

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SCOTCHED, NOT SLAIN.

Those who have read our previous articles on the Holy Coat exhibitions at Trèves and Argenteuil may think that enough space has been devoted to such a ridiculous subject. It is possible, however, that the present article will induce them to alter that opinion.

Hitherto we have treated this outburst of Christian superstition with jocosity, but there is a serious aspect of it which must not be neglected. Christianity has often made Freethinkers laugh, but not unfrequently it has made them weep tears of blood. Absurdity is not always a laughing matter. There was a comical side to the orthodox persecution of Charles Bradlaugh—but it killed him. Bigotry and superstition are fit subjects for jest and ridicule; when they gain power, however, they are apt to substitute agony for laughter. Celsus ridiculed Christianity in the second century; in the fourth his writings were absolutely destroyed, and those who shared his opinions, and dared to express them, were on the high road to the prison and the stake.

More recent events teach the same lesson. Thomas Paine treated Christianity not only with trenchant argument, but also with brilliant derision. For this he suffered ostracism and calumny, and for publishing the *Age of Reason* Richard Carlile, his wife, his sister, and his shopmen rotted in English gaols. The *Freethinker* derided Christian absurdities, and its conductors were sent to herd with criminals in a Christian prison. Nearly everyone thought, as Sir James Stephen declared in a legal text-book, that the Blasphemy Laws were obsolete; but it was proved by the inexorable logic of fact that laws are never obsolete until they are repealed. While the Blasphemy Laws exist they are always liable to enforcement. They are the standing menace of an absurd creed to those who smile at it too ostentatiously.

Let us extend the same line of reflection to this Holy Coat business. Contemptible as it is to the eye of reason, it excites the piety of millions of persons who never reasoned on religion in the whole course of their lives. Hundreds of thousands of men and women will visit these sham relics of a Savior whose own existence is open to dispute. Superstition will be stirred to its depths. The bestial instinct of spiritual slavery inherited from ancient semi-human progenitors will be intensely stimulated. The sacred function of priests will be heightened and intensified. Nor must it be forgotten that the pecuniary offerings of the pilgrims will fill the coffers of Holy Mother Church, who promises heaven to her dupes and seizes wealth and power on earth.

Superstition is scotched, but not slain. It has life enough to be a peril to civilisation. The faith which wrecked "the grandeur that was Greece and the glory that was Rome"—the faith which buried the science, art, philosophy and literature of antiquity under a monstrous heap of brutal rubbish, out of which they were slowly and painfully excavated after the lapse of a thousand years—this same faith is still

dangerous to the highest welfare of mankind; to its reason, its conscience, its sense of dignity, and its spirit of brotherhood; above all to freedom of thought, which is the sole guarantee of real and durable progress.

If we turn to Russia we see at a single glance the fruits of superstition and its twin-sister tyranny. The Czar is the head of the Church and the head of the State; not like Queen Victoria, whose sacred function is only indicated in Latin on our coinage, but in literal, prosaic fact. By means of a swarm of ignorant, and often drunken and immoral priests, the masses of the people are kept in wretched subjection—hewers of wood and drawers of water, toilers for the huge army of officials, aristocrats, and princes, and conscripts for the army; while the best and noblest, in whom there still throbs the pulse of freedom, blacken the highways to the mines of Siberia, where hell is more than realised on earth, and the dreams of sour-blooded theologians are outdone in misery and horror.

Over the rest of Europe, even in France, the secular State is often as insecure as the footsteps of travellers over thin crusts of volcanic soil. Bismarck, the Titan, whose great work, with all its defects and failings, may appeal from the clamorous passing hour to the quiet verdict of history, only kept the Catholic Church and its Jesuits in check for a generation. He could not impair its vitality nor diminish its latent power. It is in Germany that the Coat of Christ is being exhibited, with priests and professors joining hands at the brazen ceremony of imposture; in Germany that myriads of pilgrims are wending their way to the shrine of an idolatry as ignominious as anything that Christianity ever supplanted.

Even in France the one great danger to the Republic is Christian superstition. It is the Church, her priests and her devotees, that furnish the real strength of every reactionary movement. That consummate charlatan, General Boulanger, took to going to church and cultivating orthodoxy when at the height of his aspiration for power. Happily he was defeated by the men of light and leading. Happily, too, the ablest and most trusted leaders of public life in France are on the side of Freethought. It is this, more than anything else, that makes the country of Voltaire the beacon of civilisation as well as the "martyr of democracy."

Charles Bradlaugh, on a very solemn occasion, warned the Freethought party that even in England their great fight would ultimately be with the Catholic Church. He knew that superstition was scotched, but he also knew it was far from slain. While Freethinkers are laughing at this exhibition of old rags, called the Coat of Christ, they should pause for a moment to consider the serious meaning of such a grotesque display of superstition in the land of Goethe and Heine, and in the age of Darwin. Let us jest round our camp-fires, but let us grip our sword-hilts as we hear the cries, the jingle of weapons, and the tramp of men in the camp of our enemy.

G. W. FOOTE.

HEATHEN DOCTRINES OF HELL.

THE ordinary savage notion of a future state, being derived from dreams, is, like them, but a continuation and distortion of present life experiences. Generally they believe in ghosts, without holding any such abstract notions as those of the immateriality and immortality of the soul. So far as they localise the place of dead, it is in the place of the burial, often conceived as the underworld, where the sun goes at night and whence he emerges in the morning. Dr. E. B. Tylor, who remains the first authority on savage belief, says:

“Amongst the pictures into which this world has shaped its expectations of the next two great conceptions are especially to be discerned. The one is that the future life is, as it were, a reflection of this; in a new world, perhaps of dreamy beauty, perhaps of ghostly gloom, men are to retain their earthly forms and their earthly conditions, to have around them their earthly friends, to possess their earthly property, to carry on their earthly occupation. The other is that the future life is a compensation for this, where men's conditions are re-allotted as the consequence, and especially as the reward or punishment, of their earthly life. The first of these two ideas we may call (with Captain Burton) the ‘continuance theory,’ contrasting with it the second as the ‘retribution theory.’”*

Of these theories the doctrine of continuance is the earliest and most permanent, though in many races both are found to overlap. Some savage races look on annihilation as the eventual fate of most people, but not of themselves.

Dr. Tylor says (*Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 19): “In the Tonga Islands, the future life was a privilege of caste, for while the chiefs and higher orders were to pass in divine ethereality to the happy land of Bolotu, the lower ranks were believed to be endowed only with souls that died with their bodies, and although some of these had the vanity to claim a place in paradise among their betters, the populace in general acquiesced in the extinction of their own plebeian spirits.” The French countess had a similar feeling who declared that God would think twice before damning a person of quality.

The Nicaraguans, much like the Christadelphians, believed that if a man lived well his soul would ascend to dwell among the gods, but if ill it would perish with the body and there would be an end of it. The Greenlanders thought the deserving would go to a warm climate, and when they heard of hell as a place of fire wanted to get there. The Dyaks of Borneo thought that everyone whose head they get possession of will be their slave in a future life. They consequently made a religion of “head hunting,” accumulating the ghastly visages of their victims in their huts.

Savages often show indifference to life because firmly convinced, from their dreams and ghost belief, that another life follows which is the counterpart of this. The Hindu *sati*, or voluntary immolation of the widow on the funeral pile of her husband, is a well-known illustration of a widespread custom. Herodotus tells us how the Getans used to send messengers to their deities by killing them. But the notion of eternal torment is foreign to the savage mind. When told they will be burnt for ever, they always conclude they will be burnt up.

Some negroes think that after death they become white men—a curious idea found also in Australia, Tasmania, Tama, and New Guinea, in at least four distinct races.†

Some modes of death are supposed to kill the spirit as well as the body. Thus a Bushman having put to death a sorceress, dashed the head of the corpse to pieces with large stones, buried her, and made a large fire over the grave, for fear, as he explained, she

should rise again and trouble him. The Hervey Islanders believed that all who died a natural death are annihilated. Even the New Zealanders believed that a man who was eaten was destroyed both body and spirit. The same idea influenced the Californian Indian, who did not dispute the immortality of the whites who buried their dead, but could not believe the same of his own people, because they were in the habit of burning them.* Those who laugh at this as absurd should remember that ministers have preached against cremation on the ground that it will weaken the doctrine of the resurrection.

While the Jews doubtless shared in the ghost belief shown in the story of the witch at Endor, it is doubtful if they had any doctrine of immortality before the time of the Maccabees, the date of the book of Daniel. That first gives plainly the doctrine that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. xii., 2).

