

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

WHERE IS HELL?

This is a question of great importance, or at least of very great interest. According to the Christian scheme of salvation, the vast majority of us will have to spend eternity in "sulphurous and tormenting flames," and we are naturally curious as to the situation of a place in which we shall experience such delightful sensations.

But there is hardly any subject on which we can obtain so little information. The clergy are becoming more and more reticent about it. What little they ever knew is being secreted in the depths of their inner consciousness. When they are pressed for particulars they look injured. Sometimes they piteously exclaim "Don't." At other times they wax wroth, and exclaim to the questioners about the situation of hell, "Wait till you get there."

Just as heaven used to be spoken of as "up above," hell was referred to as "down below." At one time, indeed, it was believed to be underground. Many dark caves were thought to lead to it, and some of them were called "Hell Mouth." Volcanoes were regarded as entrances to the fiery regions, and when there was an eruption it was thought that hell was boiling over. Classic mythology, before the time of Christ, had its entrances to hell at Acherusia, in Bithynia; at Avernus, in Campania, where Ulysses began his journey to the grisly abodes; the Sibyl's cave at Cumæ, in Argolis; at Tænarus, in the southern Peloponnesus, where Hercules descended, and dragged Cerberus up to the daylight; and the cave of Trophonius, in Lebadea, not to mention a dozen less noted places.

The Bible always speaks of hell as "down," and the Apostles' Creed tells us that Christ "descended" into hell. Exercising his imagination on this basis, the learned Faber discovered that after the Second Advent the saints would dwell on the crust of the earth, a thousand miles thick, and the damned in a sea of liquid fire inside. Thus the saints would tread over the heads of sinners, and flowers would bloom over the lake of damnation.

Sir John Maundeville, a most engaging old liar, says he found a descent into hell "in a perilous vale" in Abyssinia. According to the Celtic legend of "St. Brandon's Voyage," hell was not "down below," but in the moon, where the saint found Judas Iscariot suffering incredible tortures, but let off every Sunday to enjoy himself and prepare for a fresh week's agony. That master of bathos, Martin Tupper, finds this idea very suitable. He apostrophises the moon as "the wakeful eye of hell." Bailey, the author of *Festus*, is somewhat vaguer. Hell, he says, is in a world which rolls thief-like round the universe, imperceptible to human eyes;

a blind world, yet unlit by God,
Rolling around the extremest edge of light,
Where all things are disaster and decay.

Imaginations, of course, will differ. While Martin Tupper and other gentlemen look for hell in the direction of the moon, the Platonists, according to Macrobius, reckoned as the infernal regions the whole space between the moon and the earth. Whiston thought the comet which appeared in his day was hell. An English clergyman, referred to by Alger, maintained that hell was in the sun, whose spots were gatherings of the damned.

The reader may take his choice, and it is a liberal one. He may regard hell as under the earth, or in the moon, or in the sun, or in a comet, or in some concealed body careering through infinite space. And if the choice does not satisfy him, he is perfectly free to set up a theory of his own.

Father Pinamonti is the author of a little book called "Hell open to Christians," which is stamped with the authority of the Catholic Church, and issued for the special edification of children. This book declares that hell is four thousand miles distant, but it does not indicate the direction. Anyhow, the distance is so small, that the priests might easily set up communication with the place. But perhaps it only exists in the geography or astronomy of faith.

Father Pinamonti seems particularly well-informed on this subject. He says the walls of hell are "more than four thousand miles thick." That is a great thickness. But is it quite as thick as the heads of the fools who believe it?

Our belief is that hell is far nearer than the clergy teach. Omar Khayyam, the grand old Persian poet, the "large infidel," as Tennyson calls him, wrote as follows—in the splendid rendering of Edward Fitzgerald:—

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by and bye my soul returned to me,
And answered, I myself am heaven and hell.

Hell, like heaven, is within us, and about us in the hearts of our fellow-men. Yes, hell is on earth. Man's ignorance, superstition, stupidity, and selfishness, make a hell for him in this life. Let us cease, then, to dread the fabled hell of the priests, and set ourselves to the task of abolishing the real hell of hunger, vice, and misery.

The very Churches are getting ashamed of their theological hell. They are becoming more and more secularised. They call on the disciples of Christ to remedy the evils of this life, and respond to the cry of the poor for a better share of the happiness of this world. Their methods are generally childish, for they overlook the causes of social evil, but it is gratifying to see them drifting from the old moorings, and little by little abandoning the old dogmas. Some of the clergy, like Archdeacon Farrar, go to the length of saying that "hell is not a place." Precisely so, and that is the teaching of Secularism.

G. W. FOOTE.

GOD'S MERCY.

A TRAGEDY has been enacted in my home. One of my little darlings has been cruelly murdered. It was a blackbird. This blessed Lord's day (May 31) it was out of its cage enjoying a bath, hopping and frisking in full delight of a little freedom, when, the door having been carelessly left so that it could be pushed open, my favorite cat entered and pounced on poor "Jacky" and mangled him. Hearing my wife's cry, I rushed from another room, darted at the cat, much as it did on the bird, but too late, Jacky's feathers were scattered on the floor, his breast was torn, and, after a few convulsive movements, he died. Puss slunk off to the coal-cellar highly aggrieved at my interference.

Trivial and commonplace as my little domestic tragedy may seem to others, to me it serves to re-open the whole pathos of life, as much as some greater catastrophe. In the fate of my dead bird I see the long sad procession of lives crushed out, the hideous carnage which ceaselessly goes on in nature.

My grief and indignation at the slaughter of my bird are but enhanced by the knowledge that both are futile. My irrational quarrel is with the very nature of things—the most stupid of all quarrels. If the nature of things has a divine source and ruler, my quarrel is with him.

I cannot blame the cat. It but followed its instinct, which even finds delight in prolonging the agonies of its victim. Have I not seen it sitting for hours, half concealed behind the lace curtains, while watching the sparrows outside, and wagging its tail with pleasure when there seemed an opportunity to spring?

But the whole system by which even a well-fed cat will take delight in mangling a bird is one which raises the utmost abhorrence. It is horrible enough as a fact, but to believe it ordained by some personal being suggests that such a being must be a malignant fiend. Knowing no such being, I accuse none, though I lament that physical laws work with such blindness and cruelty.

But Professor A. R. Wallace comes and says this incessant warfare, this strife and carnage, is the very means by which much of the beauty and harmony and enjoyment in nature is produced. Well, I admit that everything in nature is interlinked. Things could not be as they are if they had not been as they have been. But this does not meet the question, Are pain, disease and premature death the inventions of an all-wise, all-powerful and all-loving God? Even grant the unproved postulate of the optimist that "evil is good in the making," and the question still remains, Why is good brought about through evil? Pain is still pain, though it lead to development, and to me it seems that, both with domestic animals and in human life, there is much pain, which, even if once serving as a warning, when in a wild state, now remains as purposeless suffering.

The Theist at last generally comes to this—that there is a balance in favor of good. And on this balance of the preponderance of good over evil he virtually rests his deity. But where are the scales poised, and what holds them? It is the living few, not the countless crushed-out ones, who are asked to pronounce in favor of almighty goodness. It is always the eater who says that the satisfaction of eating compensates the torture of being eaten. I want not only the opinion of my cat, but of my blackbird.

The Theist has not simply the hard task of showing that, on the whole, there is more happiness than misery. Infinite power and infinite goodness are inconsistent with the existence of but one misery. Would not I have saved Jack from torture if I could? "Oh," it is said, "would you have God work a miracle to save your bird?" Well, Christians believe

that the lions would not eat Daniel; they credit that Christ stilled the tempest, though he never saves from shipwreck now; that he fed five thousand in Palestine, but lets people starve in famine now. I do not ask for miracles. It is the Theist who makes the difficulty by postulating the existence of a being with whose alleged attributes the facts of nature are incompatible.

For as John Stuart Mill says, "In sober truth nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are Nature's every-day performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognised by human laws, Nature does to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monster whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow creatures." Nature treats her offspring with what, in human beings, would be ruthless neglect and remorseless cruelty. And if Nature is presided over by a God, he is responsible.

