

The

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

PRAYER AND PHYSIC.

MR. SPURGEON has been "raised up by the Lord" sufficiently to be able to visit Eastbourne, where he will have an opportunity of seeing a scrimmage between the Boothites and the other residents on a Sunday afternoon; and perhaps, as the great South London preacher has no sympathy whatever with the street sensationalism of the Boothites, he will find the spectacle—if he *does* witness it—an agreeable variation in the monotony of his convalescence.

We are personally glad to see Mr. Spurgeon "raised up," whether the raising was effected by the Lord, the doctors, the nurses, or his own constitution—or all of them together. It gives a Freethinker no pleasure to see a Christian die before his time, and go to such a miserable place as Heaven prematurely. Mr. Spurgeon has a wife and children and many friends, and it is satisfactory to know that his society is spared to them. If his recovery should be complete, and he be enabled to resume his old duties at the Tabernacle, Freethinkers will have reason to rejoice; for Mr. Spurgeon stands up boldly for the old orthodox Christianity of hell and damnation, and is a sort of frightful warning to thoughtful young men and women against the danger of embracing "the evil faith."

Now that Mr. Spurgeon is gone off to Eastbourne, and is enjoying fresh air and every luxurious attention that money can purchase, we presume they have eased off the prayer meetings at the Tabernacle. But up to a week ago these little gatherings, for the purpose of refreshing the Lord's memory, were held daily. Smith the green-grocer and Brown the tallow-chandler, assisted by Robinson the shoemaker, reminded Jehovah of their beloved pastor, and begged his Almightyness not to forget that they—the said Smith, Brown, and Robinson, and eke their friend Jones—particularly wanted him, on their account, to single out Mr. Spurgeon as the special object of his beneficence. They were aware that he knew everything, but Jove sometimes nods. They were aware that he is "no respecter of persons," although *they* would never think of holding daily prayer meetings for the recovery of poor Tom Finch the carpenter, whose sickness had reduced his wife and family to destitution; yet they also knew, from the Blessed Book, that the Lord had his favorites, and if he stretched a point for Hezekiah's boil, he might also stretch a point for Spurgeon's kidneys. True, this is the language of paradox; but all religion is paradoxical, and if examined through and through is found to have as much organic texture as a boiled rice-pudding.

The hopeless muddle of these people who prayed for Mr. Spurgeon was exemplified by the observations of a gentleman called Stott. He came piping hot from Mr. Spurgeon's bedside, and assured the ladies and gentlemen at the prayer-meeting that the Lord had answered their prayers, for their pastor had rallied after he had been given over by the medical

profession. The person who uttered this stupendous folly is evidently "a big bug" at the Tabernacle, and he may be taken as a fair specimen of the imbecility of the Christian superstition.

How did Mr. Stott know that Mr. Spurgeon was given over by the medical profession? We are not aware that "the medical profession" ever had Mr. Spurgeon in hand. He was attended by his own physicians, and no "giving over" appeared in any of their bulletins. Mr. Stott is evidently drawing on his imagination.

We may also inquire of Mr. Stott on what ground Mr. Spurgeon's recovery should be regarded as a miracle, even if he *had* been given over by the medical profession. Doctors sometimes say a patient will recover, and he dies; they sometimes say he will die, and he recovers. They are not infallible prophets. They are not masters of all the arcana of Nature. She often baffles their skill and frustrates their calculations. Any man in his senses, who will exercise them, must see it is no miracle that a doctor should be wrong—and that is all there is when the patient falsifies the doctor's prediction. We can show Mr. Stott an old Freethinker who is a standing libel on the medical profession. The doctors tell him he ought to have died fifteen years ago. His heart is in the last stage of decay, his liver is a sponge, and he has only a half of one lung. Yet he won't die, and on Mr. Stott's theory he is a walking miracle. We know another Freethinker who was so far "given over by the medical profession" that the doctor had signed his death-certificate, and the undertaker measured him for his coffin; yet he was "raised up," and on Mr. Stott's theory he is another walking miracle. Logic, thy name is—well, not Stott.

Logic is the last thing a believer attends to. If you bring him up to it, and hold his nose to it, he will roll his eyes in another direction. Did the believers give a little attention to the subject, they would see that they move as aimlessly as the children who splash in the shallow water at the seaside. The only way to test the efficacy of prayer and medical science is to let them work separately. It will not do to let them work together, to credit nature or the doctors with every failure, and to cry "half and half" over every success. The Peculiar People—whose only peculiarity is practising what other Christians profess—try prayer without science, and we know the result. But the rest of the faithful leave as little as possible to prayer. They trust the Lord, of course, but they take precautions against his negligence. They call in the doctor first and the minister afterwards, and they swallow the physic before praying "God bless it!" They do not manifest a single grain of mental or moral sincerity. Prayer is a capital thing in church or chapel, but is treated with practical contempt outside them. Even the old Puritan cried "Trust in the Lord—and keep your powder dry!" and common sense tells us the powder will explode, if we keep it dry, whether we trust in the Lord or not.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIAN IMMORTALITY.

