

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## SPECIAL NOTICE.

"THE FREETHINKER" will Next Week be ENLARGED to SIXTEEN PAGES, still at the old price of ONE PENNY.

### MR. GLADSTONE ON DEVILS.

WHEN the Grand Old Man crossed swords with Professor Huxley on the miracle of Gadara, he spent all his time in discussing whether the pigs belonged to Jews or Gentiles. The more serious point, whether a legion of devils were actually cast out of one or two men and sent into a herd of swine, he sedulously avoided. Professor Huxley, however, is too wide-awake to be drawn off the scent; and while he disputed the points of geography and ethnology, he insisted upon the fact that their only importance was their relation to a miraculous story, which marked the parting of the ways between Science and Christianity.

The demonic theory of disease, including insanity, is universal among savages. For proof and illustration the reader has only to consult Dr. Tylor's splendid work on *Primitive Culture*. There are special demons for every malady, and the way to cure the disease is to cast out the evil spirit. Of course insanity is a striking disorder, and in default of the pathological explanation the savage regards the wild, wandering words and inexplicable actions of the sufferer as the words and actions of a demon, who has taken possession of the man's body, and driven his soul abroad or put it in abeyance. This theory of madness survived through all the centuries of Christian history until the advent of modern science. Mad people were chained up, exhibited as objects of derision, and often beaten unmercifully. It was the *devil* in them, as in the poor witches, that was treated in this fashion. And it was a recognised part of a clergyman's business to cast out devils. The Church of England canon is still unrepealed which provides that the clergy, before engaging in this useful if not agreeable occupation, must obtain the written authority of their bishops.

Laugh or smile as we will at this superstition, it is an integral part of the New Testament. The demonic theory of disease is confessed in the story of Jesus rebuking the fever of Peter's mother-in-law, so that it left her instantaneously, flying out of the door or window, or up the chimney. Jesus repeatedly cast out devils. He expelled seven, in succession or at one fell swoop, from Mary Magdalene. He turned a legion—that is, several thousands—out of the possessed Gadarenes; there being at least one apiece for the bedevilled swine who were driven to destruction. Paul likewise cast out devils. Indeed, if demonic possession in the New Testament is explained away, there is no reason why every other miraculous element should not be dealt with in the same manner.

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Mr. Gladstone perceives this, although he does not commit himself in his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*. "I am afraid," he says, in a letter to the Rev. J. W. Belcher, "that the objections to demoniacal possession involve in germ the rejection of all belief in the supernatural." This is wonderfully clear and straightforward for the Grand Old Man. Give up the belief that mad people may be tenanted by devils, and you should immediately join the National Secular Society. You have taken the first decisive step on the broad road of "infidelity," and nothing but a want of logic or courage prevents you from hastening to the inevitable conclusion.

Archbishop Trench, in his *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, rejects the theory that the "demoniacs" were simply insane. No doubt, he says, there was "a substratum of disease, which in many cases helped to lay open the sufferer to the deeper evil." But "our Lord Himself uses language which is not reconcilable" with the naturalist theory. "It may well be a question moreover," says Trench, "if an Apostle, or one with apostolic discernment of spirits, were to enter now into one of our madhouses, how many of the sufferers there he might not recognise as thus having more immediately fallen under the tyranny of the powers of darkness."

Dean Milman, the discreet, plausible, and polished historian of the Christian superstition, did not shrink from regarding the New Testament demoniacs as merely insane; and "nothing was more probable," he remarked, "than that lunacy should take the turn and speak the language of the prevailing superstition of the times." Precisely so. But why did Jesus imitate the lunatics? He addresses the evil spirit and not the madman. "Hold thy peace," he says, "and come out of him." No doubt the demoniacs were simply insane; but in that case Jesus himself was mistaken, or the evangelists put into his mouth words that he never used. The first alternative destroys the divinity of Jesus; the second destroys the authority of the evangelists.

Mr. Gladstone's position is the only honest and logical one for a professed Christian. Demonic possession cannot be cut out of the New Testament without leaving a gap through which all the "infidelity" in the world might pass freely. Devils are not confined to hell. They are commercial travellers in brimstone and mischief. They go home occasionally; the rest of the time they are abroad on business. When they see a promising madman they get inside him, and find warmer quarters than the universal air. Very likely they have started Theosophy, in order to provide themselves with fresh residences.

Little devils of course involve the big Devil—Apollyon, Beelzebub, Abaddon, Satan, Lucifer, Old Nick. He commands the infernal armies, and is one of the deities in Mr. Gladstone's pantheon. He is even embedded in the revised version of the Lord's Prayer—like a fly in amber. "Deliver us from evil" now reads "Deliver us from the Evil One." Thus the Devil triumphs, and the first of living English statesmen is reduced by Christian superstition to the

level of modern savages and ancient barbarians. Mr. Gladstone is perhaps the highest type of the Christian statesman. But how small and effeminate he appears, after all, in comparison with a great Pagan statesman like Julius Cæsar, whose brain was free from all superstition! Were the "mighty Julius" to re-appear on earth, and see a great statesman believing the story of devils being turned out of men into pigs, he would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect in two thousand years.

G. W. FOOTE.

### RE-INCARNATION.

It is easy to see how the idea of the transmigration of souls arose. Animals were observed to be no less instinct with life than men. Soul and life in early thought were identified with breath, and when life passed from one person it was supposed to be ready to enter some other. Thus the Algonquins of North America, when little children died, buried them by the wayside, that their souls might enter mothers passing by, and so be born again. Among the Tacullis, the medicine-man effects re-incarnation by putting his hands on the breast of the dying. Then, holding them over the head of a relative, he blows through them. The next child born to the recipient of the departed soul is supposed to be animated by it, and takes the name and rank of the dead person. The idea of breath being the life may be seen in the story of Jahveh Elohim breathing into man's nostrils the breath of life (Gen. ii., 7).

The notion that black people when dead get re-incarnated in white form has been found both in Africa, Asia and Australia. "Black fellow tumble down, jump up white fellow." Huxley has told how he and a friend were treated with great consideration by a savage who took his friend for the ghost, or rather re-incarnation, of a relative.

That the superstition of re-incarnation existed at the beginning of the Christian era, is evident from it being related of Herod the Tetrarch, that when he heard of the fame of Jesus, he said: This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead (Matt. xiv. 2.) Jesus countenanced the doctrine in declaring that John the Baptist was Elijah (Matt. xi., 14), though John himself denied the imputation (John i., 21). Christ declared of himself "Before Abraham was I am" (John viii., 58). He taught "ye must be born again" (John iii., 7), and said the angels cannot die any more (Luke xx., 36), which may imply they had previously lived and died over and over again. The superstition of the resurrection of the body is an offshoot of the belief in the re-incarnation of the spirit which needs some tabernacle wherein to manifest itself.

From time to time persons have appeared claiming to remember themselves in former lives. There is an Italian named Quirico Filopanti, who has published the genealogy of his former lives. They were all famous men, including Dante and Julius Cæsar. It is by no means remarkable that those who claim knowledge of their own re-incarnation always assume to have been illustrious characters. On the theory it must be so, for it is only the great who get to have a knowledge of their previous births. The mystery, however, deepens when we find two ladies claiming to have been Mary Queen of Scots, and three gentlemen who affirm they were Paul the Apostle. It reminds me of a very unfair patient at Colney Hatch. He would say he was Lord Nelson. If then asked if he was Wellington, he would declare it was true. He said he was John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and also God the Father. As another patient remarked, this monopolist did not give the other

fellows a fair chance. So at spiritist séances I have had communications from St. Paul, John Wesley, Thomas Paine, and several other celebrated characters. The vulgar unknown rarely intruded their spirituality upon my presence. I have heard many stories of spirit wonders, but perhaps the most startling was the appearance at a Re-incarnation Seance at Naples of Alladin, the hero of the Wonderful Lamp. This, however, is hardly more surprising than the fact that Miss Anna Blackwell claims to be a re-incarnation of the semi-mythical Semiramis. This lady, who thinks she was also Jezebel, says that the spirits appear again at intervals of three or four generations, say two hundred years; so Paul and Jesus should have turned up eight or nine times since they were Paul and Jesus. Socrates ought to have manifested himself some ten times or more. But perhaps he has been expiating some of his sins in another form. Mr. Sinnett, the disciple of Cristofolo, says No; a period of from 1,500 to 2,000 years passes before they come up again, by which time the world should get considerably altered, to give them a new experience. According to this gentleman, who had the benefit of the revelations of a Mahatma, Koot Hoomi, communicating through the late Madame Blavatsky, each ego goes through at least seven hundred incarnations, which, together with the intervening periods spent in Devachan or Avitchi—Paradise or Purgatory—would run up a considerable figure.\*

But Re-incarnation must be taken in connexion with Karma, and Karma tells you you get just what you deserve. Miss Blackwell illustrates this. A man murdered his wife, but the wife would not have been murdered had she not incurred the penalty by murdering this same husband in a former life. Now, think you the matter is squared? Not so. Karma must go on, and wife and husband murder each in turn *ad infinitum*. If a parent contracts a disease and gives it to his offspring, it is on account of sins which both have committed in another life. No wonder that in the East the observed effect of these two great doctrines of Theosophy is a state of complete depression; a sense of powerlessness before the unknown, even though the unknown be only the effect of one's own character in previous lives.

