

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## ARE ATHEISTS CRUEL?

THERE seems to be an ineradicable malignancy in the heart of professional Christianity. St. Paul, indeed, in a fine passage of his first epistle to the Corinthians, speaks with glowing eloquence of the "charity" which "thinketh no evil." But the hireling advocates and champions of Christianity have ever treated the apostle's counsel with contempt in their dealings with sceptics and heretics. Public discussion is avoided by these professors of the gospel of love and practisers of the gospel of hatred. They find it "unprofitable." Consequently they neglect argument and resort to personalities. They frequently insinuate, and when it is safe they openly allege, that all who do not share their opinions are bad husbands, bad fathers, bad citizens, and bad men. Thus they cast libellous dust in the eyes of their dupes, and incapacitate them from seeing the real facts of the case for themselves. A notable illustration of this evil principle may be found in a recent speech by the Bishop of Chester. Dr. Jayne presided at a Town Hall meeting of the local branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and took advantage of the occasion to slander a considerable section of his fellow citizens. With a pious arrogance which is peculiar to his boastful faith, he turned what should have been a humanitarian assembly into a receptacle for his discharge of insolent fanaticism. Parentage is a natural fact, and the love of offspring is a well-nigh universal law of animal life. It would seem, therefore, that a Society for preventing cruelty to children by parents of perverted instincts, might live aloof from sectarian squabbles. But the Bishop of Chester is of a different opinion. He is a professional advocate of one form of faith, and his eye is strictly bent on business. He appears to be unable to talk anything but "shop." Even while pressing the claims of poor, neglected, ill-used children on the sympathy and assistance of a generous public, he could not refrain from insulting all those who have no love for his special line of business. And the insult was not only gratuitous; it was groundless, brutal, and malignant; so much so, indeed, that we cherish a hope that the Bishop has overreached himself, and that his repulsive slander will excite a re-action in favor of the objects of his malice.

Dr. Jayne told the meeting that "the persons who were most liable to be guilty of cruelty to their children were those artisans who had taken up Secularist opinions, and who looked upon their children as a nuisance, and were glad to get them out of the way."

Now, on the face of it, the statement is positively grotesque in its absurdity. If Secular principles tend to make parents hate their own children, why should their evil influence be confined to artisans? And if Secular principles do not produce parental hatred in the wealthier classes, why does Dr. Jayne hurl this disgraceful accusation at the poorer class of unbelievers? It cannot be simply because they are

poorer, for he was delighted to know that "poverty by no means necessarily meant cruelty." What, then, is the explanation? It seems to us very obvious. Dr. Jayne was bent on libelling sceptics, and, deeming it safer to libel the poorer ones, he tempered his valor with a convenient amount of discretion. He is not even a brave fanatic. His bigotry is crawling, cowardly, abject, and contemptible.

Dr. Jayne relied upon the authority of Mr. Waugh, who happened to be present at the meeting. This gentleman jumped up in the middle of the Bishop's speech, and said "it was the case, that the class most guilty of cruelty to children were those who took materialistic, atheistic, selfish, and wicked views of their own existence." Surely this is a "fine derangement of epitaphs." It suggests that Mr. Waugh is less malignant than foolish. What connection does he discover between Secularism and selfishness? Is it in our principles, in our objects, or in our policy? Does he really imagine that the true character of any body of men and women is likely to be written out by a hostile partisan? Such a person might be a judge of our public actions, and we are far from denying his right to criticise them; but when he speaks of our private lives, before men of his own faith, and without being under the necessity of adducing a single scrap of evidence, it is plain to the most obtuse intelligence that his utterances are perfectly worthless.

We have as much right as Mr. Waugh to ask the world to accept our view of the private life of Secularists. That is, we have no right at all. Nevertheless we have a right to state our experience and leave the reader to form his own opinion. Having entered the homes of many Secularists, we have been struck with their fondness for children. The danger lies, if it lies anywhere, in their tendency to "spoil" them. It is a curious fact—and we commend it to the attention of Dr. Jayne and Mr. Waugh—that the most sceptical country in Europe is the one where children are the best treated, and where there is no need for a Society to save them from the clutches of cruelty. There is positively a child-cultus in the great French cities, and especially in Freethinking Paris. In this Bible-and-beer-loving land the workman, like his social "superior," stands or sits drinking in a public-house with male cronies; but the French workman usually sits at the café table with his wife, and on Sundays with his children, and takes his drink, whatever it may be, under the restraining eyes of those before whom a man is least ready to debase himself.

One Secular home, at least, is known to us intimately. It is the home of the present writer, who for the moment drops the editorial "we" and speaks in the first person. My children are three—a real Trinity in unity. If they do not love me as heartily as Dr. Jayne's or Mr. Waugh's children love their father, "there's witchcraft in it." There is no rod, and no punishment in my home. We work with the law of love. Striking a child is to me a loathsome idea. I shrink from it as I would from a physical

pollution. Strike a child once, be brutal to it once, and there is gone forever that look of perfect trust in the child's eyes, which is a parent's dearest possession, and which I would not forfeit for all the prizes in the world.

I know Christians who are less kind to their children than I am to mine. They are not my natural inferiors. Humanity forbid that I should play the Pharisee! But they are degraded below their natural level by the ghastly notion of parental "authority." I do not say there are no rights in a family. There are; and there are also duties. But all the rights belong to the children, and all the duties belong to the parents.

Personally I am not fond of talking about myself. Still less am I anxious to make a public exhibition of my home. But if the Dr. Jaynes and the Mr. Waughs of the Christian world provoke comparisons, I have no fear of standing with my little ones opposite them with theirs, and letting the world judge between us.

Dropping again into the editorial style, we have a question to ask of the Bishop of Chester, or rather of Mr. Waugh. It is this. Where are the statistics to justify your assertion? Men who are sent to gaol, for whatever reason, have their religions registered. Give us, then, the total number of convictions your Society has obtained, and the precise proportion of Secularists among the offenders. And be careful to give us their names and the date and place of their conviction.

We have a further word to all sorts and conditions of libellous Christians. Where are the evidences of Atheistic cruelty? The humanest of the Roman emperors were those who were least under the sway of religion. Julius Cæsar himself, the "foremost man of all this world," who was a professed Atheist, was also the most magnanimous victor that ever wore the purple. Akbar, the Freethinker, was the noblest ruler of India. Frederick the Great was kind and just to his subjects. But, on the other hand, who invented and who applied such instruments of cruelty as racks, wheels, and thumbscrews? Who invented separate tortures for every part of the sensitive frame of man? Who burnt heretics? Who roasted or drowned millions of "witches"? Who built dungeons and filled them? Who brought forth cries of agony from honest men and women that rang to the tingling stars? Who desolated Mrs. Besant's home? Who killed Charles Bradlaugh? Who sent the present writer to a twelve-months' death in life in Holloway Gaol? Who burnt Bruno? Who spat filth over the graves of Paine and Voltaire? The answer is one word—CHRISTIANS. Yet with all this blood on their hands, and all this crime on their consciences, they turn round and fling the epithet of "cruel" at the perennial victims of their malice.

G. W. FOOTE.

### SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION.

(Continued from p. 182.)

If, on the one hand, nonsense has been written to prove that Shakespeare was this, that, or the other, without considering what in his writing is purely dramatic, and what the record of his own thought, equal nonsense has been written by those who say we know nothing of him at all. I rather agree with Emerson that "he is the one person, in all modern history, known to us." So myriad-minded a man is, of course, open to many interpretations. But it is quite safe to say he was no fool, and that he had a deal of human nature about him; safe, indeed, to say his heart was as great as his intellect. When Ben Jonson says "He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions," we feel every word is true. Shakespeare has written it down for himself.

We know he was no bigot—his sympathies are too broad; no ascetic—he delights too much in the mirth of life, and devotes the highest reaches of his genius to the public amusement. His name, as Emerson says, suggests joy and emancipation to the heart of men.

I do not quite agree with Swinburne that "No man ever lived who had less title than Shakespeare to whatever blessing may be reserved for the poor in spirit." This dictum would, I fancy, better apply to Ben Jonson, or certainly to Napoleon. Despite the confident assurance in the sonnets that his work would outlast the gilded monuments of princes, I take it he was cordial, gentle, kindly, and modest; not haughty and self-assertive. His contemporaries so esteemed him. His was not the kind of greatness which says "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark," but the rarer kind, which has love, regard, and service for all. He might, I think, have used of himself the words he puts in the mouth of the clown in *Twelfth Night* (iv., 2), "I am one of those gentle ones that will use the Devil himself with courtesy." Only the innate gentleman as well as the true poet could have pictured the storm in those lines of Cordelia—

"Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire."

