

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

CHRISTIAN CRUELTY.

It was lovely weather on Thursday, April 23, when I sailed from Liverpool to the Isle of Man in company with my friend and colleague, Mr. Wheeler. The sky was filled with glorious light, the multitudinous small waves sported like living things, a flock of gulls wheeled and screamed above the vessel's track, and the north-easterly breeze was better than all the spicy scents of Arabia.

Perhaps it was the old sea-blood in my veins which made me remark to my companion that man will never build anything grander than a ship, by which he defies the sundering seas and conquers an element. As I looked around the broad circle of the horizon, and felt the thud of the engines, as steady and implacable as fate itself, I realised something of the mastery which science gives us over nature. The gods of the ocean have all vanished; no longer are they trusted to save from storm and shipwreck. Man builds himself stronger and stronger ships to dare the wildest weather. Science is with him in the engine-room, at the binnacle and the wheel, and holds tight for him every timber, plate, and rope, from keel to masthead. On, brave ship! symbol of man's cunning head and valiant heart.

Roaming Manxland as far as our brief stay would permit, we visited the ruins of Peel Castle. It stands on an island, which is artificially turned into a promontory by means of a mole that serves as a portion of one side of the harbor. In ancient days it must have been a great stronghold. From its watch-tower could be discerned the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, and the solid masonry of the walls could withstand the shock of any arms then in use, although they would be crushed to powder by the mighty artillery of to-day.

The old castle was extensive. Quite a little town must have been included within its walls. It contains two Houses of God—an old church, said to have been built by St. Patrick, probably after his miraculous labors in Ireland, and a more recent cathedral whose origin nevertheless reaches back into the dark ages. In that cathedral the people of the country-side, as well as the garrison, used to worship; but now it is all in the last stage of ruin, and the gulls sail over its time-eaten walls and see the stone effigy over an embalmed Bishop, and the sheep crop the grass round the tomb of another Bishop who gave his "tabernacle" to the "little worms."

Our guide was a man of exceptional intelligence. He showed us the curiosities in the little museum—stone cannon balls, old knives, forks, and pipes, etc.—giving terse accounts of everything; and finally he took us to a place which he thought we should like to see. It was the ecclesiastical dungeon under the old cathedral tower. We descended a winding flight of a dozen stone stairs, stooping all the way to avoid knocking our heads, and entered the dungeon. The inner side was arched with thirteen sandstone ribs. The square outer wall was broken by two holes

—larger now than they used to be—through which a little light straggled. Window of any kind the place never had. The floor was unpaved, and probably, in former times, strewn with rushes. And here, in the darkness and solitude, the damp and filth, human beings had known what it was to fall into the hands of the priests of the living God.

Our guide told us the story—of course from his guide-book—of a lady who was imprisoned there for witchcraft. The poor creature was exposed for seven days to the public gaze in a white, penitential sheet; she was then taken to that ecclesiastical dungeon, where she existed for fourteen years, until slow-footed Death came to terminate her sufferings.

What was that in the corner under the last ribs of sandstone? Something seemed to move. A squalid form, with long, lean arms, and white, pinched face, and cavernous eyes gleaming through masses of dishevelled hair, seemed to squat upon the floor. But as we moved towards it the thing vanished. It was only the effect of imagination, smitten by a tale of ancient wrong and agony; wrong and agony that could never be undone, never atoned for, never wiped out of the records of the universe; wrong and agony that still *would have been* if all things were turned to gladness, or the whole cosmos hurled into chaos and oblivion.

Opposite the foot of the stone staircase was a doorway. It led into a once high-walled courtyard where the poor "witch" was let out for exercise for a single hour in every day. One wall of that courtyard was the back of the banqueting hall. Torture and revelry were near each other for fourteen years. Week after week, month after month, the lord bishop lifted his winecup, while the poor creature in that dungeon tasted the saltness of tears. He and his priests lived in the sunlight, and took their ease, and fared well, and were clothed sumptuously, and fenced by good fires against the winter's cold; while the poor victim of their hateful creed lay huddled on her straw, in the cold, damp dungeon, hating man, despairing of God, and yearning for the death that would not come.

When the hymns were sung in the cathedral, the sound may have penetrated to her den. They were praising God overhead, and she was tortured in the name of God below. They sniffed the perfumed incense, and she the reeking foulness; they saw the light streaming through stained-glass windows, and she the twilight that crept through the two holes in her dungeon; they looked up to the lofty cathedral roof, and she only saw the vaulted roof of her living tomb.

I was glad to get out of that torture chamber. Tears seemed dripping from the walls, and I felt half-stifed in the gloom. Outside I took a deep draught of pure air, and took off my hat in salutation to the dear sun. I had had enough for one day of the good old times; enough of Christian charity and the mercy of priests; and I felt it was just the spot where the Bishop of Chester should preach his next sermon on the cruelty of Atheism.

G. W. FOOTE.

SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION.

(Concluded from p. 195.)

"It is hard indeed to say whether he had any religious belief or no. The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of a distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence about the after-world. 'To die,' it may be, was to him as it was to Claudio, 'to go we know not whither.' Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of life and death he leaves it a riddle to the last without heeding the common theological solutions around him."—J. R. GREEN, *Short History of the English People*, bk. vi., chap 7.

WHILE signs of "a distant and imaginative reverence" may certainly be descried in Shakespeare, a constant and palpable irreverence is far more glaring. A pious person could never have permitted himself to write down the profanity in which he indulges. He continually takes the name of God in vain. Even when our copies read "heaven" he often wrote "God," and "God" or "gods," theism or polytheism, seem quite indifferent to him. The most sacred term of religion is mainly used as a name to swear by. When swearing is meant seriously, the Freethinker breaks out in such an exclamation as that of Brutus, "Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous." The vanity of vows opposed to the surges of passion is a frequent theme.

He used the Bible, as he used everything, as its master.* Sir John Falstaff revels in Bible allusion. "In the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy?"—a saying possibly known to the French poet Piron, who excused himself for being drunk on Good Friday since on that day even Deity succumbed. "If to be fat is to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved." Bardolph's face reminds him of hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple. His face is Lucifer's privy-kitchen, where he doth nothing but roast malt worms. Such a conception of the Devil could but excite the ridicule of a man who had read Marlowe's *Faustus*. Then how Sir John ridicules hell-fire: "I think the Devil will not have me damned lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire."† So, when he dies, trusty Bardolph cries, "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell"; and Mistress Quickly replies, "Nay, sure he's not in hell; he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom," substituting with fine intuition the mythical English hero for the mythical Jewish one. Surely, could Shakespeare have read Bishop Wordsworth's attempt to make him a bibliolater, he would have said, "God make incision in thee."

His audacious genius never hesitates to joke at Scripture, or to treat with irreverence the most revered features of Christian belief. How admirably does the Clown in *Measure for Measure* (IV., 2) bowl over St. Paul's nonsense in Eph. v., 23, about the subordination of women:

PROVOST. Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head?

POMPEY. If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he is his wife's head, and I can never cut off a woman's head.

He warns us that

In religion
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

Richard II. (IV., 5) sets the word against the word—

as thus, Come little ones; and then again,
It is as hard to come as for a camel
To thread the postern of a needle's eye.

The King compares himself to Jesus, and exalts his

* Dr. Furnivall notes that in *Henry VIII*. Fletcher, a bishop's son, "naturally made use of scriptural expressions in his part of *Henry VIII*. far more often than his master, Shakespeare, did in his part."

† Mrs. Page tells Mrs. Ford to dispense with such a trifle as going "to hell for an eternal moment or so."

own misery above that of his Savior. He has "Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." So Judas did to Jesus—"he, in twelve, found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none."

What religious Christian could have indulged in the flippancy of making even crook-backed Richard say, "For you shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night" (2 *Henry VI.*, v. 1.). In the same play (I., 3) the Duchess of Gloster says—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in thy face.

Akin to this irreverence may be classed Rosalind's saying of Orlando, "His kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread." Celia rejoins, "A nun of winter's sisterhood kisses not more religiously. The very ice of chastity in his kisses" (*As You Like It*, III., 4).