The Hebrew *Sheol*, which is the equivalent of the Greek *Hades*, is variously rendered “hell,” “grave,” and “pit” in the authorised version. It simply means the underworld, and with no clear ideas of reward or punishment. Thus Jacob speaks of going to Sheol unto his son (Gen. xxxvii., 35), and of bringing his gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol (xlii., 38).

The Assyrians had the belief in the underworld, and one of their chief legends was that of the descent of Ishtar into Hades. M. Lenormant traces the Assyrian conception back to the early Accadians, and quotes from an Accadian work on Magic, in which Hades is described as “the place where there is no more feeling. . . . the place where there is no blessing. . . . the tomb, the place where none can see.”†

The ancient Greek view of Hades, or the underworld, and the Roman view of Orcus, was that of a dark, cheerless place for all, ruled over by Pluto. But a distinction was made between Elysium and Tartarus in the subterranean world of shadows. In Homer the inhabitants of Hades were empty shades, whom potions of blood alone can restore to partial vitality. Well might Achilles declare he would rather serve as a day laborer tilling the soil than rule in the realm of the dead. Pindar teaches the doctrine of transmigration, the wicked finding avenging gods and penal woes until, refined, they reach the islands of the blest. Plato makes the just and unjust receive reward and punishment in the after-life. Criminals received tenfold the evil they inflicted on others. But his Tartarus was not endless. The cries of the wicked enduring punishment were terrible to the righteous souls within hearing. Contrast this sentiment with the passages I have quoted in my *Christian Doctrine of Hell*, in which Christian saints and divines have declared that the tortures of the damned will enhance the joys of the elect.

In the Augustan age the Romans discredited all ideas of after-punishment. Cicero tells us in several places that all that was told of hell were falsities. Seneca says the same—“Illo quæ nobis Inferos faciunt terribiles fabula est.” Lucretius tells us the only Acheron is that of our own life; and Juvenal, says much like Mr. Spurgeon, that no one now believes in hell.

The Egyptian doctrine of a future life was in some respects an anticipation of the Christian. There was not only the underworld, but a Hall of Judgment therein, in which the actions of the departed were exactly weighed. In one scale was placed the image of Truth, in the other the heart of the deceased with all his actions. The justified rise with Osiris and journey with him on his celestial path; the condemned sink into some vile animal form, or hell, till their sins are expiated, and another probation granted through renewed existence in human form.

* *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 68.

† Sir J. Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, chap. vi, p. 240; 1889.

* *Ibid.*

† *La Magie chez les Chaldeens*, p. 154.

In the Persian belief we may find a close parallel to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Their hell was a temporary and purifying state; and although Ahriman, the evil principle, was supposed to triumph for a period, he was to be overcome and finally subdued by Ahura-Mazda.

The Brahmans taught a belief in transmigration, but no life is endless, and all at last are absorbed in Brahm. The Bhagvat Gita expressly states that none who do good go to an evil place.

The Buddhists have terrible pictures of their hells, which are as innumerable as their heavens. But none of them are permanent. It is a central doctrine of Buddhism that all conditions, whether on earth or in the heavens or hells, are impermanent. The only escape is to reach the unconditioned Nirvana. The Mohammedans have seven hells. The first is the purgatorial hell, through which all Muslims have to pass before they enter Paradise; the second hell is for Christians; the third for Jews; the fourth for Sabeans; the fifth for Magi; the sixth for idolaters; and the seventh, which is a bottomless pit, for hypocrites. But the Koran says (Surah xcix., 7), "He who does an atom of good shall see its reward."

Isay, then, that the Christian doctrine of hell—and what that doctrine historically is I have shown in my pamphlet with that title—is the most barbarous, malignant, and atrocious doctrine ever held concerning a future state. It rose among a savage people in a time of desperation, and it has remained the tool of priestcraft and engine of superstition.

J. M. WHEELER.

PROBLEMS FOR THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

By VAN BUREN DENSLOW.

(Concluded.)

But those of them who have read anything of the physiology of procreation know that the mother has no more to do with originating human life than has the cradle, the trundle bed, or the homestead. Human life originates absolutely in the male, and the female never supplies more than a nest and nutrition for a life previously begun. But Protestantism demands for its basis that the eldest child in Mary's numerous family shall be believed to have been generated by the cradle or the homestead without the interposition of any occupant therein, as Catholicism demands that Mary shall also be believed to have grown from nothing in the same way.

Yet human nature is so constituted that millions of men and women will organise for the propagation of a faith that rests on these hysterics of unreason. Meanwhile no lasting organisation whatever is yet possible on any basis of scientific truth, or any reasonable hypothesis, nor on any creed or opinion relating to secular affairs or social interests. Whoever advocates any of the latter must do so at his own expense and to unwilling ears. Whoever helps to bolster up the former will find every wind of popular, political, literary, and social influence blowing with him, to keep alive the same fiction. Only the undemonstrable in belief, can be advocated eternally. Hence only fictions can live forever and forever.

For many years I was greatly in doubt why this preference for a known falsehood over a demonstrable truth affected so large a majority of mankind. But when I began to perceive how unripe, ill-conceived, and mistaken are all the first efforts of these same masses of men to frame any sensible or even harmless opinions upon social, economic, and secular questions, I gradually discovered that there is a long lapse between the quantity of perception required to dissolve a false theology, and the very much broader and better trained intelligence required to think, with safety and profit to society, upon questions of human rights and social welfare.

It is better that the minds of men should be occupied with harmless though fallacious illusions concerning angelic and heavenly things than that any very considerable majority in a voting republic should come to imagine that society can be reformed or poverty abolished by limitless issues of Government notes convertible into a two per cent bond, as advocated by Edward Kellogg, or by the abolition of capital, or the taxation of rent, or by any other formula for razing the walls of Jericho to the ground by blowing on a ram's horn.

The Church's right to be, and power to sway, belongs to the same category as the right of Shakespeare and the theatre, or of Charles Dickens and the story paper. In none of these cases does the right rest on the historic truthfulness of the thing taught. On the contrary, very often the falseness of the bases the more fruitful is the result.

So long as the false allures by its romantic force and the true kills by its bald, dead bluntness—so long as the illusory call forth the affections, refines the sentiment, entertains the languid, and cheers the despondent, while the literal truth saddens, irritates, discourages, or tantalises, and especially so long as illusions, if they be such, concerning God, the angels, and the future life hold the minds of men away from the complexities of social inequality which their vanity, their impatience, and their indolence would combine to prevent them from comprehending or would lead them to suppose they comprehended when they did not, just so long these illusions are essential equally to the sanity of their victims and to the welfare of society. Hence there is no material change in the conditions which Gibbon perceived to exist in the manifold religions of ancient Rome. Now, as then, they are all "to the vulgar equally true, to the philosopher equally false, and to the statesman equally useful." No one who asks recognition from the vulgar as their equal will ever be foolish enough to question them. No one entitled to recognition as a philosopher will ever condescend to respect them. And it will be long ere any who rise into position as statesmen will cease to trade favors with them.

SUNDAY MUSIC SOCIETY, LIMITED, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

THE movement for the rationalisation of Sunday, started some two years ago in Newcastle, entered upon a new sphere of activity last Friday week, when the first meeting under the registered rules was held. Last November the peculiar people who prefer vinegar over every other ingredient in their theological hash, scored a victory at the municipal elections; it was therefore deemed best to waive for the present the claim to have music performed in the parks, and on the other hand to organise the friends of a free Sunday and to conduct independent concerts. A society was formed, which a large number have signified their intention of joining, rules have been drawn up and duly registered under the Independent and Provident Societies Acts. The shares are £1 each, payable by easy instalments, and it is proposed to conduct both indoor and open-air concerts. Any profits after paying five per cent. on the capital, will be devoted to the objects of the society. At the meeting on Friday the committee was elected as follows: President, Mr. Joseph Brown; treasurer, Mr. F. Cresswell; secretary, Mr. Elijah Copland; four committee men and two auditors. The registered office is at 74 Bath-lane, where all information relative to the society may be had. If the Freethinkers of the north come forward at once and strengthen the society, the spirit of bigotry, which has for the present overclouded the prospects of Sunday music in the parks, will be speedily removed.

In the *Truthseeker* (Aug. 15) Mr. J. E. Remsburg contributes a "Bible Lesson" on the apparently puerile question, "When Did Jehosaphat Die?" We think no sensible Christian could read it without resigning belief in Bible inspiration. By an elaborate comparison of texts and Bible history, Mr. Remsburg shows that no less than sixteen different answers can be returned to this question, of which fifteen must be incorrect.

METHODIST DECLINE.