Such a passage is one which shows at once the humanity of the man. He was one, I take it, to whom children and animals came spontaneously as knowing his sympathy was large enough to enfold them.

Yet though endowed with those gifts and graces of which Christianity most unwarrantably claims exclusive possession, he lacks all distinctive notes of Christianity. His leading, his favorite characters have no touch of religion. Full as he is of moral reflection, it is always secular morality he teaches. He himself is of the world worldly. The proof is he succeeded in the world, leaving not only fame but riches; building up a comfortable estate together with immortal reputation. He never teaches the Christian theory of the sacrifice of another for the salvation of self. His test is conduct, not creed.

Mr. Gerald Massey rightly says:

"He was not the man to be fretting and fussing about the salvation of his soul. Indeed we are by no means sure that he knew of his own soul being lost. He was a world too wide for any or all of those theologies, which are but a birth or abortion of misinterpreted mythology. Certainly Shakespeare did not accept the scheme of salvation and tenets of Historic Christianity, for all his characters put together could not drag it out of him. As Dean Plumptre admits, the Philosophy of Shakespeare is 'not a Christian view of life and death.' The Ethics of Shakespeare are not more Christian, in any real sense of the word, than those of Sophocles or Goethe." This is the true confession of a devout Christian.

Gervinus, the learned German commentator, gives his opinion:

"Just as Bacon banished religion from Science, so did Shakespeare from Art; and when the former complained that the teachers of religion were against natural philosophy, they were equally against the stage. From Bacon's example it seems clear that Shakespeare left religious matters unnoticed on the same grounds as himself, and took the path of morality in wordly things; in both this has been equally misconstrued, and Le Maistre has proved Bacon's lack of Christianity, as Birch has done that of Shakespeare."†

Shakespeare uses the supernatural, but his usage implies no belief, for he uses it as its master. We cannot prove he did not believe in fairies, we can only show he makes them subserve his purposes. Mazzini remarks—

"The divine power has scarcely ever any direct interven-

\* *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 469; 1885.  
† *Shakespeare Commentaries*, p. 886; 1877.

tion in the Shakesperian drama. The fantastic element, so frequently introduced, if closely examined, will be found never to depart from the individual sphere. His supernatural apparitions are all of them either simply personifications of popular superstition, or, like Caliban and Ariel, symbols of the duality of humanity; or, like the witches in *Macbeth*, the incarnations of human passions."

Ghosts and witches are but the machinery for appealing to the sentiment of superstitious awe. Shakespeare is the Prospero whose wand of imagination calls spirits from the vasty deep, for his own purposes, and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. He took the beliefs and superstitions of men around him as his materials. But ghosts and witches, when they have served his turn, appear no more. Like the goddesses Juno and Ceres before Prospero's cell, they melt into thin air. He could say—

"graves at my command,  
Have wak'd their sleepers; op'd, and let them forth  
By my so potent art."

Take the belief in astrology. It might be argued that Shakespeare believed it. He puts into the mouth of the good Kent the words:

"It is the stars—  
The stars above us govern our conditions."

In the same play he puts into the mouth of the cynical and crafty Edmund the scoff:

"This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools, by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and traitors by apherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence: and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's tail; and my nativity was under Ursa Major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardising."—*King Lear*, I., 2.

When we find Cassius exclaiming:

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

we may begin to suspect that Shakespeare sometimes gave his good characters the utterance of sentiments which his reason derided, and that the true Shakespeare is found, not so much in what he shared in common with his time, but in the thought that soared higher and dived deeper than his time; and this we shall sometimes find expressed in the mouths of his mad folk, his clowns, fools and villains. We shall thus learn to read him, not so much from isolated passages, as from the trend and purpose of his plays. Take *King Lear*, the deepest of all his tragedies, touching the root-springs of human nature. The scope of the whole tragedy is an impeachment of providence, and the blinded Gloucester sums up its teaching in the lines,

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods.  
They kill us for their sport."

A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* for June, 1851, says:

"It is a more serious imputation on Shakespeare that there is not to be found in his writings any habitual reverence for the Supreme Being, or permanent recognition of the superintendence of an all-wise and beneficent Providence. Expressions, indeed, having that tendency, and second in sublimity and truth to none that ever came from the human mind, are to be found scattered through his works, but it does not seem to have been the permanent direction of his thought."

This observation is just. Had Shakespeare held the conception of God in pious reverence, he could never have once indulged in the profanity in which he revels. Had he held the belief in providence, it would have been manifested throughout his works.

Perhaps the strongest expression of this belief is the oft-quoted expression of Hamlet:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will."

Yet the whole purport of the play shows an absence of Providence, Hamlet himself dying in the midst of his revenge, and uttering as his last words, "the rest is silence."

The last words of Hamlet, as given in the quarto of 1603, are: "Farewell Horatio, heaven receive my soul." But this orthodox ending did not satisfy Shakespeare, and he altered it to the more impressive and sceptical, "the rest is silence." Note too, how his scepticism breaks out in terming the ghost "Old Mole," "Truopenny," and "fellow in the cellarage." In the famous soliloquy he speaks of death as the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns, though having, as Goldsmith remarks, just seen his father's spirit "piping hot from purgatory." In the edition of 1603 the lines read—

"For in that dreame of death, when wee awake  
Are borne before an everlasting Iudge  
The happy smile and the accurst are damned."

But the judgment of Shakespeare cut out all this orthodoxy.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

### THE ETHICAL CULTURE VIEW OF SECULARISM.

A FEW weeks ago Dr. Stanton Coit delivered in South Place Chapel a discourse on the character and career of the late Charles Bradlaugh. I reproduced in these columns the substance of that lecture, adding a few critical comments or corrections where these appeared necessary, and essaying to indicate the true relation of the ethical culture people to their twin-brethren of the Freethought movement.

Dr. Stanton Coit has followed up his excursion into the biography of Mr. Bradlaugh by an inquiry into the principles and methods of the organised party which Mr. Bradlaugh led during so many years. To his credit it may be said that Dr. Coit has sought his information at first-hand, and he is not likely now to fall into some of the mistakes which he made a few weeks ago. He has learned, for example, that the National Secular Society—which he ingeniously assumed to have fallen to pieces on the announcement of Mr. Bradlaugh's death—is now stronger and more active than it has ever been. It was this National Secular Society which Dr. Coit took as the subject of his discourse at South Place on Sunday morning last.

Amongst the audience there was naturally a considerable proportion of Secularists. The venerable founder of the movement, Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, sat in the gallery; Mr. J. M. Robertson, of the *National Reformer*, was in the body of the hall; and members of London branches of the N. S. S. were sprinkled all over the place.

The first and second "lessons" last Sunday consisted of extracts from Mr. G. W. Foote's pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Secularism*. The passages, selected with fairness and judgment, were read with admirable clearness and effect.

At the opening of his discourse, Dr. Coit said it had been observed that those sects or parties which differed from each other the least, hated each other the most fiercely. There were differences between the Secularist party and that of Ethical Culture, and, even at the risk of being charged with pettiness, he intended to indicate those differences. A writer in one of the Secular papers had recently said that, "in all essential things, the difference between the Secularist of the Hall of Science type and the cultured *habitué* of South Place is precisely

the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee." (At this point a tiny wave of laughter rippled through the place.) But although there was a fundamental unity—the negation of theology—between the two sections, the fact remained that negation does not in itself afford a basis for effective co-operation: some positive agreement must be sought and found before people could be brought to work together. And differences, even if they were as minute as that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, should not be ignored—they should be examined, and discussed, and if possible removed.

Next to his views of truth, the desire for co-operation with others was dear to him; but he could not compromise his principles of good taste to secure the fellowship of any man or any body of men. He was sure that, if the Freethought party could overcome its excessive individualism, the united forces of progress would make a marvellous advance, and from that time forth it might be said, Theology is dead. When he had come to this country from America, three years ago, he had never heard of the Secular party in England; but when he learned its strength in numbers, its organisation, its devotion and its generosity, he had formed the hope that it might one day become identified with the Ethical Culture movement, and even abandon its distinctive name. So evident was the radical harmony between the two movements that this fusion was natural and proper.