Dr. Bucknill, in his *Mad Folk of Shakespeare* (p. 323), gives his opinion that the scene between Malvolio and the Clown in *Twelfth Night* represents a caricature of the idea that madness is occasioned by demoniacal possession, and is curable by priestly exorcism. To satirise the first part of this idea is to satirise the New Testament; and to laugh at the second is to laugh at the Church of England, which endorses the belief in its 72nd Canon, providing that no minister shall cast out devils without the licence of the bishop of the diocese.

In *Twelfth Night*, when Olivia says of her brother,

I know his soul is in heaven, fool,

Straight comes the rude answer,

The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven.

In the second part of *King Henry VI.*, Act II., sc. 1, Shakespeare introduces a miracle scene, of one said to have been born blind and to have received his sight. The only object of the scene, which cannot fail to remind one of the Gospel story, is to show how cunning is ready to play upon credulity.

Shakespeare not only ridicules miracles—he explains them, and that by the mouth of a cardinal (*King John*, III., 4):

No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scope of Nature, no distempered day,
No common wind, no customary event,
But they will pluck away his natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies and signs,
Abortives, presages and tongues of heaven.

Helena says (*All's Well*, I., 3):

Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper
But knows of him no more.

Again she observes:

Our remedies oft in themselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.

Consider that speech of Miranda's when viewing the shipwreck (*Tempest* I., 2):

O, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,
Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls, they perish'd.
Had I been any God of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
The fraughting souls within her.

Note his representation of prelates in the historical plays. Their actions are always directed to worldly ends. The words of religion are on their lips, but ambition influences their lives. Gold, as Timon says, "will knit and break religions." Creed in Shakespeare rarely modifies conduct. The only persons exhibited praying are Claudius, the murderer, and Angelo, the hypocrite. Throughout he shows his characters as determined to action, not by their

beliefs, but by their passions and affections, noble or ignoble. In this his point of view of human nature is that of Hume, Comte, and Schopenhauer. With his characters appeals to the supernatural are never real motives, but mere pretexts. Theology and metaphysics he evidently considered "words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart."

Finally, notice the Pagan way in which he refers to death. In *Measure for Measure* Claudio's imaginary fears are silenced by the reason of the Duke, who even in the garb of a friar declares—

Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more.

How could a Christian put such sentiments in the mouth of a friar giving consolation, and make him say that death "makes these odds all even"?

Even pious King Richard II. is made to dwell on the thought of annihilation—

Nor I, nor any man, that but man is,
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.

The sceptical Hamlet, having seen his father's spirit, speaks of death as the bourne whence no traveller returns, and utters as his last words, "The rest is silence." Prospero, in the passage appropriately put on Shakespeare's tomb in Westminster Abbey, says—

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep,

That is, as De Quincey says, "Our life is a little tract of feverish vigils surrounded and islanded by a shoreless ocean of sleep, sleep before birth, sleep after death." Could this be the view of one who accepted Christianity? No; Shakespeare's religion, if religion we term it, demands a wider name; it was that of Humanity.

J. M. WHEELER.

CREATION AND EVOLUTION.

FROM fifteen to twenty years ago the doctrine of evolution was treated by Christians as a subject fit only for merriment. Darwin was regarded as a sort of scientific "nincompoop," and many said that he believed "man had sprung from an ape" only because he wasn't much better than one himself. On several occasions I have heard Christian clergymen make statements of this kind, which were received with laughter and applause by their credulous followers. No doubt these divines knew as little of the true character of Darwin, or the scientific value of his work, as those among their hearers who laughed so uproariously at this cheap and vulgar joke.

But Darwinism has made great strides since then. The remains of the great naturalist now lie in the historic precincts of Westminster Abbey. Just before the death of Darwin many of the leading lights in the Church made the extraordinary discovery that the doctrine of evolution and Genesis were in perfect harmony; while some bolder Christians, like the Rev. Professor John Symes (of Nottingham), with whom I debated at Northampton a few years ago, went the length of declaring that Darwin was a greater authority on biology than Moses, and therefore the facts and opinions of this naturalist were of more value to-day than those of the alleged author of the Pentateuch.

Recently the London *Echo* has opened its columns to a discussion on the relative merits of the biblical theory of creation and the scientific hypothesis of evolution. Several letters have appeared for and against each theory; all of them have been interesting, and some of them have shown a good deal of research. To one, however, by Mr. Martin Westcott, I took serious objection, and endeavored to show that nearly

all the authorities he quoted as against evolution were really in favor of it. For some reason, only known to the editor of the *Echo*, my letter was not inserted, and I therefore have no option but to take this means of challenging Mr. Westcott to debate the subject, or if he does not feel himself capable of meeting me, to challenge the clergy of any denomination to take up the cudgels on behalf of the biblical story of creation, while I defend Darwinism and the doctrine of evolution generally.

The clergy have given up a great deal of the plainest teachings of the Bible. Are they prepared to give up "The Creation Story"? If not, now is their chance; let them defend their book against the attacks of the modern Freethinker; let them defend it against the facts of science; let them defend it in a fair and open encounter, or for ever hold their peace. And what is it the Freethinker undertakes to demonstrate? In the first place, he undertakes to show that science teaches that there was a time when this earth contained no form of animated existence. Secondly, that the theory of "spontaneous generation" is more reasonable than the theory of the creation of living creatures by an unknown being called God. Thirdly, that geology and palæontology go hand in hand in demonstrating the gradual evolution, in various branches, of the lower to the higher forms of life. Fourthly, that there is no break in the chain of development from the lower forms of animal life up to man. This is the contention of the Freethinker to-day; and in taking this position he is supported by science, by philosophy, and by common sense.

The scientific man knows nothing of creation *ex nihilo*. When the Christian says that God created the universe "out of nothing," the Freethinker respectfully asks what "nothing" is. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as "nothing." "Nothing" simply means the absence of "something." But in nature the absence of something is not observable anywhere. Something is everywhere, and it seems rational to suppose that that something was always everywhere. Now, if something "was always" everywhere, it was never created—that is, the something which we call nature, matter, existence, is eternal.

This does away, once and for ever, with the necessity of the Theistic hypothesis. It is said, however, that the doctrine of "spontaneous generation" is exploded; that men of science have given it up, and that it has been demonstrated to be impossible to produce life except from previous life. Strange to say, the Theist does not see that this statement is fatal to his own position.

If you cannot get life except from "previous life," neither could the "Unknown Deity" of the Christians get his life except from an unknown being who preceded him, and so on *ad infinitum*. What we call life must have been produced somehow, and the question is, Which is the more reasonable—to believe that it was produced in its lowest form by the commingling of elements hitherto apart, or that it was produced by a being who was himself unproduced? In my judgment the experiments of Professor Tyndall, which are said to have destroyed the doctrine of "spontaneous generation," were eminently unsatisfactory. To exclude the air, and consequently the gases necessary for the existence of the very lowest form of animated matter, seems to me to be setting up impossible conditions for the production of life. Besides, life having been once produced, no matter by what means—the atmosphere ever afterwards teeming with life—all experiments on the subject of "spontaneous generation" must necessarily be of an unsatisfactory character.

But the question of the origin of life has nothing to do with the doctrine of evolution. Evolution deals only with the development of living forms. The

science of geology reveals to us the vast antiquity of man and the vaster antiquity of the animals that preceded man. Palæontology further helps us in our study by pointing to the remains of extinct animals and to the implements used by prehistoric man; while embryology carries us one stage further with the proof by demonstrating to us that "the history of man in the fœtus is the history in brief of the race." The doctrine of evolution goes further even than this, for it treats not only of the gradual development of all forms of life, but of the ceaseless unfolding of nature in all her manifold manifestations. This, then, is the groundwork for the evolutionist. He builds upon the solid bed-rock of science, of history, of reason, of argument and of common-sense, while the Christian rests his belief on faith, on blind credulity, on superstition. But when the tide of scepticism and unbelief shall have risen to its full height, ignorance and superstition will be submerged for ever beneath the strong waves of knowledge which will sweep over the land, bringing with them the power and promise of future prosperity and progress to humanity.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

RUDYARD KIPLING ON CHICAGO RELIGION.

