

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## THE POPE ON THE LABOR QUESTION.

For some time it has been known that the Holy Father, as the Catholics call him, was approaching a spiritual confinement. He has successfully passed through the labors of parturition, and the result is an Encyclical Letter on the Condition of Labor. Mr. Pecci, Pope of Rome, Servant of the Servants of God, and head of the Catholic firm of priests, uses the Latin tongue for his deliverances; for the God of the Catholic Church has not yet learnt to address his worshippers in their native tongues. But his messages must be translated in these democratic days, and Cardinal Manning renders the Pope's letter into English for the benefit of all who prefer Rome to Reason.

Never did a mountainous labor bring forth such a contemptible mouse. Strip the Pope's letter of its inflated style, reduce it to naked substance, and what does it amount to? It contains not a single fresh idea. Among thousands of words there is not a new suggestion. Communism is denounced as false and impossible. Private property and the family are upheld against rash innovators. Social principles of hoary antiquity are expounded as though they were in the keeping of the Papacy. For the rest, the Holy Father hobbles after the advances of secular improvement. With a monstrosly solemn air, which is ineffably ludicrous, he advocates commonplace reforms as though he had just received a hint of them by private revelation from heaven. Everything of the slightest value in his letter has been said over and over again by uninspired reformers during the past fifty years. By the aid of Mill's *Political Economy* the Pope could have prepared this encyclical letter twenty years ago, had he then been the occupant of St. Peter's chair. Why should we go to the Pope to learn that peasant proprietorship is better than the system of big estates? Or that working men should receive a fair day's wages for a fair day's work? Or that workmen's associations are useful? Or that the law should stop what is clearly injurious to the community? If the Pope's letter came from the pen of a private individual, three-fourths of the members of his own Church would regard it as a piece of pompous inanity.

Yet the Pope is no fool, and the chief conspirators against freedom and progress around the papal chair never were fools. Behind the verbiage of this encyclical letter there is a purpose. The Church desires to appear the leader when it is only the follower. It also desires to keep pace with the main stream of social progress in order to preserve its authority. If secular improvement were to go on without the blessing of the Church, people would learn that its blessing is not indispensable. Having lost its old power of coercion, the Church can only subsist by mixing religion with all things, and by persuading people that the priest's recipe must be taken with every reform to render it efficacious and durable. "Take a little of this," the Church says,

"with everything you swallow. It promotes digestion, sound sleep, and robust health. Neglect it, and all you eat will disagree with you. Dyspepsia will afflict you by day, colic by night; and death itself will only be the exchange of one hell for another."

"No practical solution" of the labor question, the Pope says, "will ever be found without the assistance of Religion and of the Church." That is the keynote of the whole document. "O broad-shouldered King Demos! the sovereigns of old carried the Church on their backs. Do thou also carry the Holy Mother. And she will pray for thee, and drop heavenly whispers in thine ear, ay, and caress it with her soft, sleek hand, till it rivals in length that of the favored steed on which thy Savior entered the holy city of Jerusalem."

Mark, however, how the Holy Father guards against the restiveness of his beast of burden. "To suffer and endure," he says, "is the lot of humanity." They are deceivers who preach an earthly paradise. Too much must not be expected of this life. The world is "our place of exile" and not "our true country." We must "look at the world as it really is" and "look elsewhere for a remedy for its troubles." Yes, and pay the priests handsomely for cheap promises of the "remedy" in the sweet by-and-by.

Further, the Pope tells working men that it is religion which is their chief safeguard. Religion teaches their employers that all men are really brethren, sons of the same God, however unequal their lots; and thus the artisan and the peasant assume an indefeasible dignity in the presence of their social superiors. Pretty, no doubt! But the citizenship of this earth is more useful to the working man than the citizenship of heaven. When he was only "a child of God," the priest damned him, the king governed him, and the privileged classes robbed him. But now he *has a vote* he is in a different position. He is courted and flattered by the wretches who only yesterday were lashing his back and draining his blood.

Another trick of the Pope's is to insinuate that working men were well-off in the good old days of Church ascendancy, and that all the evils they now suffer are due to "the spirit of revolutionary change." "Public institutions and laws," he says, "have repudiated the ancient religion. Hence by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been given over, isolated and defenceless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition." English working men, at any rate, are not to be deluded by such sophistry. They know it is not the Church, but the "spirit of revolutionary change" which the Church denounces, that has lifted them out of the old slough, and set their feet in new paths, bright with the sunrise of a better day.

How nice it is for working men to reflect that Jesus himself was a carpenter! Think of it, says the Pope. It "cannot fail to keep down the pride of those who are well off, and to cheer the spirit of the

afflicted; to incline the former to generosity and the latter to tranquil resignation." Again a pretty picture! especially for those who have only to sacrifice a little pride. But it is probable that those who have to do the "tranquil resignation" will soon grow tired. No doubt the "poor in spirit" are blessed, in the ethics of priests; but in the world of reality they are damned to the deepest hell of misery and self-contempt.

This encyclical letter was not prompted by love for the people. It is merely a trade circular in the interests of the Catholic firm. Even the Sunday's rest—which preceded Christianity and will outlive it—is only advocated as a means of "repose united with religious observance." Christian workmen, also, are enjoined to form associations of their own, and not to consort with the infidels. Likewise, in education "religious instruction" must have "a foremost place." Finally, the chief thing needed is to "return to real Christianity." And what is that? "We," the Pope says, "are the chief guardian of Religion, and the chief dispenser of what belongs to the Church." Yes, and "all the striving of men will be in vain if they leave out the Church."

Happily the working men, or at least their leaders, all over what is called Christendom, have outgrown the slavery of submission to Rome. For the most part, the labor movement is in the hands of sceptics or persons who carry the smallest stock of belief in the superstitions of ancient Judæa. If they love red at all, it is rather the democratic flag than the cardinal's hat. We are satisfied, therefore, that the Pope's circular on the Labor Question will drop dead like a harmless rocket after its momentary blaze.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### ATHEOPHOBIA.

THOUGH the present ravages of this disease bear no proportion to those recorded in ancient times, when the very flower of the race fell victims to the people afflicted with the disorder, it still—as the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. Mr. Waugh exemplify—lurks in many quarters, ready to break out into something like the old virulence should occasion offer.

This dangerous form of rabies is chiefly acquired through inheritance. When the blood is tainted with superstition, the patient is prone to regard those who do not accept his belief as the enemies of God, and therefore the enemies of man. Ancient gods being tribal chiefs, their acceptance was a symbol of tribal unity, while their rejection was a sign of antagonism to the tribe. Every Jew considered himself justified in slaying those who did not acknowledge Jahveh, or even destroying his own kind if they sought to set up other gods. Though, as Bacon justly observes, "Atheism did never perturb States," the denial of the gods of one's country was in former times considered equivalent to treason.

Although as a matter of fact Atheism is no abnormal state of mind, but is indeed the unacknowledged creed of those who, concerning themselves with the things of the world, have helped forward its progress, many look on living "without God in the world" as something awful. I have more than once been amused by people who have said, "But really you can't mean to say you are an Atheist." Say you believe in a God—any sort of God will do, even a theosophic God—and there is hope you will swallow all other nonsense. As Père Hardouin said, "This chief of mysteries being once admitted, reason ought not to be shocked at any other." The name of God is a cloak, not only for ignorance, but for unfounded dogmas and sacerdotalism. The worst venom of the priest will always be directed against the Atheist. The denial of God cuts the ground from under the feet of priestly pretensions. The Atheist

can be frightened by no bogeys. Schopenhauer says "princes use God as a kind of bogey to frighten grown-up children to bed with, if nothing else avails; that's why they attach so much importance to the Deity." Voltaire, in one of his poems, wrote the oft-quoted line, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." Which is precisely what has been done.

People destitute of faith but afraid of scepticism, draw the line at Atheism. Take any name but that. Agnosticism, Positivism, even Secularism are becoming respectable, but Atheism is still abominable. Some who in private conversation admit that an infinite person is inconceivable, and that the idea of God is an outgrowth of savage and undeveloped conceptions, yet consider the denial of this idea almost in the same light in which orthodox Christians regard the mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost.