IN taking the subject of "Ancient Beliefs in a Future State," Mr. Gladstone has opened up a crowd of difficulties for orthodoxy. In the first place, Christianity claims to have brought immortality to light through the Gospel, while the fact is patent that the doctrine was taught by Plato, nearly four hundred years before Christ, far more explicitly than it ever was by Jesus. The Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul two thousand years before Plato. It was the very core of their faith that, as the sun sunk into the under-world and rose again, so they also would rise. Their sacred "Ritual of the Dead" was a preparation for this journey into the land of the unknown, when the soul would be brought before the judgment-seat of Osiris and judged according to its works. On the other hand, the doctrine formed no part of God's first alleged revelation to the Jews. It was believed in by the Pharisees at the time of Christ, but rejected by the Sadducees, who claimed to be the true followers of Moses.

A strong vein of scepticism ran through God's chosen people. Moses held out earthly promises and earthly punishments as the inducement to obey his laws. While at the root of Judaism was a similar ghost belief to that found in other faiths, and evidenced in the story of the Witch at Endor, the higher minds were unsatisfied. Job says (vii., 9): "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." A Psalmist (cxlvi., 4) says: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." The writer of Ecclesiastes, ascribed to Solomon, says (iii., 19): "A man hath no pre-eminence above a beast"; "The dead know not anything" (ix., 5); and counsels, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (ix., 10). In short, the Jews show, what is exhibited according to Mr. Gladstone in general history—namely, a retrograde movement from, rather than an advance to, a belief in a future life. This the evolutionist explains by the idea of soul having originated from the dreams of savages, which advancing knowledge does not tend to confirm.

But it is said God has given a revelation on the subject. Paley, in the beginning of his *Evidences of Christianity*, argues for the *à priori* probability of a revelation from God on this ground. He says: "Suppose him to design for mankind a future state, is it unlikely that he should acquaint them with it?" This suggests that those without acquaintance with the doctrine may not be designed for a future state, and further that if God wished to give us any information on the subject he would surely make the matter quite clear.

Now, does Christianity give us this true and un-mistakeable light respecting our origin and destiny which might fairly be demanded from a divine revelation? Does it clear up all that is obscure? Manifestly it does not, for Christians are at variance among themselves as to its meaning. Are there only two states, heaven and hell, or are there also purgatory and limbo? Are we consigned to our fate at death, or do we wait for a general judgment day? Are the Swedenborgians, Mormons, Christadelphians, Universalists, Catholics or Lutherans right as to their views of the future? Should we pray for the dead? Have they any chance of improvement? Do they recognise each other? Can they return to us? Do the lower animals exist after they die? On such points there is no agreement among the believers in divine revelation. Christianity tells us nothing but that there is a future life, dependant perhaps on our beliefs, perhaps on our conduct here. All this the world acknowledged long before Christ.

But it is said Christ gave the pledge of immortality by his own resurrection. Did those persons ever ask themselves how the resurrection of a god's body could assure the immortality of their own souls. The truth is the absurd superstition of a resurrection of bodies arose from the previous superstition of re-incarnation. The body of Christ is said to have been only a few hours in the grave. We are expressly told it did not "see corruption." How then can the legend, even were it true, give any assurance of our resurrection when every particle of our composition is resolved into other forms.

But I go further. This revelation which reveals nothing, is not only unnecessary but mischievous. So far from conducing solely to the improvement and happiness of mankind its tendency has been to check civilisation and substitute asceticism for a wise use and amelioration of this world.

We are told the hope of immortality is such a consolation—even though most are doomed to unending torments. No doubt there is pleasure in dreaming. Its mischief is that it hinders working. The ignorant servant-girl, told by the fortune-teller that she is to be a fine lady, delights in contemplating her future grandeur; but these dreams are enjoyed at the cost of neglecting the rational means of bettering her condition. Eternal happiness is the hope of the indolent, who long for they know not what. The Christian doctrine of a future state has failed to improve humanity. It has warped natural morality by substituting the love of God for the love of human kind, and by looking forward to another and eternal life which dwarfs the present one into utter insignificance.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND DESTINY OF MAN.

II.

THE scientific discoveries of this age have thrown considerable light upon the relation of mind to matter. Whatever may be the exact connection between brain and thought—and we are very far from thoroughly understanding that connection at present—certain it is that so close and intimate is the relationship that exists, that the one must be studied in connection with the other. Physiological psychology is now recognised as the highest and most certain form of mind study. The old methods of investigating mental operations are no longer looked upon as being of much value, and every person now who desires to investigate mind, whether in the inchoate form in which its manifestations are seen in the lower animals, or in the highest developments that take place in human nature, proceeds along the line of what may be termed the somatic basis of thought, the brain and nervous system. Whether or not the German motto be true that there is no thought without phosphorus, certain it is that, as far as we can judge from comparatively recent experiments, there is no thought without a brain or nervous system, and that phosphorus is a most potent agency in the thinking process. However, in the study of man it is the entire man that must be brought under notice, and not some supposed entity called a soul or spirit. The origin of man consequently means the origin, not of soul as such, but of the complete human being; and the destiny must be understood to mean the destiny of humanity.