RUDYARD KIPLING does not like the mighty pork city of the West, and much prefers an Indian village. Describing his experiences in the *Detroit Free Press*, he says: "Sunday brought me the queerest experience of all—a revelation of barbarism complete. I found a place that was officially described as a church. It was a circus really, but that the worshippers did not know. There were flowers all about the building, which was fitted up with plush and stained oak and much luxury, including twisted brass candlesticks of severest Gothic design. To these things and a congregation of savages entered suddenly a wonderful man, completely in the confidence of their God, whom he treated colloquially and exploited very much as a newspaper reporter would exploit a foreign potentate. But, unlike the newspaper reporter, he never allowed his listeners to forget that he, and not He, was the centre of attraction. With a voice of silver, and with imagery borrowed from the auction room, he built up for his hearers a heaven on the lines of the Palmer House (but with all the gilding real gold, and all the plate-glass diamond), and set in the centre of it a loud-voiced, argumentative, very shrewd creation that he called God. One sentence at this point caught my delighted ear. It was *apropos* of some question of the judgment, and ran:

"No! I tell you God doesn't do business that way." He was giving them a deity whom they could comprehend, and a gold and jewel heaven in which they could take a natural interest. He interlarded his performance with the slang of the street, the counter, and the exchange, and he said that religion ought to enter into daily life. Consequently, I presume, he introduced it *as* daily life—his own, and the life of his friends. Then I escaped before the blessing, desiring no benediction at such hands."

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ACID DROPS.

"Disgraceful" is the mildest epithet we can apply to the Bishop of Chester's letter to Mrs. Bonner. He crawls out of his responsibility through a hundred lines of unctuous hypocrisy, and refers all his critics to Mr. Waugh. In other words, the Bishop will not be responsible for the libel on Secularists, but he thinks it very useful all the same.

So feeble and silly is Dr. Jayne's letter that the *Manchester Evening News* says he "should follow the advice once given to a young judge, and never give reasons for his judgments." The *Scarborough Evening News* declares that the Bishop of Chester has "said more silly things than any other occupant of the bench." It says further that "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."

The *Lancashire Evening Post* tells Mr. Waugh that he would "do best to avoid casting stones in this way." The *Crewe Chronicle* prints a spirited letter from Charles Lewis, who challenges Mr. Waugh or the Bishop, either to "furnish the name and address of any person whose name can be proved to be on the National Secular Society's books that has ever been found guilty by law of neglect or cruelty to children."

The *London Evening Standard* politely quizzes Mr. Waugh. It thinks that students of human nature will be curious to know what evidence he can put forward. Then it proceeds as follows:—"The connection of cruelty and Secularism is not manifest at a glance. Parents loved their children and were kind to them for ages innumerable before Christianity was introduced. They are at least as loving and as kind in those vast realms which it has not yet penetrated. Nor can we see clearly why the rejection of that creed, whatever consequences follow in other points of view, should disturb those natural relations."

One of our friends at Swansea has withdrawn his name from the local committee of the society of which Mr. Waugh is secretary. Mr. Waugh, by the way, has just visited Swansea. In his address there he said that every baby-farmer had a certificate from a clergyman. He told of one notorious woman who had the words over her mantel-piece, "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom"; and on the decorous man suggesting that she should do away with the child, she said, "Yes, poor dear, it will be happier in heaven." Here is an excellent text for a sermon by the Bishop of Chester.

Another man of God in trouble! The Rev. Augustus James Pulling, curate of Winkfield Parish Church, is arrested for a grave offence under the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The magistrates refused bail. When the prisoner appeared in the dock he was in clerical attire, and he is reported to have said to the sergeant who arrested him, "I can't deny the charge." No doubt the Bishop of Chester will preach a sermon on this edifying case.

The May meeting season is with us once more. The Strand blossoms with white chokers, and the clerical physiognomy may even be detected in the resorts where gay youth and grey age alike take the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire. The stringed hats of colonial bishops "returned empty" may be descried in the neighborhood of Exeter Hall, whither pious and philanthropic old women of both sexes wend their way, to utter or listen to the annual platitudes of the various Christian societies for collecting cash for far-off objects.

The Rev. Given-Wilson, an "anti-infidel," of Plaistow, has been taken to task by the Town Council for circulating false reports as to the poverty of the place. Some of the councillors said the reverend gentleman is only fishing for "contributions." Ultimately it was resolved that a protest should be sent to the vicar; and Councillor Hands added a rider, advising the reverend gentleman to cultivate the truth.

A Lochgilphead Free Church minister on Sunday condemned Saturday games and Sunday walks—the former because they made young men too tired to go to church next day, the latter because they took people away from church and their homes. Yet the religion of gloom is slowly departing from Scotland, and once gone it will never return.

Dr. Balmorie (who is surely from the Land o' Cakes), preaching on the Sunday question at Bishop Auckland, declared that Sunday was an impious term, dishonoring to God. Had we consulted the arch-fiend himself as to the word that offered the deepest insult to God, we could hardly have succeeded better than in calling the day which the Lord hath made by the name of his rival the sun-god. Well, theology never could stand sunshine. Dr. Balmorie forgets that the early Christians appropriated the Pagan festival. He should keep the Saturday, and call that his Sawbath.

Prophet Baxter has fixed the end of the world for April 11, 1901. Surely this is a mistake of ten days. The first of April looks more likely.

The Catholic papers are preparing to climb down. A month or two ago the *Weekly Register* violently denounced the followers of Parnell as unworthy to partake of Catholic privileges. Now, it guardedly says, "Nothing need be said or done by the clergy to alarm from religious practices Catholic laymen of differing views as to the political wisdom of Mr. Parnell's deposition." They see that Mr. Parnell has a sufficiently large following to make it eminently undesirable they should be detached from the Church.

The *Bombay Catholic Examiner* calls attention to the fact that during Holy Week and Passion Week many Europeans resorted to French plays and other low places of entertainment which Parsee gentlemen will not visit. Another instance of the superiority of heathens.

The *Church Times* of April 24 expresses its annoyance that the Public Worship Sites Bill passed in opposition to the Government for the benefit of Nonconformists, but consoles itself with the thought that, if the Bill be not very materially qualified in Committee, it will be rejected in the Upper House. The same number of the same paper prophesies that "there will be no Assisted Education Bill this year. Mr. Goschen will not have the money, and if he had the House will not have the time for it." The wish is father to the thought with the *Church Times*.

This organ of advanced Ritualism rejoices that Sir William Plowden was not even heard upon his motion for a Royal Commission to inquire into the Church Revenues. This it describes as "the most appropriate ending of his ill-considered enterprise." The Church dislikes inquiry and investigation into its revenues as much as any gang of thieves.

The recent Mohammedan marriages in London and Liverpool excites the Christian piety of the *Rock*. That a Christian minister should solemnly repeat the words of sanction in

the name of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, when fully aware that one of the persons before him holds as the main article of his creed the verse of the Koran which says, "God does not beget and is not begotten," it calls a prostitution of the sacred service. The Liverpool papers devote some space to the marriage at the Mosque in their city, and describe the ceremony as similar to that of the Christian rite, only more beautiful.

Spurgeon says he expects to have a pulpit beyond the spheres, and to preach with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders. His congregation will need their ears strengthened if not lengthened.

Dr. Joseph Parker says that "Calvinism has done greater harm in the world than was ever done by reverent infidelity." Reverent infidelity, by the way, means "Please don't laugh at the ridiculous; treat nonsense very seriously." We thank the doctor for this admission, for Calvinism is assuredly the most logical form of Protestant Christianity; and according to the *Church Times*, it is the form which Dr. Parker is himself bound to preach by the terms of the trust deeds of the City Temple.