Dr. Coit proceeded to defend himself against the charge of standing too much in awe of Mrs. Grundy. For himself, if he bowed before any Grundy it would not be one bound up with an effete monarchy, aristocracy, or middle-class; but it would be the horny-handed son of toil, the sovereign of the future.

He then addressed himself particularly to the Secularist movement. About the year 1846 Mr. G. J. Holyoake had formulated a noble idea, which he named Secularism; but, unhappily, before long the policy of the party was determined by another; the philosophy and methods of Mr. Holyoake were superseded by an aggressive, defiant, destructive policy. Ethical Culture held this to be a blunder, and it would seek to restore the method of gentleness and moral suasion. But the N. S. S. of to-day showed no signs of such a reversion. For example, Mr. Holyoake, in the *Reasoner*, had printed extracts showing much that was good and secular in the Bible; but Mr. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, had by his writings associated himself with Bible Absurdities, Bible Contradictions, Bible Obscurities, Crimes of Christianity, and the like. This, to adopt the illustration furnished by a well-known fable, was the policy of storm, which would cause the wayfarer to hug his cloak more closely to him; but the genial, sunny influence of the primitive Secularist policy would cause the traveller to cast away the garment which oppressed and burdened him. He (Dr. Coit) regarded the policy of the N. S. S. not as one of advance, but of retrogression; in this, as in many other cases, the founders had gone right, but the followers had gone wrong.

But even the original philosophy of Secularism did not secure the unqualified approval of Ethical Culture. Mr. Holyoake has laid too much stress on "material" means. When God and Immortality, Heaven and Hell, had been disposed of, there still remained much beside mere physical environment. As a matter of fact, there had been little or no physical improvement due to Secularist effort. The success so far had been gained by the heroism and martyrdom of the Secular leaders. It was, further, by the development of character and the dissemination of new views on truth that Secularists would elevate and improve society; but these were not the "material" means upon which such undue stress was laid. The National Secular Society itself was thus not a material, "but a spiritual organisation, if you please."

An immense amount of moral force was lost in the work of destructive criticism. The whole of Mr. Foote's works, with the single exception of his noble plea for peace, *The Shadow of the Sword*, were concerned with attacks upon the Bible or Christianity. But there were other shadows on humanity besides theology; and in devoting so much attention to that, he had paid it an honor of which the almost dead thing was unworthy. There was to-day a universal recognition of the Secular philosophy; the clergy confessed themselves impotent, and even the bigots relied upon "material means" in the hour of disease and danger. It was time for the Secular party to return to its original policy. It could defend itself against assault, if need be, without sallying forth to attack.

With a comprehensive philosophy, the Secular party had adopted a narrow, local policy. It had permitted itself to be saddled with the Neo-Malthusian propaganda, which, however good in itself, had no necessary connection with Secularism. Again, it had adopted the utilitarian view of morals as its own, whereas there was ample room within its borders for intuitionism and other theories of moral duty. There was a tendency amongst Secularists to become a sect, although their philosophy might well include several phases of philosophy.

But Dr. Coit poured out the vials of his wrath upon the policy of ridicule which, he declared, Mr. Foote had so conspicuously adopted in his public advocacy. Mr. Foote had urged that ridicule invariably and necessarily failed where its use was inapplicable. "You may ridicule the multiplication table as much as you like," he had said, "but two and two will still make four." That was perfectly true, Dr. Coit continued; but what would be the effect upon a child if the policy of distortion and ridicule were pursued with the multiplication table? The child might become so confused and distressed by uncertainty that it might be driven mad!!!! [This, I may add in parentheses, was said with so much gravity and emphasis and apparent earnestness that Dr. Coit must be absolutely destitute of the sense of humor.]

It was a mistake to imagine that Christianity was ridiculous. These old superstitions were poetic conceptions, and could not be laughed off the stage by ridicule.

Again, there was a constant tendency in ridicule to fall into injustice. In one of Mr. Foote's pamphlets—"A Virgin Mother," No. 13 of *Bible Romances*—he had been guilty of a gross error of judgment. He would abstain from reading the passage, because it could not fitly be read before a public audience. Was it fair to compare the "overshadowing" of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost to the licentious excursions of the Greek gods, who came down to earth and entered into carnal relations with women? It was the rankest unfairness; it was a blasphemous libel; and, if the Christians had done their duty, every copy of the pamphlet would have been seized and destroyed. It might be said that ideas and the interests of truth were of more importance than matters of "taste." Yes; but if the idea you were striving to propagate were simply that of human kindness and brotherhood, then its progress would not be aided by ridicule and scorn.

Secularists, personally, he had found to be kind and courteous; they could meet rudeness from opponents with gentleness and dignity; their domestic life was pure and noble. Why, then, could they not display these qualities in their public work?

He had, it was true, imagined that with Mr. Bradlaugh the N. S. S. had ceased to exist; but he had found it was now stronger and more active than ever. Its new President was far and away superior to all his colleagues in literary force and ability; he was an admirable organiser, and had maintained discipline with firmness and judgment. He was a practical

man, and one who devoted a much larger share of his time and energy to the movement than any other leader had done. His policy *might* include caricatures, but these had already been discontinued; and Mr. Foote might come to see that the weapon of ridicule was obsolete and discredited.

If properly conducted, Secularism would be the movement of the future; and then Ethical Culture could work hand in hand with it, one in spirit, one in sympathy, one in aspiration.

The above summary, although necessarily inadequate, will, I hope, convey a fair idea of the discourse delivered by Dr. Stanton Coit.

GEORGE STANDRING.

## ACID DROPS.

The Glasgow Bible and Book Society issues a flaming playbill, announcing a performance in the Theatre of the Universe of a piece called "The Great Assize." The two parts of the house are the Pit and the Gallery, and "the Gallery is very spacious and the Pit without bottom." At the end of the performance the gods clap and the pittites swear. This is not the exact language of the playbill, but the substance of it; and by this time our readers will smell a rat.

We have seen this sensational playbill before. We have heard it was drawn up by Rowland Hill. That it still survives north of the Tweed, shows the backwardness of Caledonia in religious matters. Even the Salvationists, in England, are outgrowing such things.

The malignant slander of the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. B. Waugh suggests reference to their divine book for instructions as to the treatment of children. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son," says the much-married Solomon (Prov. xiii., 24), and he adds, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. xix., 18). Such texts are more likely to make cruel fathers than the teachings of Secularism. Solomon's own family did not turn out a credit to one alleged to be "wiser than all men."

On Sunday last, in the Gladstone Hall, Leeds, at the close of a lecture by Mrs. Thornton Smith, the following resolution was unanimously passed: "That this meeting of Secularists and others has observed with astonishment the vague charges of general cruelty to children recently reported to have been brought against Materialists and Secularists by Bishop Jayne and the Rev. Mr. Waugh, and solemnly records its conviction of the utter falsehood of these charges, and strenuously condemns such an unfair and unbecoming mode of attack, and further insists upon some data to substantiate the same being given, or that they be unconditionally withdrawn."

English law boasts of being *Christian*. Certainly its family department owes a great deal to the silly teaching of Jesus and Paul. An English father, for instance, can will his property as he pleases. He can leave his wife and children to beggary. How different is the French law, which was drawn up by the great Freethinking jurists of the Revolution. A Frenchman's property must be divided amongst his wife and children. All he can will away is his own individual share. Even the Mohammedan law only allows a father to will away a third of his property. The rest *must* go to his family, and the females have the first claim.

At White Plains, New Jersey, Jesse Lockwood, a man upwards of seventy years of age, became possessed with the biblical idea that the Lord commanded him to offer up a human sacrifice *a la* Abraham and Jephthah. His aged wife was the most accessible subject, and he proceeded to club her to death, coolly telling the neighbors afterwards what he had done. The couple had been devoted to one another, but religious madness resulted in murder.

