. Gage, 6d.; Alpha, 1s.; S. Wilkes, 2s.; J. Trevillon, 3s.; T. R. Amond, 1s.; A. Powell, 5s.; C. F. Finn, 10s. This fund is now closed.

Minister: "You ought to whip your boy for fishing on the Sabbath." Deacon: "I intend to, sir; but I thought I'd let him clean them first."

SOME EXTRACTS FROM WESLEY'S JOURNAL.

THE Journal of Wesley, in four big volumes, though largely taken up with a bare record of journeys and preaching, is not without interest. Wesley had a clear, simple, and direct style which is very attractive, and to anyone who wants to know the man, both in his greatness and his littleness, none of his writings are more important. I have culled, pretty much at random, a few extracts throwing some light on the religious hero of the hour. One of the most striking features of the Journal is Wesley's belief in his own self as being under the special providence of Omnipotence. God is always with him, and the Devil in the opposite camp. His preaching is "the work of God," his opponents "Satan's children." He has no words of respect save for those who agree with Methodism. He has pretty hard names for his Christian opponents, and says (Sept. 17, 1760), "It is sure, in exposing the philosophy of Behme, I use ridicule as well as argument." This should be remembered by Methodists who object to ridicule applied against themselves.

Wesley detested any approach to infidelity. He says of Lord Chesterfield (Oct. 12, 1775): "I doubt whether he believes there is a God, though he tags most of his letters with the name, for better sound sake. . . . And this is the favorite of the age! Whereas if justice and truth take place, if he is rewarded according to his deserts, his name will stink to all generations." Of Swift's Letters he says (Oct. 27, 1775): "Was ever such trash palmed upon the world, under the name of a great man?" Of Lucian's Dialogues he says (June 19, 1776): "His great hero is Diogenes, the Cynic; just such another brute as himself." On Soame Jenyns' tract on the Internal Evidence of the Christian religion, he says (Aug. 24, 1776): "He is undoubtedly a fine writer, but whether he is a Christian, Deist, or Atheist, I cannot tell. If he is a Christian he betrays his own cause by averring that 'all scripture is not given by inspiration of God; but the writers of it were sometimes left to themselves, and consequently make some mistakes.' Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth."

Wesley on Swedenborg is lively reading. He says, Feb. 28, 1770: "Any one of his visions puts his real character out of doubt. He is one of the most ingenious, lively, entertaining madmen that ever set pen to paper. But his waking dreams are so wild, so far remote both from Scripture and common sense, that one might as easily swallow the stories of 'Tom Thumb,' or 'Jack the Giant Killer.'" Again, Dec. 8, '71: "I cannot but think the fever he had twenty years ago, when he supposed he was 'introduced into the society of angels,' really introduced him into the society of lunatics." April 22, 1779, he writes: "He was a man of piety, of a strong understanding and most lively imagination; but he had a violent fever when he was five and thirty years old, which quite overturned his understanding. Nor did he ever recover it; but it continued majestic, though in ruins. From that time he was exactly in the state of that gentleman at Argos

Who wondrous tragedies were wont to hear
Sitting alone in the empty theatre."

Most people who think for themselves would say that Swedenborg's heaven and hell were more probable than Wesley's. But the latter was only disgusted with the former. He says, "His ideas of heaven are low, grovelling, just suiting a Mahometan paradise. . . . And his account of hell leaves nothing terrible in it."

In Dec. 22, 1780, he records a visit to the British Museum. "Seven huge apartments are filled with curious books; five with manuscripts; two with fossils of all sorts, and the rest with various animals. But what account will a man give to the Judge of quick and dead for a life spent in collecting all these?" He censures Robertson's *History of America* for excluding mention of the Providence of God, and uses stronger language against Hume and Voltaire than even Dr. Johnson.

Wesley frequently records the weather, for here he saw the special providence of God. Thus he says (Aug. 7, 1760): "The sun, indeed, shone extremely hot on my head; but presently a cloud interposed. And when I began to be chill (for the wind was high and sharp) it removed till I wanted it again. How easily may we see the hand of God in small things as well as great!" Fancy the hand of God employed in shifting the clouds for the convenience of Wesley! Sept. 22, 1760: "It rained before and after, but not while I was preaching. While we were at prayer a sheet of light seemed

to fill the yard, and the voice of the Lord was heard over our heads." We presume there was thunder and lightning. On the next page, he set out "in as dark a night as I ever saw. But God gave his angels charge over us, and we dashed not our foot against a stone."

Note the ease with which Wesley applies to himself a passage applied to Jesus Christ. Satan, too, is often seeking to injure him.

May 29, 1787: "The old murderer is restrained from hurting me; but, it seems, he has power over my horses"—Satan having afflicted no fewer than four in succession. Aug. 27, 1787: "I was invited to breakfast at Bury, by Mr. Peel, a calico printer [probably the father of Sir Robert Peel], who a few years ago began with five hundred pounds, and is now supposed to have gained fifty thousand pounds. O what a miracle if he lose not his soul!" Possibly Wesley thought Satan must have consideration for giving this increase of wealth.

