

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XI.—No. 27.]

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1891.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

A NEW FRENCH LIFE OF CHRIST.

WRITING to Mdlle. Leroyer de Chantepie, on October 23, 1863, the great Flaubert said, "Do you know the *Life of Jesus* by Doctor Strauss? It sets one thinking, and is substantial. I advise you to read this book, which is dry, yet in the highest degree interesting."

Flaubert was right. Strauss's book was solid, and it set the reader thinking. In England it caused a perfect storm. The author's views and arguments were popularised with pen and tongue, and pook-pooed or "refuted" from hundreds of pulpits. For the first time the ordinary thoughtful reading public was interested in a scientific treatment of the Gospel story of Jesus Christ.

Afterwards there appeared a less solid, but far more brilliant *Life of Christ* by the (now) great French writer Renan. It was written when the author had but just broken away, though for ever, from the Catholic Church in which he had been nurtured. It was also profoundly influenced by his visit to "the Holy Land." Renan made ridiculous concessions to orthodoxy in respect to the date and authorship of the Gospels. But his point of view was that of a complete sceptic as to the supernatural. Coupled with a fascinating style, this made the work dangerous in the eyes of the priests. It was banned by Bishops and Archbishops. But it sold in myriads of copies, and it must have exercised a powerful influence.

Renan's *Vie de Jésus* is the least satisfying of his series of volumes on the Origins of Christianity. It dished up the pious, fervid Communist of Jerusalem for the palate of a Parisian public. One critic remarked that there was the smell of patchouli on every page. Nevertheless the deeper scholarship and severer criticism of to-day need not sneer at the *Vie de Jésus* as contemptible. Strauss himself, in the Preface to his *New Life of Jesus*, paid Renan a compliment, though a cynic might find a sting in its tail. "I joyfully hailed the work of Renan on its appearance," wrote Strauss, "when my own was nearly completed, as the sign of a generally felt want; on closer acquaintance I accept it respectfully, and though by no means tempted by its example to alter my own plan, I may say that all I wish is to have written as suitable a work for Germany as Renan's is for France."

Peyrat's *Histoire Élémentaire et Critique de Jésus* (Elementary and Critical History of Jesus) was a far more thorough piece of work than Renan's. It appeared only a year after the *Vie de Jésus*, and even now is well worth translating into English. But it lacks the exquisite style of Renan, the light touch, the illuminating metaphors, the fine reflections—in brief, the qualities of a literary artist and a born psychologist. Learning is great, and science is great, but it is style that embalms. Renan's book was thus the dangerous one, and it is really, though not ostensibly, as an antidote to the *Vie de Jésus* that

Père Didon puts forth his two portly volumes entitled *Jésus Christ*.

Father Didon is a devout Catholic; indeed, he is one of the Preaching Brothers, and a Lecturer on Theology. Like a true son of the Church, he conforms to her sternest discipline. His book bears the Imprimatur of his ecclesiastical superiors, who declare its dogmatic part to be in conformity with Catholic teaching, besides paying the author some handsome compliments which are rather outside their province. There is also a Letter from the Holy Father himself. The old gentleman who is nominally chosen by God, though actually elected by the Cardinals, to sit in St. Peter's chair, eulogises Father Didon's book, and bestows from the bottom of his heart the Apostolical Benediction on the meritorious author, who has "applied himself with such laudable care to putting in the proper light the holy person of our Divine Redeemer." This is sonorous enough in our English version, but still more so in the Italian of the Pope's secretary, the Cardinal Rampolla. The fine old-cruised-port style of writing is one of the trade-tricks of the Papacy.

Father Didon's book is in two volumes, containing nearly a thousand pages. The price is sixteen francs—a little over thirteen shillings. This puts it beyond the reach of multitudes who have read the cheap edition of Renan. Yet it seems to be selling, for our own copy is marked "twenty-third thousand."

Compared with Renan's, the style of Father Didon is of the cart-wheel order. But there is unfairness in the comparison. Three-fourths of the work is rather preaching than writing. A more proper comparison would be with Archdeacon Farrar's *Life of Christ*. Here we think the Frenchman has a decided advantage. The French language does not lend itself so readily as English to the pompous inflation, the tumid rhetoric, which are the chief characteristics of Archdeacon Farrar's book—and, indeed, of all his writings. Allowing for the Catholic bias, we should say that Father Didon's work, if translated into English, would command a large sale, and take the first place among such productions.

But what, after all, is the value of such productions to any thinking being? Strip works like Farrar's and Didon's of their sermonising, and all their real contribution to a *Life of Christ* would hardly fill a good-sized pamphlet. It cannot be too sternly repeated that all we shall ever know about Jesus Christ—if, indeed, we know anything—is contained in the four Gospels. In saying this we generously sweep away the "apocryphal" Gospels, which delighted the early Christians, but are now the opprobrium of both Protestants and Catholics; although it must be said that writers like Father Didon, while repudiating these infantile productions of early Christian imagination, do not scruple to borrow from them any striking feature that may serve to heighten the "wonderful story" of their Lord and Savior. Well then, if the four Gospels contain all we can ever know about Jesus, why are they not left as they

stand? Why be always taking them to pieces, and putting the fragments into a fresh shape? Is it not impertinence, not to say blasphemy, to deal in this fashion with writings that were "inspired by the Holy Ghost"?

Of making books there is no end. Too many volumes (of a sort) are already written about Jesus Christ. All that can now be of the least service is scientific criticism of the text of the Gospels, further light upon their date and authorship, fresh tracing of the relation between Christianity and the Judaic and Pagan systems, and a more rigid examination of the alleged references to an "historical" Jesus in writers of the first century after the Crucifixion. Nothing but book-making can result from a design like Father Didon's, who tells us that he has taken the pearls of the Gospels and put them in a fresh setting.

The very first paragraph of Father Didon's book shows the uncritical spirit in which he writes. "Jesus Christ," he says, "is the great name in history. There are others for whom men die, but he is the only one who is adored among all nations, all races, and through all ages."

This is the language of reckless panegyric. Buddhism and Mohammedanism have both extended through many ages, and attracted the devotion of different nations and races. The fact is, Father Didon writes as a Catholic; to him the world is Christendom, it has been one religion, and that religion has but one Church. The moment he lifted his eyes over the three-fourths of the world that Christianity does not embrace, he would see the insular absurdity of his opening sentence.

Equally absurd is the penultimate paragraph of the first section of his Preface. "If Jesus," says Father Didon, "was in reality no more than the man who was despised by Jews and Pagans, how has he ploughed the earth so deeply? how did he found a religion which dominates the world?"

Questions like these only beg the whole issue. They also imply what sceptics deny. Christianity is much more than the person and teaching of Jesus. We defy Father Didon to discover the basis of half his Catholic dogmas in the words of the Nazarene. For the rest, it would be just as easy for a Buddhist or a Mohammedan to say, "If the founder of my faith was only an ordinary man, how has he ploughed the earth so deeply? how did he found a system which has so many adherents, and which has subsisted through so many centuries?" The Buddhist might even say, "My faith includes more people than yours; it existed before yours, and will probably outlive it."

Even more than absurd is another remark of Father Didon's. It is positively childish. "Those who have combated the reality of the history of Jesus," he says, "have surely not seen Palestine; if they had gone over it, with the Gospels in their hand, they would have understood that the Gospels are not invention."

According to this remark, a visit to Palestine in A.D. 1891 will assure the traveller of what happened there between A.D. 1 and A.D. 33! It is a pity that Father Didon does not tell us what particular organ is able to discern truth from falsehood across a chasm of nearly two thousand years, by merely standing on the locality of the narrative. Certainly the traveller may find Bethlehem, but will it furnish him with any proof of the miraculous birth of Christ? Certainly he may find the sea of Tiberias, but will it furnish him with any proof that Jesus walked on the water? Certainly he may find Jerusalem, but will it furnish him with any proof of the Resurrection? Certainly he may find Bethany, but will it furnish him with any proof of the Ascension?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

RELIGION AND MAGIC.