An Atheist settles in a small town or village. He seeks to enter into social relations with his neighbors, but he is never seen at church. The curate and his vicar visit him in vain. Soon it is noised abroad he is an Atheist. A boycott sets in; men must take care of their wives and daughters. He takes some medicine to a sick person, but it is thrown away. The Atheist is regarded as a monster and treated as an outcast.

Now, strange as it may seem, it does not follow that, because a man ceases to explain things by supernaturalism, he must be a bad father, husband, and citizen. An Atheist desires the respect and love of his fellows, and must act so as to obtain them. Indeed, I would say that he first fully realises his duties to his fellows who sees that they have no providence to protect them, and that all that can be done for human amelioration must be done here and now.

Atheophobia, whether inherited or inoculated by the sky-pilots, is usually associated with low mental development. The line of scientific treatment of the disorder is thus clearly indicated. Medicine must be given to stimulate brain action. A course of logic and moderate doses of history are sometimes efficacious. Cold baths of worldly experience and common sense are also useful. Patients afflicted with this virulent complaint need tender care. The treatment must be gentle, antiphlogistic, tonic, and generous. Intimate contact with the Atheist, if the patient will consent to this, is pretty sure to moderate the disease. In the stage of recent excitement, ordinary remedies are powerless, and blisters whether of ridicule or argument only inflame. The best way is to wait till the paroxysm subsides and the patient becomes cool; then show him it is his interest you have at heart in holding that the worship of God must give place to the service of man. This treatment requires care, which not everyone can bestow. Coleridge said truly, "Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist."

J. M. WHEELER.

#### GOOD GOD!

Our heavenly Father so fashioned his creatures that most of them have an insatiable desire to feed upon one another, from the smallest flea to the biggest whale. And he made several species of creatures that won't eat their own tribe nor other tribes, but which are peculiarly toothsome. The harmless creatures were made for food for the ferocious and savage. This exemplifies the goodness and justice of our heavenly Father, and shows why we should love and worship him. Here is a case that illustrates the "divine plan," and at the same time serves as a good snake and fish story:— "A black water-snake which was dissected at the Michigan Agricultural College the other day was found to contain the bodies of four fishes. One of these, which was about four inches in length, had partially swallowed another fish two-thirds its size. It was, however, not quite equal to the task, and the snake had captured both. This curiosity will be preserved in alcohol as a museum specimen."—*Ironclad Age*.

## GODS AND THEIR ORIGIN.

BY J. P. RICHARDSON.

(From the "Independent Pulpit.")

(CONCLUDED.)

SOME of our most advanced Liberals seem to think that as science has demonstrated the absurdity of the supernatural, there is nothing more to do but to leave religion to die of its own rottenness. But a large share of the world is not yet ready for this policy. If we could but induce people to read and think, to investigate the facts that science has brought to light in the last fifty years, we might safely leave religion to die out by itself; but unfortunately the priestly prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge still scares the pious victims of superstition, and they hold it to be a pious duty to shut their eyes and ears to all knowledge that does not come to them filtered through the muddled brain of a theologian. I know a prominent lawyer in Texas, who, when I offered him Darwin's works, and urged him to read them, declined, saying he was afraid it might unsettle his faith? I wonder if his faith in legal opinions is sustained by such methods. If it is, his clients would do well to employ other counsel. I wouldn't want him for an adviser. There is no getting at such people, except by tearing away the veil they wear over their eyes, dissipating the fog that envelopes their intellects, by destroying that religion for which they have enslaved their souls and bodies. They tell us, as though it were a reproach, that we are destructives, that we are always tearing down, instead of building up. They want to know what we are going to give them in the place of that faith from which they derive so much comfort. For myself, I take pride in the title of iconoclast. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation*, tells us that about all the benefit society has derived from legislation has come from the repeal of former legislation. And we may say with equal truth, that most of the progress we have made in improving the condition of mankind, has been made by the destruction of their delusions. Must we not expose the lie in which they put their trust until we put another lie in the place of it? Tear down the lie, and the truth will have a chance to grow in the place of it, as you chop down the weeds to give a chance to your crops. Shall we demand of the doctor that before he removes the cataract from our eyes, he shall put something else in the place of it? No! Let us get rid of this "old man of the sea," that has sat upon and strangled all improvement for thousands of years, and the natural law of development will bring the better things to take the place of the evils that have been destroyed. Progress in morals, social science, and aesthetic culture is not promoted by setting up new theories or institutions, based upon new opinions, to be taught in the place of the old. All of these things grow out of our relations to each other as social beings; that is, if the growth is to be in the right direction. So long as people believe that right and wrong depend upon the command of any being, natural or unnatural; so long as the reward for right action is held out to be crowns and harps in some other world, and the punishment for wrong-doing is to be a hell hereafter—with a patent, back-action escape valve, through faith in the blood of Jesus—just so long will there be a low, selfish standard of morals and a disregard of all true social science and pure ethics. Take away this low, degrading, soul-saving system of morals, and the true and better system will establish itself through a natural process of evolution until the incubus of religion, or, more properly, superstition, has been removed from the minds of men.

I know that there are men among us—good men and true—who think the time has come to adopt what they call a constructive policy; to let up in the aggressive attack upon religion, and set up some new system that will recommend itself in the place of it. With all respect for such men, and wishing them success in their work, I have little confidence that any good can come of it until the one great evil that has afflicted the world since the earliest dawn of civilisation has been swept away, to make room for the new structure. Nor do I believe that any man can now tell what that new structure will be; for the reason that it will be a growth, an evolution instead of a construction. I believe that now is the time to renew the attack, to take the aggressive with more zeal than ever. The old pod-ager orthodoxy of my childhood days has gone as irrecoverably as wooden ploughs and witch-hunting. The

Presbyterians are revising their creed, and gracefully conceding that little children need not be damned because Adam ate an apple; and the Unitarians have reached the level of Voltaire and Paine. Even in the most hide-bound churches no member believes in the full import of his creed, unless his intellect is a long way below par.

Star-eyed science is knocking away the props, one by one, from under the old superstitions. History gives the lie to miracles and fables of the supernatural, and literary criticism has so depreciated so-called revelation that, like a thousand dollar Confederate bill, it has no longer any market value. Religion lives only upon the prestige of the past. Like an old lion that has lost his teeth and claws, the memory of his past prowess still holds the unthinking crowd in awe. The task is ours to beard the lion in his den, and show to these deluded people that he is no longer dangerous; that he can only growl; that his power for mischief has gone, and they will turn their backs upon him, like office-seekers upon a defeated candidate after election day. All we have to do is to reach the eyes and the ears of the people, so as to set them thinking, and the battle for mental freedom is won. It may take time to do it. We may not live to celebrate the victory, but all the signs are propitious and cheering. It is for us to do our duty, never doubting the triumph of truth sooner or later, and confident of the grateful appreciation of the freed millions that shall come after us.

## LETTER FROM MR. W. W. COLLINS.

Auckland, New Zealand,  
April 24, 1891.

MY DEAR MR. FOOTE,—

I feel sure that a few lines from this side of the world will be of interest to you. First of all I must refer to the profound loss the cause of humanity has sustained in the death of our late lamented leader. Mr. Bradlaugh's demise has, I believe, caused more widespread feelings of regret than would have been caused by the death of any other Englishman. Since the arrival of the last English mails most of the New Zealand papers have provided their readers with lengthy sketches of his life and feeling references to his death. All this, besides being gratifying, is, I hope, indicative of a steady growth of liberal sentiment. Personally I can scarcely trust myself as yet where Mr. Bradlaugh's name is concerned, for my sorrow would be overwhelming did I not feel that it can be best assuaged by increased exertions in that work on behalf of which he sacrificed his life.