Modern Western Re-incarnationists seek to divest themselves of the belief in transmigration through animal forms. Yet this doctrine is not only historically connected with it, and held by all the great races who have adopted it, but it lies, as we have indicated, at its very foundation. It hardly does to suggest to an English audience that one's tom-cat may be your own grandmother, yet in the great scheme of may-be's this deserves about as much consideration as that Madame Blavatsky was a revised edition of Cassandra, or that Mrs. Oakley-Cooper is Hypatia brought up to date.

But then it is said the doctrine is so very poetic. Certainly it lends itself to fancy, though we expect most people find better poetry and more consolation in the dream that they will rejoin their loved ones. A writer in the Spiritist organ *Light* put forward the very poetic idea that babies deliberately choose their own fathers and mothers. Ho says: "We hold that birth into material relations is in no sense an accident but a deliberate act of volition on the part of a conscious entity seeking expression and fully aware of its wants." Sexual passion is so powerful just because so many spirits are hovering about looking for suitable parents to re-incarnate them. Now what idea could be more shocking to a mother than that the child at

\* Mr. Sinnett says the complete life of a race—there are seven races—is certainly much longer than a million years; "but when we get to figures of this kind we are on very delicate ground, for precise periods are very profound secrets for reasons uninitiated students ('lay chelas,' as the adepts now say) can only imperfectly divine." This is the sort of rubbish he took for revelations from H. P. Blavatsky.

her bosom is not really her own, but an old stager, perhaps expiating his former sins in another world when he cries with the stomach-ache? Re-incarnation in this light is almost as unpoetic as Original Sin. Like all the rest of Theosophy, it is simply a network of assumptions, creating as many difficulties as those it seeks to remove. Its revival is one of the many signs that the world is getting dissatisfied with the old ideas of eternal heaven and eternal hell. There are some who, when they give up one superstition, find a craving to substitute another. It is a hard task to realise that progress is only made in proportion as we give up dreams and restrict our aims and efforts within the limits of the actual.

J. M. WHEELER.

### CHRISTIANITY DEAD: WHAT THEN?

THE controversial Christian is sometimes fond of inviting the Freethinker to contemplate the dark condition of hopeless depravity to which the world would be reduced if Christianity were dissolved into its essential smoke. Certainly the prospect would be a dire and dismal one—for gentry of the General Booth and Price Hughes type; but for humanity at large their loss would constitute our real gain. We should certainly lose the interested attentions of a crowd of spiritual busybodies, who are ever in a flutter of hysterical excitement about the welfare of our immortal souls; but this bereavement would be amply compensated for by the improved condition all around of the general mass of mankind, who would be left free to effect their secular salvation by the more prosaic, albeit more practical, means which science and co-operation afford. Nothing in the history of social development stands out in a clearer light than the fact that the element of spiritual direction vested in the hands of Popes, bishops, parsons, missionaries, and sky-pilots of all shapes, colors, sizes, and sects, has proved a mischievous impediment in the path of humanity, sapping the foundations of intellectual freedom and stemming the tide of social progress. To-day, as ever, Christianity blocks the way. To tell us that when we are without God we shall be left without hope in the world, is merely the clerical counterpart of the good old cobbler's cry, "Nothing like leather." The banishment of God from the domain of thought, though possibly a harsh measure to employ against the "Grand Old Man," would be more than counterbalanced by the beneficent extinguishment of Hell-fire, effected by the liberation of the mind from the priest-forged fetters of supernaturalism. It is folly to pretend that man's welfare, in time or eternity, is bound up with the truth or falsity of Christism; for if that system be not a cunningly devised fable (as we believe), then the mental realisation of the prospect of everlasting torment, which it holds out as the doom of the great majority of mankind, would darken the life of every humane man and woman with gloom and anguish unspeakable. Our position, in brief, may be thus expressed—If Christianity is true, more's the pity; for, if it is not false, it ought to be, if regard for human welfare is to count as a factor in the formation of our judgment on gods, men, and things. Better, therefore, no God at all than the Christian variety of the genus *Deus*. The actual realisation of our individual hope of salvation would bring to us no real happiness if millions are doomed to expiate before our eyes an eternity of despair. Thus the limitation of both our joys and sorrows by the impassable barrier of the grave is nature's priceless boon, not to be outvalued by any of the posthumous hopes and fears promised us by the cruel creed of Christendom.

The ship of State can well afford to throw overboard into the sea of oblivion its useless cargo of gods, devils, and priests. Humanity will not be quite naked should it at last be shamed by common

sense into divesting itself of the ridiculous garments of godology. As Bacon says: "Atheism leaves men to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not." On the other hand, the adulterous connection between theology and ethics has, at best, only produced a mongrel breed of spurious moral ideas; and when the final divorce between the ill-mated twain shall be happily pronounced, and religion shall cease to spawn in the mind of man a bastard brood of base ideals and stunted conceptions of duty, the efforts of man will eventually find an unobstructed way, through the channels of purely secular aspiration, towards realising the highest attainable good on this earthly sphere of happiness—which happens to be the only one on which our labors can be known to fruitfully operate.

The shady shifts and tricky devices to which Christians are forced to have recourse in order to bolster up the tottering fabric of their creed would be laughable did they not indicate an appalling deviation from moral rectitude. One of their famous appeals *ad misericordiam* is the declaration that, "If there were no God it would be necessary to invent one." In other words, they affect to believe what is a contradiction in fact, viz., that men can only be kept true by being systematically deceived; and those who thus make themselves liars for the glory of "God" are, in their own estimation, the salt of the earth. Men who can use this method of argument—who, like their God, can send men strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they all might be *damned* (and double damned), who believe not the lie but have pleasure in righteousness (see 2 Thess. ii., 11, 12), stand, *ipso facto*, convicted as shameless palterers with their own conscience, and would-be smotherers of the conscience of the race.

Another specious appeal to the leniency of a stiff-necked and sceptical generation is based on the alleged benefits conferred by Christianity upon mankind in the past. It fostered progress, we are told, in the infant stages of social development, and on that account, if not on any other, we are bidden to still retain and utilise it. Waiving the objections we might legitimately urge against this claim having regard to the multifarious crimes of Christianity, we should like to point out that the fact that mother's milk and feeding bottles were useful institutions at a particular stage of man's individual growth, affords no reason why either boy, youth or adult should be accused of base ingratitude when he ceases to attempt to sustain life by superannuated methods that were not only admirable but essential when he was a mere babe and suckling. Precisely on the same grounds, the mere fact (if fact it be) that Christianity was a useful prop wherewith to support humanity in past moments of debility, is no reason why we should still go about with the spiritual crutches with which our fathers formerly hobbled along the path of progress.

The eradication from the human mind of the noxious weeds of superstition may be reasonably expected to prepare the soil of man's sentiments and aspirations for a more healthy flowering of social effort than hitherto known. The primary effect of such a change of thought and feeling would doubtless be to immensely raise the practical importance of this life as compared with any hypothetical life hereafter. Too many evils are, and have been, patiently endured by a long-suffering humanity through the mischievous assumption of a Micawber-like attitude of blind dependence upon "Providence" for something better to turn up here, or at least hereafter. A deeply-ingrained conviction, however, that happiness lost once is happiness lost for ever: and that if opportunities of well-being are allowed to slip through our fingers here they will never be re-presented to us hereafter, will alter the whole drift of individual and social policy, and force upon men the no less sensible

than inevitable conclusion, that if the Fates will not that they should enjoy a heaven in the clouds when they are dead and buried, they had better seize time by the forelock, and endeavor to realise a little heaven on *terra firma*, on the *carpe diem* principle of father Horace.

Another resultant of the disappearance of supernaturalism would be the formation of a more exalted conception of the character and potentialities of man in relation to virtue and happiness. His righteousness would no longer be viewed as filthy rags; the malignant delusion would no more be entertained that the heart of man is evil and that continually, and that, all of us having sinned, we are only worthy of being kept alive, when we are dead, by a continual miracle, in order to be tortured eternally. On the contrary, the knowledge of the immense strides towards perfection which man has persistently made in the course of his gradual unfolding of character from his primitive condition of lowly intelligence and animal brutishness up to the lofty pinnacles of grandeur to which specially endowed individuals and groups have at length attained—and in attaining which they have exhibited the possibilities of the whole race, under appropriate conditions—silences for ever the censorious tongues of misanthropic priestlings who would attach to the character of man the libellous stigma of utter unworthiness.