Secularism shows its progress in the ranks of the enemy. The churches are always coming nearer to us, while we never go one inch in their direction. Here is the Church Army, with its "social scheme," in opposition to that of the S. A. On May 6 the scheme is to be fully trotted out at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, together with "500 Evangelist Mission Nurses and Reclaimed Tramps, Criminals and Inebriates." The Rev. W. Carlile, the head of the Army, is exactly like his great rival in one particular—One hundred thousand pounds are urgently needed.

The total increase of Wesleyan Methodists during the past year is 688. The United Kingdom is divided into thirty-five districts, sixteen of which show a decrease in membership.

After reading Hugh Price Hughes' "Atheist Shoemaker" a Cheshire gentleman wrote to the reverend romancer asking him if the story were really true and requesting particulars. Truthful Hughes replied as follows:—"Of course the story is true. I am very surprised you should ask me. The reason why the name is not given is stated in the preface of the story. Such attacks are too absurd to be noticed by serious and busy men."

We should say that such *lies* are too absurd to be concocted by serious and busy men. Price Hughes, too, must have a lot of surprise in stock, if he is *still* astonished at questions about his Atheist Shoemaker. The "Of course" is delicious. That settles it. No evidence is needed. Price Hughes *cannot* lie.

For he himself has said it,
And its greatly to his credit.

British Methodists' subscriptions to the General Fund are less to-day than in 1868 by £4,000, and less than in 1878 by £12,470. The figures are taken from the *Methodist Times*.

Catching sight of a headline in Price Hughes' paper about "The Best Thought in the World," we looked down the column and found it was a report of a sermon by Dr. Lunn on good old Jonah. Dr. Coit thinks theology is dead, and here is a "forward" Methodist teaching lessons to young men from the ancient yarn of a prophet's excursion in the belly of a whale.

The child of Princess Beatrice has a cradle made entirely by blind men. The Queen is said to have a superstition that objects made by blind people bring luck.

Political gratitude seems a short-lived sentiment. What has become of the Bradlaugh Memorial projected at Northampton? The Radical rank and file, we have no doubt, are ready with their pence, but what is being done by the wealthier orthodox Liberals? Even the Hindus seem to be doing as little, and, according to the *Madras Weekly Mail*, Mr. Eardley Norton has withdrawn his offer of a donation of 500 rupees. He is indignant at the small amount of *practical* appreciation of Mr. Bradlaugh's "great and gratuitous assistance" to India. All that the people of Madras have subscribed is 180 rupees. "I decline," says Mr. Norton, "to continue a connection with

a movement so ridiculous. Look at the men who have subscribed and their amounts, and recollect the names of those who have not! The contrast teaches a lesson not much to the credit of men who praised the lion living and now will not bury it decently dead." It is pretty obvious that the Freethought party, to whom Mr. Bradlaugh really belonged, is the one that remembers him with a solid devotion.

The American Theosophical Society held its annual Convention on Sunday at Boston. Mrs. Besant represented England, and read a long message from Madame Blavatsky. We commend this to the attention of those who wish to see Mrs. Besant on the Bradlaugh Memorial Committee. Mr. Bradlaugh regarded Theosophy as a contemptible superstition, only not worth opposing because it is at present so small and feeble. He would have thought it strange to put Theosophists on the committee of an Institute built to maintain and propagate his principles.

Stanley has been received in Wales with fervid demonstrations. A leading feature was the singing of a welcome hymn to the air of "God Bless the Prince of Wales." Here is the first verse, and the rest are worthy of it:

We welcome thee, O wanderer,
To this thy quiet home,
Where health and peace and gladness
We trust to thee may come.
No lurking foe to harm thee,
No swamps to lay thee down,
No heathen, in their blindness,
To bow to wood and stone.

CHORUS—Let every hill resound with song,
And every dale with glee,
And every voice re-echo,
"God bless H. M. STANLEY."

If this is the highest effort of the genius of the Welsh bards, poetry is falling to a low ebb in the Principality.

The London Diocesan Conference has shown it is fully alive to the necessity of instilling religious dogmas into the infant mind if the Church is to maintain its sway. The Bishop of London, in his speech to the Conference, remarked that if the Church schools in London had to be given up because they were not sufficiently supported, it would be a terrible blow. No doubt. Unless they can mould the plastic mind to receive their nonsense, it will never do so when mature. In the discussion, Mr. T. W. Sharp, a member of the London School Board, frankly confessed that "the conscience clause existed only in theory."

The London Diocesan Conference, too, was much concerned at the desecration of Good Friday involved in the arrangements for the Easter Volunteer Review; though they were told that, as there were church parades on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, many men then attended church who otherwise would certainly not attend any service at all.

The young man Hardy, who is under apprehension for shooting Sergeant Applegarth at Merrington Lane, has addressed a letter to his mother, in which he hopes the Lord will forgive him, and says "it is the Lord's will that I have to be called away." But did the Lord commission him to call away Sergeant Applegarth at the same time? The young shooter is religious, and, like many other religious persons, his brains are muddled.

Lily Singlehurst threw herself in front of a train at East Heaton and was almost cut in two. In one of her pockets was found a letter of her mother, in which the name of God appeared four times. Another fact for Talmage.

Upton Baptist Chapel, Lambeth-road, issues some unctuous circulars. The deacons "affectionately remind" seat-holders that their subscriptions are due. The congregation are also informed that "it will be a source of satisfaction to the pastor to know that, as you appreciate his ministerial labors, you are also desirous of contributing to his temporal necessities." We dare say the pastor's temporal necessities will keep pace with the subscription list. But as he is in the service of the Lord, he should apply to head-quarters for a little assistance. Jehovah sent Elijah sandwiches, and perhaps he would send this Baptist minister a keg of oysters and a barrel of stout.

The Charity Commissioners offered £500 for a Polytechnic in Finsbury; of course with the condition that it should be unsectarian. This did not suit the Church of England promoters, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the pious Lord Mayor have been begging for this object. The report says, "A gymnastic display of more than average excellence was carried out."

The Christian Evidence Defence Association, at Spenny-moor, is annoyed because a debate cannot be arranged between the President of the National Secular Society and Mr. George Wise, of Liverpool. The local Secularists offered to arrange a debate between Mr. Wise and Mr. C. J. Hunt, who is certainly his match in ability and experience; but the C. E. D. A. declines the offer on the ground that Mr. Hunt is only an ordinary working man and not a certificated lecturer. Precisely the same may have been said of Jesus Christ. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Hunt is not a working man, in the ordinary sense of the words, while Mr. Wise was a working man until a couple of years ago, when the C. E. S. gave him a post at Liverpool.

Christians must understand that the President of the N. S. S. is not bound to meet any and every Christian champion in debate. There must be some proportion between the positions of the disputants. Mr. Foote is ready to meet any really representative Christian in public discussion.

One of Mr. Foote's many opponents at Belfast was Mr. Bruce Wallace, an ex-Congregationalist minister. Mr. Wallace runs a little paper called the *Weekly Star*, in which he gives an account of the meetings. We gather from his remarks that he is still smarting, though he was treated with perfect courtesy and fair-play. He says that Mr. Foote's addresses "abound in apt quotations from Shakespeare, theatrically recited, and in other traps for claps." Apparently Mr. Wallace does not see that he is calling Shakespeare a clap-trap writer. He might reflect that Mr. Foote is as much entitled to bring in an apt quotation from Shakespeare as the clergy are to lard their sermons with endless quotations from the Bible.

Indirectly, of course, Mr. Wallace pays Mr. Foote's audience an unintended compliment. If they applaud a fine passage from Shakespeare they are a long way ahead of ordinary Christians.

Mr. Wallace complains that the Christian side was at a disadvantage in the discussion, apparently because the Christian critics were not allowed to speak for an hour each like the lecturer. But six of them had ten minutes each, which comes to the same thing in point of time; and if they had had the sense to take up different points of the lecture they might have dealt with it completely from the exordium to the peroration. It is not the Secularists' fault if the Christians think more of themselves than of the cause they are defending.

Mr. W. T. Stead is still hatching his Church of the Future. This month he introduces his brother, Herbert Stead, who is sitting on the same egg. Behold the Moses and Aaron of the new dispensation.