But the Theist urges that if we knew all we might see that all was for the best. It is sufficient to say we do not know all, and if we did we might see the very reverse. How vain is it by such phrases to cover up the fact of actual suffering and evil which lies not only on the surface, but in the deep heart of things. Surely the system of prey which obtains throughout nature is of itself enough to make the Theist pause and recognise that the reverent, modest, and reasonable course lies not in affirmation but in silence.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE LUCKY CURATE'S SONG.

WHEN I, good friends, went into the Church,
A friendless, penniless curate,
I seemed by Fortune left in the lurch,
And felt I could not endure it.
For a living to get I tried in vain,
No friend had one in his giving,
Yet, borrow or steal, I resolved to gain
A fat and a fertile living.

So I toadied my bishop, with girls on hand,
Renowned for his nepotism;
And to make the youngest my own I planned
As I taught her the catechism.
I played that fish so remarkably well,
That in wedlock's net I caught her,
And the fattest cure to my share befell
When I married the bishop's daughter.

EARLY DEITIES DEVILS.

Here I will only observe that the deities of the lower races, being subject to the same passions as man, and in many cases indeed themselves monsters of iniquity, regarded crime with indifference, so long as the religious ceremonies and sacrifices in their honor were not neglected. The lower savages regard their deities as scarcely more powerful than themselves; they are evil, not good; they are to be propitiated by sacrifices, not by prayer; they are not creators; they are neither omniscient nor all-powerful; far from conferring immortality on man, they are not even in all cases immortal themselves.—Sir John Lubbock, "Origin of Civilisation," pp. 390-391. 1889.

"She's a dear, good girl," said a St. Louis young man in relation to a Chicago fair one: "I assure you father, she is all soul." "Yes," replied his stern parent, the old prejudice against the Garden City embittering his words, "I saw her footprint in the sand by the lake side. You are right; she is all soul."

"Well," said a bridegroom to a minister at the conclusion of the ceremony, how much do I owe you?—"Oh, I'll leave that to you," was the reply; "you can better estimate the value of the service rendered."—"Suppose we postpone settlement, then, say for a year. By that time I shall know whether I ought to give you a hundred dollars or nothing."—"No, no," said the clergyman, who is a married man himself, "I make it three dollars now."

GODS AND THEIR ORIGIN.

BY J. P. RICHARDSON.

*(From the "Independent Pulpit.")**(Continued.)*

WHAT is the next and final argument for the existence of a God or Gods. It is design. That all things seem to have been constructed upon a preconceived plan, and fitted for the functions that their surroundings called for. This is the argument of Paley, which he illustrates by his somewhat celebrated case of a man who had never seen a watch finding one, and seeing the nice adaptation of all its parts, concludes that it must have had a maker. A very sound conclusion; but why? Because he had seen other works of man, and this bore the marks of human intelligence and human hands. I doubt very much, if he had never seen any mechanical work of man, he would have supposed it could have had a maker. I have seen an anecdote of a Highlander in the army of Montrose, who found a watch on the person of an English officer killed in battle. Its ticking amused the Highlander very much, and supposing it to be some curious animal, he kept it until it had run down and stopped. He then sold it for a trifle, and after receiving the money for it he could not conceal his exultation at the successful cheat he had practised, and said, with a laugh, "She died last night." But we readily and correctly infer that a thing has a maker when we know of a being capable of having made it, and the thing itself shows that such a being made it; but by what logic can we infer both the making and the maker when we know nothing of either? Because I see the sun rise in the morning and go up in the heavens, must I infer Phœbus Apollo, with his chariot and horses, to draw it up? Rather let me suspend judgment until I have investigated the phenomena of the heavens, and then I shall have no use for Phœbus Apollo or any other god to make the sun rise.

We find adaptation in all natural things, but not design. If organised things are not adapted to their environment they cannot exist. The struggle for existence secures the survival of those forms that are best adapted to their surrounding circumstances; and the surrounding circumstances act upon each individual form, to help it to adapt itself, as the blacksmith's arm adapts itself to the work it has to do. If it cannot so adapt itself, it passes away and gives place to forms better fitted to service. As water adapts itself to the shape of the vessel into which it is poured, so everything in nature fits itself to its surroundings. The idea of a plan in nature, designed beforehand, is a putting of the cart before the horse, like the pious but unscientific clergyman, who found an evidence of the wisdom and goodness of God in the fact that large rivers were made to flow by great cities; and also that death was placed at the end of life rather than at its beginning.

In all the so-called argument for the existence of God, let it be borne in mind that there is nothing that demonstrates it. All that its advocates claim is that we should infer it; and that, too, from such very insufficient premises as I have mentioned. The whole argument is an assumption as baseless as the existence of Santa Claus, or the raw-head and bloody-bones of the nursery tales. No man of half average intelligence would now believe in it, had it not been stuffed into his head in childhood. The first gods were material things, that could be seen and heard—the sun, moon, and stars, and numberless other objects, of the nature of which man knew nothing. But man would still eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, in spite of the denunciations of the priests; and these objects were found to be but natural, and as powerless as the most familiar objects of daily life. Then followed the personification of these objects, and the objects themselves became but the outward sign and symbol of the personal God. The earth was flat, and the great dome of the sky that shut it in, was the floor of heaven, upon which the gods walked and over-looked the doings of men below. Everything upon the earth was run by the direct interposition of the gods; without which, no tree would blossom, no sun would shine, no water would run down hill.

But now in the progress of human knowledge, that floor of heaven has been swept away; there is no dome over the earth; the underpinning has been knocked from under the gods, and we look forth into space unobstructed in our view, except by stars. The earth is round, and whirling in space at such speed as to leave us in doubt as to which

direction to look for gods. Our morning praise will go up in one direction and our evening prayer will fly off into space in exactly the opposite. If we are to rise again, as the apostle tells us, and be taken up into heaven, where shall we go? It depends altogether upon the time of day on which we start.

One would suppose that at this stage of human progress, the gods would disappear and man would come to his senses. But no; the priests have too firm a hold upon human imagination. The superstitious teaching of a thousand generations has developed in man a tendency to the marvellous, an instinct which goes under the name of "the religious element in man." Though the old gods are gone; though there are no longer material gods, or personifications of material objects to take their places, the priests have reconstructed the old broken theology, and their God is now not material, but a spirit; which is equivalent to saying it is nothing.

What is a spirit? It is something that nobody ever saw, heard, smelled, tasted, or felt. Probably no two persons ever had the same idea of it. Probably no one person ever had any idea of it. If it is matter, it is subject to all the laws of matter, and whatever form it takes as an individual, it is subject to both growth, decay and death. If it is not matter, then it is nothing that we know, or can know anything about. All our knowledge is confined to material things; that is, to matter and its properties, or matter and its action through some of its forms of force.

When we speak of a spirit, or spirits, what do we mean by it? Have we explained anything? Professor Huxley says, "A phenomenon is explained when it is shown to be a case of some general law of nature. But what wiser are we by naming unknown forces spirit?" And we may answer, none at all. We have only given a name to our ignorance.

The position of theologians at the present day, driven to the wall as they are by the revelations of science and convicted of false teaching, but still keeping up their cry of "Save your soul! Save your soul from the wrath of the bugaboos," is very much like that of a big dog that I knew in my boyhood, long ago, in a country town in Massachusetts. He was a fine specimen of the Newfoundland breed, and his name was Noble. One warm spring day, as he laid sleepily on the grass, near the house, he spied a squirrel in the yard, and went for it with all the zeal that was in him. The squirrel, however, was too quick for him and disappeared in a hole at the root of a tree. Noble attacked the hole with his paws, and dug out a space almost large enough to bury himself in; all the while barking furiously; but all to no purpose, for he missed getting the squirrel, though he worked until he was completely exhausted and gave up the job. The squirrel no doubt made his escape, as squirrels do. But every day Noble returned to that hole and frantically barked and tore away at the ground. Whenever he woke from his after-dinner nap and lazily looked around for something in the way of amusement, his eye fell upon the hole, and he would take another turn at it with apparently as much zeal as at the first. If any one came along and said, "Noble, old boy, you are wasting your time and strength on that hole; there is no squirrel in there," he would look with a cunning leer that seemed to say, "I know that as well as you do, but I find my amusement in it, as well as much profitable exercise." And so he kept it up. And so with our priests; they know that the gods have disappeared; that there is nothing in the hole they have been working so long, but they still find profit and amusement in digging away at it, and making as much noise about it as if they had God actually in their hands. It is about time that they recognised the fact that the sky is empty of gods, and that nature has no use for supernatural beings.

