

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

TALMAGE ON INFIDELITY.

TALMAGE is the first preacher in the land of Barnum. His style is worthy of a penny showman. No wonder his sermons are read every week by two millions of Christians. He who echoes, in exaggerated language, the common-place sentiments of the multitude *must* be successful. But time, the rectifier, squares all accounts at last, and the popular preacher of the hour is finally buried under the dust of oblivion.

Meanwhile, however, the great Talmage has his great-little day. His tabernacle, rebuilt after the fire, has probably cost more than Solomon's temple. The very organ consumed a fortune. Seven or eight thousand people now hear his flashy rhetoric and behold his startling antics. Hats off, then! Great is Talmage of the Brooklyn Jabbernacle!

Fall of his new success, and with all his blushing honors thick upon him, Talmage stands up in his pulpit like another Samson, and slays a thousand "infidels" with the jawbone of another ass. "Infidelity," he declares, "is not only a plague, but the Mother of Plagues." The infidel goes about saying that Adam and Eve never existed, that the Flood never happened, that the Bible is a fable, that Christianity is false, and that "the Church of Jesus Christ is properly gazetted as a fool." Nor is this all. Every infidel says his "old father was hoodwinked," and that his dear old mother "sat with a pack of lies on her lap" when she read the Blessed Book. Here the preacher drops a flood of tears. His emotions overcome him. Words fail him to brand this awful infidel rightly. The man who would dare to think his father was not infallible, and that his mother may have been mistaken, is unfit to breathe the air of this planet.

All infidelity proposes, says Talmage, is to destroy the Bible; and it goes about the task with "great jocosity." Yea, Ingersoll laugheth at it, and his mirth is shared by thousands. Awful reflection! Surely the end of all things draweth nigh, and the sound of the advent trumpet will soon be heard, and the Lord's anger will burn the infidels to ashes, and the happy Christians will sing the song of redemption in the New Jerusalem, where gold is a penny a pound and jewels are cheaper than paving-stones.

What is infidelity but "a religion of 'don't know'?" while Christianity is a "religion of 'don't positives.'" But Talmage does not specify the "positives." He would find it awkward to do so. There is a beautiful harmony among Christians as to these "positives." Hundreds of sects have squabbled over them, do squabble over them, and will squabble over them until the world is weary of the squabbling. As for the grand "consolation" of Christianity, which infidels seek to destroy, it suffices to remark that Hell is as positive as Heaven, and positively fuller.

"Infidelity is trying to put out all the lighthouses on the coast of eternity." Not so, Mr. Talmage. It seeks to substitute the electric light of science for the dim, distracting light of religion. Jewish rush-lights, and Christian sixteens, are behind this age of

progress. They are only fit for the cave-men of the mental world.

Look at the Bible light on the subject of marriage. Talmage declares that the Bible does not uphold polygamy. God made Adam one wife; if he had favored polygamy he would have made five or ten wives; which is a pretty argument to address to the "infidel," who regards the Creation story as a fable. Talmage cannot deny that "God permitted polygamy," nor can he find a text against it from Genesis to Revelation. His chief favorites had many wives. David, the man after God's own heart, set up a harem, and still went poaching. Solomon, the wisest of men, had seven hundred wives and three hundred kept women. True, says Talmage, but they paid dearly for it; they were punished for their "insult to holy marriage." When, Mr. Talmage, and where? Solomon was punished for marrying foreign wives, who induced him to worship foreign gods. Had he kept within the tribes, he might have married daily.

Talmage scorns the notion that the Bible is "antagonistic to woman." But he does not reply to a single "infidel" objection. Not an allusion is made to Paul's praise of celibacy and his belated views as to the subordination of women. Instead of this, Talmage bids us look at Eve, a perfect woman—who ate apples and damned the race; at Ruth—who crept into the barn after Boaz; and at Hannah, who "with her own loving hand replenished the wardrobe of her son Samuel." Truly a remarkable woman! She could actually sew, and she made her boy a coat. Many other women have made their boys a whole suit.

Another point is that Jesus turned water into wine to help "a womanly housekeeper." But that miracle cannot be repeated, while the low teaching of Jesus and Paul did for centuries, and does still, rivet the chains on women's necks.

"Chains"! cries Talmage, "nothing of the sort." He sees pearl necklaces put on by the hands of loving husbands, fathers, and brothers. But what a foolish reply! Many men buy finery for their women-folk who treat them like dolls or slaves. What women really want is a little less of this *charity* and a little more *justice*.

Talmage's great reply to "infidelity" takes the form of a question. Where are its educational and charitable institutions? Now, to begin with, Jesus Christ told his followers not to let one hand know what the other did; and here is Talmage challenging other folk to see who gives the most. In the next place, the challenge is an idle one. Institutions are chiefly supported by endowments, and Christian laws—maintained by challengers like Talmage—do not allow "infidels" the use of dead men's money. Nay, more. Even when an "infidel" like Girard founds a college, and forbids the entrance of clergymen within its precincts, the Christians get hold of the endowment and pervert it from the founder's intentions; indeed, Talmage boasts of the fact, and the boast shows the *modesty* and *sincerity* of his challenge to the "infidels."

We will not waste words on Talmage's soup-and-

blanket-ticket argument. Freethinkers subscribe to unsectarian charities, in addition to relieving their own poor. But they lack the Christian's faith in "charity." They prefer justice. They are radical reformers; that is, they go to the roots, the causes, of social evil, instead of everlastingly tinkering at their effects. They would rather purify the blood than subscribe for plasters for ulcers.

Among the classes for whom Christianity does so much good, Talmage mentions "the imbecile." Well, it ought to do something for them, for half of them are its own creation. Human brains would be far stronger if they were not addled by superstition.

"I thank God," Talmage exclaims, "that this plague of infidelity will be stayed." He does not tell us who will perform the miracle. Perhaps he means himself, but his well-known modesty forbids his saying so. For our part, we have little belief in his ability. Let him meet Ingersoll in debate if he dares. Let him expose his trumpery rhetoric to the lightning of Ingersoll's wit, and his crude teaching to the thunder of Ingersoll's denunciation. That would be far braver than mouthing forcible-feeble platitudes at the rate of a hundred pounds an hour.

We must not close without giving a specimen of Talmage's "eloquence." After saying that the Bible will hold out against infidel attacks till the day of judgment, he tells us its usefulness will then expire.

"What will be the use of the Book of Revelation, standing, as you will, with your foot on the glassy sea, and your hand on the ringing harp, and your forehead chapleted with eternal coronation, amid the amethystine and twelve-gated glories of heaven? The emerald dashing its green against the beryl, and the beryl dashing its blue against the sapphire, and the sapphire throwing its light on the jacinth, and the jacinth dashing its fire against the chrysoprassus, and you and I standing in the glories of ten thousand sunsets."

There is a great deal of "dash" in this peroration. Impatient readers, with a preference for Attic over Asiatic (or Houndsditch) prose, will be tempted to say—Dash it! We leave Talmage standing in "the glories of ten thousand sunsets," though moonshine would be more appropriate. G. W. FOOTE.

RELIGION AND CHILDREN.

THE calumny circulated by the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. Benjamin Waugh that Secularists are pre-eminent in ill-using their children is as silly as it is false. It is the reverse of the truth. Holding as their cardinal principle to make the best of this world, Secularists teach that the proper care of children is the deepest concern of society. Our antagonistic attitude towards religion and the churches is chiefly on account of their warping the minds of children and blighting their lives with terrifying dogmas before they are mature enough to examine them. A great part of the miseries of life arise from the task of unlearning the mistaken lessons of youth, and to many, especially to weak and nervous children, religion is a curse. They cannot grasp its doctrines, but they can apprehend its terrors.

Regard for offspring is found, not only among savages, but in all animals whose progeny are unable to take care of themselves. The sentiment of parental love is not founded on Christianity. It existed before Jesus Christ, and will remain when his religion has gone the way of its predecessors. It is fortunate it does not depend on creed, for we know no faith more calculated to thwart it than the belief that children are by nature the offspring of sin, under a curse, and probably doomed to eternal torments. "Paradise," said Mohammed, "is at the feet of mothers," herein uttering poetically the natural sentiment of humanity.