It is not so very long since the Rev. What Price Hughes as the *Sunday Chronicle* dubs him, publicly gloated over the idea that Secularism was "on its last legs" at a time when it had "been dead for some time," and remarked that the sooner "its corpse was buried, the better" it would be for the "public health."

According to the report in the *Methodist Times* of the Wesleyan Conference, which has just brought its business to a close at Nottingham, the position and prospects of the people called Methodists are not particularly bright and promising just now, and Mr. Hughes, if he has any sense of the ridiculous in his nature, must feel that in consigning the Secular Party to a premature grave, he was, not to put too fine a point on it, making an ass of himself, and must feel that he acted in the teeth of the old adage which says, "that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones." In this case as in many others, "the wish was father to the thought."

During the "Conference Conversation on the work of God," the Rev. Joseph Posnett said he "wished he could take as bright a view of things as had been taken by some that day; he confessed he could not. . . . He looked at the net increase of the Connexion. It was most cheering to hear of these local revivals, but when he saw the returns, and they only reached the figures 605, he was troubled. *They could not go on in that way.* The Connexion was like it was before the Liverpool minutes were written. The Connexion had then been going down. In 1880 there was a decrease of 5828. He happened to see in the *Recorder* a diagram stating the progress of the Connexion for the last forty years. He carefully examined it. He divided the last thirty-five into sevens. Take the increase of these periods from 1857 to 1863 an increase of 59,609. Those were glorious days; an increase of eight thousand every year and more. From 1864 to 1870, an increase of 18,803. From 1871 to 1877 an increase of 35,199, from 1878 to 1884 an increase of 29,490, and from 1885 to 1891 an increase of 11,140. That made his heart sick. In some single years they advanced as much as that. . . . What of the great masses of people from eighteen to seventy years of age, to whom they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ face to face? To think of them made his heart tremulous with pain. . . . He told his people this—they could not afford to preach the gospel year after year without gathering souls. . . . He would rather die in the pulpit, rather do anything than feel he was going on from year to year without doing good. . . . They were like a ship that was icebound. The ship wanted washing with a warmer stream. . . . They wanted a better temperature. John Bright had said, 'England wants more sunshine.' They wanted it, and they might get it." The italics are ours. Secularists will agree that Methodists are not only icebound, but fogbound too, and that they not only want more sunshine but more brains. As for the temperature of Methodism, we always thought that was hot enough for anything. However, as they seem to know what they require, and the Rev. G. Bowden took God into their confidence in prayer at the close of the proceedings, we suppose it will be all right, and that there will be a marvellous increase of sunshine and sinners before next conference, and the old Methodist tub get a good washing by a warm stream—and it sadly wants it.

H. J.

BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL FUND.

W. Thomson, 2s.; Mrs. Thomson, 2s.; H. Chadwick, 10s.; R. C., 5s.; S. A. V. (per Dr. Allbutt), 10s. Per B. Dawson (card 105): J. Bell, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Bell, 2s. 6d.; J. Stitt, 1s.; W. Haslen, 2s. 6d.; R. Cowens, 2s.; J. Meuse, 6d.; J. Raisbeck, 1s.; S. Hill, 6d.; J. Percy, 1s.; J. Roberts, 1s.; J. Harle, 2s.; T. Hall, 1s.; J. Quinn, 1s.; W. Cone, 1s.; W. C. Johnson, £1 1s.; T. Noble, 2s. 6d. Per A. Beadle (card 120): A. Beadle, 2s.; T. Arthur, 6d.; W. Mills, 1s.; F. R. B., 6d.; B. Carr, 1s.; H. Little, 6d.; G. S., 1s.; J. S., 1s.; — Hadley, 6d.; — Hulme, 6d. Per J. Collinson (card 114): J. Collinson, 5s.; T. Lacy, 5s.; J. Rybourne, 1s.; J. Humble, 2s. 6d.; J. Humble, jun., 2s. 6d.; T. Gardner, 1s. Per W. Laurence: W. Laurence, 1s.; R. Hartley, 1s.; C. J. D., 2s. 6d.; S. Sanders, 1s. 6d.; A. Wicks, 1s.; T. Sanders, 1s.; M. W., 1s.; H. Stone, 1s.; E. Calvert, 5s. —R. FORNER, Secretary.

"The leading principles of Christianity are resignation which is cowardly, and justification by faith, which is an apology for scoundrels."—*William Maccall.*

ACID DROPS.

Two murderers were hung on Tuesday in last week. Thomas Sadler, at Chelmsford, made an edifying end. He took the sacrament and died with his deity inside him. Lewis Turner, at Leeds, was callous to the very last. But the name of God was frequently upon his lips. There could not be the slightest doubt of his guilt, yet he passionately protested his innocence, and the hangman's rope strangled the lie in his throat. He wrote out a cock-and-bull account of the murder, ascribing it to some unknown man, and declared this silly story to be true as he hoped for salvation in the world to come, finishing up with the usual "So help me God."

On the same Tuesday morning another murderer, John Conway, of Liverpool, was told that the Home Secretary saw no reason to grant his petition for a reprieve. He also attributed the murder to some strange man, and solemnly added, "It is my dying declaration, and it is as true as I am going before my God." He also said, "I should like the public to know I am neither a heathen nor an infidel"—a declaration which one section of the public, namely the infidels, will promptly accept.

John Conway was executed on the following day. While on the scaffold he had the white cap raised so that he might make a little speech. He thanked the gaol officials for their kindness as well as his father confessor. He was also good enough to wish that God might forgive his prosecutors—and at the same time his confession of guilt was in the priest's hands!

The essentially selfish character of religion was very strongly brought out in John Conway's case. While he thought there was a ghost of a chance of escaping the gallows he protested his innocence—"so help me God." But when he found he must die he confessed his guilt, simply in order to bamboozle God Almighty into giving him a seat in heaven. Not a single spark of real remorse was struck out of him by all the ghostly ministrations of his father confessor. Self was his only care from first to last. We presume he is gone, if Christianity be true, to a nice little mansion in the Father's house; but if the place is filled with such creatures—and they all seem to go there—every decent soul will prefer a seat in the pit.

The social aspect of John Conway's execution is quite another matter. The wretched man was given too long a drop and his head was nearly pulled off. Such a revolting spectacle should attract attention to the question of capital punishment. We believe the community will before long cease to tolerate the slaughter of even the worst criminals. Meanwhile, if murderers must be killed, it is imperative that science should provide some less repulsive method of execution than hanging, which not unfrequently leads to scenes of the ghastliest description.

The American Postmaster-General has been receiving an unexpected lesson in juvenile depravity. Desiring to build a church on the cheap, and being a great Sunday-school man, he told an assembly of little ones that he wanted each scholar to bring three bricks as a contribution to the building. "A brick, my children," he said, "will only cost a few pennies, and you can all deny yourself some little thing to help along the good work, and please the God who has done so much for you." The next Sunday Mr. Wanamaker's face fairly beamed when he announced to the Sunday-school that over 3,000 bricks had been contributed by the good boys and girls of the school. "Now try the same thing again," he said, "I am proud, very proud of you"; but the next Sunday there was a cloud resting on the superintendent's face, for thirty of the "good little boys" had been arrested for stealing bricks.—*Newcastle Daily Leader.*

God doth not delight in the strength of any man's legs, but a different taste is displayed by the Committee of the Retford Flower Show Sports, one of whom is the Congregational organist. They announce competitions for running and bicycling, with good prizes, but the entries are a shilling and sixpence, and a profit will probably be made out of the main competitors. Even religious men have an eye to the main chance.

People complain of the balderdash slushed upon them from

the pulpit, yet object to the preacher buying and reading the good sermons. Yet, judging by the advertisements in the Church papers, there must be a good trade done in manuscript sermons. Why should any man of God rack his poor brains for days to produce an incompetent sermon, when for a guinea he can buy half a dozen good ones lithographed so as to defy detection from the gallery? Honesty, say you. Then why doesn't the duffer honestly tell his own incompetency and read from the book a sermon by South, Barrow, or Jeremy Taylor, such as no living preacher could equal?

Many of these sermons are advertised as written for special occasions—harvest thanksgiving, charity, collections, and so forth. But occasionally the executors of some old clergyman who has gone to Abc's bosom find themselves embarrassed by piles of manuscripts, or some dealer purchasers them at waste paper price. Here is an opening. There are purchasers for old sermons as well as old clothes, though sometimes they go at ruinous prices. We have heard of one clergyman offering to "take the lot at threepence each."

We wonder some wag doesn't lithograph and advertise "sound doctrinal sermons," in which he artfully contrives to introduce some damnable heresies, such as that the Father died on the cross, or that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Virgin Mary. We are sure it could be done, like the initiation sermon handwriting, so as to defy detection.