It has now been more than twelve months since I left Sydney—immediately after laying the foundation-stone of the new Freethought Hall—and I am beginning to think it time I found my way back there. Originally I intended to be away some four or five months only, but the work has grown and I have been impelled to stay on and on. It has been a very up-hill fight, and I have had some of those experiences which are supposed only to characterise the Freethought advocacy of years ago. Still I think some substantial good has been accomplished. Some three months ago, and whilst in Christchurch, I succeeded in establishing the New Zealand Freethought Association. This organisation, which already has hundreds of members scattered throughout the colony, is framed on the same lines as the National Secular Society. When I arrived here, twelve months ago, Christchurch was the only place in which active work was being carried on; now there are societies in Wellington, Greymouth, Palmerston, and Auckland, all affiliated with the N.Z.F.A. Christchurch alone has enrolled more than 100 members, and other places are now bidding fair to compete with it for the honor of first place. The Executive of the N.Z.F.A. issued a request that all Freethinkers sign themselves as such in the recent census returns, and I do not doubt but that we shall figure as a very considerable proportion of the community.

During the year I have lectured in Dunedin, Timaru, Wellington, Greymouth, Brunner, Maori Creek, Masterton, Palmerston, Fielding, and Auckland, delivering in all at least 150 lectures. I am sorry I have had to suspend *Freedom* during my absence from Sydney, but it was simply impossible to keep it going while travelling. I have managed to publish three pamphlets, and shall shortly issue one or two others, so that the literary side of the work has not been altogether neglected by me.

The time and expense of travelling make the work here both financially and physically heavy. The cities are very far apart, and the country townships (some of which are

dignified by the term city) are very much scattered. In most of these country towns corresponding agents have been appointed in connection with the new organisation, all of whom have power to enrol members. Some are working in the bush, some on the gum fields, and others in the gold diggings; all are giving good accounts of themselves.

Whilst lecturing in Wellington (in which city I delivered some 45 lectures) I received an invitation from over 1,000 electors to allow myself to be nominated for one of the city seats at the election. I was compelled to decline the request, although I believe, had I been willing and able to stand, my return would have been an absolute certainty.

It is now some five and a half years since I left England, and I have worked uninterruptedly the whole of the time. Personally I am as poor as the day I left, but I venture to hope some substantial good has been accomplished. If for nothing else, I should regard the decision of the Supreme Court with regard to the publication of the *Law of Population*, as a fair compensation for all I have done.

I cannot tell you how glad I was to hear of your election to the presidential chair of the N. S. S. I was glad, too, that you were nominated for the position by Mr. Bradlaugh himself. It must have been gratifying to you. Please give my sincere regards to any of the old friends. I have forgotten none, and often think of the happy times spent with many of them.

I must before long get back to Sydney. The Association there is now meeting in the new building. I am hopeful that the main lecture hall will soon be completed; when it is you may expect to hear good accounts of the work done there. Social questions are much to the front here. I am lecturing next week, by request, for the Anti-Poverty Society in the *Wesley Hall*. Will the roof cave in?

With sincerest regards, believe me, my dear Mr. Foote,  
Yours very faithfully,

W. W. COLLINS.

429 Pitt-street, Sydney, N.S.W.

#### CASHIER JUDAS.

THERE are many inaccuracies in the New Testament, which are no doubt owing to its being a translation by an unknown scribe of an original Hebrew MS. On reading the account of the betrayal of Jesus by his disciple and cashier Judas, the price stipulated for the body (*corpus delicto*), thirty pieces of silver, seems ridiculously small considering the wealthy Jewish community. Surely this must be a mistake. Jesus was the *bête noire* of the Jerusalem Tories, who would have given anything to get rid of the Jewish demagogue with the help of the law, *bien entendu*. It is not surprising that Judas, whose exchequer was well-nigh empty, should try to replenish it by selling his master; but it seems incredible that so astute a financier charged no more than the price of a jackass for the renegade Jew. He very likely got as much as Pigott received from our leading journal for certain forged letters. Supposing the amount to be correct, this transaction shows Judas at his worst. I gave him credit for more business capacity. If one of our Christian financiers had been the seller, he would not have let the fellow go dirt cheap—a disgrace to the Jewish gentry and an insult to the victim of this wretched business, who was surely worth a hundred times that amount. What would be said of the English Government if they offered a reward of thirty shillings for the apprehension of their *bête noire*, the patriot O'Donovan Rossa? The pious Scotch showed great shrewdness by selling Charles I. for a quarter of a million sterling. Such a bargain is not likely to be struck again. A king of England of our generation would not fetch anything like that amount—more likely thirty shekels.

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

#### HEAVEN NOT WANTED.

I remember once reading a story of an old farmer who lay dying, and was called upon (in a professional capacity, of course) by the esteemed rector of the village, who, perceiving that the poor fellow was fast approaching his end, began forthwith to talk to him about the other world, and reminded him of the New Jerusalem—the abode of the blessed—with its golden streets, its milk and honey, and its crowns of glory, etc., to which he apparently listened very attentively, and when the good parson had concluded his pious talk, the old man replied: "That may be all very true, parson; but auld England for me—auld England for me." It is needless to

say that he was not what is called a "Freethinker"; but I have known many aged and estimable persons connected with the various churches, who, I regret to say, have grossly belied their professions by using every available means to prolong their life, whenever serious illness threatened, at whatever cost to themselves or others. This has always appeared strange to me, especially as these very people delight in speaking of absolute rest and supreme enjoyment—a veritable place "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." If that be really true, why do they object to go there when the palpable summons arrives? I can well understand why the *young* should desire to live, but the insatiable desire of the aged ones puzzles me—I am, in fact, driven to distrust their pious professions *in toto*. On the other hand, I can easily imagine why honest Freethinkers, whether old or young, should desire to live, for they one and all regard this life as the only stage of human existence—they do not prophesy about the future for the simple reason that it is a matter beyond human ken.

THOMAS DETCHON.

#### ACID DROPS.

The Prince of Wales varied the monotony of the "baccarat scandal" case on Saturday by going to Camberwell and opening a Mission Hall. The present writer saw the display of bunting as he passed that way on Sunday. None of the flags represented a pack of cards. Curious!

Mr. Nix, with "twenty-five brave men," has spent a few days at Epsom again, preaching the gospel on the racecourse. He gives a glowing account of his success, but the converts seem easily counted. Mr. Nix now wants £500 for his Racecourse Mission. No doubt the Prince of Wales will give a handsome subscription out of his next baccarat winnings.

It is evident the Czar of Russia means to turn the Jews out of Russia much as they were turned out of Spain and Portugal four hundred years ago, and as heedless of their fate as Ferdinand was of the Jews slaughtered in Algeria. The correspondent of the *Daily News* reports having seen Jews expelled in chains, and another correspondent tells of a hotel in which a family of fugitives had taken refuge being set on fire by the people of the village, and one of them, a child, was burnt to death.

Holy Russia seems a pretty nest of bigotry and fanaticism. The Czar is expelling his Jewish subjects, and the ignorant peasants are displaying the same virtues as their sovereign in a humbler way. In the Tersk district, at a place called Darg Koch, the yokels conceived an intense hatred for a liberal schoolmaster. They undermined the schoolhouse, stocked a nice hole with gunpowder, and fired it in the middle of the morning session. They foolishly calculated on blowing up the schoolmaster, but he escaped unhurt, while ten of the children were killed and twelve more seriously injured.

At Kornenburg, Austria, Father Rudolf Kerler, a priest who had acquired a reputation for great piety in Zistersdorf, Lower Austria, has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for ruining twenty of his female pupils. At home the High Churchmen are always praising the mysterious virtues of celibacy, without ever alluding to its observed effects.

Dr. Parker has been discoursing on "Religion Made Easy." Most people will think it easy enough already—on Dr. Parker's salary.

The Rev. C. A. Berry, of Wolverhampton, is taking a trip round the world at his congregation's expense. Sometime before leaving England he sneered at "the professional Freethinker." It is a question whether all the professional Freethinkers in this country receive the amount of Mr. Berry's salary between them.