At bottom religion and magic are one and the same. The earliest religion being the belief in spirits, the earliest worship is an attempt to influence or propitiate them by means that can only be described as magical; the belief in spirits and in magic both being founded on dreams. Medicine men and sorcerers were the first priests. Herbert Spencer says (*Principles of Sociology*, § 589): "A satisfactory distinction between priests and medicine men is difficult to find. Both are concerned with supernatural agents, which in their original form are ghosts; and their ways of dealing with these supernatural agents are so variously mingled, that at the outset no clear classification can be made." Among the Patagonians the same men officiate in the "threefold capacity of priests, magicians and doctors"; and among the North American Indians the functions of "sorcerer, prophet, physician, exorciser, priest, and rain doctor" are united.

The most esteemed persons among the Jews were magicians. Moses tried his skill against the Egyptian conjurers, and with his magic rod divided the water of the Red Sea and drew water from a rock. Samuel was ruler, priest, and weather doctor. Elijah was a corpse-restorer and rain-compeller. The Urim and Thummin were magical articles used in divination (see Numb. xxviii., 21; 1 Sam. xxiii., 9; xxx., 7-8). The ephod and phylacteries were magical amulets. The holy oil, water of jealousy, brazen serpent, and teraphim were all magical. Jesus Christ was a great wonder-worker or magician, casting out devils, turning water into wine, healing diseases even by the touch of his magical robe, and finally levitating from earth.

In process of time the priest displaces the sorcerer, while still retaining certain of his functions. The gods of a displaced religion are regarded as devils and their worship as sorcery. Much of the persecution of witchcraft which went on in the ages when Christianity was dominant was really the extirpation of the surviving rites of Paganism. It is curious that it is always the more savage races that are believed to have the greatest magical powers. Dr. E. B. Tylor says:

"In the middle ages the name of Finn was, as it still remains among seafaring men, equivalent to that of sorcerer, while Lapland witches had a European celebrity as practitioners of the black art. Ages after the Finns had risen in the social scale, the Lapps retained much of their old half-savage habit of life, and with it naturally their witchcraft, so that even the magic-gifted Finns revered the occult powers of a people more barbarous than themselves."*

The same writer in his article on Magic in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, says:

"Among the early Christians, sorcery was recognised as illegal miracle; and magic acts such as turning men into beasts, calling up familiar demons, raising storms, etc., are mentioned, not in a sceptical spirit, but with reprobation. In the changed relations of the state to the church under Constantine, the laws against magic served the new purpose of proscribing the rites of the Greek and Roman religion, whose oracles, sacrifices, and auguries, once carried on under the highest public sanction, were put under the same ban with the low arts of the necromancer and the witch. As Christianity extended its sway over Europe, the same antagonism continued, the church striving with considerable success to put down at once the old local religions, and the even older practices of witchcraft; condemning Thor and Woden as demons, they punished their rites in common with those of the sorceresses who bewitched their neighbors and turned themselves into wolves or cats. Thus gradually arose the legal persecution of witches which went on through the Middle Ages under ecclesiastical sanction both Catholic and Protestant."

But the religion of Christendom contained scarcely less elements of magical practices than that of

* *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., p. 103.

Paganism. In the early Christian Church a considerable section of its ministry was devoted to the casting out of devils. Regulations concerning the same were contained in the canons of the Church of England. The magical power of giving absolution and remission of sins is still claimed in our national Church. Throughout the course of Christianity, indeed, magical effects have been ascribed to religious rites and consecrated objects.

Viktor Rydberg, the Swedish author of an interesting work on *The Magic of the Middle Ages*, says (p. 85): "Every monastery has its master magician, who sells *agni Dei*, conception billets, magic incense, salt and tapers which have been consecrated on Candlemas Day, palms consecrated on Palm Sunday, flowers besprinkled with holy water on Ascension Day, and many other appliances belonging to the great magical apparatus of the Church."

Bells are consecrated to this day, because they were supposed to have a magical effect in warding off demons. Their efficacy for this purpose is specifically asserted by St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest doctor of the Church, who lays it down that the changeableness of the weather is owing to the constant conflict between good and bad spirits.

Baptism is another magical process. There are people still in England who think harm will come to a child if it is not christened.* In Christian Baptism we have the magical invocation of certain names, those of the ever blessed Trinity. The process is supposed to have a magical efficacy, and is as much in the nature of a charm as making the sign of the cross with holy water, or the unction with holy oil, as a preparation for death. So important was it considered that the saving water should prevent demonic power that holy squirts were used to bring the magical liquid in contact with the child before it saw the light!

The doctrine of salvation through blood is nothing but a survival of the faith in magic. Volumes might be written on the belief in the magical efficacy of blood as a sacrifice, a cement of kinship, and a means of evoking protecting spirits. Blood baths for the cure of certain diseases were used in Egypt and Mediæval Europe. Longfellow alludes to this superstition in his *Golden Legend*:

The only remedy that remains
Is the blood that flows from a maiden's veins,
Who of her own free will shall die,
And give her life as the price of yours!
This is the strangest of all cures,
And one, I think, you will never try.

The changing of the bread and wine of the Christian sacrament into the body and blood of the God is evidently a piece of magic, dependent on the priestly magical formula. The affinities of Christian communion with savage superstition are so many that they deserve to be treated in a separate article. Meanwhile let it be noticed that priests lay much stress upon the Blessed Sacrament, for it is this which invests them with magical functions and the awe and reverence consequent upon belief therein.

Formulated prayers are of the nature of magical spells or invocations. A prayer-book is a collection of spells for fine weather, rain, or other blessings. The Catholic soldier takes care to be armed with a blessed scapular to guard off stray bullets, or, in the event of the worst coming, to waft his soul into heaven. The Protestant smiles at this superstition, but mutters a prayer for the self-same purpose. In essence the procedure is the same. The earliest known Egyptian and Chaldean psalms and hymns are spells against sorcery or the influence of evil spirits, just as the invocation taught to Christian children—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
Bless the bed that I lie on.

The belief in magic, though it shows a survival in

Theosophy, as ghost belief does in Spiritism, is dying slowly; and with it, in the long run, must die those religious doctrines and practices founded upon it. No magic can endure scientific scrutiny. Almost expelled from the physical world, it takes refuge in the domain of psychology; but there, too, it is being gradually ousted, though it still affords a profitable area for charlatanry.

Lucian has a story how Panocrates, wanting a servant, took a door-bar and pronounced over it magical words, whereon it stood up, brought him water, turned a spit, and did all the other tasks of a slave. What is this, asks Emerson, but a prophecy of the progress of art? Moses striking water from the rock was inferior to Sir Hugh Middleton bringing a water supply to London. Jesus walking on the water was nothing to crossing the Atlantic by steam. The only true magic is that of science, and this is no magic at all. J. M. WHEELER.

PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

THE Organisation Committee held two sittings in June and is likely to hold two in July. Its work is growing, and I shall not be surprised if before long it has to sit weekly. In its first sitting it dealt with several matters of business, including the duties and remuneration of the Secretary. After a full discussion it was decided—and this has been endorsed by the Executive—that Mr. Stanley Jones should be absolutely under the control of the Committee. All his lecturing engagements, on Sundays as well as other days, will be made through the Committee. Branches will pay him nothing, either in London or in the country. He will be sent by the Committee, representing the Executive, and with the Committee the Branches will have to make the financial arrangements for his lectures. The aim will be, as far as possible, to let the Branches have his services free. This necessitates an increase of Mr. Jones's salary, which is fixed for the present at two guineas and a half per week.

At the second sitting the Organisation Committee dealt with the resolutions passed at the Conference and prepared a report for the Executive. On my own suggestion, the question of the proposed Monthly Magazine was deferred till August. There is no immediate hurry, and the Society's hands are just now full of business.

During the past month I have attended many meetings of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company, the Memorial Committee, and the N. S. S. Executive. Very important business had to be considered, which is not yet ripe for public announcement and discussion, although it will have to be dealt with openly before very long. One result of these meetings was a proposal I laid before the last special meeting of the Executive, and which was carried without a single dissentient. This proposal was to engage the Hall of Science on Sunday (morning and evening), and on Thursday evening, with the minor hall when required, for a period of one year, beginning on September 29. For such use of the premises the N. S. S. is to pay £250—a little less than £5 a week. Under this tenancy the N. S. S. will arrange for all the lectures and social gatherings, and I am desirous of seeing some classes conducted in the minor hall. Fuller details will be published shortly.