Joseph Cook, of Boston, inveighs against Catholic encroachments in the United States. He advocates an amendment in the constitution against the "sectarian appropriation of public funds by nation, or state, or city, or county, or town, or ward, or precinct." At the same time Joseph wants the State to ally itself with "undenominational" Christianity. That is, he wants his own faith patronised by the State as far as it is prudent. What more do the Catholics desire?

The attention of the Humanitarian League may well be directed to the question of cattle ships, which still exist in all their horror, despite the large-hearted efforts of Samuel Plimsoll. Cattle have to stand all the time during their voyage from America, sometimes sixteen days. They are put in "close enough to hold each other up," and when the vessels roll their sufferings may be more easily imagined than described.

The German religionists won't have the Salvation Army, but have started a rival military religious organisation under the name of the Army of Peace. Its object, like that of the Jesuit Society and the S. A., is "to conquer the world for Jesus," a little task he never accomplished for himself.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

Sunday, May 3, Hall of Science, Old-street, London, E.C.; at 7, "Death and the Devil."

Monday, May 4, Temperance Hall, Northampton, at 8, An Oration on Charles Bradlaugh.

May 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. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

It being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

E. H. S.—Thanks for your interesting letter. You are not the only one who became interested in the Freethought movement in consequence of Mr. Foote's imprisonment.

S. R.—You will find something on circumcision in "Father Abraham," No. 3 of *Bible Heroes*. The origin of the rite is debated. In our opinion, whatever else it may be, it was of the nature of a sacrifice. See also Mr. Wheeler's article in the *Freethinker* for July 1888. Glad to hear you find this journal instructive as well as entertaining.

J. E. STAPLETON.—After the President's explanation a discussion between the Executive and one of the Branches would be neither dignified nor useful. The Nottingham Branch has a perfect right to adopt the constitutional method of placing a notice on the Conference agenda.

J. ROBERTS.—Always pleased to receive cuttings. It will be hard to bring the pious Waugh to book. See what trouble we have had with Price Hughes.

D. WOODHOUSE.—Thanks for the batch of jokes.

C. E. MITCHELL.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."

H. TONGE.—No wonder you are indignant at the Bishop of Chester's libel, which is positively grotesque in relation to your own experience. If there be a Judgment Day you may well stand up with the best Christian the bishop can discover—or God Almighty either for that matter.

R. W. E.—The "St. Paul's Combination" refers to the situation of the House in St. Paul's Church-yard. St. Paul did several queer things: he told ladies how to wear their hair, but never prescribed their underclothing.

W. SIMONS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. LEYS.—Statement, etc. to hand. We hope the Woolwich Branch will prosper. There is a wide field for propaganda in that populous district.

E. M. VANCE.—(1) Inserted this week, though after date, in consequence of the editor's absence from town. (2) The North-West London Branch had its vote on the Executive. What more does it desire?

C. JOHNSON.—We hope you were able to circulate our article on the bishop's slander.

D. H. MARSHALL, Boston U.S.A.—Your letter dated April 10 did not reach us till after Shakespeare's birthday, and the verse is therefore inopportune, otherwise it would have been inserted. We shall be glad to receive your account of Freethought in America.

J. R. BROAD.—We daresay Mr. Spurgeon has made many Atheists.

F. GOODWIN.—Thanks for cuttings. Gratified to hear you find the "Presidential Notes" so useful. The Reminiscences are now reprinted.

H. GUISE.—We had already written on the subject, and hope our article gave you satisfaction.

J. R. WILLOCK.—Not being marked "Lecture Notice," your letter was sent on to Mr. Foote in Ireland. All such notices should be marked outside, in accordance with our standing intimation.

T. COOPER.—We do not know of the existence of a Skeleton Army. There was such a body, composed of rowdies, in the early days of the Salvation Army.

T. CHEETHAM.—Pleased to hear of Archdeacon Wilson's protest against the libel on Secularists.

F.—Some School Boards do not admit religious teaching. The number is small, but will probably increase.

H. GROOME.—Orders for literature should be sent to Mr. Forder as above. The non-observance of this rule causes trouble and delay.

J. TULLIN.—Your letter reached Mr. Foote in Ireland, too late for a "Sugar Plum." We hope the meeting was successful. We must have patience with the new members unfamiliar with the Society's business.

F. ABLARD.—Such announcements frequently appear. We hardly care to criticise a man's religion when he is burying his wife; though his cocksureness as to her being in heaven is a curious commentary on the double-barrelled doctrine taught by Jesus.

T. J. NEARY.—"Mrs. Besant's Autobiography" gives the chief facts of her life, but we believe the volume is now out of print. Perhaps Mr. Forder could supply you with a copy.

J. W. GOTT.—We are delighted to hear that the new Bradford Branch starts with thirty members, and hope it will be represented at the Conference.

W. WILDE.—It is the person who has industriously libelled Mr. Bradlaugh. The collection of extracts shows the truth of the line "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

J. ELIAS.—Received with thanks. We are not surprised that Dr. Coit's discourse made you more satisfied than ever with our policy. We believe that Dr. Coit was brought up a Freethinker, and not having been a Christian he does not understand the malady.

ALFRED HULL.—The census return of centenarians is really no proof. Many old people have been honestly mistaken as to their ages. However, the point has nothing to do with Freethought. One hundred years is not within "measurable distance" of nine hundred and sixty-nine.

MANCHESTER FRIENDS.—Thanks for the cuttings.

W. EMSLEY.—The *Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh* are being reprinted. We are pleased to hear the articles have given you such delight.

J. VNICOMBE.—The statement was reproduced in our columns from the ordinary newspapers. It concerned the private residence of General Booth and not the buildings of the Salvation Army. Those who talk of "trustees" of the Army property are, in our opinion, talking nonsense. To all practical intents and purposes the Salvation Army property belongs to William Booth.

C. PROUNDES.—We have no space for political matters. We note your statement that the Theosophic libel action against you has been privately dropped. Perhaps the same judgment will be shown with respect to the libel action against Professor Coues in America.

A. LORD (Nottingham).—Glad to hear the President's explanation convinced you that the Executive's policy was after all the right one. No harm will be done by raising the matter at the Conference. It will then be settled once for all.

S. P. W.—We are obliged. See paragraph. We appreciate your admiration of this journal.

J. FORSTER.—There must be some mistake. Ask the School Board officer his authority.

R. O. SMITH, treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges the following:—A. B. Moss, 10s.; Mrs. Foote, 10s. The Federation is in want of Funds, and those who promised subscriptions at the annual dinner are requested to remit at their earliest convenience.

E. H. SOUBEYRAND.—Freethinkers may differ about Cardinal Newman. Pleased to hear you appreciate Mr. Wheeler's articles on Shakespeare—the true king of kings and lord of lords.

G. SCOTT.—The year 1883 was exceptional. It was the year of Mr. Foote's imprisonment. It was not to be expected that the accessions to the N. S. S. in such a time of excitement could be equalled in more peaceful years. We do not know the "thirteen infidel halls that were closed last year."

H. L. HASTINGS has the accuracy of his kind.

H. J. SUTTON.—Your first query is absurd. With regard to the second, you must be a strange person to think that Mr. Foote has a holiday on Sunday when he travels from two hundred to four hundred miles and delivers three lectures. We cannot deny your merit of originality.

S. PARKES.—Forwarded to Mr. Reynolds, to whom all subscriptions should be sent direct.

S. M. PEACOCK.—Thanks for the reference. See paragraph. W. S. TAYLOR has succeeded in getting Dr. Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy* into the Birkenhead Free Public Library, and thinks that Secularists in other parts of the country should try to introduce Freethought works into such institutions.

W. HASTINGS.—Questions about points of Mr. Hunt's lectures should be put to him. His address can be found below the Lecture Notices.

W. PICKLES (Nelson).—Mr. Forder will be glad to hear from you about the parcel of literature. He has written several times. Have you changed your address?

A. ANDERSON.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. P. SILKSTONE.—The Reminiscences will be published early next week. Thanks for paper and good wishes.