How the poor men of God are persecuted! Here is an unfortunate clergyman, the Rev. William Augustus St. John Dearsley, vicar of Wilmington, in Sussex, who is basely ordered by the justices at Hailsham Petty Sessions to pay five shillings a week towards the maintenance of the illegitimate child of Jane Levett, aged twenty, a housemaid in his employment. When the justices' decision was pronounced the hardly-entreated servant of Jehovah "bowed his head in his hands and seemed completely overcome." His innocence is, of course, beyond dispute. He admitted a good deal, even the sending of "heaps of kisses" to Jane when he was away from home; but he denied all knowledge of the little stranger, and what man in his right senses, unperverted by carnal wisdom, could doubt the word of a gentleman called to the altar by the Holy Ghost? Poor William Augustus St. John Dearsley! the Philistines are upon thee, and thou art delivered into the hands of the uncircumcised.

The Rev. Joseph Coombes, vicar of Wiggshall, St. Peter's, near Lynn, was fined 40s. and 33s. costs at Lynn Police Court recently for cruelty to a horse, which he drove in harness whilst the animal was suffering from sores on its back. "Does God care for oxen?" asks Paul. Evidently this man of God doesn't think he cares for horses.

The Rev. Nowell Barton, curate of St. John's, Cinderford, does not believe in turning the other cheek or giving to him who asketh. He has been fined 10s. for knocking down two men for ringing his bell.

The Rev. Canon Carleton died suddenly while preaching in the pulpit in the Cathedral of Kilkenny. What a dreadful judgment had it been a Freethought lecturer at a Freethought meeting.

—Religious cranks and impostors always play the same old tune. Here is Mrs. J. P. Martin, the female Christ of Cincinnati, declaring that those who first proclaim their belief in her shall be made rulers in her new kingdom, which is about to be established.

Brother Price, who thirty years ago sat up an Agapemone near Bridgewater, took unto himself spiritual wives, and proclaimed that he should never die, has, it is said, reached the age of ninety. Let him double his years and he will have a large following.

Committing suicide in churches seems to be growing fashionable. On Saturday, August 22, a man called Mason shot himself through the head in St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. The church was at once closed by order of the Bishop, and a ceremony was performed which is supposed to "reconcile" God to a continued residence in the "holy edifice."

People who talk of the connection of infidelity and suicide

should look up that passage in Proverbs xxiii, 1, 2, "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee. And put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite." The meaning apparently is, rather commit suicide than show yourself a glutton. At any rate, that is the interpretation which would be attached to it if it appeared in a secular instead of in a divine volume.

Canon Cheyne has been preaching on David at Rochester Cathedral and giving the congregation some eye-openers. After pointing out that several verses in the story of David and Goliath were comparatively modern interpolations, he went on to say that David's encounter with the giant, like his battle with the lion and the bear, was not an historical occurrence; it was a divine lesson in "a romantic setting." Of course it is natural that Canon Cheyne should still seek to preserve the "sacred" character of the Grand Old Book, but he will not do so if he continues his task of reducing the "legendary" parts of it to the level of Æsop's fables.

The *Record* has been having a solemn discussion on the momentous question whether prayer ought to be addressed to the Holy Ghost. It seems the poor old Ghost is choused out of his fair portion of prayer and praise and forced to take a subordinate position. Yet there are Theists who try to make out God the Father to be equally vague and nebulous as the Ghost.

Dr. Newbrough is dead. Well, who was Dr. Newbrough? He was the writer of a revelation which was to supersede all previous ones. It was published in a big book entitled *Oahspe*. Dr. Newbrough claimed that he was only the writer, not the author. It was inspired throughout. We once looked over this new revelation, and found it more pitiable twaddle than the old. Perhaps it is true as asserted that Dr. Newbrough did not know what he was doing till the book was finished, for it bears strong marks of lunacy. But the boundaries of insanity and inspiration were never well defined.

General Booth's band sent down from London had a warm reception on Sunday at Eastbourne. They were dispersed by the police in all directions, and the hostile crowd seized their instruments. So long as the Salvationists keep fighting their pluck may be admired, but sober people find it difficult to see where the "religious liberty" comes in.

Count Tolstoi, the great Russian novelist, is sixty-two years of age. He has had sixteen children, the youngest of whom was born in 1888. After increasing the population in this extravagant manner, Count Tolstoi now advocates the New Testament doctrine of "angel marriages," in which husband and wife live together as brother and sister.

Cruel Protestants at Snohomish, Washington, have been grievously tormenting a holy moral guide. Father Quay, a Catholic priest, has been subjected to the disagreeable operation known as tarring and feathering. He is accused of enticing children of both sexes into his room, and there practising various forms of indecency, after stupefying them with liquor.

There is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and there is also but a step from piety to profanity. We once heard of a sick gentleman, who, on being told that God would give him a new heart, exclaimed, "I'd rather he gave me a new pair of kidneys." Curiously enough, something of the same kind was said at a recent prayer-meeting at Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Mr. C. Cornell, who presided, stated that he had been told that "a man cannot get a new kidney," but he replied that the Lord could give a "new heart" and a "renewed spirit," and why not new kidneys? He firmly believed God would do it for Spurgeon. So do not we. Miracles don't run to that length in this age.

Bishop Korum, of Trèves, at the ceremony of bringing out J. C.'s old coat, gave a discourse on the significance of the seamless vesture, which, he said, was a symbol of the unity of the Catholic Church. It is indeed a symbol, for it is ancient, rotten, falling to pieces; no one can tell what it was like originally, or distinguish it from its wrappings. Above all, its likeness to the Church is complete in one respect—it is a fraud.

Many persons have applied for admission to touch the Holy Coat at Trèves, in the hope of being cured of their diseases. Such persons, the Bishop orders, must give an account of their illness and provide themselves with testimonials as to their moral character. The precaution, however, seems superfluous. Surely the second person of the Trinity is able to distinguish between honest men and scoundrels.

Probably this mouldy old rag will work a good many "miracles of healing." Most of these will doubtless be humbug, but some of them will be real. Paralytic persons, or sufferers from other nervous disorders, may be acted upon by excitement and imagination. Hopelessly bed-ridden persons have been known to fly nimbly from a burning house. What marvellous quickness of movement, too, is often shown by hobbling old ladies and gentlemen when threatened by a bus-pole in the middle of the street. Many hypochondriac people give way to their ailments and are not nearly as bad as they appear. Let them go to Trèves, believing that the Holy Coat will cure them, and they will in some cases experience relief. But there is no miracle in this; it is purely natural, as medical men are well aware.

The editor of the *Jewish World* is cautious to the extent of cowardice in writing upon this relic of fetishism. It says there is no good purpose in discussing the genuineness of the Holy Coat. "It is no part of our business to lay iconoclastic hands on the sacred things of a Church with which we now stand on a footing of fraternal appreciation." Surely the *Jewish World* has turned Christian. It is not so long since the Church laid iconoclastic hands on Jewish literature and even on the sacred persons of God's chosen people.

At the beginning of the twelfth century two monks said they discovered in Jerusalem, and brought to Monte Cassino, a piece of the towel with which J. C. wiped the apostles' feet. It was put to the ordeal of fire and took the color of fire without losing its form or substance. When the fire had burned out the towel was found intact. It must have been made of asbestos. The Holy Coats of Trèves and Argenteuil should be subjected to a similar ordeal.

Commenting on recent reports of conversions to Rome the *Church Times* says that Liverpool is the only diocese in the country which shows an increase of Roman Catholics. In order to keep pace with the increase in population there ought to be now in England 2,346,000 Roman Catholics, since there were 800,000 in 1840, and an immigrant Irish population between 1846-51 of 700,000, which elements ought to have increased, had they maintained the same ratio as the rest of the population, to the figures given above; whereas the Roman Catholic population in 1890, according to the official organ for the "Society of the Propagation of the Faith," was only, in round numbers, 1,354,000, leaving a deficit of 992,000 to be accounted for.

The Athenæum is supposed to be the great literary club, though a bishopric is understood to be as good a qualification as a great history. It is, however, said that when the Bishop of Durham inquired if Justin Martyr was in the library, he was told that he was not a member. Perhaps the informant was thinking of Justin McCarthy.

Sporting Luck is facetious over Joseph's breeks—articles, by the way, not worn in Palestine—which are preserved in a Styrian church. A Croaian gentleman inserted one leg in the trousers, and he was restored to perfect health and his wife had twins. What would have happened if he had inserted both legs?