In resigning supernaturalism, Secularists have not changed their human nature. No; the thought and devotion we wasted on religion are directed to our fellows to whom they can be of service. We believe

in humanity; we hold to liberty and love. Our regards are diverted from some imaginary heaven or hell hereafter, to the future of this world, which we seek to make as happy as possible. Our hopes and cares centre in children. Religion has taught their duties; we proclaim their rights. We insist that children have faculties to be exercised, and that the influence of religion is pernicious because cramping.

We demand not only the emancipation of women but of children. "If it be true," says Herbert Spencer, "that the dominion of man over woman has been oppressive in proportion to the badness of the age or the people, it is also true that parental authority has been stringent and unlimited in a like proportion." Restraint, we say, is not education. Punishment is not reformation. Our maxim is, "Hands off. Instead of hands, hearts." We teach parental responsibility, not parental authority. Religion acts through authority and coercion. The position of a father, as taught in the Bible, is that of almost unlimited power over his children. This is illustrated in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Parents selected wives for their sons (Gen. xxi., 12; Exodus xxi., 9-11; Judges xiv., 2). In patriarchal times they had power of life and death. We read in Gen. xxxviii., 24, "It was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot. . . . And Judah said, Bring her forth and let her be burnt." Exod. xxi., 15-17, enacts that children who smite or curse their parents shall surely be put to death. Deuteronomy xxi., 18-21, declares that if a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, "all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die." Children were often taken as slaves for debts contracted by the father (2 Kings iv., 1; Is. l., 1; Neh. v., 5).

The flogging of children is a Bible duty. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. xiii., 24). "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" is another amiable injunction (xix., 18). Again: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. xxii., 15). The rod seems to have been, in the old dispensation, the divinely-appointed method of salvation. "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. xxiii., 13, 14). The infliction of pain is the only motive the divine book appeals to in the task of bringing up children. It is a sufficient comment on its divinity that it gives superfluous advice as to duties of obedience, which parents are only too eager to enforce, and says nothing of children's rights.* Such texts have fostered the love of dominion and accustomed children to a despotic form of government and an intercourse regulated by brute force. This barbarising influence has been a powerful hindrance to progress.

Take such a story as that of Elisha and the she-bears whom God sent to destroy forty-two little children for calling Elisha "baldhead." Here is a pretty lesson in religious terrorism. Then look how Sunday is made a day of dolorous gloom to children. It is a day of restriction—that is of impeding the healthy natural expansion of life. One must not do this, that and the other because it is the Lord's Day. Church and school must take the place of sunshine and green fields. To run, skip, jump, whistle or sing are prohibited, and dreadful penalties are supposed to result from the infraction of the religious taboo. How shocked, yet how delighted, are the children of religious parents when they see how the children of

* "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is a favorite and oft-repeated maxim of the religious, a sort of condensation of Bible doctrine. Wesley established a school in which he allowed no play whatever, and pointed to the Bible as his authority.

Freethinkers enjoy themselves on Sunday. I declare that, were there no other indictment against religion than the misery it has inflicted on little ones through its cramping superstitions, it would warrant the exclamation, *Ecrasez l'infâme!* J. M. WHEELER.

MABEL COLLINS ON MADAME BLAVATSKY.

AND yet I do not regret having known her. She was so extraordinary a woman. She taught me one great lesson: I learned from her how foolish, how "gullible," how easily flattered human beings are, taken *en masse*. Her contempt for her kind was on the same gigantic scale as everything else about her, except her marvellously delicate taper fingers. In all else she was a big woman; she had a greater power over the weak and credulous, a greater capacity for making black appear white, a larger waist, a more voracious appetite, a more confirmed passion for tobacco, a more ceaseless and insatiable hatred of those whom she thought to be her enemies, a greater disrespect for *les convenances*, a worse temper, a greater command of bad language, and a greater contempt for the intelligence of her fellow beings, than I had ever supposed possible to be contained in one person. These, I suppose, must be reckoned as her vices, though whether a creature so indifferent to all ordinary standards of right and wrong can be held to have virtues or vices I know not. . . .

I commenced by being interested in her professed knowledge of magic, and very curious about her greater pretensions. I ended by arriving at a condition of wonder at her genius in charlatanry, her sublime confidence in herself, her contempt for everyone else. I sometimes think the intensity of this contempt confused people and made them foolish. I have seen her, by the simplest sleight of hand, produce new American stamps, and fresh sovereigns, and clean bank notes—the newness about them being a proof of her just having created them or drawn them out of the vastness of the infinite being—to the positive conviction of apparently intelligent witnesses. I have known her profess to read sealed letters by the help of her psychic powers, and make shrewd business men think she had done so, when a mere child, not under her spell, would have pointed out that these same letters and a hot-water jug had had ample opportunity for making each other's acquaintance, with her kind assistance. I have known her intimidate a whole gathering of (at other times) sensible persons by the simple announcement that she could see her "master" standing among them, and that he was very angry. . . .

I have heard from different sources, that some very strange revelations about Madame Blavatsky would be made after her death. There are persons in different countries in possession of documents and letters which are to be published in due course, so it has always been said. I hope this may be so. Her own letters, if collected and printed, would be most curious; and would be a valuable lesson to those who are likely to be fascinated or flattered by an intellectual siren. Not that another so great is likely to arise among us in this century. Many, however, will be interested to know, once for all, whether this mystic adventuress was an adventuress pure and simple, or whether she was, as some believe, a political spy or agent, who used the cloak of a religious movement to cover her actions, and made a set of fanatics the unconscious harbingers of a few political intriguers in any centre she lived in. It would be impossible for anyone who knew her for so short a time as I did to form any opinion as to this. Whatever the vital motive of her charlatanry was, it was marvellously audacious and entirely unscrupulous. A romantic and infamous career is closed, and now that she is dead, we who have lost any of our illusions with her, can only say, "Peace be to her soul."—*Sunday World*.

The death is announced of the Rev. Basil Harris Cowper, B.A., at the age of 71. Mr. Cowper was one of the most learned and distinguished of the London opponents of Free-thought. He was for a time editor of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, and also of one of the short-lived publications run in the interest of the Christian Evidence Society. He issued an edition of *The Apocryphal Gospels*, and had a long written discussion with Mr. Bradlaugh on the question "When Were our Gospels Written?" Mr. Cowper had learning, but he lacked geniality, which want probably arose from defective health.

THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION.

One of the reasons why the Church and Conservative organs are prepared to eat the words they have written against free education, is that year by year the subscriptions to voluntary schools have been diminishing. Last year, for instance, the Church of England only subscribed £589,640 14s. 1d. to educate 2,263,435 children, while the Government paid to Church of England schools £1,455,422 2s. 3d. That is, the nation sells to the Church of England the monopoly of education in certain districts for £589,640, and pays £1,455,422 for doing it.

Virtually the Church, in country districts, has the monopoly of education. There is no choice of schools over the largest part of the area of England. The Church practically asserts the right to educate all children within vast districts, whether their parents belong to her communion or not. For this they have already obtained the major part of the expense from public money, and now hope to obtain far more.

Where ecclesiastical control of schools is most complete, education is at its lowest level. In the most recent returns the Board-schools showed 91·23 passes, while the Church-schools showed 88·36. In the higher standards it was the same. In the seventh Board-school showed 80·23, Church-schools 71·60. No wonder the discerning among the Church party hope that the Conservative Government will give a new lease of life to the worst schools, and place a new public endowment in ecclesiastical hands, and let them hold one more vested interest. But their hopes must be frustrated by the demand for universal school boards with absolute control on the part of tax-payers.

BLASPHEMY IN GERMANY.