Mr. R. O. Smith, the proprietor of the Hall of Science, is resolved against continuing on the old lines, and this step was practically inevitable, unless the Secular party was prepared to lose its central meeting-place in London—a meeting-place, too, rendered historic by the struggles and triumphs of Charles Bradlaugh. Under the new arrangement,

* See Hartland's *Science of Fairy Tales*, p. 94.

which is made for twelve months, an effort will be made to organise our party in the metropolis more thoroughly. No doubt we shall render the meetings more attractive by the introduction of music. Personally I shall strain every nerve to secure success. I believe that more and more centralisation is necessary to the welfare of Secularism. This is the direction in which I have been working, and in which I shall continue to work.

At the express wish of the Executive I am going to see if anything can be done towards repealing the Blasphemy Laws, at least so far as they prevent the endowment of Freethought. The one indispensable thing is to find a member of Parliament who will take charge of a Bill.

Before concluding, let me call special attention to the two important Funds now open—the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund and the Fund for Liquidating Mr. Bradlaugh's Liabilities. All who intend to subscribe should do so quickly. Mrs. Bonner's arrangement with the creditors has to be carried out in September. The other Fund, of course, will be kept open indefinitely. But circumstances may, and probably will, arise to make some decisive action inevitable at no very distant date. For my part, I am anxious to give all who should subscribe the fullest opportunity of doing so. I therefore press the matter upon their attention. Collecting cards, also, can still be obtained; and Mr. Forder will be happy to send out prospectuses of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company, Limited, and to receive applications for shares, which are £1 each, payable 1s. on application, 1s. on allotment, and in subsequent calls of 2s. 6d. The shares are thus within the reach of all who care to assist in raising a Memorial to Charles Bradlaugh.

G. W. FOOTE.

President, National Secular Society.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE MEETING, June 24, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Moss, Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Wheeler, Forder, Ivatts, Robertson, Killick, Hunt, Warren, Bate, Samson, Heaford, Beadle, Roger, Hartmann, Easthop, Quinton, Larkin, and Jones, sec.

The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. The financial statement for the month was received. The report of the Organisation Committee was read, having reference to the Finsbury Park Branch's new hall, the new Branch in Finchley, and a monetary grant to the North Middlesex Secular Federation, to Dr. Momerie's recent lecture and Mr. Forder's illuminated address, the proposed magazine, and new tracts. A monetary grant was reported to have been made to the North-Eastern Secular Federation. The report was accepted by the Executive.

The Organisation Committee recommended the Executive to abandon the present list of special lecturers, and to request those who wish to become special lecturers under the new arrangement to send in a special application for a diploma. The recommendation was accepted.

It was arranged so that all the secretary's lecturing engagements be made through the Organisation Committee. Mr. Forder was elected a member of the Organisation Committee.

The affiliation to the Metropolitan Radical Federation then came up for discussion. Mr. Forder proposed passing to the next business; Miss Vance seconded. Mr. Standing proposed affiliating for the current year; Mr. Moss seconded. After some discussion, in which Mr. Hunt, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Robertson took part, Mr. Standing's proposition was carried. The delegates elected were Messrs. G. W. Foote, Robert Forder, George Standing and A. B. Moss.

Mr. Moss introduced a discussion on the Blasphemy Laws, and after a short conversation, Mr. Foote was desired to see whether any member of Parliament could be found to take charge of a Bill.

DONATIONS TO GENERAL FUND.—Bedlington Branch, 5s.; John Wylde, 1s.

STANLEY JONES, Sec.

ACID DROPS.

The christening of Fife's baby was a grand affair. Such an important little squaller required the services of the Archbishop of Canterbury and three other well-paid clergymen. The water with which it was sprinkled was brought from the Jordan. That ought to make Fife's baby a thorough "child of grace." We presume it has secured a reserved seat in glory.

Parnell has committed the unpardonable sin. Adultery was bad enough, but marrying Mrs. O'Shea is still worse. According to the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe, Parnell has "capped the climax of brazened horrors" by marrying "the divorced wife of a living man." Ordinary morality would say that Parnell has done the right thing, but theological morality is *extra-ordinary*.

Coroners and others are often found insufficiently acquainted with the law on affirmations. A case in point occurred at an inquest at St. Helens. Mr. Brockbank, a jurymen, objected to take the oath on the ground that he had no religious belief. The coroner said he did not think that entitled him to make an affirmation. People could only affirm who had religious scruples against taking the oath, but a man who had no religious belief could have no religious scruple. Mr. Joseph Massey, solicitor, supported the coroner; but Mr. Brockbank asked that the Act of Parliament should be consulted, whereupon the Freethinker was found to be right and the lawyers wrong.

The American Presbyterians propose revising the Westminster Confession of Faith out of all consistency. Instead of, as heretofore, hopelessly damning all heathen and infants, since there is no salvation save in the name of J. C., they now affirm that those incapable of being outwardly called are really redeemed by the aforesaid J. C. In this case it will be better to be born a heathen or die an infant than to become a Christian. In the latter case the chances are a thousand to one against your being of the elect, while the former are perfectly safe. Missionaries who take the gospel to the heathen only give them an increased chance of damnation.

Much rejoicing goes on among those who consider themselves enlightened Christians—such as the Unitarians, for instance—because certain of the cruder aspects of Calvinism are being lopped off or put out of sight. But the whole process is illogical; a little branch is cut off while the trunk remains and puts forth new shoots. The golden paved streets of the New Jerusalem are just as much a figment as the sulphurous lake of eternal fire. Jehovah is just as much a myth as Beelzebub. The old religion was all of a piece, the retained portions being just as much the offspring of imagination as those that are discarded.

A rather awkward incident occurred in a Birmingham chapel last Sunday. The preacher, in the midst of an excited peroration, suddenly stopped, covered his mouth with his hand, and disappeared, sinking inside the pulpit. A sound of groping was audible, a sigh of relief was heard, and the preacher "bobbed up serenely from below." In his excitement his teeth—artificial—had become loose and dropped upon the floor of his pulpit.

The Rev. Isaac Hill, a Congregationalist minister of Stockport, fell under a certain suspicion which often afflicts godly men, and a great part of his congregation left the chapel. About three weeks ago he went off for his usual holiday. His flock have since received a letter from him, stating that he will not return. God has "opened a way" for him in America.

The general secretary of the Y.M.C.A. reports: "There are over 7,000,000 young men in America to-day, of whom over 5,000,000 never darkened a church door. Seventy-five out of every hundred of these young men do not attend church; ninety-five out of every hundred do not belong to church, and ninety-seven out of every hundred do nothing to spread Christianity."

A religious census of Stafford has been taken by a local paper. The town has a population of over twenty thousand. The attendance at all places of religious worship was 2180 in

the morning, 2878 in the evening, or combined 5058, of whom only 2,089 belonged to the Church of England.

The Church has objected as far as possible to give any return of its income, and it is well known the clergy set down as many offsets to their income as possible. Yet according to a recent return it admits an annual income of £5,733,557, independent of fees, pew rents, offerings, etc. Of this the immense bulk, or £3,469,171, comes from ancient endowment, only £284,386 being derived from private endowments since 1703, which year, we presume, is fixed in order to include Queen Anne's Bounty. This shows that when the time comes to deal with Church endowments, the private benefactions of which it boasts so much do not demand prominent attention. But even these may be dealt with by Parliament, as anyone knows who gives anything to the Church. No gifts could be taken by the nation on the condition that it should never hereafter dispose of them as it thinks fit.

The General Baptist Association makes its protest against the violation of the ten commandments by military representatives of national authority and government. If the Association holds to the Decalogue as it stands, it should keep the seventh day instead of the first, and prohibit all sculpture or making of graven images.

Our editor and sub. had a splendid passage to and from the Isle of Man in April. The weather was everything that could be desired; and had the Bishop of Sodor and Man been on board, the journey could scarcely have been more pleasant. The *Liverpool Protestant Standard*, in the following paragraph, explains to what it was the Atheists owed their protection. It says—"No less than four of the captains of the Isle of Man steamboats attend the church of St. Andrew's. No wonder there is safe sailing between Douglas and Liverpool." No doubt squalls would arise should any of these captains be tempted to visit the Liverpool Secular Hall.

Dr. Mommerie is "kicked out" at last. The Council of King's College have been "reluctantly compelled" to dismiss him from his chair of logic and metaphysics for "breaches of discipline." This is an astute move. It saves the Council the trouble and odium of a heresy-hunt. Everyone knows, however, that Dr. Mommerie is expelled because of his Freethinking. Now the last link is severed we hope he will take his revenge. He should attack orthodox tooth and nail.