The most impudent of all busybodies is the religious busybody. What cool cheek was displayed by the Protestant lady, connected with the Trinitarian Bible Society, who asked leave to supply the French sailors at the public dinner at Portsmouth with copies of a Protestant translation of the New Testament "free from Romish errors." The Mayor could not see his way to oblige this fussy proselytiser, who is probably sighing for the good old times when persons of her description were treated with such gratuitous civility. By the way, the lady's name is not mentioned. Can it be Miss Weston, who is assisted by the naval authorities in circulating nonsense and falsehoods among our English jack-tars?

In a hotel advertisement, after announcing boating and fishing, it states that "pigeons are always on hand for shooting"—and this in a Christian country!

"Here's a swindler," said a waiter at a swell hotel. "He calls himself the Archbishop of York, and writes his name W. Ebor." Another good story of episcopal names is told of the Bishop of Sodor and Man, who in answer to an order for a quantity of wine received the following letter:—"Your esteemed order to hand, but regret we cannot supply you without payment or reference as we are unacquainted with the name of your firm. Messrs. Sodor and Man."

A writer in the *English Churchmen* says, that statistics show that poor people, nominally Protestants, send their children to Catholic schools in large numbers. A Protestant Congress is to be held at Brighton from Oct. 12 to 15 to consider these grave matters.

Dr. F. G. Lee, the Romanising vicar of Lambeth, has put forward a book on *The Sinless Conception of the Mother of God*. He argues that for Mary to have been the fit receptacle of the Holy Spirit she must herself have been born without sin. The same argument will apply to her mother, St. Anne, and all her ancestry. But the fact is, according to Matthew, the ancestry of Jesus consisted of the most shady characters possible, including Rahab the harlot, Ruth who crept to her cousin's bed, and Bathsheba the wife of Uriah.

The *Figaro* of Paris has been making inquiries of certain well-known priests as to the possibility of bringing back the Parisian proletariat to the fold of religion. The answers are extremely lugubrious. M. Adam, curé of Belleville, said, "The workman has been too long detached from religion—he is lost to us." M. Darblato, curé of Clichy-Levallois, said it was too late to Christianise the families, they could only moralise them; and the curé of Vilette, who spoke rather more hopefully, regarded the workman who went in for politics as "absolutely lost to us."

A cadging circular issued by F. Aiden, O.S.F., of St. Francis' Parochial Hall Building Fund, promises "the names of those who subscribe 5s. or more will be published in due course and inscribed in our 'Book of Life,' which rests under our high altar." Parishioners are informed that they are expected to give "at least one day's wages," under the penalty we presume of having their names blotted out of the Book of Life. There are many ways of raising the wind, but the religious lay is the cheekiest.

General Dyrenforth claims that by exploding balloons he is able to produce rain in clear weather. In the old days he would have ranked as rain maker along with Samuel and Elijah.

Funny Cuts of Aug. 15 has a comic picture with the following underneath: Temperance Advocate, Senior (to Yokel): "My boy, does your father drink?" Yokel: "No, zur." Temperance Advocate, Senior: "Does your mother drink?" Yokel: "No, zur." Temperance Advocate, Senior (to Colleague): "That's the fifteenth native we've asked. There doesn't seem to be the ghost of a soaker in the village; these agricultural places are terribly behind the times. If things don't look brighter at the lecture to-night, I'll chuck up being a Reformed Drunkard, and start on the Converted Atheist take."

The Public Office Trust of New Zealand had as its chief clerk, the Rev. Mr. de Castro. This individual looked after the accounts, and opened proceedings with prayer. A commission had to be appointed to look into the affairs of this Public Trust Office, and it was found that the officials availed themselves of their positions to make private profit out of public trust. A large amount of property came into the hands of this body to be disposed of for the benefit of the estates it was their duty to administer. In one case a gold watch of the value of £20 was purchased by this clerk in holy orders for £5. In another, valuable lace estimated at £10 per yard was missing. All that could be heard of was some crotchet-work, but the missing lace was found in the Rev. gentleman's drawer, and he owned having it in his house for a considerable time, in order, as he said, that he might have the benefit of feminine appraisal.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 30, Oddfellows Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool:—at 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; at 3, "Nature and God"; at 7, "The Way to Heaven."

September 6, Birmingham. 13, morning, Victoria Park; evening, Hall of Science. 20, morning, Clerkenwell-green; evening, Hall of Science. 27, Manchester.

October 4, 11, 18, Hall of Science. 25, Camberwell.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—August 30, Edinburgh. Sept. 1, Paisley; 3, Hamilton; 6, Glasgow; 7, 8, 9, Aberdeen; 13, South Shields; 14, North Shields; 15, Blyth district; 16, Sunderland; 17, Middlesbro'; 18, Crook; 19, Chester-le-Street; 20, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 27, Birmingham. October 4, Birmingham; 11, Manchester; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science. November 1, Hall of Science; 8, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, London, E.C.

R. D. TURNER.—Thanks. See paragraph.

H. SMITH.—Glad to hear of Mr. Heaford's success.

J. HUBBARD.—Thanks for your good wishes. See paragraph.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—Mr. Foote will be happy to meet the reverend gentleman in public debate at Bristol.

T. THURLOW reports that he is in good health again, and will be happy to lecture for N. S. S. Branches. Address—34 Wetherell-road, South Hackney.

G. WHEELER.—Pleased to receive so good a report from Luton. We hope the Branch will enrol many new members.

S. H. ALISON.—The Stratford open-air station should be well supported by the local Freethinkers. Christian rowdies must not be allowed to create disorder at their unsweet will.

JAMES NEATE.—The nuisance you refer to in Victoria Park is getting too common. The County Council should certainly interfere. It is intolerable that Christian evangelists should play brass bands, or any other kind of music, on the space allotted for public speaking. If such people prate about "religious liberty" when they are prevented from committing this nuisance, it only shows how their long run of privilege has made them impudent.—Why is a new Branch wanted?

J. M.—The inquiry was about the Comic Bible Sketches reprinted in book form.

E. COPLAND.—Too late for last week, owing to Mr. Foote's absence from London. It is now inserted.

SOME Lecture Notices, etc., not being marked as such on the envelope, were not inserted in last week's *Freethinker*.

J. H. PAWLEY.—We hope all Freethinkers will follow your example in claiming to affirm. In course of time the law will become familiar, and judges and magistrates will cease to insult those who prefer decent speaking to swearing.

L. D. HEWETT.—The person you mention was for a short time a member of the West Ham Branch. There is no need to be disquieted about such a trifling matter. The "successful efforts of the Christian Evidence Society in stemming infidelity" are imaginary. The Society's lecturers do a great deal of good to Freethought, though quite unintentionally. We should be very sorry to see it collapse.

W. M. KNOX.—In our next.

W. LE MAITRE.—We do not recollect seeing the mistakes pointed out before. Why not drop a line to the author himself? They are slips, however, that do not invalidate or weaken his argument.

E. TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth-road, Stratford, E., will be glad to hear from Freethinkers who are shorthand writers, with a view to sending them something that may be useful. Mr. Toleman-Garner states that he is now free to labor more actively for the Secular cause.

J. R. WILLOCK.—Many thanks. The matter shall be seen to.

J. WATERFORD.—See "Sugar Plums." We shall be happy to render all possible assistance.

F. MARTYN.—It expresses more truth about the Bible than Scott's lines, but it lacks their epigrammatic force.

A. T. DIPPER.—Good reports have reached us of your Tyne-side labors. We hope you will continue them. Work such as you are doing is very hard, but you are not cast in a delicate mould.

W. HOLLAND.—Yes, if there is a charge, but not if the admission is free.

H. B. PRICE.—You had better see Mr. Foote before the date you mention.

W. GOODURN.—Sorry we cannot find room.

C. C. MONK.—Mr. Foote was away in the north of England. We hope you will continue to promote our circulation.

F. O. W.—We have no space for social or political discussions.

J. W. ELSWORTH.—Such cases cannot be dealt with unless they are reported in the newspapers.

C. W. ROSENFELD.—Hardly in our way. Judaism, as such, we are hostile to as well as to Christianity, although we advocate freedom for Jews no less than other people.

ARISTOPHANES.—Although the Talmud was compiled after the Christian era, it embodies the laws, maxims and traditions of an earlier age. There is not a particle of reason for supposing that the writers were acquainted with the gospels, but much for thinking that the Gospel writers took up ideas common among the Jews before their day. You should consult the Literary Remains of E. Deutsch, or get his article on the Talmud in the *Quarterly Review*, October, 1866.

C. H. CHEESE.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Nouvelles Religieuses 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 Yorkshire Evening Post—Liverpool Echo—Daily Telegraph—Leicester Countryman—Adelaide Advertiser—Twentieth Century—Kansas Lucifer—Glasgow Herald.

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.

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.

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.