The appeal against the iniquitous sentence of six months' imprisonment for blasphemy, passed on Dr. T. A. Voelkel, of Magdeburg, has been dismissed. Within three weeks the editor of the *Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt* will be incarcerated in a Christian dungeon, with his wife and six children left at the mercy of the world, and he expecting yet further imprisonment from other indictments. And this in intellectual Germany, in the last decade of the century which has seen Goethe, Heine, Strauss, and Schopenhauer! What do the bigots expect to do? Do they think to stay the progress of Freethought and criticism? Do they hope to kill out the pioneers of emancipation? They may as well seek to control the wind. But the past has no lesson for these stupid and brutal bigots, who display in their intolerant conduct the absurdity and atrocity of their creed.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1890-1.—The total income from all sources amounted to £58 5s 1d. Our work during the year has been fairly well sustained. Besides useful lectures, debates, readings, and entertainments at our ordinary weekly meetings, we have on three occasions had very successful lectures by local speakers. Our visits from London lecturers have included Mrs. Besant, Messrs. Foote, Moss, Hunt, and Clark. Our Picnic to Holywell Dene was again a great success, as was also our annual gathering at the new year. A good deal of literature has been distributed, and we have been able to re-open our reading library, which is now under the control of Miss Moir, in whom we have found a capable and attentive librarian. We had the good fortune to be represented at the National Conference at Manchester last year, and also the melancholy duty of sending delegates to show our respect to our late ex-President. The number of new members enrolled during the year has been larger than any previous year of the Branch's existence, with the single exception of 1886. Our roll now includes no less than four gentlemen who are members of the School Board, and two Town Councillors. A substantial balance is now on hand to open the coming year. The South Shields Branch is making arrangements for the Annual Picnic of the North Eastern Secular Federation, which it is anticipated will be held at South Shields this year.—R. CHAPMAN, secretary.

How to save your souls.—Walk on your heels.

"Do you allow drunken people in the train?" asked a fussy clergyman at the Charing Cross Station the other day. "Sometimes, but not when they are too drunk," replied the porter; "just take a seat near the middle of the train and keep quiet, and you'll be all right."

CORRESPONDENCE.

SPONTANEOUS GENERATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

WITHOUT wishing to obtrude myself into your columns, I would like to call attention to a little matter that might otherwise escape notice. Mr. A. B. Moss, writing on "Creation and Evolution," in your last issue, says:—

"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."

From which remark it is quite evident that Mr. Moss has only got the idea of Professor Tyndall's celebrated experiments at second-hand. He will, I am sure, be grateful to me for putting him on the right track on this point, as, should he repeat his opinion in public, he might lay himself open, and rightly so, to the charge of misrepresentation of facts. The whole history of the Professor's experiments may be found in his essay on "Fermentation" (*Fragments of Science* vol. ii.). By referring to that essay, Mr. Moss will find that Professor Tyndall did not exclude air from the phial containing the water—he only excluded *impure* air. The contact with the perfectly clear atmosphere of the Alps caused no life to germinate in the perfectly clear water. But I beg to refer Mr. Moss to the book mentioned. I guarantee to say that after a perusal of the essays therein contained, Mr. Moss will not, for the purpose of a mere argument, raise his opinion against what has come to be an axiom of Science. I feel I have no right in the pages of the *Freethinker* to advance any counter arguments to those of Mr. Moss, but the question must suggest itself to every thinking mind, if, at one time, this planet of ours contained no germ of life, *whence came life?* Of course, I don't pause for a reply, as I have settled the question in my own mind; but the idea of some germ careering towards this earth, on the back of a red-hot meteorite is, to me, inexpressibly ridiculous, however much it may be disguised in scientific phraseology. Mr. Moss's words "besides, life having been once produced" beg the whole question. I find it easier to believe in God. Thanking you in anticipation.

WILLIAM BRANDLE.

SECULARISTS AND CRUELTY TO CHILDREN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In nearly all the large cities and towns in the United Kingdom exist branches of the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," most of which have prosecuted a number of people for breaking the law they charge themselves to maintain. Would it not be well for Branches, or even members, of the N. S. S., in every place possible, to request or demand from the local branch of the S.P.C.C. the names and addresses of all those who have been prosecuted by it, and thus test the *truthfulness* of the statement made by the Rev. B. Waugh, and propagated by the Bishop of Chester.

JOHN JUDGE.

6 Coburg-street, Leeds, May 4, 1891.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that I record the death of Mr. John Simson, a very old member of the late Central London Branch of the N. S. S., who, after an attack of influenza, died at his residence in Jawbit-street, Bethnal Green-road, E. The deceased was about 60 years old, and died as he lived, an Atheist; but owing to his widow being a Christian he will be buried as such, and not as he lived and died, an Atheist. Of such widows is the kingdom of heaven.—JAMES NEATE.

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.

ACID DROPS.

Madame Blavatsky's death removes one of the most remarkable personages of her time, whose career presents a curious problem. She was of good birth, travelled and learned, if not in all the wisdom of the East, at least in all its superstitions. Yet she lived the life of an adventuress, and left no option between the opinions that either she was the most gifted revealer of unknown truth that the world has yet seen, or that she was an impudent impostor. She spent over forty years of her life in accumulating the material which enabled her to successfully play the rôle of high priestess of a new faith, yet it is at least possible that Theosophy was only the cover for other objects. Some who knew her well are of opinion that the masters she really obeyed were located, not in Thibet, but at St. Petersburg. In another column we have given some extracts from Miss Mabel Collins, who was for above a year co-editress with her of the magazine *Lucifer*.

Not being among the prophets we are unable to predict with certainty the effect of Madame Blavatsky's death on the Theosophic movement. Our impression is that it will gradually expire. Mrs. Besant may now take the lead, and she is a very able woman, but will she be able to make people believe that she possesses miraculous, or as the Theosophists call it *abnormal*, powers? Without that Theosophy is only an abstract superstition.

We regret to inform our readers that the Lord or the Devil has laid his hand on Col. Ingersoll. He has been confined to his bed, seriously ill with *la grippe*. But he is of a stout constitution, and has probably pulled through before this reaches our readers. We can assure him he has the sympathy and good wishes of thousands of English Freethinkers.

Mr. Justice Smith displayed an insolent bigotry at the Old Bailey. A juryman claimed to affirm under Mr. Bradlaugh's Act, and the judge said he would rather not have him. Unfortunately the judges are paid out of the Consolidated Fund, and cannot be dealt with by question in the House of Commons. They also possess the most ridiculous powers, and as the law stands it is hard to resist their tyranny. But they can be branded outside their courts, and we tell Mr. Justice Smith that he has flouted the law from the bench and behaved like a bully where he should have acted like a gentleman.

General Von Moltke, the German fighting-man, thought the Bible the first of books. We presume he referred especially to the bloody wars of the Jews, who, as Thomas Paine says, never converted but butchered, slaying man, woman, and child.

The Christian Evidence Defence Association, at Spenny-moor, is still troubling the local paper with wearisome letters about the proposed debate, but nothing it can say will alter the facts. Mr. Foote is willing to meet a representative minister, or a champion put forward by ministers or churches, and if a debate is wanted with him, his conditions will have to be complied with. No doubt it is distressing to Christians to find they cannot have their own way in everything, but they must try to reconcile themselves to the unpleasant fact.

The Manchester Branch of the Christian Evidence Society held its annual meeting at the Town Hall. Bishops, archdeacons, and M.P.'s were not present, but sent letters of apology for their absence. The secretary gave a glowing report of many important courses of lectures; but as the year's income was only £24, we suppose the report must be taken with a large grain of salt. The number of "infidels" converted was not disclosed.

The Rev. Jacob Primmer, of Dunfermline, calls the Rev. Professor Story, of Roseneath, "a sanctimonious hypocrite." The Rev. Professor Story speaks of Mr. Primmer's letter as "silly and mendacious," "insolent and profane." Mr. Primmer returns to the charge with the climax, "You were lately seen to travel by cab and train on the Sabbath Day." If this last dreadful assertion is true, surely the sympathies of all pious Scotsmen will revolt from Professor Story.

The vicar of St. Stephen's, Woodville, gives notice in his parish magazine that in future his permission must be obtained for placing any memorials on graves. He says that "jam pots, glass bottles, tin cans, blue jugs, and even chimney-pots with flowers in them," have been placed on

tombs. This may outrage his feelings, but their removal, while the costly decorations of the well-to do are permitted to remain, will perhaps yet more outrage the feelings of his poor parishioners.

In San Francisco is a religious organisation known as the Commonwealth of Jesus. The vice-president and secretary are both in prison; the first charging the latter with larceny, while the first is accused of threatening to kill the secretary. They are evidently as worthy of their name as the company of Jesus.