J. SLYFIELD.—We will see to it by next week.

T. MARTINI.—Cuttings are always welcome.

C. LEWIS, 33 Alton-street, Crewe, will be glad to hear from any Freethinker with a view to Secular organisation in Cheshire.

J. KNEEN.—Messrs. Foote and Wheeler were both at Douglas on the day of the poll and saw the election squibs you send us. Can you substantiate the statement that Baume, who left his property for educational purposes in the Isle of Man, was a Freethinker as well as a Frenchman?

R. SUMMERSALL, 186 Caledonia-road, London, N., supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

KELLEY, 4 Carlton-place, Kilburn, N.W., has begun to supply this journal.

C. DURRANT.—Many thanks.

F. BAXTER.—We fear the Ball's Pond Branch will have to call on the Bishop of Chester and Mr. Waugh a very long time before they prove or withdraw. Christian libellers, when they are challenged, usually take up an attitude of "dignified silence."

T. PHILLIPS.—Glad to hear you are more and more satisfied that Mr. Foote's position is the right one in respect to the debate. Still more glad to hear the Spennymoor Branch is enrolling fresh members. Your suggestion as to American lecturers is good enough in itself, but we fear it would over-tax the party's resources to carry it out.

W. HOLLAND.—Thanks for the cuttings. Never believe anything a Christian says about a Freethinker without proof. Bishop Ryle is as unscrupulous as Bishop Jayne. There was no eighteenth-century Atheist called William Collins. Anthony Collins was a Deist. By the way, the same story has been told about Voltaire and other Freethinkers.

L. EVANS.—Dr. A. J. Harrison we always found to be a gentleman. We do not think he would intentionally mislead an audience. But he has been cultivating a nebulous creed of late, and it may have made him obscure.

L. R. CLIFTON.—(1) Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* (Murdock's edition) is still one of the best. *Supernatural Religion* is a good book if you want to study the documentary side of early Christianity. Greg's *Creed of Christianity* is cheaper and more popular. Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity* should also be useful. (2) Mr. Foote cannot do more than bring his own publications when he lectures; but other literature can always be provided by the Branches, and sold at the meetings.

A. ALNSBY.—The two Burns extracts in the N. S. S. Almanack are from his Letters. They may be found in the handy shilling collection published by Walter Scott.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschentum—Echo—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arne Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Auckland Times and Herald—Spennymoor Times—Cheshire Observer—Scarborough Evening News—Preston Evening Post—Sporting Chronicle—Chat—Crewe Chronicle—Evening Standard—Birmingham Daily Mail—Loyal American—Lucifer—Protestant Standard—Crewe Star—South Wales Daily News—Morpeth Herald—Reading Standard—Reading Observer—Oldham Chronicle—Northern Echo—Brighouse Echo—Two Worlds—La Lanterne—The Buddhist—Leek Times—Stratford Herald—Flaming Sword—Newcastle Daily Leader—Festausgabe.

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.

Mr. Foote will deliver his new lecture on "Death and the Devil" at the Hall of Science, London, this evening (May 3). We hope some of Dr. Coit's congregation will drop in; it will do them good.

Mr. Foote had exceptionally large audiences at Liverpool on Sunday. The evening lecture on "Death and the Devil" drew a very fine meeting. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, who was of course unrecognised; but when the lecturer disclosed the chairman's identity there was a storm of applause, which must have convinced the sub-editor of the *Freethinker* that he has not labored all these years in vain.

Secularists were present at the Liverpool meetings from distant towns. Two came from Chester. They promised to see if they could obtain the use of a hall in that city. If they can do so, Mr. Foote will go there at his own expense and reply to Bishop Jayne under the shadow of his cathedral.

The Liverpool friends are pushing their Hall scheme. A site is available in one of the best streets in the city, and if the local Secularists will only take up shares in the Company they may soon have a first-class Institute of their own. We

earnestly hope that every Freethinker in Liverpool will do his duty.

The annual meeting of the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. will be held to-day (Sunday) at 11.30 a.m., in Camden Hall, when the financial statement will be submitted and officers for the ensuing year elected. Death has been very busy of late years among the members and supporters of the Branch, and we trust that Liverpool Freethinkers will redouble their efforts and maintain the Branch in its present satisfactory financial position.

While Mr. Foote was lecturing in the Oddfellows' Hall, Liverpool, Camden Hall, the usual Secular meeting-place, was occupied by a Hebrew gathering, mostly composed of Jewish Freethinkers, who formed a Working Men's Union. They were addressed in Yiddish by Messrs. Wess (from London), Shoor (from Manchester), and others, and we understand that their organs, *The Workers' Friend*, of London, and the *Free Workman's Voice*, of New York, are decidedly Freethought in character. The Jews are finding, like others, that to gain secular salvation they must rely upon themselves, and not upon religion or priests.

N. S. S. Branches should all be preparing to send representatives to the Birmingham Conference on Whit-Sunday. The business agenda will be published in the Freethought papers next week. Branches should arrange to hold meetings in time to instruct their delegates on any special matters to be discussed.

Fresh members are joining the N. S. S. daily, and there is still time for more before the Conference. Everyone who joins disproves the pious nonsense about the decay of Secularism.

Mr. Stanley Jones, who has been appointed to the secretaryship of the N. S. S., will deliver his first lecture in London on Plaistow Green on Sunday morning, May 3. London friends who desire to hear him can reach Plaistow by train from Fenchurch-street Station at eleven o'clock.

A gentleman with a Jewish cognomen has given 25 dollars to Mr. Samuel P. Putnam, to be given to any clergyman who will meet Mr. Putnam in public debate and prove the following proposition: That Jesus the son of Joseph, commonly known as Jesus Christ, was an atonement and sin offering according to the laws given to the Jews in the Old Testament. It is understood that the clergyman who accepts must be recognised as a scholar and a gentleman, and be endorsed as the representative of his Church.

The *Boston Investigator* has entered on its sixty-first volume. Threescore years is a good record for any paper. May our Boston Freethought contemporary live to celebrate its centenary.

The *Buddhist*, of Colombo, Ceylon, has some articles on Missionary Christianity and Christian Missionaries, which show that the writers are familiar with European criticism of the Freethought school.

The Swedish Freethinkers have been working long amid many difficulties. The persecution of Freethought in Germany has strengthened the reactionary movement, and the Socialist propaganda has also acted prejudicially. Mr. Lennstrand is now trying to form a joint-stock company to uphold *Fritankaren*, in which we hope he will succeed.

The German Freethinkers' Congress will take place in Mannheim on the 31st of May this year. Drs. Specht, Rüdiger and Büchner are expected to take part.

The French Freethought Federation, which now comprises 145 Branches, besides individual members, has held its Annual Congress, presided over by citizen Schacre, in la Salle de l'Ermitage. M. Hubbard, a deputy to the French Chamber, was among the speakers. It was determined to enter on a vigorous propaganda, in view of the efforts at clerical reaction. A good report appeared in *La Lanterne*.

The annual report of the Huddersfield Branch is encouraging. No less than 43 lectures have been given during the year, and in consequence of more frequent meetings the

audiences have greatly increased. We hope every Freethinker in the town and vicinity will support the Branch, morally and financially, during the ensuing year.

This afternoon (May 3), at 3, a meeting of Middlesboro' and district Freethinkers will be held in Mr. Fleming's garden, Linthorpe-road. A similar meeting will take place on the first Sunday in every month during the summer.

The *Crewe Star* gives insertion to a bold Freethought letter on Dr. Dallinger and the Wesleyans, from Mr. Charles Lewis.

The Nottingham Branch has presented its annual report. There is a balance on the wrong side, but a slight one. Owing to the loss of several local speakers, who have removed to other towns, the hall will be closed for two months during the summer. The Committee complain that few applications for membership have been made during the year, but no probable reason is assigned. Losing old members, by death or removal, without making fresh ones, is the way to extinction. Can it be that sufficient vigor is not put into the anti-theological propaganda in Nottingham?

The new Lambeth Branch opens an outdoor station at the corner of Belvedere-road, Westminster-bridge, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital. The situation is a good one, and useful work should be done there.