(To be concluded.)

A hungry minister was calling on one of his friends, on his way to chapel, and perceived some appetising biscuits on the table. While his hostess' back was turned, he yielded to temptation and slipped half a dozen up his sleeve. When, however, after a long chat he pursued his way to chapel, he had forgotten all about them. The theme of his sermon was, "All good things come from above," and, raising his arms the greater to emphasise his words, a shower of good things *i.e.*, biscuits, literally fell on the heads of the congregation, thus affording a practical illustration of his words.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE RACECOURSE.

THE puritanical psalmists of the ancient city of Chester are leading a crusade against the proposal to renew the lease of the racecourse for a period of twenty-five years, and probably disappointed that his libel on Freethinkers did not secure him the vacant archbishopric of York, the virtuous Bishop Jayne has been appealing to the Chester Town Council to stay their hands, and not to grant the lease until the public have had time to consider the question, which means until he and his fellow parsons have had time to discover and display the evils of racing to those equally as narrow-minded and shallow as he. By this means he perhaps hopes to become credited with a sufficient store of piety to secure him the reversion of the Archbishopric when it next becomes vacant. There may be those among your readers who will not withdraw their subscriptions should you go so far as to publish the Bishop's letter; and as the document is a remarkably unique one, I give it in *extenso*.

"Dee Side, Chester, 19th May, 1891.

"Dear Mr. Mayor,—You will, I am sure, understand and sympathise with the anxiety which is being widely and keenly felt in Chester about the proposed new lease of the Roodee for racing purposes. That the city should tie its hands by such a lease for a quarter of a century, and with the prospect—if I am rightly informed—of two race meetings being held in each year, is a step which no thoughtful citizen can regard without something like dismay. I am far from wishing either to exaggerate the evils or to ignore the brighter and sounder side of the Chester Races; but it can hardly be denied that, even on the most favorable estimate of their advantages and disadvantages, their demoralising influences are so dark and deep as to make it the bounden duty of every public-spirited citizen to inquire whether the new lease is likely to lessen or to stereotype, if not increase, one of the recognised blots upon the moral and social life of Chester. I would therefore ask permission to join those who are urging the desirability of full time and opportunity being given for public consideration of such a vital question. We may, I am sure, feel confident that it will not be 'rushed through.'—Believe me to remain, yours faithfully,

F. J. CESTR."

What a mixture of pathos, bathos, and bosh it is, isn't it? A man who can talk about the "brighter side of Chester races" (one wonders if he ever won a bit there), and in the next breath describes them as "one of the recognised blots upon the moral and social life of the City of Chester," ought to be—well, he ought to be a Christian bishop. And the appalling probability of there being two race meetings a year, each bringing trade and profit to the city—"horrible," isn't it? or, as the Bishop puts it, "a step which no thoughtful citizen can regard without dismay." But if Jayne-us—I should say Bishop Jayne—could only look at it as the "thoughtful citizen" does, he might rather view the remote prospect of the abolition of Chester races with dismay, because when the races go, and with them go the profits which are each year made by the Corporation, and which each year serve to relieve the burden of the ratepayers, the "thoughtful citizen" won't find Bishop Jayne and his Church ready to take the place of the races, and make up to the Borough what it loses by their abolition. It is a very funny thing that Christianity only howls at—what does he call it—"blots on moral and social life," when it finds there is nothing to be got out of these "blots." At Doncaster, where, if anything, the "blot" is bigger than at Chester, the "ower gude" do not condemn the races, because each religious body is allowed to have its picking out of the profits. From the Church of England through all the "ists" and "isms" down to the everlasting "army," each flock receives some of the shekels made out of the "sport of kings"; and, indeed, when not so very long ago a fund was being raised to add to the religious buildings in Doncaster, the authorities of the racecourse offered £100, and the building trustees of this place of worship were on it like a bird.

I am convinced that, should an earthquake ever destroy Doncaster racecourse, the Christians of that "poor, proud, and pretty" town would sooner see the races take place in the parish churchyard than they should be removed from the town. You never hear any allusions to "blots" in Doncaster; nor would you in Chester, if Bishop Jayne could experience two sensations—(1) the burden which would fall on the ratepayers if the races were abolished, and (2) the sensation of adding to the fund for church expenses an annual plum of some magnitude from the racecourse committee—which would be bliss indeed. Readers, who probably may care as little about races as the writer does, will yet be glad to learn that the Chester Town Council was by

no means disposed to put up with any of Bishop Jayne's "blot," humbug, and referred the question to the race committee, to the tender mercies of which it is at least something novel for a bishop to be left. The Chester races (which were before Bishop Jayne was) will probably be, when he in glory isn't.

GILBERT GALE.

ACID DROPS.

A lively controversy has been going on in the *Times* on the subject of Mr. Calderon's picture of St. Elizabeth, whom he depicts, in a state of nudity, before a nude statue of Jesus. He cites in his defence an old chronicler. Dr. E. A. Abbott says Mr. Calderon is justified in his interpretation of the chronicler. Father Clarke, of the Society of Jesus, says the picture is a slander on her and her priestly director, Conrad of Marburg, "a man of high virtue and spotless reputation." Karl Blind writes, showing that the spotless Conrad went about persecuting witches and heretics; and Professor Huxley cites an historian, who says he stripped both St. Elizabeth and her maids *ad camisiam* and scourged them. The controversy brings out what women will do under the influence of fanaticism and priestly control, and how Jesuits seek to gloss over the past misdeeds of the pious.

Father Clarke admits that Jesus was nailed naked, and asserts that "the outrage was one which caused the most acute suffering to his virginal modesty." But he sees no outrage to virginal modesty in nuns contemplating the naked figure in their cells.

An American paper charges against Father Ignatius that he wrote a hymn for his nuns—

There my love shall kiss me,
Call me all his own.

But it says nothing of the Christian young ladies who sang
Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast.

Dr. Momerie, who occupies the post of Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at King's College, London, has come into collision with the college authorities through the breadth of his broad church views. Theological students no longer attend his lectures. It is rather hard on Dr. Momerie that even the Unitarian *Inquirer* is down upon him for his bad taste, which to our thinking is only another word for his boldness in attacking the corruptions of Christianity.

While Dr. Momerie was preaching "liberal" sermons at the Foundling he was praised by papers like the *Star* and *Echo*, but now that he is advanced enough to shock a Unitarian like Page Hopps they begin to find that he is a nobody. He is also accused of taking the Church's pay while flouting its doctrines. But it seems that Dr. Momerie has not held a living for years, or taken any direct emolument from the Church. His professorship is another matter, and he has a right to hold it until he is discharged. As to the advertisements he indulged in to obtain an audience for the lecture which has created such a stir, we should like to know how a meeting could be secured without publicity. How can people go to hear a man if they do not know he is going to speak?

The *Spectator*, noticing the peculiar beliefs of the late Lawrence Oliphant, says his doctrine that God is bi-sexual is absolutely without evidence or meaning. In that case it is much like all other doctrines concerning deity. But Oliphant founded his doctrine on Genesis i., 27, and contended that the use of masculine terms for deity was without evidence or meaning. No doubt if women had written the Bible we should have heard of our mother in heaven. That God is pre-eminently known as father, somewhat countenances the views of those who find a phallic element at the bottom of religion.