An "American League" having been formed, whose members pledge themselves not to vote for Roman Catholics in political matters, a Catholic journal calls it an "organisation of vipers," and says that the only sure method of uprooting the deadly evil of such antagonism to the Church is the

remedy that Chicago applied to a few of the leaders of the Anarchist movement. Those who combine to oppose Catholics, in short, ought to be hung. What would be said if any Freethought paper talked in this highly Christian manner of its opponents? Those who sentence religious and political antagonists to everlasting hell naturally find little difficulty in prefacing such a doom by the much slighter punishment of death in this world.

A modern Jenny Geddes appeared in West Church, Kirriemuir. Annoyed at seeing a male member of the choir asleep, she hurled her Bible at his head. The Bible missed the offending sleeper and struck another member of the choir. The minister paused in his discourse and inquired, "What's wrong?" "The Bible struck the wrang man," she replied, "'twas meant to waken the sinfu' sleeper."

A Wood Green ex-Salvationist has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a criminal assault on his own daughter.

Mr. De Cobain, the member of Parliament who has left the country to avoid arrest under the warrant which has been issued against him for unnatural offences, played a prominent part in evangelistic movements. Among other services in which he took a deep interest was a weekly prayer-meeting, which has been held almost uninterruptedly at his residence in Ormean-road, Belfast, since the visit of the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey.

A Hamburg clergyman in his Easter sermon called the story of the Resurrection a legend, and at the confirmation classes he spoke in the same way of the story of Christ's birth, and its celebration at Christmas. A petition has been submitted to the superior Church authorities to remove the clergyman from his post for denial of the doctrine of the Christian faith. A similar case is reported from Liegnitz, in Silesia.

The Pagan gods and goddesses have often been burlesqued on the English stage, and now it is announced that an opera is to be produced, founded on Sir Edwin Arnold's poem *The Light of Asia*. M. Maurel will be entrusted with the part of Buddha. The announcement that Sir E. Arnold's *Light of the World* would also be put on the boards might strike some consternation amongst the Christians. It is said that Mr. Quillian protested against the French play of *Mahomet* being produced in England, and perhaps some of the esoteric Buddhists may protest against their divinity being made to figure on the boards.

Serious disturbances have occurred among the Hindoo population at Benares owing to the demolition of a temple to provide a site for the construction of waterworks. All the natives have struck work, the shops are closed, and the rioting has been so formidable that a strong force of infantry has had to be drafted into the city. Religious fanaticism often stands in the way of social progress.

Of the £3,603,504 given last year in Government grants to elementary schools, the Church of England took £1,350,757, and the Roman Catholics £172,345. The Board schools evidently do their educational work better than the Church, for they earned 18s. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per scholar in Government grants, while the Church only obtained 17s. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head, and the Roman Catholics 17s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.

The mission clergy under Dr. Jaynes, Bishop of Chester, are copying the political bodies in sending out a van to deliver gospel addresses in country places and market villages and sell religious literature. We shall have to inaugurate a Freethought van, which we expect would considerably more astonish the natives.

The ingenuity applied by the clericals to the problem of raising money should surely manage to pilot a camel through the eye of a needle into the kingdom of heaven. Here is the Rev. James Lunt, vicar of Leyton, who sends out a circular asking every household to send him just one penny for each person returned in the census paper. The pennies are to go to his new church.

Our old opponent, Dr. James M. Cann, has issued a work on *The Moral Culture of a Christian*. It includes the Aims of the Christian, his Duties and Responsibilities, Motives Diffi-

culties, etc. The issue of the book seems peculiarly opportune.

A young woman recently died in Germany from the effect of immersion in cold water according to the rites of the Baptists. The minister who baptised her was sentenced to a week's imprisonment for thus causing her death, but the sentence was subsequently remitted. The neighboring Baptist congregations have made arrangements for warming the water in future. The *Lancet* suggests that a medical examination should also take place to see that the candidates are free from heart disease before being submitted to the shock of immersion.

Mr. J. T. James, of Leicester, has just obtained a divorce on the ground of his wife's adultery with a man named Johnson, who was a member of the Church Army and gained access to the respondent's room, when she was ill, on the pretext of praying for her.

Thirty-two persons were bitten on Sunday morning near Czernovitz by a mad wolf. Wolves and hydrophobia are among the works of the Creator who saw that all that he had made was good.

General Booth is lamenting a falling off of £8,000 in annual receipts, the gifts to some extent having been diverted from the ordinary funds to the "Social Scheme." The Wesleyan Missionary Society is also suffering from a marked diminution of its income. The deficiency is close upon £11,000 and the debt amounts to £19,000.

The London *Echo* printed a lot of letters on Christianity and Marriage. Then it wrote an article on the folly of discussing abstract questions instead of practical ones. If the *Echo* means to let these "abstract" questions, such as deity, soul, and future life, go by the board, well and good. Every Atheist wants to see them dismissed as quickly as possible. But if it means that Freethinkers should quietly leave Christianity in possession of the mental field, it is not so well and good. Is the *Echo* ignorant that those who control the mind control practice too? It is certain that right thought must precede right action.

The papers state that the late Mr. Waugh, ex-M.P., suggested to Mr. Bradlaugh that he should swear himself in at the table at the House of Commons. We are not in a position to deny the statement, but we very much doubt its truth. So far as we know, Mr. Bradlaugh took counsel with himself in every step of that mighty struggle.

Dissatisfaction with the mission of Bishop Blyth to Jerusalem has grown to the extent that the Rev. T. J. Gaster moved that the annual grant of £300 towards his stipend be withdrawn. This, however, after a stormy debate of four hours, was negatived in favor of an amendment to await the result of an inquiry to be made by the Primate.

Some of the fishermen of St. Ives, Cornwall, are such desperate Sabbatarians that they will not allow fish to land on Monday that have been caught by going out the previous evening—whereby they lose some trade and some fish.

D. L. Moody, the American revivalist, has, says Mr. James W. Stillman in the *Boston Investigator*, accumulated a fortune of over half a million dollars. How he proposes to get into heaven with that amount is not stated. But the Lord is good to his saints.

Confirmations, which are the real test of adherence to the Church of England, are declining. In 1889 the total number confirmed was 225,058, over two-thirds being girls. Last year the number fell by no less than 28,000. Taking the three years 1888-90 together, the annual average number confirmed is only 1 in each 122 of the population, while the Church itself urges that it ought to confirm 1 in 50.

Nine parishes in Truro diocese, with a population of over 500 each—one actually with a population of 2,000—have not presented a single candidate for confirmation in five years. This diocese has fallen in the last three years 14 per cent. in the number of its confirmations, and Bangor has fallen 17 per cent. This does not say much for the progress of the Church in Cornwall and that part of Wales.

The diocese of Durham also shows a decrease of 16 per cent., perhaps owing to the change of bishops. But the Church is stronger in the south than in the north, the province of Canterbury presenting candidates, in three years, in proportion of 9 per 1,000 of the population, while York gives only 7 per thousand. In the north, where the Church is weakest, Freethought is most progressing.

Archdeacon Wilson explains the Athanasian Creed as a hymn "intended to be used by the faithful as a song of triumph"—especially, we suppose, the damnation clause. Well, if the Athanasian Creed, with its three incomprehensibles is poetry it is the most unpoetical poem we know.

"Evangelical home-made candy" is the latest Yankee device to draw sweet tooth to a Church fair.

The Synod of Sutherland and Caithness laments that while the natives are pretty well under the clerical thumb, visitors from the South engage in fishing and target-shooting on Sundays. The Lowlands are getting Anglicised in the matter of the Sabbath, and the infection seems spreading to the far north.

The Vicar of Ruabon has a new way to pay old debts. When asked to send his usual subscription to the Cottage Hospital, he sent instead a receipt for a £2 tithe which a farmer refused to pay him. Yet, while his subscriptions were in arrear, he availed himself of the subscribers' privilege on behalf of his own servant, John Nicholas, who had cost the hospital £12 0s. 10d. When this was pointed out, the vicar sent a further batch of receipts for unpaid tithe to the amount of £4 11s. 9d., which were of course returned.

The Rev. R. Hobson, a Liverpool vicar, has taken a leaf out of Booth's book, and instituted a week of self-denial for his flock. In his circular he suggests abstinence from meat, butter, sugar, puddings, tobacco, alcoholic drinks, etc.

*Up to Date*, a new journal, gives prominence to the question, Who is Mr. Stead? We respectfully suggest that the most satisfactory answer will be "God Almighty." Yet here is the *Methodist Times* saying of *The Religious Review of Reviews*: "In the current number a venomous article is published, entitled 'Christ or Anti-Christ,' the object of which is to denounce Mr. Stead as anti-Christ."