Mr. S. Standring did a good day's work at Manchester on Sunday. His morning audience indoors was but meagre, but he addressed a fine open-air meeting in the afternoon, and the hall was well filled in the evening. Mr. Standring gave general satisfaction, and several new members were enrolled. Several dozen copies of the *Freethinker*, besides other literature, were distributed at the meetings.

James Payn says, in the *Illustrated London News*, "The day of the 'interminable novel,' a writer in an American magazine informs us, is over. As one of his fellow countrymen observed of the dogma of eternal punishment, 'Our people won't stand it.'" Surely Mr. Payn has been reading Ingersoll, or he would not indulge in such levity regarding a doctrine so bound up with the history of Christianity.

The Leicester Secularists have a Cycling Club, presided over by Mr. S. A. Gimson. They make a strong point of Sunday runs, and send greetings to the Holyoake Club, whom they offer to pilot to the best Leicestershire scenery.

The Wigan Secularists will meet in the Miners' Hall, Millgate, to-day (May 3), to take steps for doing something towards clearing off Mr. Bradlaugh's liabilities. Unfortunately our correspondent does not state the hour.

Mr. Joseph Brown contributes an excellent letter to the *Newcastle Daily Leader* on Dr. Parker's recent speech in Newcastle. The *Brighouse Echo* also inserts a lengthy letter from Mr. Aurelis B. Wakefield in reply to some strictures upon Freethinkers made by the Rev. S. Pearson. These are signs our views are gradually commanding attention and the conspiracy of silence slowly breaking.

The latest *Bulletin* of the French Comité d'Etudes Morales contains a communication on the principles and sphere of ethics, from the distinguished Freethinker, Maria Deraismes, who is president of the society.

In the *Liberator* of March 21 appears a portrait of Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Symes seems to be fighting as bravely as ever amid many difficulties.

Many years had elapsed since the last Freethought lecture at Deptford, and Mr. Foote was agreeably surprised to find so good an audience awaiting him on Tuesday evening. Mr. George Standring presided with tact and firmness, which were both needed, as there was much discussion after the lecture and some interruption. One of the Christian speakers, evidently Irish, was courteous and eloquent. Mr. Foote's reception was, on the whole, very gratifying; and we hope the propaganda of Freethought will now be pushed forward vigorously in Deptford.

On Monday evening (May 4) Mr. Foote will deliver his Oration on Charles Bradlaugh in the Temperance Hall,

Northampton, which is the largest hall available while the Town Hall is repairing. The arrangements are in the hands of Mr. Bradlaugh's most devoted followers, and the proceeds will go to the Memorial Fund. A large meeting is expected.

Mr. Foote's *Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh*, revised and considerably enlarged, will be published in a separate form on Tuesday. The price will be sixpence. Print, paper, and binding are all high-class. Judging from our correspondence, the brochure will command a large sale.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(From the "Twentieth Century.")

WHEN, on January 30, 1891, in the fifty-eighth year of his life, Charles Bradlaugh died, there went out into the unknown one of the bravest, most laborious, most intellectual, most earnest, most sympathetic, and most truth-loving men who ever lived. For more than forty years he devoted himself with passionate intensity to the work of delivering men and women from religious superstition and industrial slavery, during which he scored more victories for freedom to speak and print unpopular opinions than any other man who has ever appeared on this planet. It is probable that in the future he will be more famous among Freethinkers than Bruno, Voltaire, or Paine. He was more radical than Bruno, more earnest than Voltaire, more indomitable than Paine. He found the way of the religious heretic in England blocked by many legal bars, every important one of which he broke down, so that Freethinkers who came after him will meet with little or no judicial opposition. . . .

The career of this man, who began life poor in material goods, with very little school education, who became the champion of unpopular religious opinions, who was hated, slandered, thrown into gaol, mobbed and generally regarded as a monster, and yet who twice beat the English Government in its own courts on great questions of human freedom and brought the House of Commons on its knees to him, with an apology for an affront and an acknowledgment of a wrong done him, is certainly most remarkable. These are accomplishments which, long after whatever faults he may have had are forgotten, will certainly weave themselves into a crown of fame such as few men have secured and still fewer deserved.

Mr. Bradlaugh's career divides itself into two rather well-defined periods, which mark two phases of his character, or, rather, of his mental temper.

Roughly speaking, during the first twenty years of his public life he was pre-eminently a Freethought lecturer and writer. Mrs. Edna Lyall, in her novel, *We Two*, in the character of Luke Raeburn, has drawn a graphic and sympathetic portrait of him as he was then. That was the period of which the English Freethinkers speak as "the good old times."

During the last twenty years he became more and more a politician, in as good a sense as that word can have.

At first he was young, ardent, and passionate, and he went up and down and across Great Britain delivering lectures against religion and the Church, and debating with clergymen when he could get them to meet him on the platform. Those were the days which witnessed his greatest power as an orator. He was more an orator than a writer. Many of his lectures, which, when in print, are not specially remarkable, were torrents and thunderstorms of eloquence when spoken. His audiences sat spellbound before him, forgetful of time or heat or cold, laughing at his humor, weeping at his pathos, and stirred to the core of their being by the mighty energy and tremendous earnestness of the man.

In his debates, while he was always a generous antagonist, he fought with his opponent, and fought to win, by the marshalling of facts, the weaving of arguments, and the whirlwind of his eloquence.

During those times vile slanders followed him everywhere, which he met when he could by suits at law, that he always conducted himself and nearly always gained, never having been beaten, I believe, but once. These slanders wounded his feelings, which, though he was such a fighter, were sensitive, and the lawsuits wore upon his health and kept him constantly in debt.

He had trouble about hiring halls in which to speak, but

he generally managed to surmount them by adroit plans, or lawsuits, or force. On one occasion when the owner of a hall refused to open it for him at the time of his lecture, though he had paid for its use, he broke down the door and held his meeting.

Sometimes he was set upon by Christian mobs, perhaps led by clergymen, and yelling, "Kill the Infidel!" He was fearless as a lion and would generally quell the mob and deliver his lecture.

What with arguments, lawsuits, and physical courage, he finally had little difficulty in securing halls and crowds to hear him wherever he went.

This is the most interesting part of his history. Then he was at his best, for not only did he advocate the doctrines of sound reason regarding religion, but he championed the cause of the poor with the same enthusiasm. His antipathy to the Christian religion was not based so much on the idea that it is an intellectual superstition as on the fact that it tends to enslave the wage-earner and keep the poor contented with their poverty. Probably he was more interested to see poverty disappear than to get rid of mere religious superstitions.

He belonged to no particular sect of labor or economic reformers, but was an undoubtedly sincere and earnest friend of the poor in their contention against the titled landholders and other monopolists of England and the world, for he was intensely interested in the struggles of the Italians, French and Irish for political freedom from hereditary rulers, and in the condition of the Indian natives.

He saw the evils of the land monopoly, and advocated a cumulative tax on large holdings, the abolition of the game laws, on the ground that too much land is held idle for the preservation of game, and measures to bring vacant land into use.

He was an ardent Malthusian, not that he believed the having of fewer children would abolish poverty, but he believed it was something which could now be done by individuals to relieve the pressure in the industrial slave market.

He was an intense Individualist, and because he opposed the Governmental regulation of the hours of adult labor some sectarian reformers tried to make it appear that he was not friendly to the working people.

Mr. Bradlaugh never changed his beliefs. He lived and died an Atheist. He lived and died a Republican, and an earnest advocate of the right of the working man to higher wages, but of late years, partly because age closed the dampers of the fire of youth, and partly because he became a politician, and was in Parliament, where nothing but so-called "practical" measures can be advocated, he was inclined to be conservative and conciliatory in his methods. I believe, however, that no one can truthfully say he ever violated his own conscience or sacrificed what he held as a principle for motives of petty selfishness.

(To be concluded.)