Oliphant and others have pointed out that in the description of deity given in Revelation, he, she, or it is described as "girt about the paps with a golden girdle," a phrase which supports the feminine or androgyne view of deity.

Mr. J. J. Mackay complained at the Free Church General Assembly that lady visitors could not pass along the lobbies for the amount of smoke. The Free Kirk ministers appear to be devotees of the weed, and we expect that the smoke is a fit emblem of the results of their Assembly.

The episcopal bishop-elect of Massachusetts, Phillips Brooks, says that "the supernatural can never be disproved." This is true. Neither can it be disproved that the cow jumped over the moon. The perplexing fact about the supernatural is that it never can be proved, but this does not seem to trouble the bishop.

In a hall where a number of Scotch ministers assembled to perform a ceremonial function, there was an organ and an organist provided to discourse sacred music. The player, getting tired of classical pieces, broke into some operatic selections. By-and-bye, one of the "white ties" of the old school approached, and said to the performer: "May I ask what that was you were playing last?" "That is from an oratorio called 'Patience,'" replied the organist. "I thought so," said the cleric; "and I was just remarking to my reverend brother here that it breathed resignation in every note!"

Mr. Wannaker, the Postmaster-General of the United States, has had an act passed which excludes from the mails not only all obscene and lewd publications, but also the transmission of any matter offensive to modesty. The editor of the *Truthseeker* wants to know if the volume called the Holy Bible is available, and points to many passages which might be supposed to come within the definition of the act. One individual wrote 2 Kings xviii., 27, on a post-card, and sent it to Mr. Wannaker to influence his opinion.

If the educated ridicule the ignorant, the ignorant have often a genuine contempt for the educated. The late Bishop of Ely was one day talking to a laborer, and unfortunately let fall a remark which plainly showed that he had no idea how turnips should be sown. Hodge looked at him round-eyed, in an amazement too big for utterance. But when the Bishop had turned aside he said, "'E a bishop indeed! Why, 'e aint fit to 'old a plough."

A very amusing and instructive book is George Borrow's *Zincali; or Gipsies of Spain*. Borrow translated the gospel ascribed to Luke into 'Spanish Romany and circulated it among the gipsies. He says, "the women were particularly anxious to obtain copies though unable to read; but each wished to have one in her pocket, especially when engaged in thieving expeditions, for they all looked upon it in the light of a charm which would preserve them from all danger and mischance; some even went so far as to say, that in this respect it was equally efficacious as the Bar Lachi or lode-stone which they are in general so desirous of possessing."

Borrow tells how when holding a religious meeting among the gipsies, after reading the Bible to them, he looked up and found them all squinting. This was the way in which they expressed their sense of the situation.

The other day a distinguished bishop consecrated a new church. Tickets of invitation were issued to persons whose presence was particularly desired at the ceremony, and on them appeared the words "Service 10.30. Collection at 12.30." During the service the new church was crowded, but at the conclusion of the bishop's discourse, people unaccountably vanished. There was afterwards a luncheon, at which his lordship presided, but though places were laid for a couple of hundred guests, only a couple of score of people sat down at table. The phenomenon was explained by the discovery that the printer had put "Collection at 12.30" instead of Collation at 12.30."

Arthur James Johnson, evangelist, is apparently one of those pests of society who prey on the community under pretence of religion. Three years ago he was leader of a mission at Leicester and eloped with a married woman of his congregation, taking with him to Melbourne goods not his own. He returned to England without the lady last week, but any efforts to evangelise his native land were cut short by his arrest for embezzlement.

Dr. Patterson continues his exposure of Mme. Blavatsky in the columns of the *British Weekly*. He denies that she ever was in Thibet, and says that from 1852-74 she "lived a life very different from that of a studious recluse. She asks that her real life during those years should be kept secret," and this wish Prof. Patterson observes, with the exception of the hint—"Mme. Blavatsky dare not speak the

truth, and so, to fill up an awkward and compromising hiatus, she invented the Thibet story." He declares that her Theosophic career began and ended in falsehood and fraud. On the other hand, it is said that Mr. A. P. Sinnett is about to publish a defence of the mysterious lady.

Some enthusiasts have suggested that Mme. Blavatsky may, despite her cremation, reappear to the faithful in her astral body. Enlightened lanoos know better. The lady, with the exception of a few trifles, such as her devotion to tobacco, had overcome the Kamic principle which builds up the astral form, or, as she appropriately termed it, lunar body. She can only appear in the form of smoke, and will not be reincarnated for one thousand seven hundred and thirty-four years, and will then appear in the planet Mars. She has but five other births before her, when she may, if all goes well, enter the Dharmakaya body. We have this from an occult source—our own special adept—and it may therefore be safely taken—with the addition of a saltmine.

Break away from Atheism and Materialism, take up with some kind of mysticism, and believe in "a sort of a something," and the "respectable" journals will give you publicity. Knowing this, we were not surprised to see in Monday's *Echo* a report of Mrs. Besant's lecture on "The Doctrine of the Trinity." The part reported is about "life," and Mrs. Besant seems to have repeated the usual stuff to be met with in orthodox volumes—stuff which Mr. Bradlaugh never treated with much respect. We cannot help saying that Mrs. Besant mistakes her duty. What she has to do is not to reiterate the commonplaces of every form of spiritualism, but to answer her own pamphlets and articles written when she was an Atheist and a Materialist. That is the duty she owes to the persons whom for thirteen years she misled, and anything short of that is trifling with them and the subject.

Would it not be better and braver (and we say it without a trace of bitterness) for Mrs. Besant to set up her own Theosophic platform and advocate Theosophy there? Is it not incongruous—to use the mildest word—for Mrs. Besant to boast of her collaboration with Charles Bradlaugh, and at the same time to use, as far as possible, the platforms he painfully built up for the advocacy of ideas to which he was absolutely opposed? No one denies her right to her opinions, or her right to express them; but there is a proper occasion for all things, and this is a fact she does not seem to realise.

It has been estimated that one single passage in the Bible—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"—has cost the lives of nearly 9,000,000 of people, mostly women.

It is now claimed that the Garden of Eden was situated on a little island in the Indian Ocean. It is possible, however, that Adam and Eve were sent to the island after the fall.

The annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society was a very dispiriting affair. It is true Mr. B. H. Cowper, whom we inadvertently buried by mistake for Mr. B. H. Cooper—turned up to show he was not dead yet. The Duke of Connaught sent a letter wishing the society every success, but he sent no money and regretted his inability to attend. Even the treasurer put in no appearance, and the balance-sheet was read by Mr. Waterman, not printed. It showed that they had to sell out £200 of railway stock, for which they got £259, and were thus left with a balance in hand of £46. The total income was £1,343 13s. 5d., of which the two secretaries, who virtually run the concern, take £490. They used to take £500, but have modestly reduced their allowance. The other main items of expenditure were for Sermons Conferences, etc., £442; repayment of loan, £100; office, £84. The report begins by speaking of "the extent to which their work is crippled by the insufficiency of funds," and ends by trusting that "in spite of all discouragement and failure, they may ever rest under the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Mr. Engstrom, in reading an abstract of the report, laid stress on the statement that "the partial or total withdrawal of its operations from any particular locality, because of inadequate means to carry them on, does not signify the surrender of projects of uncertain utility, but the sacrifice of opportunities of doing real service," and dwelt on the need of money and of men. They appealed to Christian men "to come to their aid with personal service. They have, indeed,

no reward to offer beyond that of the sense of arduous duty cheerfully undertaken and patiently carried on." In other words, the Rev. Mr. Engstrom, who has several other lucrative positions himself, asks that the most arduous work of his society—the out-door lecturing—shall be done gratuitously. This may perhaps help to explain its degenerate character.

Lincolnshire used to be a great seat of Methodists, but it is apparently declining there as elsewhere. The *Market Rasen Mail* mentions that a nett decrease of 491 members was reported at the May meeting of the Wesleyan Methodists, while the Free Methodists also report a decrease of 181 members.