Sometimes his religious phraseology reads funnily, thus: "Here I took a tender leave of Mrs. Heath and her lovely daughters, whom I hardly expect to see any more till we meet in Abraham's bosom"; and of the death of another lady he says, "I hope it will prove a blessing to her husband."

July 25, 1776: "I visited a poor backslider, who has given great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. Some time since, he felt a pain in the soles of his feet, then in his legs, his knees, his thighs. Now it has reached his stomach, and begins to affect his head. No medicines have availed at all. I fear he has sinned a sin unto death; a sin which God has determined to punish by death."—Mark how Wesley shows himself better than God! He pities the man whom God has determined to kill for his backsliding from Methodism.

Wesley's important utterance (May 25, 1768), that "the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible," I have already cited (*Freethinker*, p. 98). Later on he laments (July 1, 1770), "the infidels have hooted witchcraft out of the world; and the complaisant Christians, in large numbers, have joined them in the cry."

June 10, 1788: He tells of one Margaret Barlow, who, he is convinced, had "frequent intercourse with a spirit, that appeared in the form of an angel." She told him he would die in less than a year. He was now eighty-five, but he lived three years longer. She also prophesied that "God will, in a short time, be avenged of obstinate sinners, and will destroy them with fire from heaven." Wesley does not say if he credited her prophecies, but he says, "there was a wonderful power in her words; and, as the Indian said to David Brainerd, 'They did good to my heart.'"

On his great age, Wesley has some notable observations. Of course, he attributes it to the special care of God. But he also imputes it "as inferior means:—(1) To my constant exercise and change of air; (2) to my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or at sea, since I was born; (3) to my having sleep at command, so that, whenever I feel myself worn out, I call it, and it comes, day or night; (4) to my having constantly, for about sixty years, risen at four in the morning; (5) to my constant preaching at five in the morning for about fifty years; (6) to my having had so little pain during my life, and so little sorrow and anxious care." Evidently the twenty years of unhappiness endured by his wife did not affect him much. She had to stay at home; but he kept travelling and preaching from place to place, just as though he had never married. The Lord was stronger than Xantippe.

J. M. W.

BENEVOLENT FUND.

West Ham Branch, £2 18s.; J. Cowling, 2s.; Manchester Branch, £4 2s. 9d.; A. G. K., 1s. 9d.; Mrs. Mensbier, £1; Blackburn Branch, 7s. 10d.; W. Palmer, 1s.; A. Powell, 1s.; Per Messrs. Anderson and Fowler, for discount on special train to Woking, £1. F. H. Curle, 5s.—R. FORDER, sec.

CHILDREN'S PARTY, 1891.

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ANOTHER AMERICAN TRIBUTE.

The Manhattan Liberal Club, New York, passed the following resolutions on hearing of Charles Bradlaugh's death:—

"Whereas, The news which reaches us across the Atlantic of the death of Charles Bradlaugh to-day in London suggests to every advocate of Freethought and every lover of humanity and the progress of the human race the debt which all mankind owe to this apostle of liberty; and

"Whereas, It is peculiarly fitting that the Manhattan Liberal Club of the city of New York should express its high estimate of the services rendered by Mr. Bradlaugh toward the destruction of the lingering remnants of religious superstition and peculiarly his valiant warfare against the religious test oath in Parliament; therefore be it

"Resolved, That this club now expresses its appreciation of the lessons which the life and services of Mr. Bradlaugh teach all who desire the improvement of their kind; that any amelioration of human society must be preceded by the emancipation of man from the bondage of ecclesiastical and religious superstition.

"Resolved, That such a life as that of Charles Bradlaugh teaches us the infinite superiority of that immortality which the human race sooner or later awards to those who have lived and died in its behalf, to that selfish and miserable personal desire for eternal existence which most of the religions of the world have hitherto held forth as the highest aspiration of the human soul."

OBITUARIES.

We are sorry to announce the death of Charles Nicholson, member of N. S. S., who has done great service to the cause of Freethought. He died as he had lived, a conscientious Atheist. The interment took place on Sunday, Feb. 15, the funeral being attended by several hundreds of people, among whom were many friends of both sexes. A very appropriate address was given by Mr. Lees at the graveside as to his high moral qualities.—J. R., sec.

[We regret that, owing to the editor's absence, this did not appear last week. Charles Nicholson was an earnest, loyal Freethinker.—EDITOR.]

It is my duty to record the death of one of Grimsby's oldest and most respected Freethinkers, Mrs. Elizabeth Bolton, at the advanced age of 71. I am told by her husband that the deceased was perfectly conscious to the last, and that she died a firm believer in the principles of Secularism, despite the endeavor of a few rather anxious Christians. The funeral service, which was a Secular one, was drawn up and very ably rendered by our old friend Thomas Darrell, giving great satisfaction to all the friends present. The interment took place on Feb. 27 in the Grimsby New Cemetery.—J. W. WRITING.