Yet another, and specially valuable corollary of the extinction of theology, would be an intense and almost unbearable impatience, rankling in the heart of man, of every species of social wrong. The barriers of privilege and caste—whether hereditary or economic—would be relentlessly broken down, and a burning desire would actuate the vital element in the community to remove every artificial impediment that stands in the way of the highest possible realisation of happiness for each and all. Men would learn that the evils they endure were not inflicted by an angry God, owing to a shindy he had had with the Devil and their four hundred and forty-ninth grandmother a long time ago, but that these evils were natural in their origin and traceable to inharmonious conditions, which are remediable—if not removable—by the methods of ethical self-culture and social renovation, proceeding on the lines of a scientific study of nature.

The demise of Christianity, after the race shall have experienced the first pangs of loss, will only be mourned by a few antiquarian *laudatori temporis acti*, and by a disconsolate cohort of unemployed clerics, who will be compelled, by the stern logic of facts, to go forth from the garden of the Lord in order to earn a useful and an honest living for the first time in the course of their corporate existence.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

#### THE LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE.

AT a recent meeting of the Shareholders of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company a feeling was expressed by many in favor of a freehold site. This renders the Hall of Science in their view ineligible, and a majority of the shareholders recorded a resolution to that effect. The Memorial Hall, therefore, in their opinion should be elsewhere. Owing to the great cost and difficulty of procuring a site such as is contemplated, and the still greater cost of erecting a suitable Hall and Institute, many years must elapse before the project can be accomplished. In the meantime the National Secular Society must retain a central place in London for its meetings and lectures, and the use of the Hall of Science has been secured for its purposes for a period of one year. The lessee is also willing to sell his interest to the Freethought party. The lease has 28 years to run under the present conditions, and if within 10 years a sum of £2,500 is expended in rebuilding the front portion of the premises, and improving their appearance and convenience, possession

can be retained until 1977. Thus the party would possess a National Secular Hall of Science associated with Mr. Bradlaugh's name and career.

A Syndicate is being formed to carry out this object. Further particulars will be given as soon as possible. Meanwhile those who wish to assist are invited to communicate with Mr. Robert Forder, who kindly acts as Secretary for the present, or with the President of the National Secular Society.

G. W. FOOTE	GEORGE STANDRING
G. J. HOLYOAKE	R. O. SMITH
GEORGE ANDERSON	T. P. SMITH
W. H. REY OLDS	W. COOPER
ROBERT FORDER	

#### POSTSCRIPT.

(1) The Rules of the Syndicate are deposited at the Registrar's, and applications can now be made for shares. They are £1 each, payable 2s. 6d. on application and 2s. 6d. on allotment.

(2) The name of the Syndicate cannot be given definitely until the Registrar passes the Rules. It is intended by the promoters to make the Syndicate a centre of national operations. When the Hall of Science is secured, it may be possible to erect Secular Halls in other parts of London and in the provinces.

(3) As I regard the retention of the Hall of Science as vital to the interests of our party, I invite the support of Secularists in all parts of the country. And as immediate action is necessary, I beg them to be as prompt as possible.

(4) Some friends of the movement may have reasons against taking shares. I know of such cases myself. But these persons are willing to *give* something. If they will send me any subscriptions from one shilling to a thousand pounds, I will receive them, acknowledge them in the *Freethinker*, and deposit them in the custody of Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the N. S. S. Treasurer—a gentleman of sterling character, and as sound as the Bank of England. When the proper moment arrives I will myself appoint the persons who are to hold shares in the Syndicate to the amount of the subscriptions. All who give will give on this understanding, which will obviate future disputes, besides saving me the trouble of looking after another Committee.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### SPURGEON ON PRAYER.

MR. SPURGEON is getting better. He is reprieved from heaven. His sentence is commuted to penal servitude in this miserable vale of tears. Of course his friends are jubilant, and Mr. Spurgeon shares their elation. Writing to his congregation on Sunday, he described himself as "dragged back to life" by the "affectionate and effectual prayers of the saints." "Had I died," he said, "all infidelity would have noted it as a proof that prayer was useless; we have a right now to score one on the other side." But if Mr. Spurgeon had died would he or his friends have regarded it as a proof that prayer *was* useless? Certainly not. What right, then, have they to regard his recovery as a proof that prayer is efficacious? The fact is, they argue on the principle of "Heads we win, and tails you lose." Unless the great preacher has little more brains than a tame rabbit, he must see the miserable trick he is playing. He knows it is not surprising for a man of his age, surrounded with every comfort, and tended by the best doctors, to recover from a severe illness. He must also perceive, unless his mind is incapable of weighing evidence, that *individual* cases of recovery can never prove anything. Who is to measure the parts played by the patient's constitution, the physician's skill, the nurse's assiduity, and a hundred other influences? It cannot be done by the wit of man; and until it is done, it is idle to introduce the influence of prayer. There is one exception, however, to the rule. The only *individual* proof of the efficacy of prayer would be furnished by keeping Mr. Spurgeon alive for ever, or by prolonging his life beyond the possibilities of science. But such a proof will never be given. Mr. Spurgeon will die like the rest of us. And the next time he falls ill, if he will discard the aids of wealth and medicine, and trust only to the prayers of his congregation, he will soon

require the services of the undertaker. No doubt Mr. Spurgeon is as well aware of this as we are. His gushing sentences about prayer are probably a bit of professional trickery. He is bound to sustain the doctrines he lives to preach, and preaches to live.

G. W. FOOTE.

## ACID DROPS.

The Theosophy boom is still good enough for the *Chronicle*. Herbert Burrows falls foul of the gentleman who complained to Mr. Gladstone of the introduction of Theosophical lectures at political clubs. But as usual this very cocky person misses the point, which is not whether the clubs should be independent of outside interference, but whether they should be used for religious discussion and propaganda.

"Truthseeker," writing from Stoke Newington, states that after a lecture at Milton Hall on September 4, Mrs. Besant declared that she did *not* consider Jesus Christ an historical character—in fact, she looked upon him as a myth. Ten days afterwards, at Croydon, she said that she regarded Jesus Christ as a Mahatma who voluntarily re-incarnated himself for the good of mankind. "Truthseeker" wants to know how myths re-incarnate themselves. Perhaps Mrs. B. will explain. More likely she won't.

Mrs. Besant, however, denies that she said that Jesus Christ was "a myth." She says she "regarded him as a religious teacher round whom have crystallised many myths which are common to many religions." Mrs. Besant adds that she places the birth of Jesus 107 years before the Christian era "on the authority of Madame Blavatsky." This is the first time we ever heard that Madame was an historical "authority." Perhaps she was incarnated about that time. May be she nursed Mother Mary during her confinement.

Colonel Desmond turns out to be a crank or a humorist. He admits he gave a wrong address, but what does that matter? Nor can he now accept Mr. Stuart Cumberland's challenge. "I have had a precipitated short communication," he says, "forbidding me to demonstrate."

Mr. Stuart Cumberland says the Theosophists boasted loudly of "supernormal powers" until he issued his challenge. Now they say they attach no importance to such wonders. The doctrine's the thing.

By the way, Mr. Stuart Cumberland has modified his conditions. He will pay all expenses and stake a thousand pounds. The Theosophists are to pay nothing and stake nothing. And still they won't "come on."

"Gadfly," in the *Entr'acte*, devotes a couple of paragraphs to Mrs. Besant, perhaps on the ground that she is now a public performer though the show doesn't really begin till she produces those letters. "This good lady," it is remarked, "is of opinion that she has been used somewhat cruelly by some of her Hall of Science friends, but I don't well see how she can reasonably complain." Nor anyone else, Mr. Gadfly, with the regulation amount of brains in his cranium.

The English Mahatma has been discovered by Dr. A. H. Bennett. He is in the Aberdeen Asylum, and professes to be able to communicate, "by power of thought and concentration of ideas," with any person in any part of the world. He sat in a corner of the admission room for a few minutes, apparently oblivious to his surroundings, and then informed those in the room that he had just sent a message to her Majesty at Balmoral, and had received a reply. He said he could nominate the present position of any ship at sea, and communicate with the people on board at any time.

The Rev. W. Evans Hurdall's lecture at Bow to "men only" on Mrs. Besant and Secularism is reported in the *East London Observer*. It seems to have been a dreadful hodge-podge, but there was nothing in it for "men only." No doubt that is a trick of advertising.