Christians have powerful imaginations. The landlord of a West London newsagent, from whom he received a copy of the *Freethinker*, said that he saw the letters of the title positively crawling, and that he had to drop the paper in the street. So much for the eye of faith.

The Rev. J. F. Vallings, of Bournemouth, is but a poor wooden specimen of his Church, yet he no doubt fairly represented the views of the majority when, at a meeting of the English Church Union, he declared that the only condition on which free education would be acceptable to churchmen would be that the control of religious teaching should be preserved to them intact. Probably this is the view of my Lord Salisbury, but the time will come when education payed for out of the taxes will be entirely controlled by the tax-payers.

David Reeve, an Essex laborer, has been sent to gaol for twenty-one days by the Dunmow magistrates for ejaculating "Amen" at Great Caufield church while the other worshippers were silent. Probably the poor fellow will conclude that he went to church once too often, and decline another taste of Christian charity.

Thomas Clayton has been before the "beak" at the Southwark Police-court, on a charge of grossly assaulting his wife, and ordered to find a surety in £10 for his good behavior for six months, or in default to go to prison for a month. Mrs. Clayton said she had been married twenty-two years, and had worked hard to keep her four children. During the whole of the time she had never had a minute's peace. This was corroborated by her daughter, who is described as "a well-dressed and prepossessing young girl." All Thomas Clayton could allege in defence was that he was a good Christian and his wife an unbeliever who would not let the children go to church. But as this pious gentleman cut his wife's eye open on returning home after midnight, it is easy to see that his piety is not of a very elevated and scrupulous character. Anyhow, believers must not cut unbelievers eyes open, even when they happen to be their wives.

A man who calls himself Jesus Christ, but who was indicted at Westminster Police-court as Michael Lane, was brought before Mr. Shiel for doing damage in a public-house. He declared it was his mission to shut all the public-houses up. His state of mind is being inquired into. There is little doubt it is the old complaint—intoxicated by an overdose of religion.

Mrs. Mary Howland, of Providence, Rhode Island, charges her husband, the Rev. H. E. Howland, with adultery with the wife of J. L. Sullivan, the pugilist. He left his home to live with Mrs. Sullivan, whose diamond rings we wore. Howland says that he was praying during church service, and referred to the meeting of children and their mothers in heaven, when his wife called out, "Did your mother tell you to meet Mrs. Sullivan in heaven?" This broke up the service, and the organ had to play them out.

It seems that the Rev. Mr. Irwin, of Kilrea, county Londonderry, has been accused of undue familiarity with one of his parishioners. Be that as it may, six has been the average number attending his ministrations for the past two months, and the man of God has to go about with police protection. He refuses to leave the church or the parish, stating that he was aware that under the canonical law his income of £200 a-year was assured to him for life.

Albert E. Barnes is another of those pious gentry who

take as their motto "Watch and prey." He started a penny bank, and exhorted children in the intervals of prayers, hymns, and Bible-reading, to invest, promising them interest at the rate of ten per cent. But one day the pious treasurer was missing, and he has now been sentenced to one month's imprisonment, after the expiration of which he may be expected to resume the same old profitable game.

The Bishop of Chester should really turn his attention to those honest Christians called Peculiar People. One of them, at Southchurch, has lost three children in four months, and the death of the last, Olive Lavina Keyes, has necessitated an inquest. The Peculiarials of the district prayed over the little girl, and the Lord answered by killing her with measles. Such cruelty to children is shocking at this time of day, and we call on Bishop Jayne to set his own house in order before libelling Secularists again.

Despite the boasts of the "Mission" the railway men don't seem so particularly pious after all. Referring to the Real Miracle we wrote about last week, the *Railway Herald* pokes fun at the driver Hargraves and the lady missionary Mrs. Gates:—"We reckon that the Westinghouse Brake Company will now, either have to retire from business, or engage driver Hargraves, though perhaps Mrs. Gates might be useful in drawing up their advertisements."

Only five of her Majesty's judges put in an appearance at the annual church parade at St. Paul's last Sunday, and these came late. Upwards of twenty were present the night before at the Home Secretary's birthday dinner. We should say that in this matter they were good judges.

Three cases of religious mania arising from the operations of the Salvation Army are reported from New York. Two were females, one of whom became so violent that she had to be held down. The other tried to jump from a window, and, when prevented by her husband, threw out the furniture into the street. The third, a young man, was found in front of the S.A. barracks praying to a lamp-post. The effects of religious mania are remarkably similar to those of alcohol, but it is even worse when taken above proof.

The *Cornish Telegraph* ends a satirical article on a local astrologer by remarking that he may affirm his revelations to be as true as the Bible, but "he will find no one but the followers of Mr. Foote to agree." We are glad to see that our ideas have penetrated nearly to the Land's End, and we hope the *Cornish Telegraph* will have a dig at the more respectable wizards who wear white chokers and vaticinate from pulpits.

The *Stratford Express* notices Mr. Footes' lecture to a "crowded" meeting in the Enterprise Hall. The *Herald* is above such things. It devotes space to reporting an all-night Salvation meeting held the same evening, and thanks God that even in this "prosaic nineteenth century" there are men and women who don't mind wrestling with the Lord from 11 p.m. till daylight.

The Free Kirk Assembly has been complaining bitterly of the lack of biblical education among the rising young men destined for the Kirk. They know something about the controversies which gather round the old book, but little of the book itself. Family worship also, it is lamented, is dying out of godly Scotland, and with it the awesome respect for the Sabbath of the guid auld days. Wae's pair Scotland!

Mr. Leon won the seat for North Bucks, despite the clerical report that he was an Atheist. Mr. Leon replied that he was "a God-fearing man," but even this did not satisfy his opponents, who described it as an evasion of the question. We believe Mr. Leon is of the Hebrew persuasion.

Mr. Gladstone acknowledges the "undeniable vitality" of Fred Henderson's volume of democratic poems *By the Sea*. But the G.O.M. reproaches the poet for sneering at "hired priests." He remarks that men like Dean Church and Canon Liddon, both of whom lived to a pretty fair age, and one of whom left a tidy fortune, shortened their valuable lives by devoted labor in the Lord's vineyard. Mr. Gladstone says "if the priest is to live, he must beg, earn, or steal." By all means let them earn—at present they mostly beg.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 7, Camberwell Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road: at 7.30, "Secularism and Cruelty: a full Reply to the Bishop of Chester and Mr. Waugh."

June 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.

VERAX.—Mr. Wheeler appreciates your criticism and agrees with the policy of cautious under-statement. But it is occasionally necessary to emphasise that Freethinkers have as much right to put their interpretations upon the Bible as their opponents.

MILE END.—You will find a description of the methods of torture now on view at Louis Tussaud's in the chapter on the Inquisition in the *Crimes of Christianity*.

G. GROVE.—Which Bradlaugh Fund do you intend the 2s. 6d. for?

J. P. SILKSTONE.—Thanks for cuttings.

R. D. TURNER.—Pleased to hear from you, once a Salvationist and now a Secularist. Do you mean that the man you refer to has recanted?

E. PACK.—What you overheard is the common eloquence of Salvation meetings.—If this meets the eye of J. Davidson, late of 63 Fifth-avenue, Harrow-road, he will doubtless send his address at Leicester.

R. H. WELLINGS.—We do not know of any such book by Dr. Hardwicke. The earlier chapters of Darwin's *Descent of Man* would interest and instruct you.

T. PHILLIPS.—Sorry to hear that illness prevented Mr. Dawson from attending the Conference, but pleased to know that your Branch approves all the resolutions that were carried. The magazine proposal is being considered, first of all by the Organisation Committee. Certainly the strongest inducement Mr. Foote could have to fight for a seat in Parliament would be the prospect of being able to aid in repealing the Blasphemy Laws.

J. G. FISHER.—We shall print such bills shortly.

S. H. ALISON.—A Branch should be started at Stratford if it will not interfere with the West Ham Branch.

ALPHA.—Sorry to hear the Kettering newsagents, though ready to sell this journal, will not exhibit a contents-sheet. What are they afraid of?