In a lecture on Thoreau, Edward Waldo Emerson relates that when the naturalist was dying and he was anxiously asked, "Have you made your peace with the Almighty?" he whispered back, "I didn't know we had quarrelled."

The Rev. Peter Prescott, of Bristol, says that Dr. Davidson has conducted the Methodist Church to the very brink of a tremendous precipice. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is ceasing to be the religion of Protestants. He says the Methodist ministers are now taking up the position of Socinians. P. P. represents the Devil as holding a council in Pandemonium to see what should be done to celebrate the centenary of Wesley, and determining that the best thing would be to induce the Methodists to give up the Bible, and to employ their own teachers for this purpose.

Rev. C. H. Anney, an Episcopal clergyman of Washington, speaking of Col. Ingersoll, claimed to have found a new use for Freethinkers. "Sceptics," he said, "have their place in this world. They are simply picking off the vermin from the trees in God's garden." Col. Ingersoll has picked off lots of such vermin. He picked off Judge Black, Rev. Dr. Field, W. E. Glidstone, and he can pick off all the Episcopal clergymen in the United States with his finger and thumb. He wouldn't need to use his brains to do it.

The Rev. Mr. Talmage has raised his voice in severe reprobation of Noah for indulging in strong drinks and becoming intoxicated in consequence. Unfortunately, Noah has been past reforming for some years, and this attack on him is somewhat unkind. It is all very well to find fault with the old gentleman for putting an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains; but it may be offered in extenuation that Noah must have become very tired of water during that weary forty days of tossing about in the ark, and may, not unaccountably, have acquired a distaste for it.

**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

*Sunday*, April 26, Oddfellow's Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool: at 11, "The Grand Old Book"; at 3, "Oration on Charles Bradlaugh"; at 7, "Death and the Devil."

*Tuesday*, April 28, at the Lecture Hall, High-street, Deptford, at 8, "What has Christianity done for the World?"

*Thursday*, April 30, at the Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway, at 8, "Heaven and Hell."

May 3, Hall of Science; May 4, Northampton; 10, Camberwell; 17, N. S. S. Conference; 21, Stratford; 24, Manchester; 28, Stratford; 31, Wolverhampton.

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. 8d.; 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.

W. H. TAYLOR.—Thanks for the cuttings. See paragraph.

R. E. HOLDING.—Your letter was sent on to Mr. Foote in Ireland, too late (apparently) for a private reply. There is no law to prevent an Atheist from filling any public post. Mr. Bradlaugh could have served as Prime Minister. The law prevents a Freethought society from holding property or receiving bequests. Of course it is a grotesque anomaly, but that is the actual state of the law.

A. T. DIPPER, of Battersea, has removed to 112 Elswick East Terrace, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and intends to work and speak for the Freethought cause in that district.

W. LEYS.—Your letter to hand, dated April 16, the day this journal was published, and of course too late for the paragraph you desired, which we would have gladly given.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—Subscriptions received by R. O. Smith, treasurer: J. Tomkins, 5s.; C. Bussic, £1.

M. CHRISTOPHER, Wolverhampton, sends 5s. for the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund and 5s. for the Liabilities Fund.

G. HIBBERD.—You have ideas, but you want more practice in composition.

J. BURRELL.—You forgot to mention the date of the concert.

W. G. RENN.—You can have back numbers as before by calling for them.

CHARLES KELF.—In Romans iii, 7, Paul says: "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"—Christian newspapers that libel Freethinkers are naturally intolerant of correction, but every protest does good and helps to forward the cause. It has its effect on the editor even when he suppresses it so far as the public are concerned.

THE London Socialist League, 273 Hackney-road, sells this journal and other Secular publications.

H. BLACK.—Jesus is said to have upbraided the Pharisees, "For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made ye make him twofold more a child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew xxiii, 15). The frequent references in Acts to the presence of proselytes in synagogues, as well as statements of Josephus, Tacitus and Seneca, show there was a movement extending Judaism at that time. But Buddhism had sent out missionaries to all parts of the world three hundred years previously.

J. CULVER.—Certainly, witchcraft is taught in the New Testament as well as the Old. See Acts viii., 7, 9; xix., 13; Rev. xxii., 15. Jesus claimed and conferred the power of casting out devils, which implies the belief in witchcraft. The text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," occurs Exodus xxii., 18.

OWING to Mr. Foote's absence from London a good deal of correspondence stands over till next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschentum—Echo—Neues Frereligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Western Mail—Nantwich Chronicle—Manchester Guardian—Cheshire Observer—Osmopolitan—Scarborough Evening News—Cambria Daily Leader—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Daily News—Referee—Sporting Chronicle—Lancashire Evening Post—Der Lichtfreund—Truthseeker—Twentieth

Century—Open Court—Thorpe's Catalogue—Windsor and Eton Express—Worcestershire Echo—Manchester Guardian—Echo—Manchester Examiner—Comité d'Etudes Morales. 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.**

Readers of the *Freethinker* are desired to pardon any imperfections in this number. The editor and the sub-editor are both away in Ireland. Mr. Foote is paying his first visit to the "land of song," as Tom Moore calls it; and the Belfast branch of the "land of song" is a bigoted place, where the natives, whether Protestant or Catholic, sometimes take to music without words, in the shape of brickbats and paving stones, not to speak of shooting-irons. Considering these things, it struck Mr. Wheeler that he had better accompany his editor to the "land of song," so that if anything awkward happened to the said editor, he (the said J. M. W.) would be able to make the funeral arrangements, and write an authentic report of the said G. W. F.'s last dying speech and confession. Thus the editor and the "sub." are both in the "land of song" together.

Mr. Foote's first visit to Belfast has been a signal success. Large audiences attended each of his four lectures in St. Anne's Hall, and the opposition evoked by the anti-theological discourses on Sunday proves that Freethought is making some stir in the capital of Ulster. The *Belfast News Letter* and *Northern Whig* both gave reports of the lectures.

The Oration on Charles Bradlaugh on Saturday evening, presided over by Mr. J. H. Gilliland, was listened to with rapt attention by a very sympathetic audience. The Sunday morning lecture on "The Fear of Death," presided over by Mr. J. Murphy, raised the opposition of several gentlemen, including Mr. J. Bruce Wallace, M.A., who appeared and opposed at each of the ensuing lectures, that in the afternoon being on the question, "Are the Miracles of the New Testament Credible?" Mr. W. M. Knox in the chair, and that in the evening on "A World Without God," Mr. G. Cumings presiding. Animated debate followed each discourse. In the evening no less than six opponents took the platform, the ablest being Mr. Wallace, who dilutes his theology to an almost imperceptible quantity. Mr. Foote's lectures and replies gave the utmost satisfaction, and many wishes were expressed that he would again visit Ireland. Some of his auditors travelled a distance of forty miles.

The Ulster Branch of the N. S. S. is worthy of the great task it has before it—that of leavening the North of Ireland with the antidote to superstition. Its members comprise, in addition to some sturdy veterans, a number of capable and energetic young men, and in the person of Mr. Knox they have a very efficient secretary. They hope soon to obtain quarters in the Royal-avenue, one of the finest thoroughfares in the city.

The *Boston Journal*, speaking of Mr. Bradlaugh, says: "There was a peculiar resemblance in his oratory to that of Henry Ward Beecher. He had moments of emotion and splendid diction born of sudden inspiration, which were all the more remarkable because there was nothing in his environment to suggest them. They were, so to speak, lightning-flashes from the intensity of his inner life, and they appeared at intervals always to startle and to charm throughout his whole career." From what we have heard of H. W. Beecher's oratory, it was not to be compared to that of Mr. Bradlaugh.

We are glad to see that there are some clergymen whose sympathies are wider than their creed. Thus the Rev. F. E. Millson, B.A., is about to deliver a lecture at Northgate-end Schoolroom in aid of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund.

The Westminster Branch of the N. S. S. will give a Concert and Dance at the Pimlico Radical Club, Sussex-street, in support of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund. Tickets can be obtained of Mr. G. S. Ross, 156 Horseferry-road.