Dr. Momerie tells a *Christian Commonwealth* interviewer that he has "only expressed views which hundreds of clergymen hold, but which they have not pluck enough to declare." This is what we have been saying for years. Churches are homes of cowardice and hypocrisy.

A prosecution is threatened against the Rev. Heber Newton, a popular Broad Church clergyman, of New York. The

Presbyterians have a heresy hunt against Professor Briggs for denying the infallibility of the Jew books, and now the Baptists of America have their attention called to the Rev. A. J. Bonsall, of Rochester, Pennsylvania, who declares his belief that nothing is known positively as to the authorship of the books of the Bible; that he did not believe St. Paul was inspired; that he did not believe Christ when on earth was conscious of being God; that the Bible should be put in a crucible and the dross expunged.

An English missionary is reported to have been recently killed in China. This is sad news for his relatives. What a pity he did not stay at home and mind his own business!

Sir R. K. Wilson tells a good story of a captain in the Royal Navy who, cruising among the Polynesian Islands, found two native tribes commencing a bloody war, the ground of quarrel being that one of the tribes had recently been converted by Christian missionaries, and was trying to compel the unconverted tribe to contribute towards the cost of a new harmonium for public worship. The story reads like an epitome of the history of religion.

There has been a controversy as to the religious faith of Browning. Dr. Furnivall, of the Browning Society, appears to regard the late poet as a very heterodox Christian. Mrs. Sutherland Orr, in her recent book on Browning, says he held that Christ was God, and that if only a man he was an impostor. She says, however, "Christ remained for Mr. Browning a mystery and a message of divine love, but no messenger of divine intention towards mankind." This does not make his views very clear. Perhaps, indeed, they were vague. Certainly he never emancipated himself from the sentimental Methodism of his early training.

The Irish now carry the boycott into the church. The Fernoy correspondent of the *Dublin Express* states that when the emergency men employed in working Lower Moore Farm entered the chapel of Coolagown for divine worship on Sunday, the rest of the congregation rose and walked out, and the clerk declared to the priest his determination not to take part in the service. Consequently no Mass was celebrated.

Mr. H. M. Stanley recently declared at Liverpool that Africa would never become the home of the white man. But when did he acquire the spirit of prophecy? At present the white man is grasping Africa with both hands, and wherever he goes the natives are having a bad time. One white gentleman quarrels about them with another white gentleman, and when the quarrel is ended the natives have disappeared.

Stanley also said he looked forward to the time—and the Liverpool children would live to see it—when millions of African Christians would learn to love the sound of the church bells. Well now, there's a church bell at the top of our street which the Africans are welcome to. We should appreciate it better at a fair distance, say as far off as Lake Nyanza.

Mr. Quilliam, the head of the Mohammedans in Liverpool, has just returned from a visit to Turkey. His son, aged eleven, has been appointed lieutenant-colonel in the Turkish army on full pay—that is, as full as the Turkish army gets it. The lad has also been made a Bey, a title which is hereditary. Mr. Quilliam seems to have "struck oil," or at least Turkish delight.

Thomas Davies, innkeeper, of Oswestry, deems himself a moderate and persecuted man. Charged with bigamy, he replied that he was not as bad as Solomon; and as Thomas is only alleged to have two wives, he must be admitted to fall far short of that divine favorite.

The Roman Catholics in Ireland are 411,035 fewer than they were ten years ago. The Episcopalians have also lost 39,344 and the Presbyterians 24,047. The Methodists have gained 6,396. "This is extremely gratifying," says the *Methodist Times*. Extremely!

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, who was one of the original councillors of the Theosophical Society, commences in the *Two Worlds* of June 5 an account of its origin and founders. Its original object is stated as having been "to obtain know-

ledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power and of the higher spirits by the aid of physical processes." The first part is greatly taken up with the funeral of the Baron de Palm at New York in May, 1876. That individual left the T.S. his property, and, according to Dr. Coues, his manuscripts were the foundation of *Isis Unveiled*.

The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews has, says the *Sunday Chronicle*, had a rousing good year. Ten new candidates for conversion were accepted in the operative department, and it is reported—"Of these one remained four months and then returned to his native place; another refused to work, and had to be dismissed; a third left at the invitation of a rabbi; the fourth and fifth went away immediately before the time appointed for their baptism; the sixth was dismissed for misconduct; of three others all that can be said is that it is too soon to speak, 'but their youth encourages the hope that they will all do well'; while the tenth bids fair to become a compositor."

"This last instance of backsliding," says the same journal, "is too much. I am not sending any more money this year to the S.P.C.A.J. When it is added, however, that a sum of £1,000 has been expended on the training of every young missionary who has passed through the Society's training college, it will be seen that in at least one branch of effort it has been highly successful. When it gets as many as one convert to every six missionaries, the Society will no doubt feel justified in holding a bazaar."

What a pity it is that the name of a genius like Shakespeare could not die with him! It would save us from reading that "Mr. Shakespeare indicates pretty accurately what is the feeling of the majority of Baptists."

Christians fond of the design argument should study the case of the two sisters, Rosa and Josepha, who have just appeared before the medical men of Paris. They are joined together at the lower part of the bodies. Let the physical and other aspects of this connexion be worked out in imagination, and then let the Christian set himself to justify the ways of Providence.

Can the solemn Archdeacon Farrar be joking? "What is needed in the pulpit most of all," he says, "is simplicity and sincerity."

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes delivers himself on the same subject. He thinks the modern pulpit is unduly disparaged. The Church in the past went wrong, now she is on the right tack. "It is one of the most curious phenomena of history," Mr. Hughes writes, "that what I may call the intensely secular character of Christ's teaching should have been so long overlooked." This will amuse the Secularists. Mr. Hughes is appropriating the ideas of Secularism, while pretending to find them in the teachings of Christ. By way of revenge or consolation, he converts Atheists who never lived.

Lord Thurlow when he first read "Paradise Lost," was so absorbed in and carried away by the description of Satan and his battle against the host of heaven, that he exclaimed "A fine fellow. By God I wish he had won!"

Bok is. Bok created man a living slork. After man dies he will pass into the land of harmulkins and dwell with the jufams for ever. Can anybody understand that? Certainly not; because nobody knows what certain of the words mean. Until those words can be defined, the sentences in which they appear cannot mean anything. I made up some sentences like the foregoing a few days ago, and asked a gentleman if he understood what they meant. He said he did. I asked him to explain them to me. He said he could not do that, but that if I would open my harmulkinal eyes I would understand them. I asked him what my harmulkinal eyes were, and he told me that could only be harmulkinally discerned. And I could see that he was very earnest in what he was saying, and that he thought he knew what he was talking about—but I didn't.—*Twentieth Century*.

Canon Blunt, in the pages of *S. Mary and S. Cuthbert's, Chester-le-Street, Parish Magazine*, appeals to his parishioners for more money. It seems the value of his living, after he has paid assistant clergy, organist and sacristan, is but a little

over £300, and, poor man, though he has no wife, he finds this too little to exist on. He therefore wants his assistants paid for out of the pockets of the parish. We should imagine Canon Blunt had quite sufficient "brass" already.

Mr. De Cobain's latest letter, whether he be innocent or guilty, is positively sickening. Honest men consult their own honor. Mr. De Cobain consults the Lord. And he finds that the Lord does not guide him towards Belfast, where he is wanted by the police. Don't think me guilty because I run away, he says; but if you do, I must suffer as my Savior did before me. Bah! After reading such a letter, a man of ordinary sensibility feels the need of a disinfectant.

A tract issued by the Dublin Tract Depot has been sent us entitled *The Four Judgments*. Many Christians differ as to whether they go to glory or blazes when they die, or whether they wait till judgment day; whether they are punished first and judged afterwards, or whether there are two judgments. The writer of the tract before us gives Scripture to show that there are four judgments—first, of sin; second, of the redeemed, when "it will not be a question of heaven or hell (since they are all previously in heaven), but of what reward (if any) they are to get when there." The third judgment of the living nations takes place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, when the Lord Jesus returns to reign. The fourth, which takes place before the Great White Throne, a thousand years after No. 3, is upon the unconverted dead of all ages, "who are condemned to their awful doom in the lake of fire for eternity." Apparently the writer knows all about it, but we fear he has jumbled his own judgment.