Thomas Lake Harris, the Californian prophet, claims to be rejuvenated, and is thus "re-incorporated into the potency and promise of psycho-physical immortality." This is very

tall talk, but we guess there is no Life Assurance Company that would grant T. L. H. a policy on such grounds. We also guess he'll die some day, despite the "psycho-physical immortality." The founder of the Jezreelites was never to die, but he did. Anyhow he's buried. Then his wife was never to die, but she followed her hubby.

This Harris, who pretends to have realised the promise of Jesus that those who believe in him should never die, is an Englishman by birth, being born near Sheffield in 1824. Most of his life has been spent in America, where he has been in turns journalist, Swedenborgian preacher, spiritist, and prophet on his own account. He started a bank, which failed; and also a Brotherhood of the New Life, which was joined by Lawrence Oliphant and his mother. Lawrence was converted by Harris into a teamster, and Lady Oliphant was told her place was at the washtub.

On the Brighton parade, on Saturday evening, an Independent Baptist was trying to prove that eternal torment did not mean torment for ever, and he evidently thought he was taking a heavy load off the minds of his audience. A member of the Battersea N. S. S., who happened to be present, asked the man of God whether it would make much difference if we were tormented in hell for a thousand years or for ever, and if he did not think we should get quite used to in that time—in fact be sorry when it was all over. The brimstone pilot wouldn't stop to answer the question.

Canon Hoare, of Tunbridge Wells, is furious at the sky-pilots finding an opposition show in the Sunday band. Knowing the opinion of the town is entirely in favor of the band's performance, he has been endeavoring to get it discontinued privately. He wrote to the band secretary for an interview, and then remonstrated with him on his wickedness, and pelted him with texts of Scripture. Not satisfied with this, he warned the bandsmen that their livings would be in danger if they hurt the feelings of his congregation and parishioners. The bandsmen, however, decided to continue; indeed, if they did not, another band from London would probably be engaged to take their place.

The *Newcastle Daily Journal*, in announcing some lectures by Mr. Celestine Edwards, says that when he lectures in Victoria Park, Freethinkers and Secularists cannot get an audience. This is a story which it is easier to tell in Newcastle than in Victoria Park.

While urging self-denial on his followers at home, Booth travels abroad like an emperor. We read of his having a special train to Launceston, and taking thence a special steamer to Melbourne. We wonder who pays for his imperial progress.

Disturbances occurred last Sunday at Eastbourne. The *Echo* pertinently asked what would be said if a body of Secularists thus broke the municipal and parliamentary law Sunday after Sunday, and thereby promoted a breach of the peace. It adds, "Man for man and woman for woman, we believe there are more Secularists in England than Salvationists."

The Pope chose the twenty-first anniversary of the entry of the Italian troops into Rome as the occasion of a counter demonstration. Twenty thousand odd Catholic pilgrims were brought to Rome and lodged and fed at the Vatican in order to thank his Holiness for his Encyclical Letter on the Labor Question. Papa Pecci assured them that only in religion and the church could the interests of the toilers be duly attended to. The workers are, however, learning a very different lesson in their trade organisations, of which Papa Pecci would like his bishops to have the bossing.

Cardinal Parocchi says, "Leo has clearly and plainly expressed approval of a political alliance with the democracy. It is the only good and possible alliance. The church will have to reckon less with dynasties and states than with the people. The reign of the democracy is a fact, and a triumphant fact." The church took sides with the party of privilege as long as ever the democracy could thereby be exploited. Now the workers are obtaining power it shifts its sails and bows down to the coming ruler. Next year an International Congress is to be held to form a union of Catholic workmen.

A poor creature hailing from West Ham writes a dull letter to an Isle of Man paper, the *Mona's Herald*. He puffs the Christian Evidence Society, though "its limited funds are already exhausted." He also informs the Manxmen that "the Secular movement is a dying movement." He should tell this to the Manx cats. The Secular movement must be dying strangely when the *Freethinker* increases to sixteen pages.

Dr. Talmage's recent declaration that God began the creation of the world on Monday morning is puzzling the friends of the Sabbath, for it implies that he worked on the Sabbath. But then, if he didn't work on the Jewish Sabbath, he must have worked on the Christian Sabbath, and that also may trouble some people.—*New York Tribune*.

Thomas Buckland, a laborer, of Siddington, thinks he is very ill-used. He was sent to prison for leaving his children in filth, and without food or clothes, while he went to the "pub." He said, "God Almighty took my wife, and now the police take my children." Which he disapproved of most does not appear.

A Chicago minister reports that he once heard a colored preacher at City Point pray in the following terms: "O Lord, come down to City Point! Come to City Point quick, O Lord, for, O Lord, there is wickedness here that you don't know anything about." This is considered an amusing instance of negro religion, but is not all prayer virtually an attempt to instruct the Lord in his duties?

The *English Churchman* is responsible for the statement that a Norfolk clergyman has committed suicide while in a state of melancholia and semi-starvation, brought on by fasting in accordance with his ideas of religion. It heads the paragraph "Ritualism and Suicide." Even Talmage never ventured to suggest that Atheists recommend semi-starvation.

The Rev. J. B. Camm, rector of Monkton Wyld, Dorset, has given up his living and joined the Roman Catholic Church. In this as in many other cases, the English Church Union planted, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament watered, and the Church of Rome reaps the harvest.

The persecution of Jews and Stundists continues in Russia. The former cannot emigrate out of the country nearly as quickly as they would like. The *Jewish Chronicle* does not exactly say that the Russian famine is owing to the persecution, but it hints that Christians might see in it a parallel to those events in Egypt which are believed to have been divine checks upon the rigor of Pharaoh.

Rice has gone up to famine prices in Upper Burmah; an indication, we suppose, of divine wrath at Buddhism.

A correspondent writes: "During the recent wet weather two priests hit upon the idea of going to the farmers in the neighborhood and offer to bless the crops for a certain fee, so that the farmer might get them in good order. Having obtained the necessary fee and blessed the crops at three farms, they proceeded to the fourth, but found a most wretched crop of all that had been sown. Said one priest to the other it is no use our seeing the farmer, for a blessing will be of no use to this land for you see it wants manuring."

According to a newspaper paragraph, the Rev. David Melville, rector of Whitby, who was one of the officiating clergy at the marriage of the Earl of Dudley, obtained his living, when last vacant, by writing to the late earl the following laconic epistle: "Lord, rememb David" (Ps. cxxii., 1). The earl gave him the living.

Father Ignatius returns from America with a bad opinion of the American Episcopal Church. He thinks it high time Anglicans repudiated a church which harbors such heretics as the Rev. Heber Newton, and which has made Dr. Phillipps Brooks (another denier of biblical inspiration) Bishop of Massachusetts.

The Society of the Holy Cross, since the outcry at its publication of *The Priest in Absolution*, has, like the bats and moles, preferred to work in the dark. It, however, dimly emerges above ground in the announcement that it provides "Retreats for the Clergy." The real clerical retreat is a retreat all along the line.

A poor curate writes to the *Guardian* that before he could take a holiday he had to beg and wait till some richer clerical brother in Christ had sent him his cast-off clothing. Sydney Smith well said the Church of England consisted of beggars and bishops. Lazarus, in holy orders, waiting for the crumbs from the table of Bishop Dives, pictures its rotten condition.

We have received a prospectus of the *Review of the Churches*, a "new monthly review of religious intelligence." The last word, we presume, means *news* and not *sense*; otherwise the new review will have a job to find its material. We observe that a circulation of 50,000 is guaranteed for the first number. It appears, therefore, that the promoters of this enterprise have the gift of prophecy; unless the "guarantee" is a bait for advertisers.

The *Review of the Churches* is to be generally edited by the Rev. H. S. Lunn, M.D.—doctor of bodies and souls. The special editors are Archdeacon Farrar, representing the Church of England; Dr. Donald Fraser, the Presbyterians; Dr. John Clifford, the Baptists; Dr. A. Mackennal, the Congregationalists; and Mr. Percy Bunting, the Methodists.

This is a remarkable "happy family." The object of the promoters is to destroy the internal differences among Christian Churches and "unite the flock." They also propose to convert the "masses of men who are outside all the churches." Evidently they have a heavy task before them. For our part, we have a notion that whatever success they achieve will take the form of salaries and profits.

At the Methodist camp meeting at Sidney, N.Y., the impassioned exhortations of young Preacher Truesdell merged into discordant and incoherent cries. He had become insane from religious excitement.

Religious mania proved to be at the root of the tragedy in Epping Forest, where a mother drowned her two children. She is to be detained in a lunatic asylum.