E. CLARK.—Thanks. See paragraph.

H. JONES.—See the acknowledgment in "Sugar Plums."

QUIZ.—*Bible Romances* will probably run to twenty numbers. Ultimately the work will be bound in one volume. Thanks for your efforts to sow Freethought seed and promote our circulation.

S. STANDING.—Always pleased to hear from you. Your Federation has a right to apply to the N. S. S. for reasonable assistance. Write to the Secretary officially.

W. CROOKS.—The fault must lie with the news vendor or his wholesale agent. If they persist in obstructing the circulation of this journal, you might obtain it direct from Mr. Forder.

R. O. SMITH, treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges:—L. Angel, 10s.

H. E. SMITH.—Do you expect us to get inside Christians who profess "conversion"? Why not watch one or two of the "converts" after the excitement is over, and see whether they are more sensible or moral than they were before?

A. H. SILAW.—Our "sub." attended the meeting. Thanks all the same.

F. GOODWIN.—We are obliged. See paragraph.

W. E. JENKINSON.—In the lying story of Thomas Paine's death-bed, the Mary Roscoe and the Mary Hinsdale appear one and the same person. Pleased to hear our writings have been helpful in your conversion to Freethought. You are quite old enough to join the N. S. S.

W. T. LEEKEY.—We don't see why it should conflict with the Federation excursion. Thanks for cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Pritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Neues Freireligioses

Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Flaming Sword—Loyal American—Reynolds's Newspaper—Publisher's Bulletin—Burton Chronicle—Stratford Express—Northampton Mercury—Chester Courant—Johannesburg Standard and Digger's News—Market Rasen Mail—Bournemouth Guardian—Hants Observer—Church Reformer—West London Church Chronicle—Oban Telegraph—Cornish Telegraph—Wolverhampton Express and Star—Dublin Evening Telegraph—Weekly Times and Echo—Better Way—Two Worlds—Leicester Daily Mercury—Detroit Free Press—Midland Evening News—Leeds Daily News—Sunday Chronicle—Northampton Reporter—Manchester Evening News.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Probably owing to the remarkably fine weather on Sunday, Mr Foote's audiences at Wolverhampton were not as large as was expected. The largest audience assembled in the afternoon to hear a reply to the Rev. C. A. Berry. There can be no doubt as to the impression made. Every pronounced Freethought sentiment was heartily cheered. A Branch of the N. S. S. will now be formed in Wolverhampton, of which Mr. Wootton will probably be secretary. Another good feature was the large sale of Freethought literature.

Travelling up to London on Monday morning, Mr. Foote fell in with a gentleman who had attended the Wolverhampton meetings. He had taken his wife in the evening to hear her first Freethought lecture, and she was simply delighted. It is to be hoped that Freethinkers everywhere will have the courage to press their wives and sisters, and even their daughters, to give our side a hearing. That is all we want. Ladies who listen to our advocacy soon find that Freethought is a better friend than Christianity of the highest interests of their sex.

The opposition at Wolverhampton was particularly feeble and foolish. In the afternoon a Salvation Army officer said she had come to clear herself, and to tell the Secularists that if they didn't believe as she did nothing could save them from hell. In the evening a local preacher, Bible-seller and tract-distributor, declared in a way that was not convincing that he had been led to drink and gambling by Freethought and rescued from it by Christianity. Under pressure he said he had lived at 45 Station-street, Swinton, near Rotherham, and was led to drink by a Freethinker named Hare; although the only fact he could allege was that Hare once took him to the Liberal Club at Rotherham and gave him a glass of beer. The man gave his own name as S. Folloms. Will some of our friends at Sheffield make inquiries? There is nothing like running these stories to earth.

Mr. Foote's second free lecture at Stratford drew a larger audience than the first, the hall being crowded in every part. A few questions were asked, but there was no discussion. The collection was one of the best yet made, and this course of lectures will about pay its expenses.

Evangelist Boardman was not present. Without replying to Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Grand Old Book," he delivered a feeble, sentimental lecture on the same subject in his own Mission Hall. After the lecture he led the "men only" into a smaller room, where questions were allowed. But the lecturer did not answer them; in fact, he confessed his inability to do so. They were answered by a friend of his, the young man of whom our West Ham friends—if they will allow us to say so—are taking too much notice.

Members of the Bradlaugh Memorial Committee, and others holding collecting cards, are desired to return them (with remittances) to the hon. sec., R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. Fresh collecting cards can be obtained by those who think they can get more subscriptions. It is necessary to know *at once* what amount can be reckoned upon.

Those who intend to take shares in the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company (Limited) should lose no time in filling in application forms, which can be supplied to any

extent by Mr. Forder. All who hold back are only giving the promoters of the scheme unnecessary anxiety. If the Freethought party doesn't mean to erect a Memorial Hall in honor of Charles Bradlaugh, there is no more to be said; but if it wishes to see the design accomplished, it will have to bestir itself in good earnest.

The Bethnal Green Branch is going to carry on Sunday morning (as well as afternoon) lectures in Victoria Park, and we hope its enterprise will command the hearty support of the local Freethinkers. A member of this Branch, well known as a Secularist, has just been elected "parish auditor of accounts."

An open-air lecture station has been started at Finchley, and probably a Branch of the N. S. S. will be formed there. Mr. S. Standing gives an encouraging account of the work of the North Middlesex Federation. Never was the outlook so bright, and the local Secularists mean to make themselves felt in the approaching School Board elections.

Mr. A. B. Moss takes his holiday the last week in July and the first two weeks in August. He intends to go on a lecture tour as usual, and will be happy to travel through S. Lancashire and as far as Ireland.

Mrs. Thornton Smith lectures three times to-day (June 7) at Hetton-le-Hole. Mr. Birtley and other friends will attend from Chester-le-Street, and an effort will be made to start a Branch. Freethinkers in the district will please note.

Fund for Assisting Dr. Voelkel, imprisoned for Blasphemy at Magdeburg:—A Friend, 1s.; J. Christopher, 1s.; G. Painter, 6d.; W. Jones, 6d.; G. Richards, 3d.; Alpha, 6d.; J. Fry, 1s.; H. Jones, 1s.; W. Carter, 10s.; G. Rigby, 1s.

The Spennymoor Branch held its half-yearly meeting on Sunday. A good deal of useful work was reported, and the membership had increased from ten to eighteen. Mr. J. M. Robertson will lecture in the district shortly.

One of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, our veteran friend J. Brumage, of Portsmouth, has been visiting Plymouth, where he spent an evening with the local Branch. The secretary tells us they had a sort of experience meeting, and were delighted with Mr. Brumage's company.

Dr. Thornton, Bishop of Ballarat, recently stated that the Victorian-Anglican clergy are now teaching religion only to 2,000 children a week, whereas before the passing of the present "free, secular, and compulsory" Education Act they taught 10,000. This should stimulate the energies of the friends of secular education in England.

Mr. C. C. Cattell, of Birmingham, has just issued a pamphlet on the Second Coming of Jesus, though some people think he hasn't put in a first appearance yet. The pamphlet is very readable, and would be a cure for Baxterism, if it could only be applied to the sufferers.

The *West London Church Chronicle*, which is the official organ of the Church in the district, gives a full report of Dr. Momerie's lecture on the Corruptions of the Church, and recommends him to go East for a more attentive audience. This is one of the signs of the times. We should be pleased if Dr. Momerie took the hint and tried the Hall of Science.

The supplement of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* continues Mr. G. J. Holyoake's Reminiscences, and the last numbers give a too brief account of Henry Hetherington and James Watson, two brave Freethought publishers who, as Mr. Holyoake says, "exalted their cause by their characters," and also of William Lovett and Richard Moore.

Prof. R. L. Garner, in an article on "The Simian Tongue" in the *New Review*, contends that monkeys think and use a language, of which he gives illustrations.