The American Freethought papers announce the death of Colonel John R. Kelso, author of *The Deity Analysed*, *The Universe Analysed*, and other Freethought works. Colonel Kelso was born near Columbia, Ohio, March 23, 1831. Early in life he was a Christian minister, but resigned on account of his Freethought. He served with distinction in the civil war, and became a representative to Congress from Missouri. The last five years of his life were spent near Longmont, Colorado, where he died on January 26.

Died at Luxor, Egypt, Jan. 26, Charles Lee Lewes, only surviving son of George Henry Lewes. He was born in 1843 and educated in Switzerland. On the death of "George Eliot" he came into her fortune, and assisted Mr. Cross in writing her life. He also contributed to the *Nineteenth Century*. Mr. Lewes was a member of the London County Council, and one of the secretaries of the Hampstead Heath Extension Committee.

We regret to record the sudden death of Mr. Samuel Lowry, who expired on Monday, March 2, after a brief but severe illness. Mr. Lowry was a son of Mr. John Lowry, a veteran Freethinker and song composer, and inherited his father's musical talent. He was a compositor in the *Freethinker* office, and was respected by all who knew him.

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, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Hospitals not of Christian Origin."
Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "How I Escaped Siberia." Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, Mr. G. Edgar Bottle (Fabian), "Socialism an Evolution." Thursday, at 8, committee meeting. Friday, at 8, at the Temperance Hall, Doddington Grove, Battersea Park Road, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Heaven and Hell."

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 166 Bethnal Green Road, E.: 7.30, Dr. C. R. Drysdale, "The Cause of Poverty." Admission free.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7, dramatic recital; 7.30, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "Christianity and the Social Question." Friday, at 7.45, Science Classes (Hygiene and Chemistry).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road: 8, The Propagandist, "An Oration on Buddhism."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Christianity and Science."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, Grove House, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Tuesday at 8, Mr. W. Heaford, "In Darkest England—Is General Booth's Scheme the Way Out?"

Leyton—Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisey Villas, Manor Road: 7, Mr. Snelling, "God-Fearing Folk."

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W.: 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Charles Bradlaugh and what he Teaches us." Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Moral Fables." Thursday, at 8, Mr. Macdonald (Fabian), "The Sphere of the State."

West London—8 Norland Road North: 8, Mutual Improvement Class, Mr. E. Bowles, "The Eight Hours Question."

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street: 7, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Evolution and Design."

Wood Green—"Star" Coffee House, High Street: Annual Conference of North Middlesex Secular Federation.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road): 7.30, Mr. Toleman Garner will lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. R. Rosetti, "God is Love."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 3.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "In the Beginning."

Hyde Park, near Marble Arch: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Design in Nature."

Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road: 3.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "Constructive Secularism."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "Secularism and Politics."

COUNTRY.

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street: 12 noon, debating class, "Hotch Potch"; 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "The Theology of Burns."

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room: 6.30, Mr. S. Thomson, "Hindoo Theology and Egyptian Civilisation."

Leeds—Crampton's Hotel, Briggate: 6, meeting to elect officers.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street: 11, Tontine Society; 3, discussion class, "The Atonement—was it Necessary and did it Meet its Ends?"; 7, Mr. Haslam, "The Belief of an 'Unbeliever.'"

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints: 6.30, Mr. Ernest Jones, "Earthquakes and Volcanoes: their Work in Nature." Free. Wednesday, at 8, dancing (admission sixpence).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street: 3, Mr. Dickinson, "Secondary Causes."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street: Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, 11, "Disestablishment"; 7, "Some Phases of the Land Question."

Oldham—Hall of Science, Horsedgate Street: Mr. H. Smith, 3, "God Winked" (Acts xvii., 30); 6.30, "What Think Ye of Christ" (Matt. xxii., 42).

Ox Hill—J. Errington's, "Ox Inn": 6.30, important business meeting.

Plymouth—100 Union Street: 7, Mr. Thackwell will lecture.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 3, debating class, "The Tempest"; 7, Mr. Freake, "How to Remove Poverty."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West Street: Mr. Haslam, 11, "The Great French Revolution and Freethought"; 3, "The Protestant Reformation: What we have Gained and Lost by it"; 7, "Why I Became a Secularist: with Recollections of Mr. Bradlaugh."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, a reading of original composition, "A Chat with an Eight-day Clock."

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

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street: 11, special meeting; 6, Mr. T. Phillips, a reading.

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street: 7, Mr. R. Weightman, "Priestcraft."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Botherhithe, London, S.E.—March 15, Leeds; 29, Camberwell. April 5, morning, Westminster, evening, Woolwich. May 3, morning, Clerkenwell, evening, Woolwich; 17, morning, Westminster, evening, Woolwich.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—March 8, Woolwich; 29, Reading.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—March 8, Oldham; 15, Birmingham.

STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Liverpool.—March 15, Bolton; 29, Nelson; 29, Sheffield. April 19, Liverpool. May 10, Manchester. Sept. 6, Liverpool.

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