The quarterly meeting of the Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S. was held in the hall last Sunday, and Mr. Thomas

gave a very favorable report of the Society's progress for the quarter. The officers were then re-elected, Mr. Lappage becoming vice-president, Mr. Hartmann being elected delegate to the executive, and the remainder retaining their old positions. Some 300 members and friends then adjourned to the large hall to discuss the tea. A very good concert and a few dances closed a very successful meeting.

Two able letters from L. Broderick and W. H. Taylor appear in the *Manchester Guardian*, protesting against the libelous bigotry of the Bishop of Chester.

The *Albany Telegram* says that "Bob Ingersoll" will miss the lake of fire and brimstone unless he is more careful. Touched by the destitute condition of the children of the late Speaker Witer, of the Montana House of Representatives, he gave a lecture in Helena for their benefit, and added 2,000 vols. to a fund being raised for them. The eloquent Agnostic refused any part of the proceeds, and even bought a ticket which admitted him to hear himself speak. After all, says the American editor, it is just such religion as this that will save us poor devils here below, if anything can.

More laurel for the brow of Thomas Paine. It is now ascertained that the first anti-slavery appeal ever published in this country came from the noble heart, and was written by the brave hand of Thomas Paine. And it is also found that his pen first pointed out the wrongs of woman, and that he was the first to demand equal rights and equal privileges for women. The debt which our nation owes to this dead patriot increases as we uncover the hidden leaves of the past. Will the people of the United States grow large enough, honest enough—just enough—to pay the debt they owe to Thomas Paine? We hope so. When full justice is done to the name of Paine it will be inscribed on the loftiest monument of our nation.—*Boston Investigator*.

The Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost has been asked to write something on the subject—"Without God no Commonwealth." He says he cannot do it, but he might write something on the subject—"Without God More Wealth More Generally Distributed."

The *Independent Pulpit* for April opens with an article, "Does Religion Promote Good Morals?" The writer, Mr. J. P. Richardson, thinks it is Christianity that has kept back the progress of the world. There are other able and interesting papers on Evolution, God, Religion, Morality, etc.

Mr. J. E. Remsburg is opening up new Freethought ground in America, being on a lecturing tour in the South Atlantic and Gulf States. We trust he will not come under the notice of the *Mafia*.

The *Westminster Review* for April opens with a caustic criticism of the Evangelical school, under the title of "The Rearguard of the Christian Army." The writer, who signs himself "Geoffrey Mortimer," concludes: "There seems no lack of evidence that Christianity will eventually destroy its idols by improving them. As shown in the past, the heresies of to-day become the beliefs of the future; the 'down-grade' of one generation are the elect of the next. And so Evangelicalism will dwindle and fade—not in fulfilment of the Apostolic augury of darkness in the latter times, but in obedience to the inviolable and increasing law of human evolution."

The orthodox Methodist *London Quarterly Reviews*, in an article on "The Critical Problem of Isaiah," admits that "the balance of evidence on the whole turns against the traditional view which attributes the whole of the book called 'Isaiah' to the prophet himself." Presently the orthodox will admit that a number of other books of the Bible were not the composition of those whose names they bear.

A controversy on the letters "I.H.S." in the Belfast *Northern Whig* gives an opportunity to "Broad Churchists" to point out that they were first used as the monogram of Bacchus, and represented Iakchos Emon Soter (Bacchus our Savior). He cites Professor Max Muller as saying, "That age [first three centuries] was characterised by a spirit of religious syncretism—an eager thirst for compromise. Maya and Sophia, Mithra and Christ, Virof and Isaiah, were mixed up in one jumbled system of inane speculation."

Alfred Fouillée, the veteran French philosopher and Freethinker, has put forward a new volume on *L'Enseignement au Point de Vue National* (Hachette et Cie), (Education from the National Point of View). He compares the system of France, Germany, Italy, and England, paying much attention to education in this country. The object of education, he contends, is to assure the development of people.

The Humanitarian League has been formed for the diminution of cruelty and the promotion of kindness. It will aim at the abolition of vivisection and private slaughterhouses, as well as what is called "sport" at the expense of dumb animals. The secretary is Mr. H. S. Salt, 38 Gloucester-road, Regent's-park, London, N.W. The committee includes parsons and Freethinkers.

It is announced that Miss Mathilde Blind will contribute to the *Fortnightly Review* her reminiscences of Mazzini.

#### THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES AS A "SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIAN."

THE Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is nothing if not sensational. In this he is the exact counterpart of Mr. W. T. Stead. Both have many traits in common, and both are good friends, I believe. Perhaps the latter fact accounts for the former, as manners, like measles, are catching. The man, who as a boy, thrashed another boy because he had the temerity to look at a girl tying her garter, was bound to grow up into something uncommon. And he did. He became the author of the "Maiden Tribute," one of the dirtiest bits of journalism ever penned. Mr. Price Hughes must have been equally "nice" as a boy, I have no doubt, though his abnormally developed moral sense might have manifested itself in some other direction. Probably as a boy he, like George Washington, was never known to tell a lie, and "licked" other boys who did; and, as a man, wrote "The Atheist Shoemaker," which Mr. Foote dubs a Lie in Five Chapters.

As Mr. Stead inaugurated the new journalism, so Mr. Hughes aspires to inaugurate the new Christianity. As Jesus Christ followed John the Baptist, so Hugh Price Hughes follows William Thomas Stead. As Mr. Stead baptised the country in a deluge of indecency, so Mr. Hughes is sprinkling it with a shower of imbecility. That Mr. Hughes, like Mr. Stead, is a clever man there is no doubt, and that both possess the "journalistic instinct"—which, I presume, means knowing what will "go down"—is equally evident. But both occasionally overdo it. Mr. Stead overdid it in the Armstrong case; and Mr. Hughes stirred up such a hornet's nest on the missionary question that he had to beat a hasty retreat and narrowly escaped a good stinging. That Mr. Hughes is eloquent goes without saying, for is he not a Welshman? He can string more words together of mere "sound and fury signifying nothing" than any other man I know of—unless it be Mr. Stead. Everything is always in the superlative degree with him, and his adjectives are as lavishly squandered as were the thousands of the "Jubilee Plunger." The most momentous issues are always at stake, and the opportunity of a life-time is cropping up every other week—generally when money is wanted for something.

But if there is one subject in which Mr. Hughes shines, it is in knowing what Jesus Christ would do under every conceivable circumstance. He can read the mind of Christ like the A B C. He knows what Christ would say or do on every public or private question, from the Parnell case to the Eight Hours Bill. That Christ didn't seem to know his own mind always, makes no difference to Mr. Hughes. If Mr. Hughes had been there, he would have told it him. And herein lies Mr. Hughes's great qualification to be the apostle of the New Christianity. Speaking of Professor Davison's address on "Inspiration and Biblical Criticism," he says in a recent number of the *Methodist Times*, after referring to some of the damaging admissions made in that address: "We hope, however, that those who are disturbed will soon realise that nothing said . . . interferes in the least degree with the real authority of the Bible, but, on the other hand, is only calculated to make everyone build the fabric of his faith more intelligently and more exclusively than ever upon the only abiding foundation, which is Christ. We entirely agree with Professor Davison that our faith in Christ does not depend on our faith in the Bible, but quite the reverse—that our faith in the Bible depends upon our faith in Christ. Mariolatry and Bibliolatry represent opposite extremes. The Romanist is tempted to trust in the infallibility of the

Church. The Protestant is equally tempted to trust in the infallibility of the Bible. But the really scriptural Christian trusts in the infallibility of Christ. He is the true word of God, and our faith in him is entirely independent of anything that biblical criticism may demonstrate with respect to the precise way in which our Bible assumed its present shape, or the particular method which the wisdom of God used to inspire men with eternal truth. As Professor Davison wisely said, the mere fact that God has given us divine treasure in earthen vessels does not in the least degree alter the character of that divine treasure itself."