THE BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL.

ON Tuesday evening I presided at the first meeting of shareholders of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company, Limited. The meeting lasted three hours and a half, and needed a good deal of chairmanship. My proposal of a practical scheme was rejected by a considerable majority, many of whom had only applied for and been allotted shares in bare time for the meeting. Ultimately, by passing to the next business, the amendment as well as the resolution was lost. My advice as to electing a smaller board of directors was also disregarded, and in the circumstances I felt bound to say that I hesitated to stand for re-election. Under general pressure, however, despite my strong mistrust of the business efficiency of a board thus constituted, I consented to stand, though I do not feel bound to serve for twelve months. I consider the situation one of great gravity, and I shall have to deal with it, as well as to announce my decision, probably in the next number of the *Freethinker*.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

We desire to call special attention to the new arrangements at the London Hall of Science. On and after the first Sunday in October all the lectures will be under the direct management of the National Secular Society. The Sunday morning lectures will be free, while the present charges of admission to the evening lectures will be continued. Music will be a new feature at the evening meetings. Although Mrs. Besant declines to lecture under the new auspices, the list of lecturers up to Christmas is a very good one, including G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, G. J. Holyoake, Touzeau Parris, J. M. Robertson, and Dr. Allinson.

Annual tickets are on sale for the shilling reserved seats. They are one guinea single, and one guinea and a half double (lady and gentleman). The purchase of these tickets will be of great assistance. They are very cheap, and should be taken up liberally. Purchasers can obtain them at the Hall of Science bookstall, or at Mr. Forder's, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Mr. Foote had good meetings at Newcastle on Sunday, the evening one being particularly large. There was no discussion except in the afternoon, when a blind man tried to prove the design argument from the perfection of human eyes. Mr. Joseph Brown, the evening chairman, made a spirited appeal

on behalf of the N. S. S. funds, for which a collection was taken at the door.

Owing to a strong under-current of bigotry the Newcastle Branch has had to leave its meeting-place at the Working Men's Club. In future its meetings will be held at the Eldon Hall, at the corner of Clayton and Blackett-streets, which was occupied until recently by the Mormons. The room is a fine one, capable of seating 150; it has been redecorated and furnished with a splendid piano; and all that is now wanted is a good attendance of Freethinkers on Sunday evenings.

Mr. A. T. Dipper, late of Battersea, having gone to Newcastle, has been gallantly fighting there for Freethought. He has lectured to large open-air audiences, and his efforts have greatly stimulated the movement in the whole district. Mr. Dawson, a young man of promise, is also taking to the outdoor platform. He gives his first lecture to-day (Aug. 30), and should be well supported.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to the largest audience he has yet had there. The chair was taken by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, and Mr. Touzeau Parris was on the platform. Previous to the lecture Mr. Watts announced his intention to remain in England for the rest of his life, and to aid Mr. Foote in the great struggle in which he was engaged—whereat there was tremendous cheering. After the lecture a vote of thanks to Mr. Holyoake was proposed by Mr. Parris, who expressed his great delight at learning that Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts were going to work together.

Mr. Holyoake's speech introducing Mr. Watts to the audience we are able to give *in extenso* :—

"I have to introduce to you a Canadian lecturer—Mr. Charles Watts—whom you will be glad to hear has decided to remain among us. In Canada (of which I have myself pleasant memories) he has made friends and reputation, and has advanced the knowledge of Secular principles there. We in England are indebted to our Canadian friends for their important co-operation in rendering Freethought international. Mr. Watts cannot but regret having now to work apart from his Toronto colleagues, which has been rendered necessary by the loss of Mr. Bradlaugh and the secession of Mrs. Besant—a secession which could not have been foreseen nor is it explicable by human reason. My life-long friend, Mr. Daniel Baker of Birmingham—one of those gentlemen who believes the Secular principles he maintains, and as Archbishop Whately said a man should do—he maintains them because he believes them, has made a munificent gift to Mr. Watts of Baskerville Hall, which he built—gives it free of all charges even of rent and taxes, that Mr. Watts may establish a Freethought centre in Birmingham and the Midlands co-operate with the metropolis. Mr. Baker thus gives Mr. Foote a colleague competent to assist him in the consolidation and extension of the National Secular Society and its organisation. Mr. Watts, like Mr. Foote, has always understood the Secular side of Freethought, and has advocated it with consistency, persistency and no mean ability, as editor, lecturer and debater. Freethought alone is a great power for good. It has already entered the churches. The rivers of orthodoxy would be stagnant and putrefy, were they not stirred by contradiction and sweetened by the salt of Freethought. Were it not for this nations would die of the pestilence of ignorant uniformity of opinion. Christianity itself has been improved by independent criticism and Christians now admit it. Secular thought therefore occupies a useful place and is entitled to further ascendancy. Physicians determine the prospects of a patient by the healthy state of the tongue; and philosophers can foretell the future of a movement by examination of the same organ. Now I take it that the sign of wholesome speech is when it directs Freethought on the path of Secular action. We have two leaders, Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts, not to mention other speakers—we have two papers, the *Freethinker*, which ere long may be increased in size, and the *National Reformer* which carries the old flag which Mr. Bradlaugh bore. We may soon have a law of Free Bequests which will enable Freethought to be endowed as Christianity is, and we shall, I trust, see this Hall converted into a Bradlaugh Memorial Institute. The prospects of the good cause are bright. I now call on Mr. Charles Watts of Birmingham, late of Toronto, to deliver his lecture."

There is no reason whatever to complain of the response to

Mr. Foote's appeal on behalf of the scheme for settling Mr. Watts at Birmingham. The subscriptions have flowed in generously. But the necessary funds are required immediately and those who intend to assist should send in their donations as quickly as possible. When the moment arrives a statement shall be made as to the disposition of the fund. Meanwhile the subscribers will have confidence in the President of the National Secular Society and those who are acting with him in this matter.

Mr. Foote has received the following further subscriptions for the Birmingham Fund:—Samuel Seal, £10; Sydney A. Gimson, £1; Newcastle Friend, 5s.; F. W. Donaldson, £1; Dr. T. R. Allinson, £1 1s.

Col. Ingersoll has taken to spectacles. In other respects his kindly, smooth-shaven face is as youthful as ever, and he retains the genial, hearty manner that made him a charming companion before he became a famous orator.

Miss Ada Campbell, the Australian Freethought lecturer, leaves New York for England at the end of this month. A complimentary farewell meeting has been held at Newark, N.J. We are unaware if the lady will stay, or is only giving a passing call.

M. C. Cilwa, editor of *La Verité Philosophique*, sends us a copy of his translation into French of Mr. Foote's *Virgin Mother*. It makes a twenty-page pamphlet, published in a blue cover at 50 centimes (5d.)—which shows the low price of the English original. A hasty glance at the translation—all we have time for at the moment—assures us it is well done and very faithful. Reviewing it in *Le Bulletin des Sommaires*, M. Limousin, a critic of reputation, says it is "extremely well written, and contains the substance of all that has been advanced on the subject by the many exoterists who have treated it sometimes with a fantastic and curious precision."

After all the nonsense that has appeared in certain papers about Secular bigotry towards Mrs. Besant, it is quite refreshing to find the London correspondent of the *Manchester Evening News* declaring that "the Secularists have been very indulgent to her." "Though from their standpoint," he says, "she is a pervert who has, by taking up what they consider the most slavish of superstitions, brought odium on their cause, they have permitted her to champion her new faith from their platform. They consider, however, that this is no longer tolerable."

An agreeable change from our too common task of showing how inoperative for good are Christian beliefs on the conduct of clergymen is the record of the gallant conduct of the Rev. Mr. Moggeridge, who lost his life at Banff in his efforts to save two boys from drowning. His inspiration was evidently not that of religion but of humanity, and a tribute of sorrow and admiration springs as spontaneously from Freethinkers as from Christians.

Christians in this country who talk of "infidel France" as a hotbed of immorality would do well to ponder the statement in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 22, that in the Department of the Lozere the Assizes have been cancelled from June 1890 till September 1891, there having been no criminals for trial.

The Bradford Branch is organising an excursion. Members and friends are going to Morecambe on Sunday, September 6, starting by train at 8.30 a.m. The tickets are half-a-crown, and can be obtained of J. W. Gott, 37 Villiers-street. We understand that two lectures are to be given on Morecambe sands.

The Hull Branch was favored with fine weather on Sunday, when it took its annual trip to Aldboro'. A large party of members and friends disported on the sands after refreshing the inner man at the Temperance Hotel. The return home of so many happy faces on a Sunday evening was a wonderful sight to orthodox spectators.