At a meeting of Spiritists in St. James's Hall last week, the Rev. J. Page Hopps claimed that the Bible was full of spiritism from cover to cover. Jahveh of the Old Testament was either a band of spirits of varying grades, or a masterful spirit who took possession of this wandering tribe of fugitive slaves and assumed the name of Jehovah. From this rudimentary local god—the boss of a tribe of semi-savages—they were going on to discover the boss of the universe. But is not the one as much a figment of the imagination as the other?

Mrs. Besant has intimated her decision not to seek for reelection to the London School Board, as she intends in future to devote her energies entirely to Theosophy.

Writing on Mrs. Besant's retirement, "Urbanus" of the *London Echo* says that even those who regard the late Madame Blavatsky as an adventuress "will readily admit that the Theosophic platform is higher than the Secularist platform." Yes, it is. Theosophy is higher than Secularism as a balloon is higher than the pyramids. But balloons come down, and the pyramids don't.

Mrs. Besant seems to be an attractive subject for the religious press. All the sects would like to have her, and boast of her as "the friend of Charles Bradlaugh, you know." Here is the *Church Times* saying, "Mrs. Besant began as a Catholic, and, if she retains her reason, will no doubt end as one." The *C. T.* forgets that Catholicism offers no career to women except one of silent self-sacrifice.

Freethought refers to the new teaching of a Theosophic lady that "it is necessary to a full and complete practice of the precepts of Theosophy that a man should be conjugally inert." Our Frisco contemporary knows this sort of thing at first sight. Mr. Macdonald says:—"I have heard this doctrine

before. Some years ago a man came preaching it in New York. Of course he was a reincarnation of Jesus, Moses, and the patriarchs. He made a convert of a lady who had preceded her husband thence from the far West, so that when the latter had spurred over the plains to meet the female of his kind, she received him courteously but coldly, and told him to suppress his carnal nature. He must go away, she said, and not return to her society until deep thought had eradicated the pineal gland and he was selfless. He did so, and shortly thereafter the woman and the prophet set up housekeeping. The prophet has since established himself in San Francisco, and is said to be fairly successful in separating husbands and wives. Observation teaches that priestly celibacy, Theosophic celibacy, and Koreshan celibacy are for the aged and the uninitiated."

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," said Jesus Christ. The Archbishop of Prague differs from J. C. He deposited 100,000 marks in the Bohemian Agricultural Bank, and has lost "the blooming lot" through the president's embezzlement.

The West Ham Branch had a concert in aid of its funds. It had also the audacity to send two tickets to the local M.P., Mr. Forrest Fulton. Of course they were returned. Mr. Fulton has "no sympathy with Secularism," and the longer he lives the more convinced he becomes that "the only sure foundation on which we can rest our actions here is a reverent belief in the sacred truths of the Christian religion." Well now, one of the sacred truths of the Christian religion is that poverty is a blessing, and that a rich man stands as good a chance of getting into heaven as a camel does of going through the eye of a needle. We shall believe in Mr. Forrest Fulton's sincerity when he sells all he has and gives the proceeds to the—say the West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society.

From *Freethought* (San Francisco) we see that the Pittsburg authorities have refused to permit Colonel Ingersoll to speak on Sunday evening to an audience charged for admission. Yet several Roman Catholic churches in the same city charge for admission every Sunday in the year. Some months ago two and five dollars were charged for admission to a discourse by Cardinal Gibbons. Evidently there is one law for Christians and another for Freethinkers in Pittsburg.

In the Old Testament days they often wanted rain. Sometimes they wanted it badly. Once there was no rain for three years. It sounds strange, but 'tis as true as the Bible. Well, when they wanted rain they used to pray for it, or get a prophet to do the praying for them. But that fine old method has somehow fallen into contempt in this enlightened age. We actually read that over at Washington the Agricultural Department has been experimenting in the sky. A balloon was sent up into the clouds, where it exploded, and a downpour of rain occurred the same evening, though no one is sure it was the result of the explosion. Anyhow, the godly methods of old are dying out, and the devilish spirit of carnal science is captivating men's minds.

The majority of the trustees of the Secular Hall at Melbourne being in opposition to Mr. Symes, they were not only able to obtain possession of the building, but went the length of erasing his name from the inscription on the memorial stone. The incident is a significant warning against making the direction of a hall company too inclusive.

"Some few years ago Mr. Foote, the Secularist, was prosecuted and imprisoned for publishing some comic illustrations in connection with the history of the Jewish God of the Old Testament. We seem to have made some advance in toleration since then. At this moment the dead walls of the kingdom are placarded with a caricature of one of the comic stories in the Old Testament, treated with irresistible humor by Colonel Ingersoll—the animals going into the Ark. The caricaturist on this occasion is not Mr. Foote, but the well-known firm of matchmakers, Bryant and May. Their comic animals are each carrying into the Ark a box of matches, amid demonstrations of general zoological rejoicings. Will Messrs. Bryant and May be prosecuted for blasphemy, or have the public ceased to believe in these old Oriental fables?"—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

Lydia Harvey, a poor widow, has been fined half-a-crown

by the Gloucester County Sessions magistrates for selling newspapers on a Sunday. She pleaded that it was her only means of living. But that is a small matter to the gentlemen on the Bench. They all of them, we suspect, break the Sabbath for their pleasure; but to do so for a living is an awful sin against God. Better die, Lydia Harvey, and go to heaven—if you can find the route, and it must be admitted that the parsons' directions are rather hazy.

The Catholics have resolved, despite being in a hopeless minority, to protest against the Free Education Bill. A resolution was passed at Manning's house condemning it. The Cardinal is astute enough to see that in the long run free education will be no advantage to the Church.

In the Middle Ages the Pope assigned heathen territory to his Catholic subjects of Spain or Portugal just as he pleased. He cannot do this just now, but he has consecrated to the Most Holy and ever-blessed Virgin Mary the Free State of the Congo, which owns the suzerainty of King Leopold of Belgium. What does pious Stanley think of this?

Dr. Parker is on the war path. He denounces the Emperor of Germany for wanting to visit the Naval Exhibition on a Sunday. If the Emperor wanted to visit Parker's Exhibition on Sunday it would be different. Of course!

The Emperor of Germany was going to visit the Naval Exhibition on Sunday, July 12, but the visit is now postponed, probably because he has been informed that the London Secular Federation Excursion is on that date. The steamboat will pass the Naval Exhibition, and the Freethinkers of London would have seen the pious Emperor enjoying himself on the Lord's Day.

Six hundred manuscript pages of Mrs. Booth's autobiography have been lost. General Booth is much concerned. Should he not put up special prayers for their recovery?

General Booth is a law-abiding man. He makes a boast of it. But he "can't abide" laws that interfere with his "Army." He tells the Eastbourne Salvationists to go on fighting the magistrates, who won't allow bands in the streets on Sundays. Of course, they *must* go on. Booth knows that the "Army" is nothing without a band. Anyhow, it must beat a big drum. Its policy is to "make a joyful noise before the Lord," and there is no doubt about the *noise*.

We always understood that Sir F. Burton was a Freethinker. Lady Burton, however, who is herself a Catholic, has had him buried, with her own Church rites. She has also destroyed the manuscript of a translation from the Arabic, on which he had been occupied for ten years. Her object seems to have been to save his soul. She forgot that her husband was little likely to need "salvation" here or elsewhere.

Sir Richard Burton's niece, Miss Stisted, contributes some reminiscences of her uncle to *Temple Bar*. His parents were old-fashioned Church people, who desired he should become a clergyman. But "his parents' well-meant project came to nothing; for when about three-and-twenty he became a Deist, and although, as his friend Cameron truly says, no man was ever more qualified to write a critical comparison of the religions of the world, he never altered his views again." This is at least decisive as to Burton's rejection of Christianity.

The credulity of mankind is something marvellous. The Rev. W. P. Brown, of Independence, Mo., is selling off his effects for cash, with which he purposes going to Jerusalem in order to be present at the second coming of Christ. He says the event is not far distant, because the Jews are rapidly returning to Jerusalem. Oh, that all believers were inspired to go there also!

Mr. W. W. Pocock, of London, has given £500 to start a fund with which to provide suitable books for needy local preachers. We hope our *Bible Handbook* will be included. It is a capital book for preachers, whether needy or well-off, local or otherwise.