If this precious paragraph mean anything, it means that the Scriptural Christian—i.e., Mr. Hughes—is not (1) a believer in the infallibility of the Christian Scriptures, and (2) is not a Protestant any more than he is a Romanist who believes in the infallibility of the Church. No! Mr. Hughes is above such fetichism. He has outgrown such old-fashioned theology; he is paving the way to a complete desertion of the hitherto Word of God, and "builds the fabric of his faith more exclusively than ever upon the only abiding foundation, which is Christ." Poor old Christian Scriptures! The mighty waves of Freethought criticism have so completely washed away the foundations of the old fortress of biblical infallibility, that Mr. Hughes, like a skilful soldier, evacuates it and takes up his position "upon the only abiding foundation, which is Christ." His stay there will be equally short. The forces which wrought such havoc to the "old fabric" are wearing away the Rock of Ages. Denudation and disintegration are rapidly doing their work. The infallible Christ will have to go with the infallible Bible. They stand or fall together. They are inseparable. It is useless for Mr. Hughes to say that his faith in Christ is independent of his faith in the Bible. Mr. Hughes cannot play ducks and drakes with his theology in that fashion. For does he not get his Christ out of that Bible? And if it be untrustworthy, what guarantee have we that Christ was the Son of God, or that he even existed at all, any more than Adam and Eve, or Samson or Job? Is the evidence of Christ's divinity any more credible than the evidence of Samson's strength abiding in his locks? "Earthen vessels" very often "alter the character" of their contents, especially if they be dirty, as a rusty pipe discolors the water which passes through it. The thought suggests itself that probably the Gospel writers were very earthen vessels indeed, and "altered the character" of the "divine treasure" very considerably. If Mr. Hughes can distinguish between the "divine treasure" and the human element in the earthen vessels, he is even cleverer than we give him credit for. If he can tell us what we have to believe and what we are to reject, he will deserve our thanks. The birth, life, character, teachings and miracles of Christ are surely as dependent on the Bible and as much part and parcel thereof as anything else contained therein, and consequently can never be entirely or in part "independent of anything biblical criticism may demonstrate with respect to" them. Mr. Hughes cannot take his Christ out of the Bible and dissociate him from it, and set him up on a pinnacle and say, "Behold the infallible Christ." If he had never had his Bible he would never have had his Christ. H. J.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY ON PORCINE MIRACLES, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

To a correspondent who forwarded a copy of the *Dispatch* of February 27, containing an amusing account of an Irish pig having entered the Waverley Book Bazaar at Greenock, and evinced a desire to learn what Mr. Gladstone had written in defence of the Gadarene swine miracle, about which a controversial war has been waging for the last two years, Professor Huxley writes: "I am much obliged for your letter and inclosure. I have no doubt that your case is quite as truly miraculous as the other."

HOW TO HELP US.

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

A FEW POST-DILUVIAN IDEAS ON THE DELUGE.

WHEN any excavator, ignorant in geology, but well-versed in Bible legends, encounters a stratum of sand, gravel, or alluvial deposit, containing fossilised bones, etc., of prehistoric animals, etc., he invariably attributes such phenomena to Noah's flood, and venerates them as revelations of divine testimony, and feels disgustedly shocked at any scientific friend who should dare to ascribe them to any other causes than those enumerated in the Mosaic account of the universal deluge. But could a deluge of twelve month's duration produce such smooth round pebbles of flint, boulder and limestone as are everywhere to be met with in deposits of gravel? This question must be answered in the negative.

Let us now briefly consider the dimensions of the first Great Eastern ship, and Godalmity's commands to an old man 600 years old. Noah's legendary ark was 450 feet long and 75 feet wide (over all, I suppose), which gave an area of 33,750 square feet for each of the three stories, or, allowing for the curvatures of the bow and stern, a total floorage of 100,000 square feet.

Reasonable calculations show that animals require, for a year's supply of food, a quantity at least twenty times their own bulk. Some of the carnivorous animals can consume their own bulk of food every week; while some of the graminivorous kind and some of the birds have digestive capacities for double that amount. We cannot, therefore, be exceeding a fair statement in saying that not more than one-tenth of the available floor space could be devoted to the questionable sevens and twos which entered the ark, and that nine-tenths of the floorage would be required for the immense cargo of hay, corn, fish, dead meat, vegetables, fruits, insects, reptiles, larvæ, etc.—as food for this concourse of elect cattle.

Our next consideration is whether 10,000 square feet (one-tenth) of floor space was adequate for 3½ couples of every kind of fowl, 3½ couples of every kind of clean animal, and one couple of every other kind of animal that went on all-fours at that period of the world's history.

As theology won't admit that natural selection, etc., has differentiated the many species which now exist, there must have been a thousand times as many creatures in that fabulous ark as there are in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London.

We now approach the dilemma—"Was the ark large enough?" If not, somebody is *flumming*; if it was, these dumb creatures were all benevolently housed, fed, and cared for by eight old people, whose aggregate ages amounted to 1,800 years!

As a certificated teacher I taught (to my eternal disgrace) this kind of stupid nonsense for eighteen years, under a penalty of incurring the direful wrath of the parson, squire, and other pious ignoramuses that crawled hebdomadally to the Bethshan of Whitechapel, near Preston.

To do further justice to the diluvian theory, let us suppose that, as Godalmity had hermetically sealed the one door, the eight human centenarians opened the one small window for their sanitary benefit. It may also be estimated that the dung produced on board this living Argus during its voyage amounted to 20,000 tons; so that, if the upper deck were made the receptacle of this guano until it could be solidly deposited on Mount Ararat, it is now a promising speculation for some credulous Christian capitalist to form a syndicate for the utilisation of these nitrogenous treasures.

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## SECULARISM AND CRUELTY.

THE false charges made by the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. B. Waugh have provoked several protests. At the annual meeting of the Rochdale Branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Archdeacon Wilson referred to the Bishop's charge that cases of cruelty were often traced to persons who professed Secularism, and said that from his own experience he had found that such was not the case, and he regretted that such remarks had been made except with the clearest evidence. The persons guilty of cruelty to children were often neither Secularists nor professors of any religion, and ought not to be classed amongst Secularists or amongst Christians.

The *Scarborough Evening News*, in an article headed "An Unfounded Accusation," says: "The notion that moral turpitude is somehow or other bound up with speculative error is held by none but the baser kind of religious teachers. No one with a reputation for common sense to lose would dare to assert that an unbeliever is necessarily a bad father or a vicious man. Dr. Jayne has lived in some of our great towns, and he must have seen that the class from which the persons who come under the notice of this Society is that in which no opinions, whether Secularist or otherwise, are held. These cruel parents are the very dregs of the population. They are not Secularists any more than they are Christians. But, if the truth must be told, in the case of a religious census the social sediment has always styled itself as belonging to the Church of England, simply because by law everyone belongs to that communion. It is undeniable that the delusive returns of previous religious censuses rest upon the claim of these people to be members of the Established Church, and Churchmen have not been backward in pointing to the figures as proving the numerical superiority of their sect. Of course they are not really members of the Church of England any more than they are Methodists; they simply have no opinions at all, or any intelligence higher than the brute creation, but if Dr. Jayne were to term them Secularists they would feel insulted. . . The truth is, we suspect, that the Bishop of Chester has merely added another to the long list of blunders into which his remarkable temperament has already betrayed him. We promise him that if he cares to investigate the subject he will find that a more inexcusable statement was never made, and that his theory that unbelief and paternal heartlessness are allied is a figment of his own brain. Certainly, the criminal statistics afford no warrant for the assertion. The chaplains of our gaols will assure him that small indeed is the proportion of prisoners who reject their spiritual ministrations on the ground of conscientious disbelief. There is much to be said in support of the statement of a correspondent, that crime statistics show 'that the largest percentage comes from that class which of all others is most in the leading-strings of priestly authority, and which floods our large cities.' We do not hold a brief for any shade of opinion on religious subjects, but it has seemed to us that an utterly unfounded assertion from such a quarter calls for prompt notice. Of Mr. Waugh we can only say that his allegation is only on a par with the many foolish things he has said and done ostensibly in the interest of the society. He believes, no doubt, that all parents who insure their children's lives have a great temptation to kill them; and if they happen to be 'artisans' or 'Secularists,' the tendency is doubly evident. But we would commend this latest speech to the friends of the society, and ask whether such cruel slanders on any section of the community tend to further the interests of that useful agency. Already it is evident that a storm has been raised which both the Bishop of Chester and Mr. Waugh will find some trouble in allaying."

## WONDERFUL MRS. NOAH.

Once upon a time some bold bad boys, having become aware of the Bible lesson which their old preacher intended to read at the morning service, glued together the connecting pages in the old gentleman's Bible. The next morning the parson read on the bottom of the page, "When Noah was 140 he took unto himself a wife, who was" (turning the leaf) "140 cubits long, 40 cubits wide, built of gopher wood, covered with pitch inside and out." He was naturally puzzled at this. He read again, verified it, and then said, "My friends, this is the first time I ever met this in the Bible, but I accept it as evidence of the assertion that we are fearfully and wonderfully made."