Speaking of the Christian form of oath, the *American Medical Register* says: "The lips are most sensitive receptacles for the germs of disease, and from the motley throng of dirty and diseased persons who are summoned in a court of justice what infectious germs may not be disseminated? The person who kisses the Bible in court has not the least surety that his lips do not come in direct contact with the pollution left by a predecessor who was suffering from some foul skin disease or taint, not to speak of the germs of eruptive fevers and the like." Thank you, I prefer to affirm.

A young man in North London who carried a collecting-plate after the service, before starting put his hand in his pocket, and placed, as he supposed, a shilling into the plate and then passed it round among the congregation, which included many young and pretty girls. The girls as they looked on the plate, all seemed astonished and amused, and the young man, taking a glance at the plate, found that instead of a shilling he had put a conversation lozenge on the plate, with the words, "Will you marry me?" in red letters, staring everybody in the face, whilst one of the congregation had capped it by a second lozenge, on which was printed, "Name the day."

A nice little pious row is reported from Poughkeepsie, New York. There are two rival incumbents at the local Baptist gospel-shop. On Sunday morning, sky-pilot Wood was in possession of the pulpit. Sky-pilot Boyce entered, took a seat in a front pew, and bent his head as if addressing his heavenly Father. Having disarmed the vigilance of the guards, he vaulted over the pew, seized two of the guards, knocked their heads together, leaped up the pulpit stairs, kicked out sky-pilot Wood, and proceeded to give out the hymn. The congregation retired in disorder, and Boyce was arrested next morning.

The alleged holy sites at Jerusalem are the scene of periodical disputes between rival sects of the Christian Church. The last faction fight was on the question as to which religious body should undertake the carrying out of the repairs to a wall. From hot words, the rival parties proceeded to blows, which necessitated the intervention of the Turkish soldiery. These set to work so energetically, that in a short time the holy spot was strewed with dead and dying. The influence of the blessed Savior who said he came not to send peace but a sword, evidently lingers round the holy spot.

Now the Government proposals for free education are before the country, it is evident that the main point for us is to insist that public pay shall carry with it public control. In over ten

thousand parishes the Church school is the only school, and, considering that it will be supported by about nine-tenths of public money, it is surely imperative that some share in management should be taken by those who pay. This is a point upon which those who formerly opposed free education will not give way, for their only reason for accepting it now is to maintain the control of the so-called voluntary schools. We must bide our time, but not cease agitating the question until all schools supported by public money are under public management.

*An Examination of Bill Sykes's Theology* is the title of a little book put out by the Unitarian Rev. J. W. Brown, in opposition to one by his brother, the orthodox Rev. A. G. Brown. Bill Sykes's Theology is the designation of the beautiful Christian doctrine of the atonement, which remits one person's sins on account of another person's sufferings.

The Welsh Calvinists are much concerned that the young men of the principality give more attention to athletics than to religion. The *Baner* says, "public sports, especially football, have become contagious diseases in the land." Instead of attending the prayer-meeting, they go to play football and cricket, and, instead of reading the Bible, read newspaper novels and infidel books.

The Methodists of Llanrhaiar have taken this matter to heart, and condemned cricket as leading the young men to destruction. As a consequence no one can be found to let the cricket club a field, and moreover a local coal dealer, who is a member of the club, is now boycotted by the deacons. Hitherto he has had the privilege of supplying the chapel with coal, but this is now denied him, and other people have been directed to boycott him.

The Rev. J. P. Bacon Phillips publishes a list of twenty-three priests ordained in the Church of Rome and now serving as clergymen in the Church of England. The question whether they are "apostates" or still working in the interests of Rome is, of course, not easily answered.

With a view to preventing the leakage from the Roman Catholic Church, which it is admitted counterbalances its gains, a Society has been formed to take a census of, and supervise, the Catholic population. What the guild of Ransomers have been able to do in the way of spoiling Protestant meetings is looked upon as very encouraging by the promoters. If Freethinkers were as ready to band together as Catholics they might perhaps astonish the world by the force of their numbers.

A Church of England sky-pilot recently perambulated Bath station with a big card, bearing the inscription "Prepare to meet thy God." It was a broad reflection on the safety of the Great Western trains, though the officials had not the penetration to see the libel.

Church and Dissent are quarrelling at Whixall about day schools. By and bye the children will be considered in the dispute. Then the education will be secular.

A teacher in a Sunday-school was examining a class of little boys from a Scripture catechism. The first question was, "Who stoned Stephen?" Answer: "The Jews." Second question: "Where did they stone him?" "Beyond the limits of the city." The third question: "Why did they take him beyond the limits of the city?" proved a poser to the whole class. At length a little fellow, who had been scratching his head all the while, looked up and said: "Well, I dinna ken, unless it was to get a fair fling at him!"

The *Baptist Teacher* (American) says: "If it had pleased God so to order, it would have been entirely possible even for an oyster to swallow Jonah." Perhaps so; but it would have been much easier for Jonah to swallow the oyster.

Replying to the *Baptist Teacher*, the *Congregationalist* says that "If it had pleased God so to order, it would have been entirely possible for him to make an oyster a Sunday School teacher." We should say it has been done already.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Collected in Regent's Park, 4s. 4d.—  
R. FORDER, hon. sec.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 14, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.; at 7.30, "Secularism and Cruelty: a full Reply to the Bishop of Chester and Mr. Waugh."

June 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.

J. R. BROAD.—There are many difficulties in the way of an avowed Atheist entering parliament.

T. BIRTLEY.—Thanks. The magazine has been returned.

UNPREJUDICED RECKONER.—All communications must bear the writer's name and address, though not necessarily for publication.

H. E. SMITH.—It is the nature of all excitement to give impetus. Some day, when we have time, we may write at length on the subject.

H. T. BAILEY.—Misprints will occur in the best regulated offices.

CASTREL.—See *Bible Handbook*, p. 63. Cruden reckons a talent of gold as £7,200, and a talent of silver as £450. Archdeacon Farrar, in his little book on Solomon, reckons his annual revenue of 666 talents as about £5,000,000. His estimate of the value of the gold talent is therefore slightly higher than Cruden's.

C. K. LAPORTE.—The De Cobain subject is too unsavory for satirical verse in a public journal, otherwise we should have inserted your clever production.

H. BEADLE.—Pleased to hear the Leyton Branch began its open air work successfully on Sunday morning. No doubt the local Freethinkers will support you, especially as you expect "sharp opposition."

S. W. L.—Secularists have no Burial Service, in the ordinary sense of the word "service." Nor is anything issued by the N. S. S. Something will be said over graves, and Mr. Austin Holyoake and Mrs. Besant each drew up something for the purpose. We cannot say that we think either production satisfactory. The subject is too big to be disposed of in a single paragraph.

J. B. HOBSON.—The N. S. S. secretary will forward your certificate. Never mind the smallness of the subscription if it is all you can afford. No one must be left outside on account of poverty. Every Freethinker should join the N. S. S. and contribute according to his means.

G. CLANCY (Huddersfield).—Your signature is not too legible. We hope we have it correctly. Such organisation as you very properly desire is impossible without a decent building, and that is denied the Huddersfield Secularists by the bigotry of landlords. We hope to see a great deal of good work done in the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall.—De Fivas' French Grammar is an excellent one; but surely there is some evening school where you can learn French by ear as well as by eye.

H. SMITH.—We hope you will have a good meeting, and that the Liverpool Hall of Science Company will soon achieve its object. Every Secularist in Liverpool is bound to help to the best of his ability.

MAX SEAGULL.—You are quite right as to the benevolence of the Jews to each other. *Modern Society* should not write in that way when one rich Jew alone, Baron Hirsch, is devoting three millions to the relief of his suffering race. At the same time this immigration of poor Jews is a serious matter to the English labor market.