The Duke of Connaught lately held forth at one of the pious meetings at Exeter Hall, and was followed by an arch-episcopal flunkey who lauded his "impressive" speech. His Royal Highness said that there was a lamentable decay of religion in these days, and too much selfishness. Well now, that *was* impressive. The speaker himself, for no other merit than condescending to be born, draws a pension of £25,000 a year, besides his military emoluments. This income of his is a tax on the industry of people who work for their living. Yet the royal pensioner—or royal pauper—stands up at a pious meeting and cants about the selfishness of the age; and the pious audience applauds him, and an archbishop—another public parasite—hails him as a God-given moralist! And this is the Christianity we are asked to treat with *tenderness*! Bah! the wretched thing stinks—positively stinks.

The Swedish courts have not only convicted Mr. H. V. Berghell of blasphemy for preaching the doctrines of Bentham and Mill, which they declare subversive of Christianity, but ordered that he, a native of Finland, shall, on the expiration of his sentence of three months' imprisonment, be handed over to the tender mercies of the Russian Government. Such is Christian law in the nineteenth century.

The Russian religious papers solemnly rejoice over the fact that the decrees expelling Jewish artisans from cities, have compelled over 50,000 Jews to abjure the Law of Moses. How they must love the religion they have embraced.

The Roman Catholic appeal to obtain the money of Mrs. Hampson, who was got into a sisterhood through a hole in the wall, has been dismissed with costs.

Yankee ministers have found a new way of raising cash. They get some farmer to give them seed corn, then ask the other farmers to sow it in a patch for the Lord, and give the proceeds to the church. Here will be an opportunity for testing the power of prayer. Let the parsons pray with all their power for the Lord's patch, and see if it is any more fruitful than the rest of the crops.

At Castleford, West Riding, Yorks, the census returns show that the population increases at least four times faster than the professed religionists. No doubt other places will also show that they are declining year by year.

A correspondent who signs himself "Autolyucus" thus expresses himself in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, *apropos* of a lecture on the methods of Semitic thought:—"As regards the existence in the Old Testament of myths and fables which are to be found in varying form all over the world, there is no lack of them, from the story of the Fall and the talking serpent downwards. There is a myth about the Exodus, Moses, and the plagues, of which variants are to be found in European, Polynesian, and Indian folklore. But though scholars are in doubt as to how the Semites got hold of these stories originally, they have not been courageous enough to proclaim that they are not myths at all." Very true, "Autolyucus"; but by what talismanic influence did you induce the editor of the *D. P.* to give publicity to your letter?

According to a correspondence in the *Guardian*, the religious state of Birmingham is enough to give Jehovah the dumps. One writer says intellect is wanted on the part of the clergy. Another says that intellect is wanted on the part of the people. The only way to attract to sermons, it is said, is to preach on such subjects as "A Thorough Screw," "Dead as a Nail," "Which Horse will Win?" "A Woman Sitting on a Wall," and such topics, with which the intellect of Birmingham has recently been edified.

Corporal Greenwood, R.E., committed suicide at Aldershot. As there was no evidence to show that his mind was impaired, the jury returned a verdict of *felo de se*, and the coroner gave orders for the police to take over the body and bury it at night. One would think, at this time of day, the authorities would be ashamed of such an indignity. But if the law is to be carried out, it should be carried out properly, and the suicide's body be buried at the meeting of four cross-roads "with a stake in his inside."

According to a correspondent of the *Newcastle Leader*, Mr. De Cobain, the "wanted" M.P., has been airing his piety at Bilbao, where he offered to conduct religious services in the Seamen's Hall.

Listen to the Christian missionaries and you will imagine the Chinese to be a wicked and cruel people. Now a Chinese proverb says, "He is a great man who never loses his child's heart." Every sensible man will be slow to believe missionary slanders of a people who have a proverb like that.

Professor Max Müller's Gifford Lectures have just been discussed by the United Presbyterian Synod assembled at Edinburgh. A no doubt worthy person, holding that the Professor had "done the greatest mischief to the Christian faith that had ever been done in Scotland," moved that a committee should be appointed to inquire into the learned lecturer's views, and into the powers of the Senate to accept the Gifford bequest. Although the gentleman declared that any man who moved or supported an amendment "denied Christ," it is satisfactory to note that an amendment to the effect that the Presbytery had no jurisdiction whatever over the Senate of the University was carried by seventeen votes to five. "Five for Christ," exclaimed the defeated member. —*Pall Mall Gazette*.

In ancient times the clergy had the privilege of taxing themselves. The great purpose of holding Convocation—which was suppressed in 1716 and revived in a powerless state in 1854—was to obtain their consent to the subsidies required. Be sure they made things easy for themselves, and would like to revive the good old times. Though they do not venture to propose this, they are strongly of opinion that others should be taxed to support their churches, stipends and schools.

The *Irish Y.M.C.A.'s Bulletin* gives its readers a half-column of "Acid Drops." We should be glad to record that it had taken something else from our columns than the hint for a headline.

The beneficent effects of the divine religion of sweet Jesus is illustrated in Russia, where 10,000 Jews have been turned out of Moscow, and Christian Stundists are being severely prosecuted on the charge of leaving the orthodox faith, and have been sentenced for this "crime" to terms of imprisonment varying from six months to five years, with exile, in the latter case, to Siberia, and in all cases with deprivation of all civil rights. It is only Christianity which evokes such loving charity as this to fellow Christians.

The anti-Jewish Press of Russia actually proposes that a law should be enacted which would compel the 5,000,000 of Russian Jews to emigrate *en masse*. To this no doubt the most Christian Czar would accede, were it not for the pressure of Jewish financiers, whose services he requires.

The vicar of Madeley has been having his church restored, and, in honor of Fletcher of Madeley, gave to the Methodists the old font in which Fletcher was baptised. The *Church Times* thereupon roundly abuses the vicar for "giving away what was not his to give," tells the Methodists they had better return to the Church than become resettlers of such property, and demands the restoration of the font. How they love one another!

The Chinese have a curious saying: "The Christians abuse their neighbors. We can do that without becoming Christians."

Samuel Kinns, the gentleman who once threatened us with legal proceedings for criticising him severely, has issued another big book, called *Graven in the Rock*, which is mercilessly cut up in last week's *Academy*. "The book is not one for serious review," says the *Academy*, but a "few gems" are

selected to show its quality. Our contemporary sighs over the fact that a thousand copies of this "silly and pretentious book" were sold in a fortnight.

A different notice appears in the *Speaker*—which, by the way, is owned by Samuel Kinns's publisher, Messrs. Cassell and Co., and edited by Mr. Wemyss Reid, the firm's literary superintendent. The author who is laughed at in the *Academy* appears as "a singularly well-equipped scholar" in the *Speaker*, and his belated ideas are mildly referred to as the effects of "a somewhat Conservative standpoint." Of course the get-up of the book receives unstinted praise. It is a curious case of publishers' log-rolling.

The Earl of Shrewsbury has made a collection of implements of torture, which will shortly be exhibited in Regent-street. The collection contains the famous Iron Virgin from Nuremberg, a picture of which we gave a few years back. There are also leg-irons, thumb-screws, racks, and other instruments much employed in the service of religion in the good old times.

The *Star* serves up a very old "chestnut" in a paragraph on the late Bishop Magee. It relates that, at a dinner where a wealthy man was boasting of his charities, and remarking that he gave £5,000 every year to the poor, the Bishop said, "Dear me! that is the largest insurance against fire I ever heard of." Many years ago the same story was told in relation to Baird, the ironmaster, who left some hundreds of thousands to the Free Kirk. Probably it will never be known who originated the witticism, which must be put down for the present to *Benvenuto*.

The *Quarterly Review*, in its article on "The Lambeth Judgment" in the Bishop of Lincoln case, says, "It will be nothing short of a calamity if there should be a difference of opinion between the Archbishop's Court and the Privy Council." The "calamity" being that the secular court will override the spiritual one, we do not look forward to it with much alarm. Few people think it any calamity that Probate and Divorce jurisdictions have been transferred from ecclesiastical to civil courts.

Columbus, in his account of the Indians he met at San Salvador, near four hundred years ago, says they were "very gentle, without knowing what evil is, neither killing nor stealing." "I believe in all the world there is not a better people; they love their neighbors as themselves, and they have the sweetest and gentlest way of talking in the world, and always with a smile." Nine of them he brought back to Spain after his first voyage. They were baptised, and the first one who died was declared to be the first of his race who went to heaven. Columbus himself soon made the unbaptised ones acquainted with slavery.