Mr. H. L. Hastings, the Yankee evangelist, is the author of a pamphlet on the Inspiration of the Bible, which is circulated by the hundred thousand in England. We are now told that it has not brought "much profit to the author,"

and the Rev. Edward White begs for £500 for him through the *Christian World*. Would it not be best to print the publisher's account of income and expenditure before raising money for this "first-class hardy soldier of Jesus Christ"?

The fire at Louis Tussaud's Exhibition did not destroy the collection of instruments of torture. They will still be displayed for the edification of those who need object lessons in "Christian charity."

The Rev. A. J. Pulling, late curate of Wingfield, has got off easily with six months' imprisonment for seducing a young girl of fifteen. The girl, it is stated, will shortly become a mother.

The *Church Times* calls attention to "The Parson's Prayer," a piece of verse reprinted in a halfpenny Welsh paper. It says it "comes perilously near an infringement of the Blasphemy Laws." If, as we surmise, the reprint is of one of our own *Freethinker* tracts, "The Parson's Creed," we dare say the *Church Times* is correct.

Can a lady be her own aunt? To this conundrum Theosophy replies in the affirmative. Mr. A. P. Sinnett, author of *The Occult World*, who, we suppose, has been vouchsafed a special revelation, tells in *Lucifer* about the previous incarnations of H. P. Blavatsky. He says, "Her very last incarnation before this one just completed was in the person of a member of her own recent family, an aunt who died prematurely, and that existence does not seem to have served her advancement in any important degree." This being one's aunt hardly fits in with Mr. Sinnett's own explanation that a period of usually over fifteen hundred years is spent in Devachan before a fresh re-incarnation. But then, H. P. B. was an exceptional person.

Mr. Sinnett is confident that H. P. B.'s next incarnation will be a masculine one. Indeed, he hints that there was no natural reason for her death save that she meant to re-incarnate herself by violence in some mature masculine body. We fancy H. P. B. would at any rate never select the corpus of A. P. S. That would not serve her advancement in any important degree.

A case of the Christian conversion of a Hindu boy aged 13 has excited much commotion in Bengal. The boy, Appa Row, was enticed from the guardianship of his grandfather by the Rev. H. Bird, in order that he might be brought up a Christian. An action at law was brought, and the man of God was ordered to give up the boy and prohibited from teaching Christianity or interfering with the boy's religion until he attains the age of majority. During the case it transpired that the missionaries both suborned witnesses and tampered with documents in order to prove that the boy was eighteen.

Several recent cases of a similar character have induced the zemindars of the Hooghly District to get up an "Anti-Missionary Memorial" to the Government. One thing especially complained of is the interference of missionaries at the religious fairs and festivals. These ceremonies being conducted in the open-air, the missionaries think they have the right to intrude and deliver public addresses, but the natives claim they are as much religious gatherings as if celebrated in a temple.

"Papa," asked a little boy the other day, apparently fresh from a theological controversy with some young playmates. "papa, was Christ a Jew?" "Yes." "Was he really and truly a Jew?" "Yes," was the answer. There was a long pause, and then came the comment, "Well, I always thought God was a Presbyterian."—*Truthseeker*.

Spurgeon is a great man—a very great man, but he is mortal. Anyhow he falls ill like meaner folk. The influenza got hold of him, and then he had a relapse. He has been attended by Dr. Kidd. But this is not enough. Last Monday his congregation had an all-day prayer-meeting for his recovery. This is rough on the doctor.

OBITUARY.

Died at Indianapolis, Indiana, on June 16, Laura Monroe, aged 27, the wife of H. C. Monroe of the *Ironclad Age*. She was one of the principal compositors on that Atheistic paper. We tender Dr. Monroe and his son our respectful sympathy.

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.

H. HURRELL.—(1) The sentence passed on Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant was six months' imprisonment as first-class misdemeanants. They did not go to prison, however, for Mr. Bradlaugh quashed the indictment. (2) Mr. Bradlaugh was a Freemason. We believe he belonged to a French lodge.

J. SAUNDERS.—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

P. SPENCER.—It will prove useful. Glad to hear your report of the spread of Freethought in Japan, India, and other eastern parts.

C. CROWFOOT.—See "Sugar Plums." Sunday, July 12, is the date of the London Secular Federation's Excursion.

W. WAKEFIELD.—Shall be stopped till we hear from you again. The discussion between Grant and Holyoake has long been out of print. Perhaps Mr. Forder could obtain you a second-hand copy.

TOLEMAN GARNER.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope the Leyton Freethinkers will be able to get rid of the Salvationists next time. If they come into a Freethought meeting and start a hymn, perhaps it would be well for the Freethinkers to start another tune, and beat them at their own weapons.

VERAX.—Certainly not.

H. ROWDEN wishes to know the address of a stationer who sells the *Freethinker* in East Greenwich.

J. STOKES.—No doubt your distribution of copies of this journal will do good. Peg away.

A. STRONG.—Read Professor Huxley's article in the June *Nineteenth Century*, George Smith's *Chaldean Account of Genesis* and Mr. Foote's *Noah's Flood*.

J. B.—It is a very old story. We first heard it told many years ago of a village natural.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Too warm for our columns, though witty and pointed. We have written on the Burton affair.

J. FISH.—(1) We hope the Cheshire Branch will do good work, though we see the difficulties in such a locality. (2) In heckling the candidate tell him that under the Common Law of England the propaganda of Freethought is illegal and punishable with imprisonment; that no Freethought Society can hold any kind of property or receive bequests; and ask him, as a man of honor, if he will promise to vote for any Bill that may be introduced to put Secularists on an equality with their Christian fellow citizens.

R. B. WALTON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Nenes Frereligioses—Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arme Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Vérité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Flaming Sword—Loyal American—Better Way—Reading Observer—Portsmouth Evening News—Victoria Weekly Colonist—Hull Daily Mail—Protestant Standard—Leeds Mercury—North-Eastern Daily Gazette—Madras Mail—Birmingham Daily Mail—Reynolds's Newspaper—County of Middlesex Independent—Twentieth Century.

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.

Mistakes will happen, and there was an awfully idiotic one in last week's *Freethinker*. It was announced that the London Secular Federation's river excursion would take place on Saturday, July 5. This should have been *Sunday, July 12*. Life is not long enough to discuss how the blunder got safely into print, so we just ask our readers to note the correction. Perhaps they will also pray for fine weather. Given a clear sky, and the Federation's excursion will doubtless be a big success. In addition to the Branch secretaries, the following persons are supplying tickets:—E. Pownceby, 7 Finsbury-

street, E.C.; R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.; G. Standring, bookstall, Hall of Science.

According to the tickets the boat is timed to leave London Bridge at 9. But this is rather early on a Sunday morning for people who have to come from a distance. The boat will therefore be kept waiting till 9.30.

The excursionists will provision themselves on this trip. There are too many difficulties in the way of providing a common tea for such a large number. Some arrangement will be made—of which more next week—for an *al fresco* gathering, to be addressed by Mr. Foote and other speakers.

"Our British Brethren" is the headline in the New York *Truthseeker* over a three-column article on the National Secular Society. The report of the Birmingham Conference is admirably summarised, and Mr. Foote is handsomely complimented on his leadership. "Next to Mr. Bradlaugh," the *Truthseeker* says, "Mr. Foote is the natural leader of the English Secularists." We are glad to hear that the English Secularists who have gone to America are "among the most enthusiastic and able toilers in the cause."

Referring to the villainous state of our English law, the *Truthseeker* says: "The proposed Bradlaugh Memorial Hall must be held by trustees who can, if they choose, convert it into a church. Such a contingency will be made as remote as possible, by electing no one as trustee who is not a member of the National Secular Society, but it is there, and is a constant danger." True, friend Macdonald; and if you bear this in mind you will understand why the President of the N. S. S. set his face like a flint against the inclusion on the Memorial Committee of any outsiders, however able, eloquent, or estimable.

H. O. Pentecost's *Twentieth Century* sustains its character and we hope its circulation. The last number to hand notices the increase in the membership of the National Secular Society. The editor contributes a spirited discourse on our baccarat scandal.