W. M. KNOX.—Parcel to hand. Delighted to hear the Ulster Branch has entered its new premises. The Organisation Committee will consider your being visited by Mr. Moss and other lecturers.

J. KENNEDY.—Mr. Foote has so far escaped the influenza, and is in his usual robust health.—Thanks for Father Farniss's *Sight of Hell*, though we had a copy before. He thinks hell is inside the earth. But he must be very ignorant or dishonest to teach that the *sheol*, into which Cora, Dathan and Abiram descended, was the Christian hell. The old Hebrew *sheol* simply meant the grave, or underground.

Mrs. SMITH, 13 Cursitor-street, Chancery-lane, supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

CAN any one tell us where the *Freethinker* is sold in Brompton, Fulham and Walham Green?

A. RENNOLDS.—Medical testimony is indispensable in such cases. Many persons suffer from imaginary ailments. Rheumatism is often alleviated without prayer as well as with it. When prayer can put a fresh leg on a man who has lost one we shall believe in its efficacy.

B. HARRIS.—Mr. Wheeler believes neither in Design nor in Chance. He believes in Necessity. Your criticism, therefore is founded on a misconception.

G. GROVE.—We have put the first to the Voelkel Fund.

P. R. DOWNEX.—We hope to issue the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* this year.

M. E. B.—It may be useful.

U. BALDWIN.—Cause and effect are subjective conceptions. There is no break in the continuity of nature. A spark sets fire to a barrel of gunpowder, and you may call the spark the cause and the explosion the result. But in reality the spark itself was "caused," and the gunpowder was "caused," and their "causes" were also "caused," and so on *ad infinitum*. The real cause of anything is everything; but substance remains unchanged, and cause and effect only apply to the sequence of phenomena—that is, the manifestations of substance.

FREETHINKER.—We have not the figures by us, but we believe the churches and chapels in this country would hold about one third of the population over ten years of age.

J. JOYCE.—We have not time to answer such questions by post. When we referred to the famine in China we were guided by the reports in the newspapers. We have no private intelligence from that part of the world.

MR. HOINWILL, Mare-street, near Triangle, Hackney, sells the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

J. E. MENZIES.—Put yourself in communication with Mr. J. Brown, secretary of the N.E. Secular Federation. When your new Branch is properly constituted arrange for a fortnightly members' meeting, and get your share of the public lectures delivered under the Federation's auspices. The N. S. S. Executive is always ready to support Branches that are trying to do good work.

S. STANDRING.—Always pleased to hear from you. You certainly put a lot of energy into the work. We hope the North Finchley Branch will prosper. Your report of affairs at Chatham is gratifying.

J. BURRELL.—Your members entertain an extraordinary respect for the late Sergeant A. Bell. We regret we did not know him personally. Probably the wreath the Westminster Branch has laid upon his grave will teach charity, and something more, to some of the Christians who visit the cemetery.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren — Liberty — Freethought — Ironclad Age — Menschenhum — Echo — Neues Frereligioes 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 — Polytechnic Magazine — Leeds Mercury — Leeds Daily News — St. Pancras Guardian — Chat — Modern Thought — The Better Way — The National Church — Two Worlds — Twentieth Century — Glasgow Herald — Reading Observer — Answers — American Sentinel — Worker's Cry — Birmingham Weekly Mercury — Fur Unsere Jugend.

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.

This evening (June 14) at the London Hall of Science, Mr. Foote lectures on "Secularism and Cruelty" in reply to the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. Mr. Waugh. He will deal with the subject more fully than was possible in a *Freethinker* article. The lecture is one that Freethinkers should induce their Christian friends to listen to.

After Mr. Foote's lecture on Sunday evening at Camberwell a collection was made for the Hospital Sunday Fund. Owing to the combined influence of the fine weather and the 'bus strike the audience was below Mr. Foote's average in point of numbers, though extremely enthusiastic.

Dr. Hunter deserves thanks for taking up the case of Mr. J. Robinson, one of the N. S. S. members in South London, who was treated with insolence and illegality by Coroner Wyatt. In reply to Dr. Hunter's question, the Home Secretary stated that Mr. Robinson did not apply to affirm on conscientious grounds, but simply declined to be sworn. This is absolutely false, as is proved by the newspaper reports of the

incident. But when Coroner Wyatt resorts to lying he shows the weakness of his position. Probably he will restrain the petulance of his bigotry when the next Secular jurymen appears in his court. If he misconducts himself again he will be put to more trouble.

Mr. Charles Watts, of Toronto, has been giving a course of 34 lectures in different towns in the United States. He says he recognised increased attendance of wives, mothers, and daughters at Secular meetings, and sees signs of "the undoubted progress of Freethought views."

Mr. Charles Watts is expected to arrive at Liverpool by the Gallia on the third or fourth of July. He is to give three lectures in the Oddfellows' Hall on Sunday, July 5. No doubt he will have a hearty reception.

Of all the collecting cards for the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, that of the Hamilton Branch shows the highest amount—£8. Sunderland holds the second place.

By the way, all the holders of cards should send them back now (with the amount collected) to Mr. Forder. Fresh cards can be obtained if necessary. Individual intending subscribers are also earnestly desired to forward what they mean to give as early as possible.

Fund for Assisting Dr. Voelkel, imprisoned for Blasphemy at Magdeburg:—Two of the Damned, 2s.; E. Truelove, £1; Bolton Branch—T. Halstead 2s. 6d., T. France 1s., J. Mawson 1s., W. Collins 1s., C. Atkinson 1s., J. F. Hampson 1s., A. C. Hampson 2s.; G. Grove, 2s. 6d.; F. Smallman, £1 1s.

"J. D.," the London correspondent of the *Truthseeker* of New York, says: "Under the supervision of the President, the National Secular Society is likely to become a larger and more effective organisation than it has ever been, as Mr. Foote goes thoroughly into the cause of Freethought, and evidently intends to leave no stone unturned to make it a far greater power than he found it. For the sake of the cause he so ably champions, it is to be hoped he will not take up with politics more than he does at present, as his time must soon be so fully occupied with his work that he will have to take some of that to devote to political work, with the result that the National Secular Society will most probably have to suffer."

"J. D." may rest assured that Mr. Foote will let nothing prevent his giving due attention to the National Secular Society's affairs.

Prof. R. L. Garner, whose paper on "The Simian Tongue" in the *New Review* is exciting some attention, may certainly claim to have thrown new light on the language of apes. By separating a male and female, and taking their utterances in a phonograph, he clearly showed they had an intelligent appreciation of the sounds. When the male heard the voice of his mate reproduced in the instrument, the expression of his face was a study. Prof. Garner found that the same word was always used for milk, and has gone some length in deciphering their vocabulary.

Under the head of "Pepper and Salt," Portsmouth *Chat* reproduces some of our "Acid Drops" with slight alterations, though (perhaps prudently) without acknowledgment. We are glad to be of service to *Chat*, and still more glad to see our paragraphs circulating among the general public.

M. Cilwa, of Paris, editor of *La Verité*, has applied for permission to translate Mr. Foote's "A Virgin Mother"—No. 13 of *Bible Romances*—into French, thinking it an excellent pamphlet to circulate even in the land of Voltaire. This is the pamphlet that most excited the wrath of Dr. Coit. What he disapproves seems to commend itself to the public.

Mrs. Thornton Smith spoke successfully at Hetton-le-Hole on Sunday. The Chester-le-Street friends who attended brought and distributed some Freethought literature. A first meeting of this Branch will be held in the Committee room of the Miners' Hall on Sunday, June 21.

The Huddersfield Branch holds its annual picnic at Colne Bridge Pleasure Gardens to-day (June 14). Brakes leave the Market Place, Huddersfield, at 1.30 p.m. Tea will be pro-

vided at sixpence per head. Mr. H. Smith, of Farsley, and other speakers will address the "saints" when they are properly mollified by edibles and souchong.