Freethinkers in the neighborhood of Walham Green are earnestly invited to attend a meeting this evening (Aug. 30), at 7, at Cockerell's "Goat's Head" Coffee Rooms, opposite the Butchers' Almshouses. The object of the meeting is to form a Branch of the National Secular Society.

It should be the duty of all Secularists at the coming School Board election, to agitate for a day's outing for School Board children. At present, scholars attending Board schools never get a day's excursion like the children attending other schools. It is a well-known fact that many Board school scholars go to Sunday-schools merely for the sake of the "treat." Freethinkers should not let the sky-pilots get hold of the children in this way. Why cannot excursions be organised at Board schools? The scholars can pay their fare just the same as they have to do at Sunday-schools, and the School Board should pay for those children who are in needy circumstances. School Board candidates should be questioned on this matter.

The Sydney Secularists have a flourishing Lyceum where music and other accomplishments are taught to a hundred boys and girls.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway expresses in the *Monist* his opinion the Government of England is really more democratic than that of the United States. He says the first shows the effects of evolution, the latter those of revolution.

In *De Dageraad*, of Amsterdam, Mr. J. V. d'Ende translates Mr. Foote's article "Where is Hell?" from our columns. There are many other interesting items in this old-established Dutch Freethought magazine.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has issued Part IV. of his *Principles of Ethics*. It deals with Justice. The first part, "The Data of Ethics," was finished some years ago, but the second and third parts, as well as the fifth and sixth, are not yet completed. They will deal with the Ethics of Individual Life, Negative Beneficence, and Positive Beneficence.

The Leicester *Countryman*, in an article on "Jerrymandering our Free Library," says that, considering that 75 per cent. of grown men in Leicester profess no religious belief, the proportion of theological and supernatural literature on the shelves of their free library is inordinate. He gives a list of Freethought and other works which have been suggested and refused, including Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, which, however, the authorities say has not been refused.

Percy Strzelecki, of Gateshead, has been contributing several well-written papers to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* on the question of the Pagan origin of Christianity.

Mr. W. Heaford had a good open-air meeting at Farsley, despite the miserable weather. He was courteously opposed by two Christians. Both his lecture and his replies gave great satisfaction. The local paper gave a fair report of the lecture and discussion.

Mr. Warmington, the Liberal candidate for Lewisham, being asked by Mr. J. H. Salter, whether he would vote for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and for legalising bequests to Secular Societies, replied on both points in the affirmative. Freethinkers should heckle the Liberal candidates on this matter in every division. They should also keep a note of the answers, and use it against the candidates who fail to keep their promise.

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

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SOME OF THE UNSAVED.

I.

To be saved, in the theological sense, is to escape damnation and secure happiness in the next world. Salvation of this sort, we are told, is free to all on certain specified conditions, the first essential being belief in Christ and acceptance of the system of religion which he founded. It is not affirmed that faith alone will ensure salvation, for "faith without works is dead"; nevertheless, faith is a *sine qua non*: "Without faith," says Paul, "it is impossible to please God." It is true that certain Christians, like Canon Talbot and Archdeacon Farrar, repudiate the orthodox view, and declare that good works alone are a sufficient passport to heaven;* but in so doing they simply express their own private opinion as distinguished from the orthodox and time-honored teaching of the Churches. The doctrine that belief is necessary to salvation is clearly taught in the New Testament, and is held as part and parcel of Christianity by the generality of believers throughout the whole of Christendom.

I propose in these articles to examine the practical bearings of this doctrine, and to illustrate its monstrous immorality by its logical consequences. I propose, in other words, to apply it, not to believers as a class, but to individual Freethinkers, to men and women with whose names and history everybody is familiar. I have heard theologians object to this use of the *ad hominem* argument; they have urged that although the mass of unbelievers are shut out from salvation, individual sceptics may obtain pardon on grounds of merit, or for special reasons known only to the supreme judge himself. This argument, so racy of the theological soil, recalls Macaulay's words about the "strange loopholes" through which the human mind "contrives to escape when it wishes to avoid a disagreeable conclusion"; but inasmuch as it is merely a pious opinion and not sound doctrine, it does not call for more than passing notice. I maintain that the personal argument is a perfectly fair weapon to use in this controversy; a sentence pronounced against a class applies equally to the units of that class. It is neither good logic nor sound theology to argue that, while unbelievers are under condemnation in the mass, they may be saved as individuals.

Let us, then, apply this teaching in the first place to the case of John Stuart Mill. Mill was a typical unbeliever, and may be said to have been cradled in scepticism. He was brought up to regard all religions with equal indifference, and he lived and died without ever having known, or desired to know, what are called the consolations of Christianity. Of a calm and philosophic temper, he expressed with singular strength of language his detestation of certain aspects of the orthodox faith. Speaking of the Christian God, he declared it to be "impossible to adore such a being without a frightful distortion of the standard of right and wrong." "There is no moral enormity," said he, "which might not be justified by imitation of such a deity." Discussing Dean Mansel's argument that we must not judge God by our notions of morality, Mill wrote: "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go." Here, surely, was a man who, if belief be necessary to salvation, must be numbered among the unsaved. Yet, when we examine the moral nature of this eminent sceptic, we find, instead of a fit object of divine wrath, a character that commands our highest admiration. Such was his singular moral elevation that Mr. Gladstone used familiarly to call him the Saint of Rationalism. Mr. John Morley described him as "the wisest and most virtuous man he ever knew, or was ever likely to know." Mr. H. R. Fox Bourne, writing shortly after his death, said: "Great as were his intellectual qualities, they were dwarfed by his moral excellences. . . . No one who had any personal knowledge of him could fail to discern the singular purity of his character, and to those who knew him best that purity was most apparent." His chief characteristic, according to Mr. Herbert Spencer, was "an unusual predominance of the higher sentiments—a predominance which tended, both in theory and practice, to subordinate the lower nature unduly." A mediæval Christian would have argued that Mill's virtues were merely "pagan virtues": the old-world theologian could see no merit in goodness which did not spring from faith in Christ; to him, virtue and self-denial were but "splendid

* Canon Talbot recently expressed his belief that Chares Bradlaugh has gone to heaven. Archdeacon Farrar, writing in the *Christian World* of April 11, 1889, said, "We shall be saved neither by our opinions nor by our observances, but simply and solely by our character and by our life."

sins" if they did not wear the Christian garb. But the modern mind does not take kindly to these musty sophistries of a dead past, and present-day Christians, to do them justice, seldom argue in this fashion. They prefer to say of Mill, as they have said of Mr. Bradlaugh, that he was a "Christian without knowing it"; but as the orthodox plan of salvation makes no provision for "Christians" of this sort, we are bound to conclude that the great soul of John Stuart Mill is lost.

Take, again, the case of the late Charles Darwin. Darwin probably did more than any other man of his time to sap the foundations of Christianity. If the Evolution theory is true, the Genesiac account of creation is false, and the story of the Fall, the key-stone of the arch of Christian theology is a myth. Darwin abandoned religion bit by bit, his progress in scepticism keeping pace with the march of his great mind and the progress of his studies. After renouncing Christianity he remained for some time a Theist, until at last he expressly avowed himself an Agnostic. He rejected first the Old Testament and then the New; he declared the design argument had failed, he reasoned against an intelligent First Cause, and contended that the misery we see around us is incompatible with belief in a beneficent and omnipotent God. If there is no salvation save through faith, there can be only one opinion as to the fate of this distinguished thinker—he has followed John Stuart Mill to perdition. But, if such as Charles Darwin are damned, hell is not only paved with good intentions, as Dr. Johnson said, but peopled with good men. For not even his most bigotted opponent would deny that Charles Darwin, morally speaking, was a good man. There is no exaggeration in the eloquent tribute of Mr. Grant Allen: "Of Darwin's pure and exalted moral nature no Englishman of the present generation can trust himself to speak with becoming moderation. His love of truth, his singleness of heart, his sincerity, his earnestness, his modesty, his candor, his absolute sinking of self and selfishness—these, indeed, were all conspicuous to every reader on the very face of every word he ever printed. . . . Greatness is not always joined with gentleness: in Charles Darwin's case, by universal consent of all who knew him, 'an intellect which had no superior,' was wedded to 'a character even nobler than the intellect.'" Even Christians came at last to recognise the moral grandeur of the man, and when he died eminent ecclesiastics were amongst the mourners who gathered round his bier. "Men of all opinions," writes Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, "united to do him honor. Clergymen and laymen, Christians and Agnostics, moved with one accord of homage, bent beneath the vaulted arches of England's great cathedral to lay there his honored and sacred head." The late Cardinal Newman was enabled by the peculiar constitution of his mind to contemplate unmoved the vision of a good man thrust into hell; but what man or woman in a state of sanity can reflect without an instinctive shiver of indignation, that the doom of the unbelieving described in scripture* is the final fate of the great and noble spirit of Charles Darwin. D. W.