Colonel Ingersoll seems to be returning to the platform. He is a born orator, and we always doubted his ability to keep off the rostrum. His recent lecture at Chicago on "Shakespeare" was a tremendous success. This is what the *Chicago Tribune* says: "Col. Ingersoll's rosy face is always welcome in this town, and when he tosses his hollyhocks of eloquence from a public stage, they are eagerly grasped and carried home in the bosoms of a good many thousands of persons. But the crowd that heard his lecture on Shakespeare last night was by far the biggest that he ever spoke before in a public hall. . . . His reception last night was enthusiastic. The audience was enthralled from the beginning, and when he left the stage he was followed by a roar of applause, and a cannonade of cheers that was maintained for five minutes after the close of the lecture."

One passage of Ingersoll's lecture on Shakespeare was as follows:—"More than three centuries ago the greatest of the human race was born. He was not of supernatural origin. There were no celestial pyrotechnics. The cradle in which he was rocked was canopied by no myths and miracles." This passage was too much for the *Inter-Ocean*, which devoted a whole-column article to denouncing Ingersoll for striking "a heedless, heartless, cruel blow" at "persons educated in veneration of the truth and traditions of Christianity." Poor persons! How it must have shocked them to hear a simple statement of fact!

The Life of Ernest Jones seems likely to be written at last. The biography is to be followed by his poetical writings. A committee of publication has been formed in Lancashire, and Ernest Jones's eldest son is taking an active part in the matter.

Mr. Moncreu D. Conway has completed his Life of Thomas Paine, and the work will be published by the Putnams in September.

The Sunday Society held its sixteenth annual meeting at Lord Brassey's house on Saturday, June 27, the chair being occupied by Mr. Brunner, M.P. Mr. Mark H. Judge, the hon. sec., read a very encouraging report. The chairman

said (we quote from the *Daily News*) that "He found those who know least about the Continental Sunday denounced it the most. It was infinitely preferable to the British Sunday of the slums with its deadening vacuity and debauchery."

The Battersea Branch held its quarterly meeting last Sunday; most of the old officers were re-elected. The balance-sheet showed a small sum on the right side. The tea at 5.30 was a great success, as was also the evening's entertainment, which consisted of two farces by the Battersea Secular Dramatic Club, some songs and recitations, finishing up with a few dances. During the interval between the tea and entertainment, Mr. G. Suambook lectured to a good audience at the Battersea Park gates. The Sunday evening lectures of this Branch will be delivered outdoors until the end of September.

Dr. Mommerie's impeachment of the corruption of the Church, which, if he only knew it, is an impeachment of Christianity, has occasioned so much talk that it is by request repeated at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, this Saturday (July 4).

The Leyton Branch is a young one, but is doing good work at its open-air lecture station, and we hope will be well supported by the local Freethinkers. Last Sunday morning a lecture was delivered by Mr. Toleman-Garner, and listened to quietly and attentively except for the spiritual interruptions of one Christian. One opponent came up for discussion, but before he had said much the local squad of Booth's Army got on the edge of the meeting and started yelling "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." These noisy blood-and-fire soldiers were asked to desist, but they wouldn't; in fact, they sang verse after verse, and broke up the meeting in disorder. These are the people who cry out, "Persecution!" and call on heaven and earth to witness their wrongs, when they are prevented from taking possession of the public streets.

The *Echo*, which gave Spurgeon's manifesto as "A Voice from the Dark Ages," also prints a comment from Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, who points out that although Calvinism is horrible, it is nevertheless the logical result of Christian Theism. He says—"Messrs. Spurgeon and Co. seem to be inhuman, but logical; and their Christian opponents seem to be humane, but illogical. The only way out of the dilemma is, I think, the path that leads right away from all forms of Theism."

Mr. Symes has appealed in the law case by which he lost the use of the Hall of Science, and meantime has secured premises, formerly belonging to the Y.M.C.A., at Russell-street, Melbourne, where he lectures as usual every Sunday.

Wilhelm Steinitz, who ranks as foremost chess-player in the world, has given, in the *Chess Magazine* of New York, some reminiscences of Mr. Bradlaugh as a chess-player. He confirms the reports of Mr. Bradlaugh's mastery at "the king and queen of games," and adds: "He was also a skilful amateur in other scientific games, and notably in checkers or draughts, as the game is called in England, in which he belonged to the rank of masters."

Mr. John E. Remsburg, who has delivered Freethought lectures to nearly half a million of people in the United States, and has put forward many smart little works on behalf of the cause, has now put forward his best work of all in the person of his son, G. J. Remsburg, who has taken to the Freethought platform while still a minor. We have noticed some contributions of this young man to the *Truthseeker* before now, and trust he will have before him a long life of useful labor in the Freethought cause.

The Reading Branch has its annual excursion to-day (July 5). The members and friends go to Cookham by the steamboat "Fashion." All the tickets were disposed of soon after they were printed.

The Birmingham Branch has its annual picnic to-day (July 5). The party starts from Snow Hill station at 10.30. There will be tea at the Fountain Inn, Clent, at 4. Clent can be easily reached from all places between Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

What on earth are we coming to? On Sunday last (Sunday, mark you) the Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches played a cricket match, and spent "a very enjoyable

afternoon." To-day (July 5) they play a return match. If judgments are about, the survivors are desired to communicate with us as early as possible on Monday.

The Education Department has issued a valuable paper on the working of the free school system in America, France and Belgium, by J. G. Fitch. Throughout the United States elementary instruction is free and secular. "The local laws are universally framed on the supposition that the religious nurture of children should be left wholly to the family and to the churches." In France also education is secular, but not in Belgium, where they are not quite free, although the fees paid by parents amount to little more than three per cent.

The *Missionary Review* dolefully relates that "all the six hundred native newspapers in India, except half a dozen, may be set down as inimical to Christianity. Organisations, modelled after the Christian Tract Societies, have been established, and are in active operation. The Freethought Depôt in Madras issues a list of one hundred and twenty-four separate works, including thirty-four publications of Mr. Bradlaugh, nineteen of Mrs. Besant, sixteen of Colonel Ingersoll, and others of Paine, Voltaire, and other well-known infidels."

The directors of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art have been well satisfied with the behavior of the visitors now the museum is open on Sunday. This is always the case. The Pharisees predict licence if people are accorded rightful freedom, and the prediction is always falsified. Rowdies find no natural attraction in museums. Any who do cease to be rowdies.

Otto Wettstein thinks Agnosticism is as absurd in regard to an infinite personal deity as in regard to a chimera. He says: "We do not know there is a God. No one now knows there is a God, and no one in the past has ever known there is a God—therefore there is no God. If such a being existed we would all know it. 'He' would make 'his' presence known to all. But why accept the crude notions invented by the ape men or their near relatives simply because they are handed down from generation to generation as true and authoritative? Does superior brain, and a vast accumulation of knowledge, count for nothing?"

Ingersoll, in his latest after-dinner speech, told a story of an old minister in Kentucky, who, endeavoring to impress upon his hearers the beauty of the heaven they were about to go to, provided they joined his church, after exhausting all the superlatives of which he was master, wound up by saying: "Brethren and sisters, in short, it's a regular old Kentucky place."

The *Weekly Colonist*, of Victoria, British Columbia, reports at length a debate on the Divine Origin of the Bible, between Mr. S. P. Putnam, editor of *Freethought*, and the Rev. Dr. Driver, on behalf of the Y.M.C.A. The mayor presided, and the proceedings aroused much interest. British Columbia is a region hitherto little visited by the gospel of Freethought.

The *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on Religion and Children, and also gives above a column of extracts from our Acid Drops, which thus tickle the palates of many in the Far West.

FUND FOR THE LIQUIDATION OF MR. BRADLAUGH'S LIABILITIES.