On Sunday last the Ulster Branch held their first meeting in their new premises, Crown Chambers Hall, 64 Royal Avenue, Belfast. The hall is newly finished and seated, and presents a pleasant contrast from the dinginess of the old meeting-place, the Abercorn Hall. Mr. John Murphy took the chair, and in a few appropriate words welcomed the audience to their new quarters. He then called upon Mr. Gilliland, who read an able and interesting paper on "The Advance of Freethought." There was some criticism, which was replied to at the end of the discussion.

The first General Meeting of the Liverpool Hall of Science Company, Limited, will be held to-day (June 14), at 11 in the Camden Hall. It is of the utmost importance that every shareholder should attend.

London friends who have any special gift of prayer should not forget that July 12, the great day of Orange and Catholic faction fights in Ireland, is the day for the annual excursion of the L.S.F., and that this year we go by water to Hampton Court. Return tickets, 1s. 6d.; children, 1s.

The steamer "Snowdrop" is engaged for the L. S. F. excursion. She is licensed to carry 453 passengers. There will be music on board, and refreshments supplied by the company's contractors. Mr. Foote intends to join the party, which will doubtless include "everybody who is anybody."

At the German Conference of Freethinkers at Mannheim, Dr. Büchner occupied the chair. In the evening sitting, Herr Fulda, of Mannheim, spoke on Charles Bradlaugh. Prof. Rudt spoke on Religion and Science, and Prof. Büchner on Creation and Evolution.

The German Freethought Congress has been held at Mannheim this year under very depressing circumstances. Something like a reign of terror directed against Freethought is going on in Germany. Dr. Voelkel is imprisoned for six months, with many other indictments pending against him. Frau Henrich Wilhelmi has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment at Halle for blasphemy against God and the Christian Church, and Herr Erth, at Schneeberg, Saxony, has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for stating that the story of the miraculous conception was an invention of the Christian Church.

Encouraged by the persecuting spirit of the young Emperor of Germany, the bigots of Scandinavia are again in full cry. In Denmark, Mr. E. Brandes, brother of Georges Brandes, one of the leading literary men of Denmark, has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment for writing against the Church. The editor of the daily paper of Copenhagen has received a like sentence for "blasphemy against God the Father."

Despite the many protests against the dastardly handing over of Mr. H. V. Berghell to the Russian authorities, persecution still continues in Sweden. A Mr. F. V. Thomson, of Malmo, has been indicted for blasphemy for having mimicked the administration of the holy sacrament in a local theatrical performance. The spirit of persecution always bursts out afresh when bigots begin to see that their cause is lost.

Dr. Felix Adler, who fifteen years ago established the Ethical Society of New York, gave a discourse to his congregation recently before departing on a tour to England and Germany. He is well satisfied with his work and the prospects of his society, and promises to go in for larger effort upon his return.

In his article in the *Nineteenth Century*, Professor Huxley says he is not ashamed to admit with David Hume his want of ability to discover that polytheism is in itself altogether absurd. Professor Huxley is right; the theory of there being gods, or a divine syndicate, is as much entitled to consideration as that of all things being created by one person. Few people know how much there is to be said for polytheism, or how much was said for it not a hundred years ago by Thomas Taylor, a learned modern polytheist.

In Ireland a religious census was taken, and the returns



show a decrease of 10 per cent. of Roman Catholics, 5 per cent. of Episcopalians, with an increase of 13 per cent. of Methodists, 280 per cent. of Jews, and 221 per cent. of those who refused to enter themselves under any denomination. We have reason to believe that some put themselves down as Freethinkers, but of these the number has not yet been published.

We see from the monthly *Bulletin* of the French Freethought Federation that M. Hubbard, one of the Chamber of Deputies, gives his opinion that between 220 and 230 deputies are opposed to the *budget des cultes*—the subsidies to religious bodies and to the embassy to the Vatican.

The French Freethought Federation now comprises more than 150 branches, and intends to actively propagate the complete separation of Church and State in preparation for the elections of 1893. If the French Freethinkers would all pull together they would doubtless succeed in carrying their point.

*Secular Thought* describes a debate in Toronto between a Freethinker and a Methodist minister who "admitted that all things are not possible with God, that Christ's power was limited, and that his words are to be interpreted by modern thought. The reverend gentleman further granted that Secularism contained much that was true, that the Church has been corrupt, that Christianity is not original, and that there is not a Christian country in the world."

The town of Liberal, Barton County, Missouri, used to boast that it had neither church nor drinking saloon. Two years ago, however, the Methodists made a good offer to erect a conventicle and evangelise the Freethinkers. They were permitted to settle; but from that day to this, reports Mr. G. H. Walser, they have not made a single convert.

The Rev. W. E. Collier, of Manchester, contributes an article to the local *Congregational Monthly* on "How to Deal with Sceptics." Mr. Collier rebukes his Christian brethren for allowing sceptics to remain the victims of unjust laws, he denounces the slightest persecution of them in private, and he advises the frank discussion of their objections to Christianity. There are points in Mr. Collier's article from which we strongly dissent, but we pass them by in recognition of the honorable character of the rest.

Mr. W. Heaford, one of our London lecturers, is a man of wide reading and independent thought, and a fluent speaker. Mr. Heaford will be on tour in the north of England the last two weeks in August. Sunday, August 16, is fixed for Manchester; Sunday, 23, for Sheffield; and Sunday, 30, for Hull. Lancashire and Yorkshire Branches would do well to avail themselves of Mr. Heaford's services on the intervening week-nights. His address is 31 Kerrison-road, Battersea, London, S.W.

In the *Truthseeker* G. J. Morris tells a very interesting story of how he was converted in Tasmania by Miss Ada Campbell, the Freethought lecturer, who is now in America. He was a sailor, who went to her meeting from hearing that some Catholic navvies were speaking of stoning her as an infidel. In fact they did throw stones, and the sailor and others formed a guard and saw her home, after a lecture which, as he says, was an eye-opener.

Referring to the controversy on "Apostate priests" in the *Echo*, "Anglo Saxon" points out that while much fuss is made of the conversion or perversion of a few priests to or from Romanism, little notice is taken of the fact that numbers of journalists and men of science who are really far more influential than any priests, have been gradually giving up all connection with dogmatic religion.

"The Crucifixion" and "John's Nightmare," numbers fifteen and sixteen of *Bible Romances* are slightly delayed at the printer's. They will be ready for sale on Monday (June 15).

**NORTH EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.**—The Annual Meeting of the Council of the North Eastern Secular Federation will meet on Sunday, June 14, at 3 p.m., at 25 Nelson-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, for the election of officers and other important business.—JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec., 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

## BLASPHEMOUS CHRISTIANITY.

I CAN'T exactly say under what circumstances I first set eyes upon that marvellous effort of journalism which is weekly issued under the title of the *War Cry*, whether my morning rasher was wrapped in it, or whether I picked it up at the barber's. But however I made its acquaintance, I must say that in the course of time I have grown to regard it with something more than friendship, even to the extent of adoration for the masterly genius of those engaged in its composition. I am sure that never had a novelist the power of romancing equal to that possessed by the young men who manufacture the *War Cry*, and the dictionary has yet to be printed with a command of language to equal that used by this same devoted band of ink-slingers. To those who really want to know what the resources of the English language are, I can give no better advice than that they should regularly read the official organ of the "Hallelujah Band." Beyond this, however, the perusal of its pages reveals the extent to which blasphemy can be introduced into alleged Christianity. The language of the Stock Exchange, worse still the *patois* of the racecourse, not to speak of the common or garden variety of slang, are all pressed into the service, when a successful meeting at Exeter Hall has to be described, or a special appeal has to be made to the pockets of the rank and file of the legion of Salvation. To describe the general character of such paragraphs as humbug would be to do them a great injustice. Humbug, rant, utter bosh, are all terms which imply a condition of things, which would pale before "Salvationism" as a farthing dip would pale before the illuminations of Edison and Swan.