The English Puritan looks on the typical infidel Frenchman as an abandoned creature, who goes through life chiefly in pursuit of his neighbors' wives; yet statistics show that in France the illegitimate births, at any rate, are much lower than among ourselves; and the average length of life—one of the best signs of the welfare of a community—is six per cent. higher than in England.

The Puritan settlers in New England left behind them severe laws against Sunday travelling or recreation of any description. They also punished witchcraft with death, and inspired as much gloom as possible in the community. These things induced a worthy American to observe that it would have been a good deal better for the country if, instead of the Pilgrim Fathers landing on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers.

At Trèves they have not only the Holy Coat, but the relics of St. Goar—a saint who is said to have hung his cap and cloak on a sunbeam, the beam kindly materialising itself into a hatpeg for the convenience of the saint. Hartmann, the pessimist, was not far wrong in saying the two great factors of humanity were stupidity and superstition; and we add, these two are one.

The Rev. J. Keatinge, of the Catholic Church, Chatham, sends a circular round to his parishioners, asking them, now the schools are free, to send him three-halfpence a week, or half the former fee, and to put the other three-halfpence into the Savings Bank. His circular is published in the *Tablet* as a "plan of campaign" for the guidance of other priests.

The Rev. Lancelot Holland is likely to get into a libel suit for making the charge that noxious drugs were given to girls in a convent near London. A Mr. Thomas Smelt, in the *Manchester Courier*, also makes the charge that the inmates of nunneries are able to conceal "births and deaths which are constantly occurring in these places" without registration. We have always held that nunneries should be as much subject to inspection as private lunatic asylums. The proposal would hardly be so energetically opposed if the priests were sure that all is sweet and sound.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Sept. 27, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: at 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; at 3, "The Follies of Theosophy"; at 6.30, "The Way to Heaven."

October 4, 11, 18, Hall of Science. 25, Camberwell.  
November 1, Portsmouth; 8, Sheffield; 15, Leicester; 22, Wolverhampton; 29, Grimsby.  
December 6, Hall of Science; 13, Manchester; 27, Hall of Science.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Sept. 27, Birmingham. October 4, Birmingham; 11, Manchester; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science. Nov. 1, Hall of Science; 8, Birmingham; 15, Birmingham; 22, Portsmouth. December 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20 and 21, Leicester; 27, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, London, E.C.

G. F. D.—Why rake up the embers of old controversies? Let us face the future manfully. Neither the defection of Mrs. Besant, nor the other causes you refer to, will destroy the N. S. S., or even impair its vitality.

R. WOOD.—There is no dignity or utility in such a discussion. We are satisfied with having stated the facts of the case, and we do not intend to be drawn into a personal squabble. The rest is silence.

W. WOODLAND says that Abbot, Lower Bond-street, Weymouth, will supply the *Freethinker* if ordered. When sailors call ashore, however, they want the paper there and then. This correspondent is assured that there are many readers of the *Freethinker* and many members of the N. S. S. in the navy.

T. PHILLIPS.—Glad to hear of Mr. Watts's success at Spenny-moor, and that you were "delighted" with him. Pleased also to receive your thanks for what we have done to secure Mr. Watts's stay in England. We intend to pursue our settled policy for the good of the cause. Never do we take a single step without reflection, and we ask the party to judge us, not by the controversies and cavils of the moment, but by results. We share your opinion that every Free-thinker should join the N. S. S. Those who hold aloof have an easy task when they take to criticism, and their advice is always more or less suspicious.

E. PARKER.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."  
FREETHINKER, who is a Yeovil parson's son, suggests that friend Moffat should leave a bundle of Freethought literature behind him at Weymouth. This is the plan that "Free-thinker" has adopted for forty years when running up to Yeovil, where one is now able to buy the *Freethinker* at a stall in the public streets.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Such debates are sure to do good. The "burden" doesn't matter while Mr. Foote keeps his strength.

W. B. JEVONS writes:—"As a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, permit me to say how much I appreciate your action as President of the National Secular Society, to the Funds of which I beg to enclose a donation of 10s."—These are the sort of letters we like. There is something substantial about them. We should be delighted to receive a hundred of this sort during the next month. The N. S. S. funds are running lower than they should, partly through increased expenditure, and partly through the drain of special subscriptions.

W. BURRIDGE.—Many thanks. Mr. Foote will bear it in mind.  
H. I. BARRON.—English books are liable to a duty of 25 per cent. on their value at United States ports, but we should hardly think the authorities would trouble about what you mention.

H. ROWDEN.—For information as to the Deptford Branch apply to W. H. Reynolds, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E. The Woolwich Branch is under a cloud at present, local conditions being apparently very unfavorable.

W. M. KNOX, in sending copy which will appear in our next, writes:—"The last increase in the size of the *Freethinker* doubled its sale in Belfast, and I hope the fresh increase will have a similar effect. It may gratify you to know that the members of the Ulster Branch, without exception I think, heartily endorse all you have said and done in regard to Mrs. Besant and Theosophy."

REX REGES.—Yes, Mr. Holyoake is the same as ever. The story of his Imprisonment is most pathetic. He bore his sufferings with fortitude and without a trace of spitefulness.

R. ROBINSON.—Glad to receive expressions of confidence from the Durham collieries, where Mr. Bradlaugh was so greatly admired. Our attitude towards Mrs. Besant and Theosophy excited the hostility of the same persons who most strongly resent our attitude towards the "Memorial."

E. J. joins the N. S. S., as "every Freethinker should in this time of trouble." This correspondent's suggestion as to Hall of Science tickets will be considered.

R. S. SEAGO.—Thanks for the paper with marked paragraph.

W. WHEELER.—Pleased to have the confidence of the Westminster friends. Securing the Hall of Science is not the end of all things. By and bye other halls will be rented or built in London, we hope through the same Syndicate, and,

as you say, there is a good field farther West. Only wait a bit.

A. WHEELER, on behalf of the Finsbury Branch, after thanking Mr. Foote for last Sunday's lecture, adds:—"I have also to express the explicit confidence of our members in you, and their high admiration of the manner in which you have done the hard work of the party since your Presidency."

G. NAEWIGER.—Delighted to hear of your progress at Hull. See paragraph.

J. E. MENZIES (Houghton-le-Spring).—The chapter is absolutely closed. Glad to know you think we have "acted rightly throughout."

B. DAWSON.—Mr. Watts will be pleased to learn that his Spenny-moor lecture is regarded as "a fine treat." He is, beyond question, a very valuable accession to our platform. We note your expression, "I am pleased with the part you have taken all along."

A. LORD.—We hope the Nottingham Branch will go ahead under the new management. Mr. Foote will pay you a visit in December or January.

S. H. ALLSON.—It is satisfactory to learn that you had a large and orderly audience at the Strafford open-air station. Pleased to have your approval of our efforts to secure the Hall of Science. Thanks for your promised efforts to promote the circulation of the *Freethinker*.

H. M. RIDGWAY.—The matter would have to be discussed at a Conference. We know a great many Secularists who are teetotalers, and we see no objection to a Teetotal Wing of the N. S. S.

J. B. notes that it is two most pious countries, Spain and Russia, that are suffering from the visitation of Providence in floods and famine.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.—In our next.

T. PAUL.—The approval of a "forty years" Freethinker is welcome.

J. M. (Colne).—Your parody on the Sermon on the Mount has been in type for weeks. It will be inserted as soon as possible. Don't lose temper. We are not God Almighty. We cannot make different things occupy the same space at the same time.

R. ROSETTI's new address is 21 Harrow-road, Harrow-green, Leytonstone.

J. R. WILLOCK, secretary of the Manchester Branch, is now located at 2 Morton-street, Clifford-street, C. on M.

H. (Nottingham).—You may rely on our firmness in both matters. Thanks for the promised help. The enlarged *Freethinker* should have a good sale in Nottingham.

F. ABLARD (Manchester) writes:—"No *Freethinker* could be bought at Strefford till nearly two years ago, when I persuaded a newsagent to give it a trial by taking half a dozen copies. I promised to take what he did not sell, but I was never called upon to take more than my own copy, and now he sells two dozen copies. He would sell far more if he would display a contents-sheet." We hope F. Ablard's example will be extensively followed during the next few weeks.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer London Secular Federation, acknowledges:—Leyton Branch, 5s.; East London Branch, 3s.; Victoria Park (collection), £1 6s. 3d.; A. Chertoff, 1s.

W. STURMANS.—We oppose Christianity because it is false. Is not that sufficient?

J. A. FLEMING.—Mr. Foote's private address is his private property. His business address is printed every week in the "Correspondents" column. Glad to hear that "so far as Middlesboro' is concerned, Mr. Foote has made no mistake in the adoption of a colleague" in Mr. Charles Watts.