## A NORWEGIAN NOVELIST.

It is fully a generation since Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson first opened to the reading world new visions of nature by his charming romances of pastoral life in Norway, taking us up with the milkmaids to the *sætars* in the mountains, where, as in ancient Greece, the cattle are taken in the summer; and showing us, as in a camera obscura, a picture of the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, which make up the life in the valleys below. Since his first story of *Synnøve Solbakken*, he has gone on increasing in range and depth. For a while he followed his fellow countrymen and fellow Freethinker, Ibsen, in making a national drama; but he has returned to his early love of romance, and his novels have increased in power while not losing their original simplicity. Readers must not go to Bjørnson for thrilling adventures and sensational plots. They will find no divine heroes and no execrable villains. But they will find simple, natural characters, painted with the fidelity of the old Dutch pictures.

The novel before us has, in its English dress, reached its fifth thousand. This is pleasant; for, like his previous novel, *Dust*, it is of a Freethought character. We remember that some time ago B.V. satirised the religious novels by showing how easy it would be to reverse their procedure, making the parson a villain and the Atheist a hero, and converting the heroine to Freethought in the third volume. Bjørnson does not work in this way. In *God's Way*\* depicts from their boyhood upwards two characters, Edward Kallem, a Freethinker, who becomes a doctor, and Ole Tuft, a pietist, who becomes a clergyman. Both have fine traits, but both are far from perfect characters, though we cannot fail to see how far less worthy is the career of the servant of God than that of the servant of humanity.

Bjørnson is himself the son of a parish clergyman, and knows Christianity, not only in its outward phases, but in its deep-seated hold on the life of his people. A Norwegian of the Norwegians, he is yet a travelled cosmopolitan, and he sees that justice cannot be done to human nature until it is emancipated from superstitious fears and ascetic burdens imposed in the name of religion. His novels are all calculated to break down the narrow puritanism and religiosity which sits like a nightmare on so many of his people, and prevents them from sharing in the free, glad life of the world. But he works more subtly and more truthfully than to make his clergymen villains or his Freethinkers perfect heroes. He never labels his characters, but lets them depict themselves. He never says their actions are good, bad, or indifferent. He shows their consequences. He is a moral teacher, but no moraliser. In this volume he shows the subtle sensualism which underlies religiosity; he shows the nature impulses of Josephine Kallem thwarted by her union with the pious Ole. Itzani, Edward Kallem's wife, a sweet and tender flower, is fairly crushed to death by the calumnies which everywhere beset Freethinkers. The story illustrates the difficulties attending thinking and acting for one's self amid the narrowing influences of provincialism and pietism. It should do good work in helping to break these down. J. M. W.

## DAGONET ON SABBATARIANISM.

A Scotch clergyman has discovered that it is wicked to walk on Sunday. The Rev. Mr. Macaskill, in holding forth on the infamy of football at the Dingwall Free Church, declared that all forms of exercise even on weekdays were frivolous, but that walking on Sunday was a deadly sin. "Did they expect such a profanation would bring them one additional moment of health? He declared it would not."

The Rev. Macaskill must have an extraordinary idea of a God and a curious notion of religion. Imagine the Almighty power, as conceived by this blasphemous and bigoted minister, forbidding the Sunday air to give color to the toiler's pallid cheek. Imagine—if you can—a God who would consider himself insulted because, on the day of rest, one of his creatures put one leg before the other in the open air. It seems hard to believe that at the end of the nineteenth century there are still educated people to be found with such extraordinary ideas of a God as that evidently entertained by the Rev. Mr. Macaskill, of the Dingwall Free Church.

You can't wonder at doubt and disbelief, and Agnosticism and Atheism spreading when professionally religious men preach such preposterous nonsense from the pulpit.—*Referee*.

\* *In God's Way*. A novel, by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, translated from the Norwegian by Elizabeth Carmichael. London: William Heinemann.

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*President, G. W. FOOTE.*

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SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

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Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

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This Declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary, with a subscription; and, on admission of the member, a certificate will be issued by the Executive.

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Fill up the above form and forward it, with subscription (as much, or as little, as you think just to yourself and the cause), to Mr. R. Forder, sec., 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.; or to a local Branch Secretary.

**SUNDAY MEETINGS.**

[Not cos of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

**LONDON.**

- Balf's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N.: 7, medical and dramatic entertainment. Admission free.
- Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, entertainment by members and friends. Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, Mr. T. Bolas (Fabian), "Capital and Labor."
- Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—"The Monarch" Coffee House, 189 Bethnal Green Road, E.: 7.30, members' quarterly meeting, important business.
- Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, "Freethought, Old and New."
- Deptford—Lecture Hall, High Street: Tuesday, April 23, at 8, Mr. G. W. Foote, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"
- Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, "The Triumph of Secularism."
- Hammersmith — Hammersmith Club, Grove House, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, at 8, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Heaven and Hell."
- Leyton — Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisey Villas, Manor Road: 7, Mr. C. B. Snelling, Reading; from Judge Haliburton. Members' quarterly meeting after the readings.
- Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W.: 7, Orchestral Band; 7.30, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "Is Paul a Myth?" Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes (practice).
- West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, The Secretary, "The Spirit of Truth."
- West London—8 Norland Road North: Monday, at 8, Mutual Improvement Class, Mr. F. Dowdall, "Some Greek Myths."
- Woolwich—Dinmore's Coffee Taverna, Beresford Square: 11.30, special meeting of members. "Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 69 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road): 7.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sophistry."

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

- Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. S. Soddy, "Myth and Science."
- Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church: 11.15, Mr. Haslam, "Bible Stories: are they true?"
- Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "God's Truth."
- Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road: 3.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "Science and Health."
- Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. J. Rowney, "Christ's Teachings"; 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Evolution and Design."
- Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Sacred Yarns."
- Hyde Park, near Marble Arch: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Slavery."
- Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "How Christianity has Cursed the World."
- Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Chris's Fables."
- Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "Religion and Secularism Contrasted."
- Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road: 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Christians and Christianity."
- Victoria Park, near the fountain: 3.30, Mr. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation—I."
- Wood Green — Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "God is Love."

**COUNTRY.**

- Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street: 7, Mr. H. Hands, "Why the People do Not Attend Places of Worship."
- Bradford—Temperance Hall, Leeds Road: Saturday, May 2, at 5, tea, concert and ball (tickets 1s. each).
- Chatham—"Old George Inn," Globe Lane: 6.30, Mr. W. B. Thompson, "God or Man: Whom will you Serve?"
- Heckmondwike — At Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms: 2.30, a meeting.
- Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street: 12 noon, debating class, Mr. D. Lindsay, "Representative Government"; 6.30, Mr. Shaw, "The Mythical Origin of Christianity."
- Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne Street: Mr. G. W. Foote 11, "The Grand Old Book"; 3, "Oration on Charles Bradlaugh" 7, "Death and the Devil."
- Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N. S. S. — 4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street: 3, last monthly financial meeting in these premises, every member must attend.
- Nottingham — Secular Hall, Beck Street: 7, Mr. J. Hooper, "Missionaries and Missionary Work."
- Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: Mrs. Thornton Smith, 3, "The Evolution of Conscience"; 7, "Has Man a Soul?"
- Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, a lecture or reading.
- South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street: 7, secretary's annual report.

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

- ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—April 26, evening, Hall of Science. May 3, morning, Clerkenwell; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; afternoon, Victoria Park; 17, morning, Westminster; 24, morning, Kingsland; afternoon, Victoria Park; 31, morning, Battersea. June 7, morning, Clerkenwell; afternoon, Victoria Park; 14, morning, Woolwich.
- C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordinley Road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 26, morning, Hyde Park; afternoon, Finsbury Park; evening, Woolwich. May 3, morning, Kingsland Green; afternoon, Regent's Park; 10, morning, Pimlico; evening, Kilburn; 17, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Battersea; 24, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith; 31, morning, Camberwell; evening, Lambeth. June 7, morning, Kingsland Green; afternoon, Regent's Park; 14, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Kilburn; 21, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Lambeth; 28, morning, Pimlico; evening, Lambeth.

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