Still I read the *War Cry* sometimes. In the valley of literary obscurity I delight to contemplate the lofty heights of metaphorical magnificence to which the *War Cry* ascends. It does me good to realise that others may be able to use the English language in a manner which is so immeasurably beyond me, and I would as soon read the *War Cry* as I would gaze upon a "Raphael" or listen to an oratorio of Mozart's, because I know and feel the presence of superior genius, loftier conception, and more skilful execution. So whenever my butcher wraps my matutinal chop in a sheet of this precious production, I read it and re-read before I light my pipe with it. It was not so long ago that, in the course of describing a visit of the "General" to Ireland, one of its contributors safely delivered himself of the following:

"A chorus was sung, and, in an instant, the General jumped up Bible in hand. By this prompt action an object-lesson was conveyed to the congregation that the General meant real business to be done for God. After saying a few words apologetically for being late, he delivered a most vigorous and interesting address from the first chapter of Acts, which was listened to with rapt attention, the audience eagerly drinking in every word. Tears could be plainly seen chasing each other down the cheeks of many. Burning truth after burning truth went forth from the lips of the General with practical effect, and he was exceedingly helped by the Spirit of the living God, and a great power fell upon the assembly, and a remarkable feeling was realised in the meeting, hallowing and endowing waves of sanctifying influence came rolling in upon the people, and occasionally such exclamations as 'Glory be to God!' 'Hallelujah!' and 'It's good to be here!' came forth from the audience. For me to describe what was realised in this meeting would be utterly impossible; scores of souls were brought into close touch with the warm love of Calvary, and went away with the power of the Spirit upon them."

The italics are mine. Now perhaps the reader will appreciate with me the beauties of this roundly-abused tongue of ours, and will agree that perhaps we don't need a "Volapuk" while the Queen's English can be so artistically employed. But when it is remembered that this was written in Ireland, a country justly celebrated for the excellence of its "spirit," it is not surprising that the meeting got into the state described. And when it is stated that the people "went away with the power of the Spirit upon them," but neglects to say how many policemen were necessary per man, or to what state the Spirit had reduced them—whether the jovial, quarrelsome, or blind speechless condition—one realises that though the *War Cry* reporters are unapproachable in the matter of language, they are certainly neglectful of details. Surely a word as to what some of them got in the morning for having got into that condition of spirit overnight would not have been lost, would it? One naturally likes to know. But when a Salvationist gets too much of that spirit, which "creates hallowing and mellowing waves of sanctifying influence," we who know what the effects of other spirits, unattended by such influences, are, can excuse such a trifling absence of details. But if Irish whiskey can produce such awful things as these, isn't it time Parliament prevented its consumption?

H. D.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## THE CHRISTIAN CROSS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I wish most respectfully to object to what is said in last week's "Sugar Plums," where we are told that "the Christian cross was taken from the Egyptian *crux ansata*, which was the symbol of life at least two thousand years before Christianity." The Christian cross when first adopted by them was purely astrological. All the Christian priests were then astrologers. It represented the heavenly circle quartered or divided into four parts by the solstitial and equinoxial lines or colors (see Didron's *Christian Iconography*). Mrs. Besant was nearer right twelve years ago in the *Freethinkers' Text-Book*, where she says: "The crucifix appears to have arisen from the circle of the horizon being divided into four parts—north, south, east, west," etc. It was more properly the circle of the heavens, or zodiac, divided into four seasons, and the accompanying A and O, or alpha and omega, represented the beginning and the ending of the year. The same cross that Didron gives from the catacombs is found upon Achaian coins two hundred years before Christ, which also have the A and O. The main basis of all the religions of the Eastern antiquity back to Babylon, four thousand years ago, was Saebism, or star worship. God was represented by a star by the Akkadians, and we must put Phallism, or Nature worship, before this. It is an earlier form of religion. In ancient Rome, when Christianity first rose, the dominant religion was Saebism, tinged with a remnant of ancient Persian fire worship. What some of the crosses meant two thousand years before Christ has no bearing on the question whatever.

R. SHAW.

[Mr. Shaw omits the word "probably," which appeared in the "Sugar Plum" he quotes, and which might not be out of place in his own letter.]

## LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

Council Meeting held at Hall of Science, on Thursday, June 4, the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. J. M. Wheeler (Vice-President), Brown, Collins, Courtney, Enderby, Guest, Heath, Hooper, Lupton, Renn, Rowden, Rowney, Rutland, Thomas and Turner.—The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, the Secretary presented financial statement of Stratford Free Lectures, the result being a slight balance in favor of the Federation. At the suggestion of the West Ham Branch, the Council was asked to consider the advisability of a further course of lectures, but no action was taken thereon.—Arrangements for excursion were then discussed, and the Secretary instructed to engage a steamboat for Hampton (calling at Kew); the price of tickets being fixed at 1s. 6d. for adults, children 1s.—The report of the Open-air Committee was received, and applications for grants referred for consideration. A vote for a further supply of lecture lists was taken, and some minor matters dealt with. Mr. Guest gave notice of a motion relative to the forthcoming Peace Congress; and the question of an organised collection for the Hospital Saturday Fund was considered.—The Council then adjourned.—EDMUND 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): 8, Mr. T. Bolas (Fabian), "Abolition of Taxes." 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 Basis of Morality."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road: 8, Mr. J. F. Haines, "What has Vaccination Done?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Secularism and Cruelty—a Full Reply to Bishop Jayne."

Westbourne Park Gymnasium: 3, "Mr. Bradlaugh." Strangers invited to speak.

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "Why the Sea is Salt." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon Road (close to Latimer Road Station): Thursday, at 8, adjourned general meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11, debate between Mr. W. Hearford and Mr. J. Symons on "The Existence of God."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, a Free-thought lecture.

Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Bible Stories." Edmonton (corner of Angel Road): 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "When and Where was Jesus Born?"; 3.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Modern Science and Modern Thought."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. W. Hearford, "Christianity and Secularism Compared."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Who was Jesus, and what did he Teach?"

Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "God: where and what is it?"

Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. H. Hooper, "Christian Theism Examined."

Lambeth (corner of Belvedere Road, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "When the Church had Power?"

Leyton (open space in the High Road, near the "Lion and Key"): 11.30, Mr. Charles Johnson, "New Testament Morality."

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge Road): 11.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "God and Man."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. H. Courtney, "The Decay of Christianity."

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

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Death and Resurrection."

Regents Park (near Gloucester Gate): 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sophistry."  
 Tottenham (corner of West Green Road): 3.20, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation."  
 Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "The Ethical Aspect of Religion"; 3.15, Mr. S. Jones will lecture.  
 West Ham — Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "The Origin of Man."  
 Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "David and Shimei."

**COUNTRY.**

Crook—35 Gladstone Terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law: 6.30, a meeting.  
 Liverpool — Camden Hall, Camden Street: 11, meeting of shareholders in Hall of Science Company; Tontine Society; 7, Mr. L. Bergmann, "Hereditry: are Acquired Characters Transmissible?"  
 Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints': Mrs. Annie Besant, morning, "Freethought in America"; afternoon, "Ethics from a Theosophical Standpoint"; evening, "Crucified Saviors."  
 Newcastle-on-Tyne — Nelson Street: 3, fortnightly financial meeting. Debating Society: 7, debate between Mr. J. Wilson and A. Dawson on "The Existence of God."  
 Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Pinhorne, "A Chat about Books."  
 Reading—Forester's Hall, West Street: Mr. John M. Robertson, "Atheism and Conduct"; 7, "The Anatomy of Jesus."  
 Sheffield — Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, instrumental and vocal music by several friends.  
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King Street: 7, business meeting.  
 Spennymoor — Victoria Hall, Dundas Street: 6, a business meeting.

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

Bradford—Shipley Glen (near Ariel Flight): 3, Mr. John Grange, "Why I am Not a Christian."

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—June 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 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; 28, 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.—July 5, morning, Plaistow Green; 19, morning, Kingsland Green; 26, morning, Battersea.

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