(To be continued.)

ON SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

THE Sunday-school was the invention of a benevolent heart, not of a scheming brain. Robert Raikes found children growing up untaught, and he established Sunday-schools to counteract the ever sinister influence of ignorance. His main object was to teach children who were unable to read. Raikes was himself, I believe, a Unitarian, or at any rate a creedless Christian. In its inception the object of the Sunday-school was philanthropic, not religious. But the sky-pilots soon discovered that the Sunday-school would make a good recruiting ground for church and chapel, and they have deliberately perverted it for this purpose. The whole object of Sunday-schools and their attractions of excursions and parties, for which attractions much misery is undergone, is to attract people to church. As to any other benefit, very few indeed have derived any valuable instruction from Sunday-schools, while the fact that the majority of criminals have been taught in Sunday-schools shows that their moral education is equally valueless.

The Sunday-school is usually a dreary institution. Its chief effect is to inflict on the poor little ones another sermon besides those they get at church. The teaching is not education. It is an attempt to pump in a lot of religious twaddle utterly unsuited to children's minds. The teachers fancy the

best way to make children pious is to drill them in Bible and Catechism, to tell them they must not chatter and to warn them that laughing in the Sunday-school displeases that mysterious fetish Jesus. Sweet Jesus and the virtues of his precious blood are the great themes of the saintly lady and goody-goody young men teachers, who find something else to talk about when they go home by themselves—or they would scarcely smirk so much.

If the children of pious families could give their experiences of Sunday, they would often unfold a tale of monotonous misery such as the records of maturer years could scarcely equal. Toys, pictures, books put out of sight, and only replaced by the Holy Bible; the solitary amusement left, to hunt up its too familiar dirty passages; family prayers longer than ever; no laughter allowed; no romping in the garden, lest pious neighbors should be scandalised; church and Sunday-school vieing with each other in dreadful monotony. Those who have endured this can hardly think of the Christian Sabbath, God's holy day, without a shudder. The religionists have turned the day of rest, which to all should be a day of gladness, into one of gloom; instead of being a period of delight, it is one of disgust.

I was once teacher of a Sunday-school. It was at a Unitarian chapel, and I at once secularised that institution. We had readings from the poets, fairy tales, stories from the novelists and from history, jokes and flirtation—for it was a girls' class I conducted. Those girls enjoyed their Sunday-school, and there was at least one daughter of a Secularist among them. There is nothing I more delight in now than to show young people who are not used to it how to keep the Sabbath. "May I have the pleasure of a dance, Miss? Too good? Your sister will favor us with the Toreador waltz. Or what say you to a quiet game at whist? You don't care for cards on Sunday, well give us a little song. What are the first lines of that popular ditty, 'Get your hair cut?'"

LUCIANUS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last week's leading article you say, "Jesus Christ is urgently required on earth again to settle the pious dispute between Trèves and Argenteuil as to which possesses the real seamless coat." I am really sorry to say that I cannot come to earth to settle this important matter, as Heaven has been shifted some millions of miles from its former position; besides, you must remember that I am not so young as I was—I am nearly two thousand years old. But as I wish to prove that both of these coats are frauds, I have managed, by some ingenious means, to shoot this epistle into your letter-box.

I desire you to make it known to the British public—at least the thinking portion—that neither of the coats was ever worn by myself while upon earth, and this I can conclusively prove. In the first place, a carpenter's son could never afford to buy a coat of such costly material as these two garments are made of. In the next place I wore a linen tunic till I was eighteen, and then mother Mary bought me a coat for two pieces of silver from an old Jew. This lasted me until I was twenty-six, and then it was cut up for my young brothers, so that disposes of coat number one.

My next coat was bought at Egypt at the establishment of Moses and Co., while I was at college, and this is the one that was ruffled for by the Roman soldiers at my crucifixion. Joseph of Arimathea bought it from the soldier who won it, and Joseph gave it me back after my resurrection, because he didn't want me to go about naked. And I wish to inform you—and this is the God's truth—that I ascended into heaven with this identical coat, and it has been hanging up behind the throne of glory ever since, and the holy pilgrims will be able to view it when they get to heaven. Therefore I think I have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the holy coats of Trèves and Argenteuil are both gigantic frauds, and are only on show for the purpose of making money.

Yours etc., J. CHRIST.

A little girl was overheard to say to her mother the other evening—"Mother, I believe God thinks I'm dead." "Why?" asked the mother, somewhat astonished at the remark. "'Cause I haven't said my prayers for a week."

Goodman—"Our new minister is troubled with insomnia." Cynicus—"He should swallow some of his own sermons each night before retiring."

* Rev. xxi., 8.

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): 8.15, Entertainment (admission, 1d. and 2d.). Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, discussion class.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Sun's Heat."

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.: 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "1875 to 1891: a Fragment of Autobiography."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, Mr. H. Hooper, "Christian Reconcilers." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon Road (close to Latimer Road Station): Friday, at 8.30, members' business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.15, Mr. Harry Courtney, "The Three-headed God"; 7, Mr. A. Johnson, "Bible and Christian Lies."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. Thurlow will lecture.

Camberwell—Station Road: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. G. Standring, "Why are Atheists Moral?"

Edmonton (corner of Angel Road): 7, Mr. C. Cohen, "The Value of Christianity."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "St. Augustine's Confessions"; 3.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "Miracles and Prophecy as Tests of Truth."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "A Plea for Unbelief."

Kilburn—Salisbury Road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Has Man Evolved?"

Kingsland Green: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Steinberg, "Morality and Religion."

Lambeth (corner of Belvedere Road, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster Bridge: 6.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Design in Nature."

Leyton (open space near Vicarage Road, High Road): 11.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "Is Easter a Christian Festival?"

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge Road): 11.30, a lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "Freethought and Progress."

North Finchley: 3.30, a lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Who was Jesus and what did he Teach?"

Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. H. Hooper, "Renan's Christ."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester Gate): 3.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "What is Sin?"

Stratford—Matthew's Park Estate, Ham Park Road: 3.30, Mr. H. Hooper, "Agnosticism and Christianity."

Tottenham (corner of West Green Road): 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Ethical Aspect of Religion."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "The Value of Christianity"; 3.15, Mr. James Marshall, "God, a Personification."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's Hill: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Moral Fables."

COUNTRY.

Hetton-le-Hole—Committee Room, Miner's Hall: 6, members' meeting.

Hull—Cobden Hall, School Street, Waltham Street: Mr. W. Heaford, 2.30, "What must I do to be Saved?"; 6.30, "A Peep into Heaven and Hell."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne Street: Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; 3, "Nature and God"; 7, "The Way to Heaven."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints': 11, 'busses leave the hall for annual picnic to Bowden; tea at 4, at "Stamford Arms." Tickets (including tea and fare), 3s.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall (corner of Clayton Street and Blakett Street): 3, first monthly meeting in new premises.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Hore, "Hospitals." A collection will be made for the Hospital Sunday Fund.

Reading—Forester's Hall, West Street: 7, monthly meeting of members and friends.

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road: 6.30, important business meeting of members.

Sheffield N. S. S. members and friends meet by Victoria Station at 2 to go to Darnall and neighborhood, and from thence to Mr. Garbutt's (of Attercliffe) to tea.

South Shields N. S. S., annual picnic to Holywell Dene; brakes leave Saville Street, North Shields, at 1 o'clock.

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation Street: 7, important business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Farsley: 3, Mr. J. Grange, "Moses and Darwin"; 6, Mr. A. B. Wakefield, "Why do the Clergy Shun Discussion?"

Hull—Corporation Field: 11, Mr. W. Heaford, "Man's Reason God's Revelation."

Newcastle—Quayside (near big crane): 11, Mr. A. Dawson, "An Impachment of the Christian Faith."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.—Aug. 30, Halstead. Sept. 6, Rochdale; 7, Wigan; 10, Blackburn; 11, Darwen; 13, Manchester; 14, Nelson; 15, Nelson; 19, Chester; 20, Liverpool; 27, Rushden. Oct. 4, Battersea; 18, Finsbury Park. Nov. 1, West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Aug. 30, morning, Woolwich. Sept. 6, morning, Clerkenwell; 13, morning, Clerkenwell Green; afternoon, Victoria Park; 20, morning, Westminster. Oct. 4, Camberwell; 11, Westminster; 18, morning, Hall of Science; 25, Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley Road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Aug. 30, morning, Camberwell; evening, Lambeth.

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