Notes and Queries has a letter on the Swastika cross, which, according to Burnouf, was a sign of beneficence and happy augury known to Brahmans as well as to Buddhists. It is mentioned in the Ramayana as a sign of good fortune. It is found in the earliest Buddhist's medals, and is declared by Colonel Sykes to be essentially Buddhist. The Christian

cross, however, is probably not taken from the *Swastika*, but from the Egyptian *crux ansata*, which was the symbol of life at least two thousand years before Christianity.

In the case of Gnostic gems in the British Museum is one presented by Mr. Rider Haggard, the novelist, on which is depicted the mother, the child, the tree of life, and the *crux ansata*.

In the current number of the *Nineteenth Century* Professor Huxley returns to the attack on the myth of Noah's Flood in the guise of a paper on 'Hasisadra's Adventure, Hasisadra being the hero of a similar legend current in Mesopotamia before the year 2,000 B.C. In a postscript he gives a smart flagellation to his grace the Duke of Argyll.

Judge J. P. Richardson, of Austin, Texas, whose paper on Gods and their Origin we are reprinting from the *Independent Pulpit*, is one of the oldest Freethinkers in Texas. He occupies the position of President of the Liberal—i.e., Freethought—Association of that State.

Dr. Rufus K. Noyes, of Boston, is one of the latest additions to the Freethought platform in America. His discourses, according to the *Boston Investigator*, are solid and valuable.

We read in the *Truthseeker* that Miss Ada Campbell, formerly of Australia, now of New York, is lecturing on Charles Bradlaugh: his Life and Work. The lecturer, it states, furnishes her services free, and the collection will be forwarded to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund.

In the *Contemporary Review* for June, Mr. P. G. Hamerton gives the second instalment of his excellent paper on "The Basis of Positive Morality." Mr. Hamerton sees clearly that the religious hypocrites with their affected faith, are the worst hindrances to morality. On regard for animals he says, "It is I believe authoritatively taught by the Church of Rome that we have no moral obligations toward the lower animals; this is at least a doctrine generally accepted by Roman Catholic populations both in France and Italy, and it leads to horrible cruelty, especially in Sicily. When remonstrated with for his barbarity, the Sicilian settles the question in his own opinion by the answer "The beast has not been baptised—is not a Christian."

Temple Bar for June has an article on Richard Jefferies, by Mr. H. S. Salt, author of *Lives of J. Thomson and of Thoreau*. Jefferies is described as a Pagan Pantheist, a worshipper of earth and sky, and above all of the great sun burning in the heaven. There is also a paper on W. S. Landor, by Mrs. A. Crosse.

The Humanitarian League sends us the first of its pamphlets on *Humanitarianism: its General Principles and Progress*, by H. S. Salt, published by Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, at sixpence. It is excellently written and well worth reading—like everything Mr. Salt pens; though we fancy the Humanitarian League will have to cultivate a more popular style if it is to succeed.

It is evident from the *Standard and Diggers' News*, of Johannesburg, that Freethought is spreading in the South African Republic. That paper has a very broad article on "The Pulpit of To-day." It declares that the preachers prepare only food for babes, and the discriminative stomach rises against the fare. "From Cape Town to the Zambesi, and from Woolwich Bay to Durban, there is hardly a man worth giving ear or heed to." "The pulpit perorator," it says, "finds his occupation going, the glamor of his gown wearing away, and his shadow growing less. Meanwhile Science is advancing."

Mr. Symes says that among his recent converts are a minister and a local preacher. We hope he will be able to put them to some use in extending Freethought in Australia.

Two fresh numbers of *Bible Romances* will be ready next week—"The Crucifixion" and "John's Nightmare." Three of four further numbers will complete the work.

John the Baptist lost his head through a dance. How many young men and women have lost their hearts through the same cause?

"SPONTANEOUS GENERATION" AND EVOLUTION.

In reply to Mr. William Brandle's objections to my arguments on the above subject, I beg to say that he is quite wrong in his suggestion that I got my information in reference to Professor Tyndall's experiments second hand. I am not in the habit of retailing hearsay information. Such limited knowledge as I possess I got first hand, within the limits of my means. In the case in question I well remember reading Professor Tyndall's articles some years ago in the *Fortnightly Review*. I remember, too, that Professor Tyndall failed to convince Dr. Bastian, and I have to acknowledge that, notwithstanding Mr. Brandle's assertion that "spontaneous generation" is an exploded theory, has now become an "axiom of science," I still remain unconvinced.

In one respect I admit that my statement respecting Professor Tyndall's experiment was not quite accurate. Professor Tyndall *did not exclude the air* from the phial; he only excluded carbonic acid gas, or what Mr. Brandle calls "impure air." But may it not have been that the exclusion of the gas prevented the success of the experiment?

All life, it seems to me, must either have been produced by nature, or by some power outside of and independent of nature. Nature, to me, appears to be boundless—that is, without limit; and to talk of anything being outside everything is obviously a contradiction in terms. Nor can we set any limit to nature's capabilities. For aught we know to the contrary, nature is capable of producing everything that is. And even Professor Tyndall must have entertained this view himself when he delivered his famous Belfast address in 1874; for we find him saying that he closed with Giordano Bruno, and recognised in nature not "that mere empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb."

As an evolutionist, it is not necessary for me to dogmatise respecting the origin of life. I confess at once that I do not know how it originated. I was not there myself when it first came into being, and I am not acquainted with anybody that was. It is not even necessary for me to have a theory in regard to the origin of life. However life begun, evolution is a fact. As Professor Huxley says, men now know that "man is but one of the innumerable forms of life now existing on this globe, and that the present existences are but the last of an innumerable series of predecessors." There is no break in the long chain from the highest to the lowest. Theologians have been altogether wrong in their theories in the past. What guarantee have we that they are right now, when, instead of saying that God made man and the lower animals as we know them, they declare that God made the germ out of which they have all evolved?

The fact is the child is the true philosopher—not the man. When the loving father in reply to his child says "God made man"; the child immediately looks up into the father's eyes and asks "But who made God?" And if life can only be produced by a living being, I respectfully ask Mr. Brandle who produced his living God? And who produced the being that produced him, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Mr. Brandle may find it "easy to believe in God," but I fancy he will find it difficult to make any one understand what he means by a word, which is very often nothing more than a convenient term where-with to cover one's ignorance.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

WHY NOT CONVERT THE DEVIL?

Poor Hottentots can show a better way
Than all the ranting preachers of the day;
When Missionary Kay spoke with a chief,
The latter asked the cause of unbelief.
The former said, "Undoubtedly the Devil,
Who is the source and cause of every evil."
"Convert the Devil first," the chief replied,
"Then all the rest will soon come to your side."

—J. L.

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS NECESSARY.

Though religious ideas and institutions have an average adaptation to the characters of the people who live under them; yet, as these characters are ever changing, the adaptations is ever becoming imperfect; and the ideas and institutions need remodelling with a frequency proportionate to the rapidity of the change.—Herbert Spencer, "*First Principles*," p. 122.

SCEPTICISM.

THIS is a sceptical age. There is nothing very remarkable in the statement, for all ages have been sceptical. The present one, however, is the more noticeable, because scepticism may assert itself without the fear of physical opposition. The knowledge is most gratifying to the lovers of progress, and they, as we do, hope for the time when it universally will be the case. And why should it not be so?

Because a man is a Christian, does the fact of his being so make him any superior to another who is a Mohammedan? Decidedly not. But someone has said it all depends upon their fighting abilities. Man is sceptical by nature, and scepticism pervades everywhere. In the Bible itself a sceptical strain is evident from beginning to end.

Ingersoll has said he considers the term celibacy the most immoral in our language; in like manner we consider the term tolerance the most detestable. We loathe the party, whether religious or political, that talks of its tolerating another's existence. It sounds to us as brutal and degrading. A religion or a political body that cannot keep itself compact without the aid of force is not worthy to live.

Abstain from violence, but in its stead place intellectual might, and then, unless a religion, a political or any institution can bear the test of reason, nothing further is required, for, though speedy extinction may not follow, death is insured, and though it be slow it will be more certain.

To scepticism we are indebted for a great deal. In fact, it is most essential to progress. As an instance of its worth, take astronomy. What would our knowledge of that science have been had scepticism not played on certain decisions regarding it which were thought to be irrefutable?