Sir Arthur Helps, in his anonymous account of *The Conquerors of the New World and their Bondsmen*, says (p. 151): "Columbus, in his letters to Los Reyes [Ferdinand and Isabella], goes into an account of the pecuniary advantages that will arise from these slave-holding transactions and from the sale of logwood. He estimates that 'in the name of the sacred Trinity' there may be sent as many slaves as sale could be found for in Spain, and that the value of the slaves for which there would be a demand, taken at four thousand, and of the logwood, would amount to 40 cuentos [*i.e.*, forty million maravedis]."

The *Athenæum*, reviewing the late Bishop Lightfoot's edition of "Clement of Rome," very truly remarks that the Bishop throughout his work is first of all a defender of the truth of Christianity—and, we add, the value of Episcopacy—very credulous in regard to all that he believed favorable, but sceptical in regard to everything which he thought of an opposite nature.

A lady writer in the *Christian Commonwealth* proves God's bounty from the number of our hairs. If this lady were married, and had a bald husband, she would see differently.

The same journal prints the following story for its imbecile readers:—"When that fearful epidemic, the cholera, first visited our shores, the following impiety was manifested, and visited with punishment, by the omniscient Governor of all: Three infidels were carousing together one evening in a

provincial town, and as the intoxicating glass went round they discussed the news of the day. Among other things the cholera, a subject of solemnising moment, was introduced, when one of the party rose, and spoke to this effect: I would beg leave to propose the health of the cholera, and when the gentleman comes to town I hope to be the first man he will call for. The second and third followed in his blasphemous wake, and said they hoped he would not overlook them. The cholera came, the three infidels were its first victims, and they were carried off in the very order in which they had drunk the cholera's health. 'Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.'"

Anent the death of Prince Jerome Buonaparte, who was said by Prophet Baxter to bear the number of the beast, "Antichrist" cites in the *Boston Investigator* from Huldrich's *Toldoth Jeshu*, the Jewish Life of Christ, which declares Jeshu Natzr (Jesus of Nazareth) has the number of the beast. The name and numerical value of the Hebrew letters are—Yod, 10; Shin, 300; Vau, 6; Nun, 50; Yod, 10; Tsaddi, 90; Resh, 200. Total, 666. Q.E.D.

The Catholic Publication Society put out a translation of a work by a French Jesuit, Father Grou, with the curious title *The Interior of Jesus and Mary*. Their spiritual interiors are, of course, intended.

Parsley seed in many parts of the country is always sown on Good Friday. Why this is so has excited some controversy, and a writer in the *Church Times* explains it. He says parsley seed is of such proverbially slow growth, the popular superstition is that it descends to Hades before making its appearance above-ground; hence the idea of sowing it on Good Friday.

This writer explains more than he knows. Good Friday is part of the spring festival, in which early man enacted by representation the death and descent of vegetation into the under-world and its resurrection. The myth of the descent of Jesus Christ into hell is but a reproduction of the myths of Adonis and of Persephone; and the custom of sowing the slow-growing parsley seed at this time is a survival of a world-wide superstition, explained in Mr. J. G. Frazer's great work *The Golden Bough*.

Someone has sent us a pamphlet by the Rev. T. Talbot, in which it is denied that the Duchess of Gloucester was imprisoned at Peel Castle. We never swore that she was. We gave the story as the guide told it. But that ecclesiastical dungeon under the cathedral tower was not built for nothing, and if the Duchess of Gloucester was not imprisoned there, it cannot be doubted that many persons did taste its "sweetness and light."

The persecution of the Jews in Russia is likely to drive them over here. Last year, it is estimated that something like five thousand pauper Jewish emigrants found their way to this country. It is said that the priests and pastors of all non-orthodox faiths in Russia are overwhelmed by applications from Jews desirous of baptism in order to save themselves from ruin. Thus Christianity spreads simultaneously with persecution on the one side, and hypocrisy on the other.

The Rev. J. P. Farler, vicar of St. Giles's, Reading, issues a circular, in which he says: "If you do not Communicate you break God's positive law, just as much as anyone would break his moral law if they murdered or stole or committed suicide." That's it. Those are in a perilous state who do not deal at our shop, where the only genuine God's blood and flesh are provided.

The *Church Times* declares that unless some scheme of affiliation is quickly put into working order the Church schools of London cannot be maintained. Well, ample accommodation will be found elsewhere.

Rider Haggard has been to Mexico to find material for a new novel. He has been much "jiggered" by the mosquitoes, and thinks it a fine country to come away from. He says he shall locate his story in the time of Cortes, "as I believe that Mexico was more civilised then than it has ever been since." This means that the advent of Christianity was the advent of comparative barbarism.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Friday, May 15, Corn Exchange, Chester; at 8, "Secularism and Cruelty: a Reply to the Bishop of Chester."

Sunday, May 17, N. S. S. Conference, Birmingham.

Thursday, May 21, Enterprise Hall, Great Eastern-road Stratford; at 8, "The Grand Old Book."

May 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.

CASTREL.—The text to which you refer occurs Romans iii., 7. Like much else in Paul's epistles it is rather "hard to be understood."

ANNOYED.—We regret to hear that the Camberwell Branch was disappointed by the non-arrival of its open-air lecturer on Sunday morning. The matter should be inquired into, and, if necessary, a complaint sent to the N. S. S. Executive. More harm may be done by once breaking faith with the public than by twenty of the lecturer's best efforts.

R. ROSETTI.—Never mind the filthy ravings of such men. Their foolish personalities only disgust people with the Christian cause. To advertise them is to give them too much honor.

R. O. SMITH, treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges:—G. Anderson, £2 2s.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Robertson, £2 2s.; W. Wheeler, 5s.

F. BAXTER, for Ball's Pond Branch, expresses hearty thanks to Mr. George Anderson for his generous gift of books.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Sorry to hear you will be unable to attend the Conference, but glad to know the Newcastle Branch will be well represented.

W. Y. PAUL sends 5s. towards the expenses of Mr. Foote's visit to Chester.

W. HOLLAND (Manchester).—Thanks for jokes, etc. We don't see why Mrs. Besant's lecturing on Theosophy should prevent you from joining the N. S. S. She is not a member of the Society, and is not advertised as one of its representatives. The Branches have freedom to invite anyone they please to lecture on their platforms, though they are bound in honor to tell the audience, through the chairman, when lecturers do not represent their views.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—It was noticed in a short paragraph last week.

J. BRUMAGE.—Now you have retired from the dockyard we hope—as all your many friends will hope—that you may enjoy a long spell of comfort and usefulness.

P. EMARY.—The "universal consent of mankind," in speculative matters, proves nothing to anyone who respects his own intelligence; besides, the fact that the question is debated shows there is no "universal" consent. Orthodox Buddhism as taught by Buddha and his first disciples, does not include a belief in God. Later Buddhism has manufactured deities for the superstitious multitude, as the Catholic Church manufactured saints; but they are all mortal like men, and Buddhism does not teach the doctrine of a Creator.

J. TENNES.—We are pleased to see there is good evidence for the statement that Baume, who left his property for educational purposes in the Isle of Man, was a Freethinker. Had Messrs. Foote and Wheeler known there were Freethinkers in Douglas they would have notified their visit to the island.

W. M. C. (Barnsley).—Colliers find scientific precautions better than prayer.

S. SMALLWOOD.—The time of the Chester lecture was stated eight o'clock.

J. EATON.—(1) Mr. Forder will send you the *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* for 7s. 6d., carriage free. (2) *Bible Romances* will be bound up when completed. (3) *Greg's Creed of Christendom* is published by Trübner in two vols. at 12s. 6d.

C. E. SMITH.—What we thought of issuing was a volume on Christian Evidences. Mr. Foote and Mr. Wheeler are often urged to reprint their best articles from this journal, but it is doubtful if the volume would pay.

H. BROOKSBANK.—We note your correction that the Bradford Branch is not a new one, but the old one reformed.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Pleased to hear from you, but the subject is dealt with in Mr. Wheeler's article.

J. BURKELL.—It is rather late now to report a meeting on May 4. Sorry to hear of the death of Sergt. R. Bell, who appears from your touching account to have been a splendid man.

BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL FUND.—Northampton: C. Wells, 3s.; W. Wells, 1s.; H. Holloway, 1s.; J. T. Baker, 1s.