W. Brammer, 1s.; J. Atha, 1s.; J. Drinkwater, 1s.; An Individualist, 2s. 6d.; J. A. Morris, 1s.; E. Withers, 1s.; H. C. Brown, 6d.; H. Y. Wood, 5s.; C. Watts, 2s.; C. Meek, 1s.; Parker, 5s.; collected at Mrs. Thornton Smith's Lecture, £1 1s.; C. D. Moore, 2s. 6d.; Emma Jackson, £2; R. Cooper, 1s.; Newington Reform Club, £3 2s.; collected by North London Club, £1 3s. 2d.; F. G. Rice, 2s. 6d.; H. G. Darnall, 1s.; Warwick, 1s.; W. Leggett, 1s.; A. Thorne, 1s.; H. E. Crabb, 1s.; E. Ward, 1s.; E. Chapman, 2s.; H. Solomon, 1s.; Three Bees, 2s. 6d.; Per Huddersfield Branch: W. Barrett, 1s.; F. Wilkinson, 2s. 6d.; T. Haigh, 1s.; Entwistle, 2s.; E. Moorhouse, 5s.; R. Eastwood, 1s.; Mrs. Wilson, 1s.; A. Friend, £1. Manchester Branch: F. Hornett, 4s.; D. H. Ream, 5s.; J. Walker, 1s.; T. Foe, 5s.; D. Drew, £1.; J. Comperty, 3s. 6d.; S. Valentine, 5s.—W. H. REYNOLDS, treasurer, Camplin House, New Cross, London, S.E.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Luton Branch, 10s.; collected at Regent's Park, 7s.; James Read, 2s.; Mr. Morris, 1s.

VANITY.

By H. O. PENTECOST.

For a number of years I have observed active religious workers, and cannot but believe that from the Pope of Rome to the corporals in the Salvation Army, vanity—the love of distinction—is the prevailing motive power of their lives, as it is in yours and mine. Do you suppose there is no vanity in the high-buttoned coats of the clergy, or the picturesque garb of the nuns? Do you suppose there would be as many nuns as there are if it were not for the sense of importance that goes with the really becoming clothes they wear? The Church is as wise as the State in uniforming its persons of distinction. A uniform is wonderfully gratifying to human vanity. Observe the difference in the bearing of a liveried coachman and an ordinary hack-driver. Observe how high and mighty sleeping-car porters and other trainmen have become since they have been put in uniforms. How the Seventh Regiment boys would slouch along without their uniforms. They think they are fired with patriotism, but the emotion which really burns in their breasts is the consciousness of how well they look in their uniforms.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not speaking contemptuously of this vanity. I am trying to show you that it is such a power in human affairs that if you were to empty the heavens of imaginary supernatural beings, take from man the hope of personal continuance after death, destroy the very idea of morality, with its inflexible, eternal oughts and ought-nots, this human vanity, which is now the unconquered mainspring of life and conduct, would still be sufficient to lift men further and further out of the mud, to pull or push humanity on to more refined and happier conditions.

It is so necessary to our happiness to enjoy the good opinion of our fellows that if you relieve men of the idea that God's eye is upon them, and that he will reward or punish them, they will still go on, even more earnestly and laboriously, doing agreeable and useful things for the sake of the pleasant reward which awaits them among their kind here and now in this world.

I, for example, have absolutely no belief in a Supreme Being. It is all gone out of me. I have no expectation of continuing to live after I am dead. But I am so proud, so vain of my good name that, if there were nothing else to be thought of, there are certain injurious things I could not possibly do. And I am so desirous of being ranked with those who seek to make life more agreeable to others that, apart from other selfish considerations, I am willing to suffer a good deal of pain and privation to win a place in my little world among those who find happiness in trying to promote happiness.

You must excuse me for speaking of myself, but, you see, I know myself better than I know anyone else; and, though I speak only of myself, I believe that I am but one among a great multitude of persons who have a similar ambition.

It is my vanity to want, when I am dead, my wife and children to say: "It is true he did not make much money or hold any office, but he was gentle in his words and kind in his treatment of us"; and to want other people to say: "Yes, perhaps he was very foolish, very much mistaken, but he did not rob or wilfully injure or humbug people." We all have our little vanities. This is mine. I do not care to be rich or great. I only care to be, and to have the reputation of being fair, honest, kind, and useful. I do not mean to say that I succeed in deserving such a reputation, but only that I wish and try to deserve it. And if other people were not specially dear to me—my wife and children, and a few others in a different way—this vanity would be a sufficiently strong motive to keep me from intentionally hurting any-

body and to make me work, in my way, for the good of others.

And I—I am only one of thousands who wish to live that way.

This world is not growing pleasanter every day because a God rules over us, but because there are so many persons who are learning the happiness of helping to make it more agreeable, and who wish to enjoy the reputation of being the benefactors of the race, and this desire will always be strong enough to keep the good work going on.

The misfortune is that men are ashamed to say, even when they know it, that they are moved by vanity. But it seems to me that since it is a fact, it is foolish to be ashamed of it. Why should we be ashamed of what is true? Why should we consider that disgraceful and something which is not true honorable? No doubt we should regret it if our vanity leads us to silliness and injuriousness instead of wisdom and usefulness. But there is nothing in vanity itself to be ashamed of. On the contrary, it should be cultivated to the highest point of refinement.

Woman should be vain enough to wish to look as pretty as possible, and men to be as handsome as possible, for whatever else that may lead to it will lead to cleanliness and good clothes, which are much more desirable in society than filth and rags.

We should all be vain enough to wish to win the good opinion of others, for that will lead us to make ourselves agreeable and useful, which is much more desirable in society than that we should be ill-natured and hurtful.

I am not vain enough to think that I have brought you all to agree with me, if you did not already, but I am vain enough to think I have said something which is worth your while to think about.

—*Twentieth Century.*

A CHRISTIAN FALLACY.

AMONG the many absurd conclusions arrived at by Christians is the one that as men of note, who are great in some things, believe in the religion of Christ, religion is proved to be true—or, if it is not proved to be true, no room is left for any person of "common sense" to doubt. Unfortunately, this sense is so common that when it is analysed it is found to be simply nonsense. Christians should, however, bear in mind that outside those persons who make a business—and a very good one too—of religion, the men of note who support it are those who have acquired fame through their ability in other things.

When an instance of religious "great men" is asked for, the Grand Old Man is generally brought to the front; but his name has been made in politics, and not in defence of Christianity. That men can be great in some things, and very little in others, there cannot be the slightest doubt; and, as such is the case, the fact that some great men are religious does not in any way strengthen the Christian or any other cause. The fact of many men whose greatness is undoubted being slaves to gross superstitions, proves the point in question; and I give a few of the most notable instances.

The great Bismarck, the "blood and iron" Chancellor, the Savior of Germany, believes in and is a slave to one of the most absurd superstitions that man can be enslaved by. He believes in the *futility of the number 13*. He is not the only one who believes in this extreme absurdity, hundreds believe it; and the great Signor Mario owned himself completely under its control. He once actually refused to sing at a house where he was engaged, because he saw over the door the fearful number 13.

Again, the "great" Napoleon (whom Christians so call through his having been very religious, but who was the greatest scoundrel of modern times whom the "living God" is the first cause of), the almost conqueror of Europe, was held fast by the relentless iron hand of superstition. He was a believer in presentiments; and it is alleged that in some cases they became true, which, after all, is not very remarkable; but it would have been so if, of all the presentiments he had, none of them "came to pass."

Napoleon III. was firmly impressed with the belief that he would be shot in St. Paul's Church-yard; but he, however, does not appear to have had as good an insight into the future as his uncle is alleged to have had.

Another religious bigot, but undoubtedly a great man, Dr. Samuel Johnson, the famous lexicographer and writer, was the victim of a ridiculous superstition which would not allow him to enter any place without putting his right foot before the left. He also used to touch every post that came in his way when he was walking out, in case some evil should befall him. The poet Cowper, and many others who are included in the category of eminent persons, have been bound tightly by superstition.

If the fact of great men being religious proves religion to be true, then the fact of great men also believing in superstition, proves superstition to be true; so that when the table salt is spilt there will be trouble in the house, and if a stray white cat comes into the house there will be more trouble, and if a harmless cricket pays a visit to the domestic hearth of the reader he will have a death in the house very shortly, and these, with others innumerable, will altogether make life not worth living. There is no drawing the line with superstition, any more than a religious man's belief in things holy can be limited. Then there are great Mohammedans, Buddhists and others, who are all equally zealous in the support of their faith as the most fanatical Christian is in the support of his; so that each of these religions are proved to be true, if the Christian religion is, by the principle given.

The explanation of there being great men who believe in religion, is that religion is only a form of superstition which has been, and is, upheld by those drones of society who have sucked the blood of the people from time immemorial—the priests.

SCEPTICUS.

IMPOSITION OF MATTHEW, CHAPTER VIII.

(From the "Cosmopolitan.")

WHEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes follow him.

And, behold, there came a vagrant and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus brought forth a cake of soap from his vest pocket, and he gave it to him, saying, I am not a public washer: go thou and clean thyself.