JOSEPH BROWN, sec. N. E. Secular Federation, says that Mr. Watts made "a great impression" at Newcastle, and is a worthy co-worker of ours. Mr. Brown adds: "I approve of your action over the Memorial Hall scheme. It was the only course you could have taken. I only regret that I am not a rich man. As it is, I can only give my time, energy, and the little talent I possess, to the good old cause."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Noues 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—Newcastle Daily Journal—Mona's Herald—North Wilt's Herald—North-Western Gazette—Tunbridge Well's Advertiser—Spenny-moor and Tudhoe Chronicle—Ariel—Literary World—Vanoni's Weekly Sheet—Daily Chronicle—Banbury Guardian—East London Observer—Port Elizabeth Telegraph—Le Bluet—Leeds Mercury—Countryman—Johannesburg Star—Kimberly Diamond Fields Summary—The News Paper.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

This is the last twelve-page *Freethinker*. Our next number will be sixteen pages. We intend to make it a good one in every respect. Perhaps the friends who care to help us will order extra copies of this special number for circulation among their acquaintances. This is a good opportunity for other friends to stir up the newsagents. Wherever the *Freethinker* is kept a sale is found for it, and many newsagents could be induced to give it a chance. Half a dozen copies might be ordered by some friend of the paper, on condition that the newsagent sells what he can of them, the rest to be paid for by the orderer. Some newsagents, too, might be induced to display a contents-sheet, which we shall be happy to send by post. We may add that the size of our weekly contents-sheet will be increased.

Despite the lowering sky and the occasional drizzle of rain, Mr. Foote had a big audience on Clerkenwell-green on Sunday morning. The collection realised £1 10s. for the London Secular Federation—a handsome sum for a poor neighborhood.

Mr. Foote's evening meeting at the Hall of Science was a capital one, and very enthusiastic. Before the lecture Mr. Foote referred to the new arrangements, and the retention of the Hall of Science for the Secular party. Mr. R. O. Smith, who was in the chair, afterwards made a brief, modest, pointed speech, explaining his position. His manner evidently pleased the audience, and his straightforward remarks were cordially applauded.

The new arrangements at the London Hall of Science begin on the first Sunday in October and will continue for at least twelve months. Mr. Foote will open with three special Sunday evening lectures, and will be followed on two Sunday evenings by Mr. Watts, who in turn will be followed by Messrs. G. J. Holyoake, Touzeau Parris, J. M. Robertson, and Dr. Allinson. The Sunday morning lectures will be free, but there will be a few sixpenny front seats to help defray the expenses. Full particulars will appear in our next.

Annual tickets, admitting to the reserved seats on Sunday, are on sale—single, one guinea; double (for lady and gentleman), a guinea and a half. A fair number have already been purchased, and no doubt many more will be taken up during the next week or two. They are a very good investment for those who attend frequently. Some of our wealthier friends, who live at a distance in suburban parts, and can only visit the Hall occasionally, might purchase a ticket nevertheless. A guinea is not a large amount to some of them, but every guinea is a welcome encouragement to the Committee, who are laboring hard for the success of this enterprise.

We have already stated, but we may as well repeat, that music will be a new feature at these Sunday evening meetings. Half an hour's music will be given before the lecture, and if there be no discussion another half an hour's music after the lecture. Another new feature will be a reading from the world's great literature. When Mr. Foote lectures he intends to give the reading himself. His example will probably be followed by other lecturers.

The London Secular Federation takes the first four Thursday evenings in October at the Hall of Science for another course of free propagandist lectures. Mr. Parris leads off on "Theism, Pantheism, Atheism." Mr. A. B. Moss then discusses "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?" Mr. Forder speaks next on "Theosophy: Old and New," and Mr. Foote winds up with a discourse on "The Gospel of Freethought." We hope these lectures will be well attended, and, if the Christian Evidence people want to convert infidels, this is their chance.

Saturday (Sept. 26) is Charles Bradlaugh's birthday. In the evening there will be an important function at the Manchester Secular Hall. Mr. Foote is to unveil a life-size portrait of Charles Bradlaugh, painted by Mr. Walter Seckert, and presented to the Branch by a generous donor who wishes to remain unknown. The chair will be taken at 6.30 by Mr. J. M. Robertson. After Mr. Foote's address some local gentlemen will speak from the platform.

The next day (Sunday) Mr. Foote lectures in the same

hall. His subjects are "The Tree of Knowledge," "The Follies of Theosophy," and "The Way to Heaven." Weather permitting, good audiences are expected.

Mr. Charles Watts concluded his three weeks' lecturing tour in the north last Sunday, when he lectured three times at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The rain poured down in torrents during the day and affected the morning and afternoon audiences. In the evening, however, despite the rain, the hall was crowded in every part, even the seats upon the platform being filled. Mr. Watts, we are informed, met with an enthusiastic reception. His announcement that he intended to work with Mr. Foote, whose policy in reference to Theosophy he fully endorsed, met with immense cheering. There was a great demand for the *Freethinker*, and although several extra dozen copies were forwarded, all were sold and more were required.

After Mr. Watts' lecture last week at Spennymoor a lively discussion followed between the lecturer and the vicar of the district. Mr. Watts invited the rev. gentleman to a set debate, but the invitation was declined. The local papers gave a very fair report of the proceedings.

Since Mr. Watts' recent lectures in Aberdeen quite a warm discussion has been going on in the local press upon the subject of his lectures. The Rev. A. Stewart has made a vigorous attack upon Secularism. Probably Mr. Watts will notice his old opponent's fallacies in the *Freethinker* next week.

Mrs. Watts (who is looking exceedingly well) having arrived from Toronto, Mr. Watts will at once take up his residence in Birmingham, and commence his Secular work in that town.

Fund for settling Mr. Charles Watts at Birmingham.—We have received the following: J. Swinton, 4s.; A Friend, 2s. 6d.; R. Forward, 2s.—A fresh circular on this matter is being sent out. Another £100, at least, will be required shortly.

The Science Classes at the Camberwell Secular Hall for the 1891-92 session open on Friday, October 2. The subjects are four—Chemistry, Physiology, Geology, and Hygiene. The Branch intends to abolish the fees. The classes will thus be free, and they are under the conduct of a very able teacher, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S.

Down in the East of London the Bethnal Green Branch does a good work with slender means in a very poor neighborhood. Its open-air station is at the "Salmon and Ball," corner of the Bethnal Green-road. Sometimes the Christians are a little riotous. Last Sunday morning they made an organised attempt to break up the meeting. This sort of thing must be checked. Reason and civility are lost upon these orthodox rowdies. What is wanted is the presence of half-a-dozen stalwart Freethinkers to surround the platform and protect it. We hope this appeal will bring the necessary support.

The Hull Branch is a standing disproof of "the decline of Secularism." Its meetings have so increased in size that a larger hall has had to be taken for the winter's lectures. Mr. Naewiger, the secretary, sends us a program from October to March. The meetings are now held at the Cobden Hall, School-street, Waltham-street. By the way, Mr. Naewiger's address is altered; it is now 32 Cannon-street.

Mr. Stanley Jones has been on a lecturing tour in the North-West of England. We have a good report of his meetings at Liverpool. At Birkenhead he addressed a large open-air meeting and gave great satisfaction. The Chester friends also sing Mr. Jones's praises.

Miss Ada Campbell, the Australian lecturer, discourses in England for the first time to-day (Sept. 27). The Rodney Hall, corner of Rodney-street, Mount Pleasant, is engaged for the purpose. The afternoon lecture, at 3, is on "Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, Men and Women"; the evening lecture, at 7.30, on "Why I am not a Theosophist: a Reply to Mrs. Besant." No doubt the Liverpool Freethinkers will give Miss Campbell a British welcome.

Liverpool Secularists should give immediate support to the

Secular Hall Company. H. Smith, secretary, 3 Breck-place, will be glad to hear from persons willing to take shares. An opportunity has arisen to acquire good premises in a main thoroughfare. They were built a few years ago at a cost of £4,000, and can now be obtained for £1,750. We earnestly hope the Liverpool Secularists will strive to embrace this opportunity. If they do so they will give the cause an immense impetus in that populous city.

Freethinkers in Macclesfield and Nantwich are desired to communicate with Mr. Charles Lewis, 33 Alton-street, Crewe, with a view to organisation.

Mr. Forder had a crowded and enthusiastic meeting at Edinburgh on Sunday. His criticism of Theosophy was heartily cheered. The only apologist for Mrs. Besant was a Socialist, who declared that she had withdrawn from the Malthusian propaganda, not because of Theosophy, but on account of Socialism. Mr. Forder left the Edinburgh friends forming a Branch of the N. S. S., and went on to Aberdeen, where he was promised a good reception.