OBITUARY

It is my painful duty to record the death of Mrs. Hopkins, wife of Mr. Jesse Hopkins, who died on April 15, and was buried at Highgate New Cemetery on April 18. The deceased lady has been a Secularist and a devoted follower of our late leader, Mr. Bradlaugh, nearly forty years. Almost her last journey was to Woking to witness his interment. She was the oldest member of the N.W. London Branch, and always a most liberal supporter. The Secular Burial Service was read by Mr. Robert Forder, the majority of the members of the Branch being present. She carried to the grave the unfeigned respect of all who knew her, and her husband and family receive our deepest sympathy. The Branch loses one of its most active and kindly workers and the undersigned a dearly loved and staunch old friend.—E. M. VANCE.

THE BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL FUND.

C. Riddle, 2s.; W. Blayre, 2s. 6d.; per J. A. Pilling, Bury, £1 1s. 6d.; T. Platt, 2s. 6d.; J. G. Gibson, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Lawrence, 10s.; W. Hargreaves (per F. Smallman), £1 1s.; E. Truelove, £1; Mrs. Truelove, £1; Miss Truelove, £1; A. Clark, £1; J. Ivory, £1; per S. Alward, Grimsby, £1; A Friend, 1s.—R. FORDER, secretary.

After the Sunday-school Picnic. First Deacon—"There are nearly a hundred sandwiches left over. What shall we do with them?" Second Deacon—"Store 'em away in the vestry, they'll do for next year."

ONE FOR BISHOP JAYNE.

DR. JAYNE, the right reverend Lord Bishop of Chester, has hit upon a notable discovery. He is told by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children "that the class most guilty of cruelty to children are those who take up Secularist opinions." He considers this information most interesting, because he believes that "sooner or later Secularism means cruelty and a great many other things." It is such a hopeful thing to see a bishop getting a powerful and comprehensive grip of the true inwardness of things that I feel bound to offer him my congratulations. Nay, I would encourage him to carry the inquiry further, so that, having told us what Secularism means, he may presently be able to explain what it *doesn't* mean. As a kind of pointer, I may suggest that it doesn't mean salaries of £4,000 a year and upwards for bishops, which, of course, is another form of cruelty, and—and, in fact, "a great many other things" too unspeakably awful for expression in words. But against this allegation of Secularist cruelty to children I would fain hold up the mirror of mine intellect and make a few reflections.

It is curious how orthodoxy, the world over, is eager to pick holes in the moral characters of people whose doxies are the least bit off color. In Russia the religion of the Greek Church is regarded as the only genuine and unadulterated article by the respectable classes. I was reading the other day a translation of a Russian hymn in which the Luthianian Dissenters were branded as thieves, harlots, and murderers, with an agreeable refrain, in which they were alluded to as "The damned Stundists." But as any orthodox Russian will freely swear, it is the Jews who are cruel to children in that country. The Jews kidnap Russian children and bleed them to death as a portion of their unhallowed sacrificial rites. The Jews are reputed to boil babies in oil, and that is why they are disliked in Russia. In the same way the orthodox African worshippers of Mumbo Jumbo for a long time looked upon the Christian missionaries with suspicion, because they had been informed by the medicine men of their Established Church that the missionaries ate the children of their enemies raw. This was regarded as ungentlemanly conduct by a people of refined cannibal instincts, who for generations had roasted their captives with yams, and never picked their teeth with their forks. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a bishop of *our* orthodox and only true faith complaining that the Secularists are "most guilty of cruelty to children."

The fact that the bishops and clergy of the Church of England have for centuries been concerned in a conspiracy against the children of the poor—a conspiracy which has perverted nearly all the educational endowments of the country from their proper uses for the benefit of the rich, is not, of course, evidence of cruelty. The children of the poor do not like to go to school, and the clergy took care that they should not become the victims of coercion in this respect. That is, they did so until the cruel Secularists made a fuss and forced the School Board system on the unwilling infants of this country. It is also a well-known circumstance that the resistance to the proposal of the Berlin Labor Congress, that the minimum age for child labor shall be twelve years instead of ten, springs entirely from the Secularists. No Churchmen are opposing it—oh, dear no! And the mills and factories and sweating dens, where little children toil and toil for all the daylight hours of their lives, are run, of course, by Secularists. Their proprietors never go to church, or become churchwardens or sidesmen; nor are any of them personally known to Bishop Jayne. Or else there is some mistake somewhere, and this kind of thing is not cruelty at all, and the people who passed the Factory Acts and the Mines Acts gave themselves unnecessary trouble. I know not how long the thing may be, but I am exceedingly glad to find that the Bishop of Chester is not behind the worshippers of Mumbo Jumbo and the heads of the Russian Church in his knowledge of human nature.—*Sporting Chronicle*.

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action and speech.

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.

MEMBERSHIP.

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

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The minimum subscription for individual members is one shilling per year; all beyond that amount is optional, every member being left to fix his subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Life and Time of Voltaire." Monday, at 8 social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, discussion class.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. G. Standing, "Why I am Not a Christian."

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

Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W.: 7, Orchestral Band; Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Deluge." Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes (practice).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. J. Coppock, F.C.S., "Fifty Years of Science." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

Pimlico—Radical Club, Sussex Street: Monday, concert and dance in aid of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund; concert at 7.30, dancing from 10. Tickets, 1s., 1s. 6d., 2s. 6d., from G. S. Ross, 156 Horseferry Road, or J. Burrell, 136 Lillington Street, Westminster.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road (entrance, Maxey Road): 7.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Soul Idea and Immortality."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. F. Haslam, "Science and Revelation."

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church: 11.15, Mr. H. Courtney, "The Decay of Christianity."

Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Lost, the Christian Religion."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Bible Up to Date."

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road: 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "They shall be tormented for ever and ever."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. R. Forder, "Kaisch and the Noachian Deluge"; 3.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Is the Bible True?"

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

Hyde Park, near Marble Arch: 11.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Christ's Farewell."

Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Moral Difficulties of Christianity."

Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Evolution v. Design."

Lambeth—Corner of Belvedere Road (opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Credibility of the Gospels."

Leyton—Open space in the High Road, near the "Lion and Key": 7, Mr. E. S. Wise, "Secularism."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "What is Blasphemy?"

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "Bible and Science."

Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road: 3.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Are any but Roman Catholics Christians?"

Victoria Park, near the fountain: 3.30, Mr. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation—II."

West Ham—Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Soul Idea and Immortality."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "The Wesleyan Methodist Census, 1891."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street: 11, members' meeting for Conference arrangements; 7, concert.

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street: 12 noon, debating class, Mr. Woodburn, "Race Education"; 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "The Scientific v. the Theological Doctrine of Disease."

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall, Northumberland Street: Tuesday, at 8, business meeting.

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room: 6.30, Mr. G. E. C. Naewiger, "The Dying Struggles of Christianity." Subscriptions now due.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street: 11, Tontine Society; 11.30, annual meeting of N. S. S. Branch, election of officers, etc.; 7, Mr. Harry Smith, "Worse than an Infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8).

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints': Mr. G. J. Holyoake, 11, "Career and Characteristics of Charles Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "What would Follow on the Effacement of Christianity?"

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Working Men's Club, Nelson Street: 7.30, Mr. Armatage, "The Apostles' Creed."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street: 7, Mr. A. Lord, "Faith and Prayer." Wednesday, at 8, monthly meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 3, debating class, Mr. Googe, "The Supposed Good Effects of Christianity"; 7, Mr. R. O. Calaghan (secretary of Vegetarian Federal Union), "The Diet of Health, Wealth, and Happiness" (illustrated with dissolving views).

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, musical and other recitals, singing, etc.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street: 7, readings, etc.

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street: 6, Selections from the poetry of Shelley.

Stalybridge—Mr. J. Taylor's, 12 Bayley Street: 7, committee meeting.

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street: 7, Mr. T. R. Fox, "Christ and Socrates."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—May 3, morning, Clerkenwell; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; afternoon, Victoria Park: 17, morning, Westminster; 24, morning, Kingsland; afternoon, Victoria Park; 31, morning, Battersea; afternoon, Finsbury Park. June 7, morning, Clerkenwell; afternoon, Victoria Park; 14, morning, Woolwich; afternoon, Finsbury Park; 28, afternoon, Finsbury Park.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley Road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—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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