Scepticism was no mean instrument among the others that caused the revolutions in France and England. The people doubted the right of their rulers to govern as they pleased. This seed of doubt, once implanted in their minds, soon developed into a healthy growth, and with irresistible strength they threw themselves against the tyrants who oppressed them, and, what is more, to a great degree gained their point.

Scepticism helps us in the study of history, of science and art, and of philosophy in all its branches. By its aid we doubt parts of them that do not appear clear, and in the investigation that follows we either prove their truth or falsity, or, if unable to make a satisfactory decision, it teaches us to accept them with diffidence.

One Christian philosopher—Isaac Taylor we believe—advises his readers to be a "little credulous" rather than too sceptical. Of course there is reasonable and unreasonable scepticism. For instance, to have doubt in conversation of every little thing told us, would be the height of folly. However, as this philosopher's advice is given in regard to the Christian belief, we emphatically dissent from it. Instead we say, *be sceptical always towards dogmatic superstition*. And who, with any grain of reason, can really be a little credulous towards the stupendous miracles of Christ, or even to the most trivial of them!

We have met with Christians who firmly believed their God could, with ease, confine the Eiffel Tower within the narrow limits of a *thumb*. If such is an item of his power, we should much like to see a performance of it; it no doubt would be very interesting, and withal, would cause a wholesale conversion of infidels.

The above is by no means the only preposterous absurdity in existence; there are scores, nay thousands. Take, for instance, the contemptible rubbish circulated by the Romish Church; the Virgin visions, the stories of Satan, the faith cures (and by the way, these latter seem an especial favorite of Christianity in general) and the other lumber, which if collected would fill an unlimited number of volumes.

The reformed branches of the Romish Church are little better than their parent. Like it, in the time of prosperity, they are bigoted and cruel, and the present tolerance [how detestable the word sounds] shown to unbelievers, is not their liberality, but is that which unbelievers have extorted themselves.

Looking back across the ages darkened by the predominancy of Christianity, one feels pained at the tyranny, superstition, cruelty and misery caused by it. But the reflection does good, for it arouses the adherents of scepticism to a stronger sense of duty, and, with the impulse, they fly to sharpen their weapons, and attack with redoubled energy that fell disease of man, *dogmatic superstition*.

JAMES H. WATERS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

Executive Meeting, May 27, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Warren, Heaford, Bater, H. Jones, Smith, Truelove, Hunt, Roger, Moss, Forder, and Jones, sec.—Mr. Bater proposed, and Mr. Heaford seconded, that the members of the Organisation Committee for the past year be re-elected; carried.—Mr. Heaford proposed, and Mr. Bater seconded, that the members of the Benevolent Fund Committee for the past year be re-elected; carried.—Mr. Warren proposed Mr. H. Jones and Mr. Roger as Finance Committee, and Miss Vance seconded it; carried.—Mr. Forder proposed, and Mr. H. Jones seconded, that the Conference report be referred to the Organisation Committee; carried.—Letters were read by the secretary from the North Eastern Secular Federation, from the Leyton Branch, from the Finsbury Park Branch, and from Mr. Fisher (Leeds), all of which were referred to the Organisation Committee.—Tracts for distribution were granted to a number of Branches.—Mr. C. J. Hunt asked questions concerning the secretary's lecturing, and the Executive referred the matter to the Organisation Committee.—STANLEY JONES, secretary.

OBITUARY.

Last week I recorded the death of Mr. Kidd; this week I have to record the death of Mrs. Kidd, who died on Tuesday, the 26th ult., in her 72nd year. She never knew of her husband's death. By the death of these two old Freethinkers the Branch has lost two staunch supporters of the cause.—W. JANNAWAY, sec. Portsmouth Branch.

It is with feelings of regret that I have to record the death of Mrs. Emily Suthern, the beloved daughter of Mr. Robert Lowther, the venerable north country Freethinker. At the age of twenty death came on her like an untimely frost. Having been reared in a family who are liberal in thought, she was always free from the fears and misgivings of a superstitious belief. On May 28 she entered her silent and eternal rest. The service was conducted by the writer, and this being the first Secular Burial Service known to be held in the village, hundreds turned out to hear the ceremony, which gave every satisfaction and was highly appreciated.—THOS. BIRTLEY, Sec. Chester-le-Street Branch.

On May 23 died at Loughborough, and interred at the same place, Mr. Thomas Richardson, aged 77 years. The late Mr. Richardson was an earnest Freethinker, reformer, and follower of Robert Owen and Thomas Cooper. He was one of the founders of the Leicester Secular Society, and remained staunch in the cause up to the last moment of his life.—S. STAUGHTON.

Mrs. Mary Ramsey died on June 1, aged 77. Until a year or two ago she was a regular frequenter of the London Hall of Science. For some time before her death she had been bedridden. She was a staunch Freethinker, and the approach of death had no effect on her convictions.

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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): 8, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Hell Up to Date." Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Secularism and Cruelty—a Reply to the Bishop of Chester and Mr. Waugh."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7.30, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "Theosophy."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. E. Soddy, "Other Worlds than Ours." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. Sam Soddy, "Honest Doubt."

Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Age of the Earth."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Ancient Saints and Modern Sinners."

Edmonton (corner of Angel Road): 7, Mr. C. Cohen, "Scepticism."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): Mr. H. Snell, 11.30, "The Lamb of God"; 3.30, "From Creeds and Priests Good Lord Deliver Us."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "King David."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "Lying Jacob."

Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "The God Idea."

Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

Lambeth (corner of Belvedere Road, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "History of the New Testament Canon."

Leyton (open space in the High Road, near the "Lion and Key"): 11.30, Mr. Charles Johnson, "The Bible Unworthy of God, Unsuitable to Man."

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge Road): 11.30, Mr. A. Guest, "The Two Adams."

Mill End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "The God Idea."

North Finchley (opposite "The Swan"): 11.30, a lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Life and Character of Charles Bradlaugh."

Regents Park (near Gloucester Gate): 3.30, debate between Mr. C. J. Hunt and Mr. R. Dunn.

Tottenham (corner of West Green Road): 3.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "Is there any Efficacy in Prayer?"

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "A Scientific Basis of Morality"; 3.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Jesus Legend."

West Ham—Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "God and Man."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Kees, "They shall be tormented for ever and ever."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge Street: 7, Mr. R. S. Bransby, "Secularism and Christianity: which is the Better Rule of Life?"

Crook—35 Gladstone Terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law: 6.30, important business meeting.

Heckmondwike—At Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms: 2.30, a business meeting.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street: 11.30, committee meeting; 7, Mr. T. S. Gowland, "Robert Owen and General Booth."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints': 6.30, Mr. Wainscott (of Bury), "The Eight Hours Question."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 7, a meeting.

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road: 6.30, a lecture.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, lecture or reading by local friend.
 South Shields—Free Library Hall, Ocean Road: Mr. John M. Robertson, 11, "The Meaning of Materialism"; 3, "The Law of Population"; 7, "The Anatomy of Jesus."
 Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street: 6, Mr. B. Dawson, "Selections from the Poets." Monday, at 8, Central Hall, Dundas Street: Mr. J. M. Robertson, "An Impeachment of Christian Morality."
 Stalybridge—Mr. J. Taylor's, 12 Bayley Street: 7, committee meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Hull—Corporation Field: 2.30, a meeting.
 Manchester—At the corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road: 3, Mr. Waincott (of Bury), "Land, Labor, and Capital."
 Rochdale—Town Hall Square: 2.45, a lecture.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—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.—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. July 5, morning, Kingsland Green; afternoon, Regent's Park; 12, morning, Pimlico; evening, Kilburn; 19, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Lambeth; 26, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith. Aug. 2, morning, Kingsland Green; afternoon, Regent's Park; 9, morning, Pimlico; evening, Kilburn; 16, morning, Clerkenwell; evening, Lambeth; 23, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith; 30, morning, Camberwell; evening, Lambeth.

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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