Mr. William Bunton, by his bold challenge of Christianity in the ancient and pious town of Banbury has stirred up ministers and magistrates pretty considerably. They have been letting him have it in the columns of the *Banbury Guardian*, which we dare say he does not in the least mind, since that paper is fair enough to let him reply, which he does very effectively.

There are several Freethinkers and readers of this journal on board H.M.S. "Trafalgar," and the chaplain is very much annoyed. One day he heard a man say "He didn't want to go to heaven; he wanted to go to Gosport." This sensible sailor was denounced from the pulpit as an "ignorant idiot," and the reverend gentleman's language caused a revulsion of feeling in favor of the heretics. On another occasion the chaplain exclaimed—"There are people—they are not men—on board this ship, who say there is no God and no Devil, no heaven and no hell; and where will they go when they die?" Poor chaplain. He seems a more "ignorant idiot" than the sailor he denounced. But perhaps, after all, he is trembling for his salary; for the spread of Freethought means the drifting of sky-pilots among the unemployed.

The "Trafalgar" has been cruising about Sigri, a place which has recently figured in the "Eastern Question." She is going on to Malta, and if anyone will send a packet of Freethought literature, well wrapped up, to E. Parker, Bandsman, the said E. Parker will distribute the contents judiciously among the crew.

*Fritankaren* contains a full report of a debate at Skepparslof between its editor, Viktor E. Lennstrand, and Pastor Nymansson, on the evidences of Christianity.

As a set off to the visit of French pilgrims to the Pope may be placed the unveiling of the statue of Garibaldi at Nice, which has been erected at a cost of 70,000 francs.

Mr. James Hooper is the new president of the Nottingham Branch, and Mr. R. A. Murray the new vice-president. Both are old workers in the Freethought cause. The Branch has been allowed to sink into a very weak condition, but the new officers mean to put fresh life into it.

The Marlowe Memorial was unveiled last week at Canterbury. Mr. Henry Irving was the chief speaker at the ceremony, and his language was rather ornate and stilted. The task of praising the genius of the poet of the "mighty line" should have been entrusted to some distinguished man of letters.

"In his own day," the *Daily News* says, "Marlowe's fame suffered from the fact that his theological views were opposed to those of the majority of his countrymen." True, and every great poet of sceptical tendencies has suffered in the same way ever since. Look at Shelley, for instance, between whom and Marlowe there are many points of similarity. Both were fiery souls, both were glorious poets, and both were Atheists.

The manner of Marlowe's death is still a mystery. According to a sort of "frightful warning" tract published many years after his death, he was stabbed in a tavern brawl; but according to a contemporary, as the *Daily News* points out, he died of the plague. Probably we shall never know the truth. And after all, what does it matter? The "mighty line" still lives, and will live as long as English literature.

Mr. T. J. Price, an active co-worker with Mr. Symes on the *Liberator*, of Melbourne, is compiling a series of "Freethought Gleanings." The instalment in the number before us (Aug. 8) consists of a column and a quarter selected from various articles by G. W. Foote.

The *Liberator* contains an advertisement of *Letters from Hell* and *Letters from Heaven*, which, having been stolen and burnt by J. B. Patterson, at the Custom House, Melbourne, are reprinted by A. T. Wilson, 456 Bourke-street, Melbourne. Perhaps the Custom House officer thought both pamphlets emanated from Hades, or should at any rate be consigned there.

The French Comité d'Etudes Morales a (Committee on Moral Studies), composed of Freethinkers, are going seriatim through a list of ethical questions, each member contributing his opinion. The result is to be published in a large volume. The President is M. Jean Paul Cee.

In Carlyle's latest discovered letter on the subject of tobacco pipes he has the salutation "Good keep you always." He seems to have been with those who spell God with two o's and the Devil without the D.

Some of Professor Huxley's contributions to periodical literature are to be issued this autumn by Messrs. Macmillan and Co. under the title of *Essays on Some Controverted Questions*.

The *Truthseeker* calls for an International Congress of Freethinkers to be held in Chicago in 1893. Will not this be a day after the World's Fair?

The Finsbury Park Branch will have no cessation of its activity. The secretary has applied to the London County Council for permission to use the band-stand during October, and will carry on the work indoors during winter. Disengaged lecturers are requested to communicate with Mr. Clinton, 29 Parolles-road, Upper Holloway, N.

The *Chatham Observer* reports an open-air debate between Mr. Thomas Holmes (Christian) and Mr. W. B. Thompson (Secularist) on "Christianity or Atheism." The audience was large and orderly, and the meeting terminated with a collection on behalf of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The *Observer* also prints an impertinent letter on the debate from John Stigant (is it a misprint for Stiggins?), to which Mr. Thompson gives a civil but stinging reply.

The Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment Campaign has begun in earnest. The Welsh National Council has declared that the Church in Wales is opposed to all that is distinctive in the national sentiment. Steps will be taken to make the Disestablishment question the test one at the General Election.

We have just issued a handsome edition of Thomas Paine's "Complete Theological Works," including the *Age of Reason* and the miscellaneous writings. The volume is nicely bound in cloth, and the price is only half-a-crown.

Next week we shall have on sale at our publishing office our reprint of the articles written thirty years ago by Charles Robert Newman, the Atheistic brother of Cardinal Newman. Mr. G. J. Holyoake supplies a brief Preface, and Mr. J. M. Wheeler a lengthy Biographical Introduction. The title of the reprint is *Essays in Rationalism*. The volume is bound in cloth, and the price is eighteenpence.

This evening (Sept. 27) Mr. G. J. Holyoake lectures at the London Hall of Science. His subject is a suggestive one, and will be treated, we have no doubt, with characteristic wit and thoughtfulness. Freethinkers in London should give the veteran father of Secularism a hearty reception.

## REAL MAHATMAS.

RECENTLY a great deal has been said in certain quarters about some mysterious but highly-evolved creatures called Mahatmas, who are said to reside somewhere in Thibet and devote a great deal of time and attention to the study of the occult arts, with the view of bettering the condition of mankind. These beings are called "Masters," and are supposed to be of the masculine gender, although nobody has seen them except in the "spirit"; for they strive successfully to hide themselves in the obscurest and most inaccessible portion of the globe; although it is claimed that the great object they have in view is to spend their lives and devote their talents to the service of mankind. In order to accomplish this object they refuse to have any dealings, in word or deed, with any persons who do not believe in them, and they will only "communicate" with advanced "pupils," to whom, on special occasions, they will transmit a communication on a leaf containing most important information, which, being meant for the benefit of mankind, they urge their pupils to keep a *profound secret*.

Of late these mysterious and shadowy creatures have been occupying a lot of public attention; and it is as well, for a change, that the rational mind should turn from these imaginary creatures to the real Mahatmas—the world's great teachers, who in all ages have contributed to the advancement of mankind by their real and unconcealed services to humanity. Socrates was one of these. He lived more than four hundred years before the alleged birth of Jesus. He did not hide himself from the people; he dwelt and worked among them. Of him, Xenophon wrote: "The loss of Socrates is mourned, even at the present day, by those personal friends and acquaintances who knew his real character, and who have any aspirations after a good and noble life; for no help was so invaluable as his for the realisation of goodness.\* "The fitting mission of Socrates was the education of youth, for he saw more honor in making wise and virtuous citizens and rulers than in being chief ruler of the State himself. He was willing to assist all in the paths of knowledge, but each must conquer truth for himself. The injunction of the Delphic God, 'Know thyself,' seemed to realise his philosophy. He confined himself chiefly to ethical questions concerning both public and private life, seeking to counteract the influence of sophistry, with its debasing opinion that there was no truth for man, only the shadow of it, with which he might 'disport himself at will.' †"

Euclid did not hide his light under a bushel. He gave the world a great work, which has been of incalculable benefit to mankind; for the problems of Euclid are true yesterday, to-day and for ever.

And what shall we say of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who, being a Roman emperor, used his knowledge and power for the benefit of his subjects, and not, like too many rulers, for their degradation and destruction? He was a wise teacher, and devoted his talents to the service of man. Were the great philosophers and scientists like Bruno, Spinoza, Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, Newton, Berkeley, Hume and Mill teachers who were afraid of the public gaze, or of having too many pupils? Did they appear to their pupils in dreams and adjure them on no account to reveal the great truths of science and philosophy, lest some unscrupulous persons might use them for wicked and harmful purposes?

And what of our poets? Wasn't Shakespeare a real Mahatma—a great teacher? Didn't he understand human beings with a "learned spirit"? And yet he did not hide himself from his fellows. He performed his duties as a citizen, occupied himself in

his profession as an actor, and wrote his incomparable plays, which have not only won the admiration of his own countrymen, but of civilised beings the world over. He gave us profound studies of human character: he taught us how to become noble men and women. There was no mystery about his teaching. It was simplicity itself.