B. A. MILLICHAMP.—Thanks for your interesting letter.

J. R. BROAD.—Waterman's tract can only serve for pipe-lights.

G. GALE.—Not without merit, yet not up to the mark.

P. MELLEN.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Neues Frereligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Protestant Echo—Irish Y.M.C.A.'s Bulletin—Echo—Association Echoes—Burton Chronicle—Countryman—Auckland Times—Kensington News—Woodville Magazine—Stratford Herald—Home Words—Short Cuts—Two Worlds—Standard—Staffordshire Sentinel—Leek Times—Reading Standard—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Liverpool Daily Post.

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.

There was a capital audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Death and the Devil." Mr. J. H. Ellis presided. Two opponents wearied the audience with rambling speeches. It is difficult to get Christian critics to stick to the point; nay, it is difficult to get them to see the point. They pick up the crumbs that fall from the table without heeding the dishes on the board; in other words, they waste their time on incidental points, without attacking the central arguments of the lecture.

Despite the fine weather, which usually lowers the circulation of all periodicals, there was a considerable rise in the circulation of last week's *Freethinker*. We hope the improvement will continue. Our friends might help us by introducing the paper to their friends, and by getting newsagents to display a contents-sheet, which we shall be happy to forward weekly to any address.

Our next number will contain a full report of the National Secular Society's annual Conference.

Delegates and other Secularists who intend to take tickets (2s.) for the 1 o'clock dinner at Birmingham should communicate with Mr. Partridge, at Baskerville Hall, in order that he may know how many to provide for.

There does not appear to be a convenient excursion train from London to Birmingham by the North Western. The Midland runs a train from St. Pancras at 1.5 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, returning from Birmingham at 9 p.m. on Monday. The return ticket is ten shillings. Probably some of the London delegates will go by this train.

The London Secular Federation's Annual Excursion will take place on Sunday, July 12. It will be a river party. A steamer will be chartered, and everything will be done to make the trip enjoyable. It is to be hoped that the clerk of the weather will be in good temper.

The London Secular Federation's last course of Free Lectures this season has been overtaken by the fine weather. Mr. G. Standing opened on Thursday, May 7. Mrs. Thornton Smith follows on Thursday, May 14, her subject being "Christianity and slavery." Mr. Foote takes the third and fourth Thursdays, his subjects being "The Grand Old Book" and "Heaven and Hell." All the lectures are delivered in the Enterprise Hall, Great Eastern-road, Stratford. Time, eight o'clock. Freethinkers in the district should get their orthodox friends to attend.

Messrs. Foote and Forder's late visit to Luton has resulted in the formation of a Branch of the N. S. S. The Secretary is Mr. W. Rudd, 57 Bute-street, to whom Freethinkers in the

neighborhood should apply. Some open-air lecturing will be done at Luton during the summer.

I have received from Mr. George Anderson the sum of £20, and I have his approval in distributing it thus: £1 annual subscription to N. S. S.; £5 to Special Fund; £2 2s. to the London Secular Federation; £2 2s. to Children's Excursion; £5 1s. 6d. to the Benevolent Fund; and 10s. 6d. worth of literature at wholesale price to the following Branches for sale at their open-air stations: Balls Pond, Battersea, N.W. London, Woolwich, West Ham, West London, East London, Finsbury and Wood Green.—R. FORDER, hon. sec.

The *Stratford Herald* inserts letters from E. Toleman-Garner, E. Anderson, and W. Watson, all challenging the calumnies of Mr. Marchant against the West Ham Secularists. It would probably be best, however, to leave this calumnious person severely alone.

"Mr. Foote, in the *Freethinker*, is furnishing some interesting reminiscences of Mr. Bradlaugh. There is much to be told; and it is to be hoped that those who knew him so well and so intimately for so many years will bring out their stores. A great man is worth knowing in detail; even the minutiae of his character should be told. A small man cannot afford such exhaustive treatment, for he has no greatness to counterbalance the essential elements of his character. A really solid and great man can afford to be known even to the smallest of his foibles and vices. And certainly no man can better afford to be known than Charles Bradlaugh."—*Joseph Symes, in "Liberator."*

In far off Alaska—formerly known as Russian America—a Freethought organisation has been formed, called the "Alaska Secular Union and Humanitarian Association." The headquarters are at Juneau.

Messrs. Watts and Co. will publish immediately a cheap popular edition of the prize essay on *The Practical Value of Christianity*, written by the Rev. J. Broadhurst Nichols (from the Christian standpoint) and Mr. C. W. Dymond, F.S.A. (from the Sceptical standpoint). The competition was instituted by Thomas Allsop, whose generous support of Freethought is well known; and the adjudicators (Mr. Clair J. Grece, LL.D., and the Rev. Septimus Hansard, M.A.) had to make their selection from fifty-five essays. The forthcoming edition will be issued in boards at one shilling, and in cloth at two shillings. The volume extends to 152 pages.

We have received from Spain a translation of Victor Hugo's splendid oration on Voltaire, a pamphlet on the Jesuits by D. J. Nane, Y. Flaquer, a *Republican Catechism*, published at the office of *El Pueblo Soberano* Barcelona, and the prospectus of a Catechism of Reason (*Catecismo de la Razon*), intended for the children of Freethinkers. Evidently the Freethought movement is extending in Spain where it appears to go hand in hand with Republicanism and Freemasonry.

The merits of the Bible as an entertaining and ridiculous history seem fully appreciated by the French. It is now nearly ten years since, in an early number of the *Freethinker*, we called attention to the publication of *La Bible Amusante*, one of the cuts from which was among our own early Comic Bible Illustrations. Now the Librairie des Publications Modernes, 10 Rue de la Grange Bateliere, is bringing out *La Sainte Bible Racontée par un Auvergnat* ("The Holy Bible Told by a Native of Auvergne"), in which the puerility of the stories is added to by the naiveté of the *patois*.

Rénan's volume, *The Future of Science*, written in 1848 and but lately published, contains a glowing, pathetic apostrophe to "the God of my youth," whom he desired to find again, if only on his deathbed. But time has brought more than an anodyne; it has brought even more than a compensation. This is what the Rénan of to-day writes:—"Would to God that I may have succeeded in making clear to a few lofty minds that there is, in the pure cultivation of human faculties and of the divine objects which they attain, a religion as genial, as rich in delights, as the most venerable forms of worship. I have tasted in my childhood and early youth the purest joys of the believer, and I say from the bottom of my heart that these joys are nothing by comparison with what I have felt in the pure contemplation of the Beautiful and the passionate search after Truth. I desire for all my

brethren who have remained orthodox a peace to be compared with that in which I live since my struggle is over, and since the appeased storm has left me in the midst of this great Pacific Ocean—a sea without wind or storm, upon which one has no star but reason, no compass but one's own heart."

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

(Translated from "*Las Dominicales*" by F. Malibran.)

WITH the course of years, with the incessant exchange of ideas, with the political and religious revolutions which are continually occurring—now ostensibly, now clandestinely—everything alters, modifies itself, and changes form. New moulds are substituted for old ones, stale theories are supplanted by modern ones, and absolutely everything that exists in the physical as well as in the moral world is inevitably borne on by the current of universal progress—a current which cannot detain itself, that no obstacle however large and powerful can resist, and which nothing can escape; for to cease to progress would be equivalent to cease to exist in time and space.

These revolutions, which we see effectuating themselves constantly in all directions, also attain and transcend the elevated regions of ethical and philosophical sciences. Modern progress, the actual state of things, the developing degree in which all sciences stand, necessitated a sudden and complete modification of the conception which, till to-day, has been held of philosophy. Theology and philosophy are the two names with which till at present two branches of human knowledge have been designated and considered as completely united—the existence of theology supposing that of philosophy, and each being the support and foundation of the other.

As philosophy, according to the scholastic criterion, studies everything that refers to the world, and theology all that relates to God, his attributes, the relation between the creator and the created, cause and effect, it is clear why theology placed itself above philosophy, and why the latter was considered the indispensable foothold to attain the high edifice of theology. As it was from philosophy that the scholastic clergy drew their best arguments about the dreadful problem, viz., the origin of things; hence they considered it as a servant of theology.