And immediately the vagrant hied him to the waterhole, and lo! half an hour after he was as clean as a new pin.

And Jesus saith unto him, show thyself to every man, and say, Behold what Jesus' soap hath done!

And the people all marvelled, and there was a great demand for Jesus' soap, so much that he started a manufactory, the ruins of which may be seen to this day.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion saying,

I am a man of authority, and when I say to this man go, he goeth; and to another come, and he cometh; and to another, do this, and he doeth it.

When Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said, verily I say unto you, this boss hath the confidence of his men; be ye so even as he.

When the even had come they brought unto him many that had glasses of spirits in their hands, but being teetotaler he cast out the spirits.

And the red-nosed ones marvelled, and said, what waste; behold it is a judgment upon us.

But Jesus being a conjurer, produced some cheap whisky, and altered it by magic into a red rosy liquid, and drank it, and became noisy like the others.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Elieass the prophet, saying, himself shall bear our infirmities, and get drunk like the rest of us.

Now, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart upon the other side.

That the prophecy might be fulfilled, saying, he shall be first on one side, then on the other side, and at the last on both sides.

And a certain scribe came and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest for 8s. a day and board.

And Jesus said unto him, the fishes of the sea have holes, and mosquitos of the night have nests, but the son of man is thought of such little account that he hasn't the price of a night's lodging, and not friends enough to get him into the poor-house.

And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

But Jesus said unto him, let the undertakers bury the dead, it is naught to do with us.

And the people marvelled and said, behold he hasn't the common feeling of humanity.

That it might be fulfilled of the prophet saying; and they shall come unto him asking to bury their fathers, and he shall say, blow the dead! what good are they? let us take thought of the living, for to-morrow we die.

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, inso-much that the vessel played pitch and toss like a street boy; but Jesus being used thereto, he fell asleep in himself.

And his disciples came unto him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us; we perish, and have the sea-sickness exceedingly bad.

And he said unto them, O ye incompetent seamen, sons of sea cooks, put your helm a-starboard, and hand in your jibboom.

Now, Jesus being trickey, while they were away to do these orders, he made haste to tip some oil from a barrel into the sea, and lo! the ship rode exceedingly smoothly thereat.

And the men marvelled and said one to another, what manner of man is this that can still the waves and make the sea obey him?

And Jesus laughed in his sleeve, murmuring to himself, my disciples are of the right stamp, ignorant and credulous, and verily it won't be my fault if I don't work the racket for all it is worth.

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two men who had *delirium tremens* badly, which was believed at the time to be the work of devils.

And Jesus, taking advantage of their superstition, and being a good mesmerist, made the men whole, and, moreover, having the gift of ventriloquism into the bargain, carried on a conversation with imaginary devils, whereat the multitude marvelled and said, lo, he can "knock spots" off anything we ever saw before.

And one of Jesus' disciples, who was in the swim, had made a herd of swine violently drunk by mixing cheap whisky with their swill, and behold, Jesus made believe to drive the devils into the swine; whereupon the people marvelled among themselves, and it is not known to this day how the thing was done.

That it might be fulfilled which was written by the writers of Revelation, saying, and behold a red bull with four horns shall appear, and the whole land from Beersheba to Dan, and from Patagonia to Borneo, shall be made desolate by a she-wolf with ten legs which shall spit blue fire.

And behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him they besought him that he would leave their coasts.

And Jesus answered and said, walkers in darkness, followers of the ten-eared beast whose vomit is wickedness, it is not meet for me to be here. Ye will not take free entertainment gratis in the open, but must needs grumble because ye know not the wherefore thereof; what would ye have done had I charged ye a shekel a head in some theatre? Ye of little faith, children of your grandfathers' father go ye home and keep the even tenor of your way.

And Jesus, being full to bursting of disgust, cursed them with a grievous curse, saying, may your fourteenth child be born with a harelip, and may the locusts turn from your grass as from a plague. And immediately he stamped angrily with his feet in the dust, the mark whereof is seen to this day.

And the people fled as if Mephistopheles were after them; and the wise men have handed down that thereupon he called for his balloon, and departed into the firmament.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the prophet saying, he shall rise like the wind, and play hide and seek with the clouds.

ST. MATT. SECUNDUS.

A man who caught the minister kissing his wife the other day, says that these clerical errors have got to stop.

Old Spiritualist: "That coat you sold me is all going to pieces." Dealer: "Mein frient, you go to doo many off dose seances. Dose spirits dake a vancy to dot fine coat und dey dematerialise it so as to haf it for dereselves."

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): Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, musical and dramatic entertainment (tickets 3d.). Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.
 Camberwell — 61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "The Anatomy of Jesus."
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Dangers Menacing Society."
 West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Hell Up to Date." Thursday, at 8, open debate.
 West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon Road (close to Latimer Road Station): Friday at 8.30, social meeting.
 Westminster—"Duke of Ormonde," 13 Prince's Street: 7.30, half-yearly general meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: Mr. F. Haslam, 11.15, "Who was Jesus and what did he Teach?"; 7.15, "How I became a Freethinker."
 Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. Charles Johnson, a Freethought lecture.
 Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "Is there any Efficacy in Prayer?"
 Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Jesus Up to Date." Monthly meeting of members after the lecture.
 Edmonton (corner of Angel Road): 7, Mr. F. J. Boorman, "The Evolution of Man."
 Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. C. Durrant, "Christianity"; 3.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Religion is Dying—Is Humanity?"
 Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Miracles."
 Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Has the Religion of Christ been of Benefit to the World?"
 Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Basis of Secularism."
 Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Solar Origin of Christianity."
 Lambeth (corner of Belvedere Road, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "When and Where was Jesus Born?"
 Leyton (open space near Vicarage Road, High Road): 3.15, Mr. Sam Soddy, "Bible Difficulties Considered."
 Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge Road): 11.30, Mr. J. Rowney will lecture.
 Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Miracles: are they Credible?"
 New Southgate—Betstyle Bridge; 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Secularism at Work."
 North Finchley (opposite "The Swan"): 7, a Freethought lecture.
 Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "The Atonement."
 Old Southgate (on the Green): 7.30, Mr. Sam Standing and others.
 Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Basis of Secularism."
 Regents Park (near Gloucester Gate): 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Philosophy of Secularism."
 Stratford—Matthew's Park Estate, Ham Park Road: 3.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Moral Fables."
 Tottenham (corner of West Green Road): 3.30, Mr. F. J. Boorman, "The Origin of Christianity."
 Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Science and the Bible"; 3.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Heaven Hereafter."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. F. J. Boorman, "Who was Jesus?"

COUNTRY.

Liverpool — Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne Street: Mr. Charles Watts, 11, "Secularism: its Twofold Advantage"; 3, "The False Claims of the Bible"; 7, "Is Unbelief a Crime?"
 Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints': Mrs. Thornton Smith, 11, "Secularism: what it means"; 3, "Is the Deluge Story Credible?"; 6.30, "The Atonement."
 Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Brumage, farewell discourse. July 9, at 8, half-yearly meeting of members.
 Rochdale — Secular Hall, Milkstone Road: 6.30, members' business meeting, final arrangements for picnic party to Whalley.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: 7, Mr. James Weston will give an account of his late visit to Egypt.
 Stalybridge—Mr. J. Taylor's, 12 Bayley Street: 7, committee meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bradford—Shipley Glen (near Ariel Flight): 3, Mr. H. Smith, "Secularism and Cruelty—a Reply to the Bishop of Chester."
 Hull—Corporation Field: 2.30, Mr. G. E. Naewiger, "Thomas Paine: his Life and Labors."
 Rochdale—Town Hall Square: 2.45, a lecture.
 South Shields—Market Place: 7, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Moral Reasons for Rejecting Christianity."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—July 5, morning, Clerkenwell; afternoon, Victoria Park; 12, morning, Woolwich; 19, morning, Westminster; afternoon, Leyton. July 26 to Aug. 9, Holiday Tour. Aug. 16, morning, Battersea; 23, morning, Westminster; 30, morning, Woolwich. Sept. 6, morning, Clerkenwell; 13, morning, Bethnal Green; afternoon, Victoria Park; 20, morning, Westminster.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley Road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—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.—July 5, morning, Plaistow Green; 19, morning, Kingsland Green; 26, morning, Battersea.

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