And then we must not forget our Darwins, our Huxleys, our Tyndalls, our Stephensons, our Watts, our Edisons. Why, these men have made the world worth living in. What are the achievements of the table rappers, the rose scatterers, the leaf communicators, compared with these? The teachings of a Darwin change the whole tenor of human thought for generations, inspiring men to investigation, to discovery, and ultimately to great triumphs over the harmful forces of nature; while the application of Edison's discoveries put hundreds of thousands of men in employment. The shadowy Mahatmas do nothing but communicate secret messages. Let us, then, turn from them to the real teachers of mankind for instruction and inspiration.

Our attitude towards all new doctrines is one of doubt. Show us what you are and what you can do, are the first questions we put. Let us have proof that your pretensions are genuine. Let us examine you and put you to the test in the light of day. And any teaching which shrinks from examination and hides itself in mystery has either upon it the stamp of folly or fraud; while those teachings which are true and therefore beneficial must be open to all, and be capable of being utilised at all times for the service of mankind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

MR. WATTS'S tour in the North came to a successful conclusion at Newcastle on Sunday, Sept. 20. In spite of a drenching rain, which continued during the whole of the day, a very good audience assembled at 11 a.m. in the Lecture Hall, to hear Mr. Watts lecture on "The False Claims of the Bible." There was no discussion, but he was heartily applauded by the audience, many of whom had travelled in from the country Branches to hear him. At the afternoon lecture on "Secularism: its Twofold Advantage," the attendance had considerably increased, and Mr. Watts was again received with the greatest enthusiasm, many declaring that the lecture was the best exposition of Secular principles they had ever heard. The hall at the evening lecture was crowded, and the enthusiasm greater than even at the two previous meetings. The subject was, "Is Unbelief a Crime?" In response to the plaudits of the audience, Mr. Watts, in a feeling manner, thanked them for their hearty reception, and reminded the older Freethinkers present that it was on that platform he had held his first set debate, his opponent being the Rev. David King, and hoped before long he would have the pleasure of meeting a representative local clergyman in debate, for, while he was very fond of lecturing, he was passionately fond of discussion. Mr. Watts during his tour, has lectured at the following places: Wellington, South Shields, North Shields, Bedlington, Spennymoor and Middlesborough. At all these places he secured a hearty reception. Mr. A. Dipper, late of Battersea, is also engaged for open-air work among the Branches, and has gained the encomiums of all who have heard him. Up to the present he has delivered twelve lectures at the following places: Bedlington, Chip-pington, Annfield Plain, Sunderland, Houghton-le-Spring, Hetton-le-Hole, Fence Houses, Blyth and South Shields. Altogether, including Mr. Moss's tour, thirty-four lectures have been held under the auspices of the Federation during the last three months, and on behalf of the Council I appeal to the local Freethinkers for their financial support to carry on the good work. I have to acknowledge the following subscriptions:—Mr. Pace, Pelton Fell, 5s.; Chester-le-Street Branch, 11s.; collection at Bedlington, 7s.; collection at Hetton, 6s. 7½d.; collection at Mr. Watts' evening lecture at South Shields, 18s. 6d.; collection at Mr. Watts' evening lecture at Newcastle, £1 3s. 6d.; Crook Branch, 2s. 4d.—JOSEPH BROWN, Hon. Sec., 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

\* Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, chap. iv.

† Perrin's *Religion of Philosophy*, p. 49.

## OBITUARY.

**CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY.**—Mrs. Sarah Axcell died on Monday, Sept. 7, after wearying months of pain and suffering, by that dread and incurable disease cancer, aged forty-one years. Those principles of Freethought which sustained her in health and life were sufficient to carry and sustain her through a painful disease to death. Her gradual journey from life to death was smoothed and comforted by the kindly help and ministrations of her Freethought friends. She died as she lived, a firm and consistent Freethinker. The funeral took place at Gillingham Cemetery on Sunday, Sept. 13, the members of the Society following from the cemetery gates to the graveside, and as the coffin was lowered they sang that beautiful song of Gaskell's, "Calmly, calmly lay her down." Mr. A. H. Andrews read the Secular Burial Service, and Messrs. Taylor, Boorman, and Thompson spoke a few words personal of the deceased. The service seemed to make an impression on the large concourse of persons present. Mrs. Axcell was a very active worker in our Society, an ardent politician, a member of the Women's Liberal Federation of this borough, and I believe she was connected with some of the London Branches of the N. S. S.; also at one time a member of its Executive.—W. B. THOMPSON, Hon. Sec.

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

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## SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

## LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, Mr. C. Cohen, "The Value of Christianity."  
Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 3, members' meeting; 5.30, Bradlaugh anniversary—Tea and Soirée (tickets 6d.). Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, discussion.  
Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. R. Forder, "The Bible and Ancient Monuments."  
Finsbury Park—1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: Thursday, at 8.30, members' meeting.  
Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, "Boldness in Opinion—the remarkable book on Compromise by Rt. Hon. John Morley, M.P."  
Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "Theosophy: a Criticism."  
West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Heat of the Sun." Thursday, at 8, open debate.  
West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, members' monthly business meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Mr. J. Rowney, "Christianity"; 6.30, Mr. G. Shambrook, "Jesus and his Beliefs."  
Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, a lecture.  
Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "The God Idea."  
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Mr. Toleman-Garner, "Freethought Leads the Way."  
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 6.30, debate between Mr. L. Keen and F. Boyce on "Is there a God?"  
Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. E. W. Osborn, "Futurity"; 3.30, a lecture.  
Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "What think ye of Christ?"  
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The God Idea."  
Kilburn—Salisbury-road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "The Childhood of Christianity."  
Kingsland Green: 11.30, a lecture.  
Lambeth (corner of Belvedere-road, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital), Westminster-bridge: 6, a lecture.  
Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "God is Love."  
Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, Mr. G. Standing, "Morality Without Superstition."  
Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "That Whale Story."  
North Finchley—Coleridge-road: 3.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Does God Love Niggers?"

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Science and the Bible."

Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "How I became a Secularist, and why I remain one."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Has the Bible been on the Side of Liberty?"

Stratford—Matthew's Park Estate, Ham Park-road: 3.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, Mr. C. Cohen will lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Belief"; 3.15, Mr. W. Heaford, "Holy Absurdity."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's-hill: 11.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "The Old Testament."

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Mr. Charles Watts, 11, "My Political Program"; 7, "Freethought in England and America." Bradlaugh anniversary—Tea and social meeting at 5 (tickets 8d. each).

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: noon, debating class, Mr. Lawrie, "The Immorality of the Soul"; 6.30, Mr. Woodburn, "My Progress from Christianity to Secularism."

Hetton-le-Hole—Committee Room, Miner's Hall: 6, Mr. James Murray, a reading.

Liverpool—Rodney Hall, Mount Pleasant: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Good and Evil, Vice and Virtue, Men and Women"; 7.30, "Why I am Not a Theosophist—a Reply to Mrs. Besant."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; 3, "The Follies of Theosophy"; 6.30, "The Way to Heaven."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, monthly meeting of members; 7, social gathering to celebrate the anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's birthday.

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, the President of the Branch will give an address and read a paper.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 2.45, meeting to arrange the formation of a reading circle to be held on Sunday afternoons; 7, Mr. Hore, "Ma y Magdalene." Sept. 28, at 7.30, an "at home," in commemoration of the anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's birthday.

Reading—Forester's Hall, West-street: 7, monthly meeting of members.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Miss Eliza Hammond Hills, 3, "Poets and the Poesy of Britain" (with illustrative recitals); 7, "The Achilles of Our Age." Tea at 5.

South Shields—Free Library Hall, Ocean-road: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "Theosophy and Occultism"; 3, "Do Christians Believe in Christ?"; 7, "Crucified Saviors."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, Mr. A. Dawson, "Will Christ Save Us?"

Nottingham—Sneinton Market: Mr. A. Lord, "Martyrs of Science."

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Sept. 27, Milton Hall. Oct. 25, morning; Finsbury Park. Nov. 22, Hall of Science.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Sept. 27, Rushden. Oct. 4, Battersea; 11, Portsmouth; 18, Finsbury Park. Nov. 1, West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Oct. 4, Camberwell; 11, Westminster; 18, morning, Hall of Science; 25, Camberwell. Nov. 15, Reading.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Sept. 27, morning, Hyde Park; evening, Hammersmith. Oct. 4, morning, Pimlico; 11, morning, Camberwell; 18, morning, Mile End; 25, Manchester.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth-road, Stratford, London, E.—Sept. 27, morning, Clerkenwell Green. Oct. 11, evening, Ball's Pond. Nov. 29, Ball's Pond.

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