There is nothing to be surprised at in this. A philosophy like the scholastic, without any foundation, based only and exclusively on vague abstractions, on hollow considerations of the nature of human personality, affected with very grave errors, absolutely destitute of all practical wisdom, without any argument of real importance capable of implanting a sound conviction; it does not seem strange that it should adapt itself to all demands, and should be a rich arsenal from which theologians could draw the elements necessary for the attainment of the object which they had in view.

But who at the present time maintains opinions like the scholastic ones? What person, with a superficial knowledge of the movement which animates all the various sciences and the tendency of modern thought, would set himself up as a defender of the rancid theories of the theologians?

Philosophy, as it is understood by all the distinguished champions who figure in its front rank, is not an abstract science; it is not, as many suppose, the science of vagueness and illusion, but a science as experimental and practical as any of the others to which these titles have been granted. In what does philosophy differ from the other sciences? What is its object? That is not difficult to understand. Physical science studies the laws that regulate the changes and phenomena which, under the name of physics, take place in bodies. Mechanics occupies itself with the study of all those laws which govern the movements of masses. Astronomy makes use of physics and mechanics in order to obtain more readily its desired object; and, finally, chemistry analyses all the phenomena which, under the name of chemical, take place in living beings, and the infinite reactions and changes to which they are susceptible. But philosophy, instead of having as its aim a particular and concrete object as the one searched by each of those said branches of human knowledge, relies upon the data which these offer it, compares them together, discovers their point of agreement and difference, deduces conclusions and formulates laws, which, being sustained by all the sciences, are universal. Once for all, let those persons convince themselves that they are altogether wrong, who maintain that philosophy is destitute of any practical character. True philosophy, the philosophy of the present century, which grows and develops under the pro-

tection of the human mind, is a purely experimental philosophy, springing up in physical and chemical laboratories, dissecting rooms, and museums of natural history, and not in the solitude of a study, with the help only of a heated imagination, a dreamy state of mind, a pen ready to hand, and a quantity of paper. Thus modern philosophy, in the same manner that it has discarded in the psychological field the theory of the soul's existence and of vital force, has likewise, in the theological field, exploded the most subtle theories of the subtlest of divines.

We shall not in this article treat in its full extent the problem of the origin of things, but will merely give a general outline sufficient to make the question better understood.

At first sight the argument presented by Theism appears very logical and consistent in saying that since there is no effect without a cause, and that every creation necessarily implies the existence of a creator, the world, the entire universe, in order to be formed and begin to live, necessitates some force which will communicate to it the life and existence with which it is animated. This argument is not so conclusive as it might seem at the first sight. It is quite certain that there is no effect without a cause, but it is likewise necessary to bear in mind that in order that something may operate as a cause—that is to say, in order that one being may give rise to another—it is necessary that that being should exist (for if he did not exist he could not produce). But in this case we are confronted with the same difficulty: to whom does this being owe its existence? Where did it arise from?

It is thus seen that upon the Theistic hypothesis the difficulty regarding the problem of the origin of things is only put further back instead of being solved. The difficulty we have in understanding the origin of matter without an anterior cause is exactly the same as imagining the existence and reality of this cause without something anterior, which would explain to us its origin. This is what the experimental sciences teach, and which all those who have their reasoning powers clear and unbiassed, cannot do otherwise than recognise. Well, if modern philosophy has arrived at these conclusions, if experience and study have conducted, by the hand as it were, the immense majority of contemporaneous thinkers to the profound conviction of these truths, how can philosophy be considered as the servant of theology, and why credit the utility of this last? If the sciences called theological are occupied with the study of God, and modern philosophy denies the existence of this Supreme Cause, how does philosophy serve as a starting-point and support to theology, when it declares the hypothesis of the divinity to be useless, and equally useless all that has been written about it? Who will consider them as sisters, when the existence of the one necessarily supposes the ruin and death of the other? More than that, philosophy, in proclaiming force and matter to be the supreme cause of all those multiplied and varied phenomena which we observe in nature, and in explaining everything by purely natural activities, places itself at the same height as ancient theology, for it studies the actual cause of what exists, although under a different name and under different attributes. On the other hand, how much superior is the object of philosophy to that of theology? The first is not only founded on a true basis, but progresses and develops under the protection of the other sciences. Any new invention, any newly-discovered law, may immediately modify the course and direction followed by scientific philosophy. Scientific philosophy closely resembles the waters of a river, which, owing to constant renewal, can never be corrupted. With theology quite the contrary takes place. It is called the science which treats of the absolute, and the absolute being eternally at rest, it is evident that theological science ought to partake of that immobility; so that theology is a fossil science, something standing apart from the allied perfection of the branches of modern science, and, like a boulder in the midst of a torrent, endeavoring in vain to withstand the irresistible force of modern thought and progress. There can be no doubt that theology, like many other things, has outlived its day. We live in an experimental age, in an eminently Positivist age, in which a single well-observed fact has more value than all imaginary arguments, no matter how well knit together they may be. We must seek for the future of philosophy in the depths of chemical retorts, in the surgeon's scalpel, and in the mathematician's calculations, but not in dialectics.

Let us bury, then, for ever in the depths of our libraries the innumerable books which have been written upon theological questions, allowing theology to remain with a purely historical interest, but leaving the field free and unencumbered

for the experimental sciences, which alone are the indestructible foundation of modern philosophy.

A WHIMSICAL SIDE OF RELIGION.

A SHORT time ago, on that day sacred to the memory of the exterminator of snakes in Ireland, I happened to be passing along a footpath which traverses a small village church-yard in Berkshire. The weather was dismal and stormy, the sky ashen grey, and the rain fell pitilessly down on the monuments and mounds of the departed. The clock in the ivy-covered belfry had just tolled five as I crossed the stile. As I neared the church door I was startled by a sudden apparition of a figure bare-headed, half-clothed in a loose white gown with a bit of black skirt underneath, and clasping a book in its hand. Behind there followed two women in humble black attire, sheltering themselves with umbrellas, and one carrying under her arm what looked like a long, narrow, box-like parcel covered with a white cloth. Behind these two followed a man bare-headed and in a black frock-coat. The party walked slowly and unobserved, save by myself, some distance along a path, until the man at the rear tapped the ghostly-clad personage who led the procession on the back, and motioned him to turn sharp to the left. Presently another signal was given to turn to the left again, and then the party of four halted. I noticed then that the woman who carried the parcel removed the white covering and handed it to the black-coated gentleman. The parcel looked like a small narrow box, and was covered with what looked like sky-blue paper. Then the gentleman in the white robe opened his book and began mumbling something, which to me was inaudible. Meanwhile the rain poured in torrents, and I pitied the man in white in his flimsy vestments, and the man in black pitied himself, for he turned up his coat-collar after a time, and soon after placed the blue-covered parcel in what seemed to be a hole in the ground. But the man in the white gown still pored over his book, seemingly undaunted by the rain which poured over his bare head. Presently the party broke up, the women going one way the men another.

It was a funeral, the funeral of a child a fortnight old. There was no tolling of the bell for this poor innocent, although it had been *half-baptised*, as the country folk call it—that is, just baptised enough to see it safe through eternity. Of course, had it lived, it would have needed another doing later on. The comicality of the whole scene seemed to me almost irresistible—the evident discomfort of the bare-headed parson standing, it is true, stoically enough, going through an unpleasant duty, the restlessness of the sexton who would, if he could, have shortened the service, the two apparently indifferent women (friends of the mother), and the blue-paper parcel, all deluged in a pouring rain, a baptismal downfall! And all for what?

In this same church-yard is a recently-erected white marble cross and etceteras, with an inscription to the memory of a child *one month old!* D. B.

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CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(From the "Twentieth Century.")

[CONCLUDED.]

It is an apparently suspicious circumstance that the Tories became so friendly toward Mr. Bradlaugh at the last, and that the daily press of England lavished many and elaborate encomiums on him after he was dead, and that even clergymen spoke well of him, but it must be remembered, that while he would fight the Government on occasion, and break the laws of the land at times, he nevertheless had a profound respect for the State as an institution. A law court and Parliament were as sacred institutions to him as to the most unenlightened Englishman, and after he, owing to circumstances, ceased to be as aggressive an Atheist as he once was, and worked quietly in the harness of the State, there was little about him to offend the pious politicians among whom his lot was thrown, for while he sincerely sympathised with the poor, and cordially disliked the landholding aristocracy, he did not attack the rights of property, and his proposed measures of relief for the poor were all (from my standpoint) moderate and of a regular legislative character.

If Mr. Bradlaugh had been as free from political as from religious superstition, and as determined to break a belief in the imaginary thing called the State as he was to destroy faith in the imaginary being called God, he would have been as cordially hated to the end by the English Philistines as he was in the earlier part of his life when, as is natural with young men, he enjoyed fighting more than conciliating to gain his points.

It is undoubtedly true that if his latter method had been the policy of his earlier years he never would have had the personal following he gained, probably the largest of any man in England, he never would have become the idol of the Freethinking world, but for all that he died as he had lived, an upright man, and with a political record in the light of which no one can fairly say he ever acted contrary to his own convictions of right and wrong.

From my standpoint, the glory departed from him in proportion as he realised his political ambitions, and he became comparatively unimportant after he entered Parliament, but he should not be judged from my standpoint or any one else's but his own, and I have endeavored to fairly estimate him according to his own ideas of what it was wisest for him to do. Thus estimating him I am of opinion that those who have broken away from the Christian religion may well be proud of Charles Bradlaugh.

Do they wish to point to a martyr? They will find one in him. Nothing was too cruel for the Christians to do to him, to the extent of their power; nothing was too vile for them to say about him. Of matchless physique, he died prematurely of worry and trouble and nervous strain. A poor boy when he began life, with abilities which could have made his fortune as a lawyer or statesman, he remained almost miserably poor till he died. He went through life loaded with debt, not on account of extravagant habits, for he lived frugally, but because he spent his money fighting for freedom.

Do they wish to point to a saint? They will find one in him. Not that he was perfect, for he was not; but he was honorable and clean. In all his dealings with men he treated them justly, though he was sometimes domineering, as all great leaders must be; in all his relations with women he conducted himself so that he had nothing to conceal. In addition to the fact that he found his highest happiness in conforming to what is called morality, he always felt that for him to offend the conventional sense of right and wrong would bring Atheism, as a rule of conduct, into public shame, and he was scrupulously careful to give no enemy an occasion to criticise his actions. Hard as iron in advocating his principles, he was as gentle as a child in manifesting his affections. Quick to resent an injury and punish the offender, he was moved to tears by a kindness, and he never forgot a friend. He fought his enemies with a ferocity equal to their own, but without the meanness they frequently exhibited, but he would stand among his co-workers shaken with tender emotions at any exhibition of love and confidence from them. Upright in his public life, clean in his private life; bold toward his enemies, gentle with his friends—what better saint should you want than such as he?

Being a positive character, and a born leader and organizer, he alienated some of his fellow Freethinkers who opposed him, but now that he is dead even those who could not work with him lift up their voices in eulogy of him, and every Freethinker in the world is proud of the great Atheist who put to shame the clergymen among whom he lived, because all the world can see that he was more earnest and sincere in his beliefs, more useful in his life, and more widely mourned in his death than they. He proved, what every intelligent Freethinker knows, that Atheism, rightly understood and consistently lived, tends to make a man happier and more useful than if he were a believer in the hopes and fears, and a doer of the unnatural behests, of religion.

When in life, Charles Bradlaugh wished that, when in death, he should be buried in silence, and that his friends should not wear mourning. These wishes were respected. Beside his grave no sound was heard but the sobs of those who loved him, and the dull thud of the bunches of flowers which were thrown upon his coffin. Thus in simplicity and silence, just as the noble warrior had won for himself the right to live in peace and enjoy length of days, closed a wild and stormy career.

You and I can do no better than to emulate his virtues, and when the fitful dream of life is over, sink, as he did, silently into eternal sleep.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

Council Meeting held at Hall of Science, on Thursday May 7, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. Present: Messrs. A. B. Moss, J. M. Wheeler (vice-presidents), R. O. Smith (treasurer), Baker, Brown, Collins, Colville, Courtney, Enderby, Guest, Heath, Hooper, Hunt, Lupton, Mæers, Rous, Rutland, Renn, Rowden, Turner, Thomas, and Miss E. Vance. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The report of the Children's Party Committee was taken as presented to the Executive of the N. S. S., and a vote of thanks was moved by Mr. Wheeler to the ladies and gentlemen who had worked to make the party successful. This was unanimously agreed to. The secretary reported arrangements for Stratford Free Lectures, and also his application for promised donations. On the appointment of a committee to distribute grants in aid of open-air propaganda, some discussion took place, and it was decided that the committee should report monthly to the Council. Messrs. R. Forder and G. Standring were appointed to act (in conjunction with the treasurer) as this committee. After some discussion it was agreed that the Annual Excursion should take place on July 12, by steamboat, the secretary being instructed to arrange all necessary details by next meeting. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. D. Colville for his presentation of a new lecture-stand. The monthly lecture list was then discussed, and finally the matter was left in the hands of the President. The Council adjourned till the first Thursday in June.—E. POWNCEBY secretary.

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SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "History of the Inquisition." Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, discussion.
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. F. Millar, "The Philosophy of Agnosticism."
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7.30, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "What is the Truth about Religion?"
 Leyton — Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisey Villas, Manor Road: 7, Mr. Beadle, a reading.
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road; N.W.: 7.30, Orchestral Band; 8, Ex-Commissioner Smith, "Social Sores and Quack Remedies."
 Monday, at 8.30, social meeting. Tuesday, at 8, singing and dramatic classes (practice).
 Stratford — Enterprise Hall, Great Eastern Road: Thursday (May 14), at 8, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Christianity and Slavery."
 West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 8, Mr. H. Snell, "Why Fear Death and After?" Thursday, at 8, open debate.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. E. Calvert, "Bible Wonders."
 Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church: 11.15, a Free-thought lecture.
 Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. F. Millar, "What is the Popular Faith?"
 Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Philosophy of Secularism."
 Edmonton — Corner of Angel Road: 6.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "Is there any Efficacy in Prayer?"
 Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. H. Courtney, "The Decay of Christianity." At 3.30, Mr. H. Snell will lecture.
 Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Moral Fables."
 Hyde Park, near Marble Arch: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "The Jews' March out of Egypt."
 Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. H. Courtney, "The Decay of Christianity."
 Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Moral Difficulties of Christianity."
 Lambeth—Corner of Belvedere Road (opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Bible Stories."
 Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge Road): 11.30, Mr. J. Pagan will lecture.
 Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "English Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century."
 Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, a lecture.
 Regents Park (near Gloucester Gate): 3, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Bible: what it is and what it is not."
 Tottenham—Corner of West Green Road: 3.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen "Is there a God?—I."
 Victoria Park, near the fountain: 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation—III."
 West Ham—Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11, Mr. C. Cohen, "Scepticism."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Did God Create Man?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street: 10.30 and 2.30, National Secular Society's Conference. Exchange Rooms, New Street: 7, Public Meeting.
 Glasgow—Albion Hall, College Street: 12 noon, debating class; 6.30, Mr. Shaw, "Secularism, Atheism, Monism, or Agnosticism, Which?"
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Haslam, "False Assumptions."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Working Men's Club, Nelson Street: 7.30, Mr. R. Chapman, "Vegetarianism."
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street: 7, Mr. A. Lord will lecture.
 Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Googe, "Thoughts on Republicanism."
 Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road: 6.30, meeting of members and friends, important business after a reading.
 Sheffield — Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, musical and other recitals, singing, etc., by several friends.
 Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dudas Street: 6, Mr. J. Rothery, a reading.
 Sunderland — Albert Rooms, Coronation Street: 7, Mr. R. Weightman, "A Plea for Cremation."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E. —May 17, Conference; 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; 21, morning, Westminster; evening, Camberwell; 28, morning, Clerkenwell; afternoon, Finsbury Park. July 5, morning, Clerkenwell; afternoon, Victoria Park; 12, morning, Woolwich; 19, morning, Westminster.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley Road, St. Peter's Park, London, W. —May 17, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Battersea; 24, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith; 31, morning, Camberwell; afternoon, Regent's Park; evening, Lambeth. June 7, morning, Kingsland Green; afternoon, Regent's Park; 14, morning, Pimlico; evening, Kilburn; 21, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Lambeth; 28, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. —June 7, morning, Plaistow Green. July 5, morning, Plaistow Green; 19, morning, Kingsland Green; 26, morning, Battersea.

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