This is not the place to discuss the question of the origin of man by evolution, a fact which is now generally accepted by all well-informed people of every shade of theological opinion. Evolution has furnished us with an explanation of so much that was before obscure, that its value cannot be overrated. Not only the physical organs of humanity, but its highest mental powers, lie latent in the brains of inferior animals. Evolution, in fact, assumes, to use the words of Hæckel, "that in nature there is a great united, continuous, and everlasting process of develop-

ment; and that all natural phenomena, without exception, from the motion of the celestial bodies and the fall of the rolling stone, up to the growth of the plant and the consciousness of man, are subject to the same great law of causation; that they are to be ultimately reduced to atomic mechanics." Perhaps it is going farther than proof warrants us to assert that the entire process of evolution is reduced to mechanical law, but, substituting the term physical for mechanical, the assertion no doubt is correct. Many of the faculties of man were at one time supposed to be peculiar to him, and to be entirely absent, even in the lowest degree of development, from the inferior animals; but recent observation has shown the incorrectness of this view. Fear, love, joy, and other emotional states are seen not only in the highest animals below man, but very much lower in the scale of animal life. The religious faculty is still maintained by theologians to be an exception; but apart from the question whether any such faculty really exists, religion, as generally understood, is a combination of fear, veneration, and dependence, all of which are to be met with in the lower animals. Darwin has clearly shown the power of the emotions in the lower animals, and the facts which he has quoted are far too strong and too numerous to be set aside.

Man no longer stands on a lofty pedestal raised above all other creatures, and subject to laws and states to which they are strangers. He is one link in the "chain of being"—the last one doubtless up to the present—but still connected with the next as the rest with each other. An inquiry into his origin and destiny must, therefore, be pursued upon the same lines as the investigation of all other things. The origin of his physical frame is to be traced in the same way as that of all other organic bodies, and his intellectual faculties differ from theirs in degree and not in nature. We see that the human mind is infantile in the child, juvenile in the youth, mature in the adult, feeble in the aged, deranged by disease of the material organ the brain, and at death it disappears. The origin of the so-called human soul is just that of the body, and no separation, as far as modern science shows, is possible. Mental life commences with physical life, and both are immature together. We learn to use our intellectual powers in the same way as we acquire the more perfect use of our muscular—by experience and practice. It would be no more unreasonable to discuss the origin of muscular power than to speculate about the origination of brain power. Both must begin and both must end with the somatic organs on which they depend. From this it will be seen how very puerile are all the speculations about the pre-existence of the soul, and the question of what it was and where it was before its connection with the body, which really means before it had any existence. The modern delusion called Theosophy has therefore no foundation in science, nor in common sense. It is either the result of the working of diseased brains or the less pardonable trickery of charlatanism. The re-incarnation of spirit is almost on a par with the re-incarnation of a pre-existent digestive power in the absence of digestive organs.

The modern discovery of the correlation of force has completely revolutionised our knowledge upon a variety of subjects, and on none more so than that of the nature of thought or mental action. Light, heat, electricity, magnetism, etc., are now known to be forms of force, and what else is life and mind? Professor Huxley has shown how absurd it is to suppose life to be an entity—just as whimsical in fact as the old notion that there was an entity called aqueosity, which controlled the formation of water out of the elements of which it is composed. Oxygen and hydrogen unite in certain proportions and form water—that is, the water is the outcome of the union of

these elements. No one would be so exceedingly simple as to inquire where the water was before the union of the oxygen and hydrogen took place, for it is obvious to the merest tyro that it did not exist. So in certain other combinations, an organism is formed and the result is life. The life did not pre-exist, for it had no existence at all until the organic body produced it, and then it made its appearance simply as a correlated force. The production of mind is caused in a similar way. A particular kind of organic matter, termed nerve or brain, gives out mind, just as a simpler kind evolves life. What occurs here is a correlation of force—that is, one form of force is converted into another, heat into light, electricity into magnetism, and some one or more of them into life or mind. The origin of mind, therefore, is like the origin of heat or electricity—viz., correlation. The force itself thus correlated was of course eternal in some one or more of its forms, but the particular form in which it is beheld is simply the result of correlation. Nothing is called into actual existence but a phenomenon, having no more permanent individual existence than the flash of lightning or the peal of thunder. We kindle a fire and heat is produced, or we light the gas and the room becomes illuminated, but where was the heat or the light before the combustion upon which they depend was brought about? Surely not in existence in the form in which they are now seen. When the fire goes out the heat ceases, and when the gas is turned off there is no more light. No one thinks of asking what has become of either. Yet people talk of life as being an entity, and they discuss the whereabouts of mind before and after the existence of the organic substance, upon which the whole thing depends. Of course no one force can cease to be; energy is as indestructible as matter. But mind, like electricity, is but a form of force, and when it is correlated it ceases in that particular form. The origin of mind is analogous to the origin of heat, and the pre-existence of the one is as absurd as is that of the other. The same rule which applies to a prior existence before birth, applies with equal force to a continued existence after death. If there be such a state it must be discovered by some other process than science, for the belief in it can gain no support from that source. Indeed, the whole tendency of modern science is in quite an opposite direction. As to the destiny of man, if it is to be arrived at by the scientific method applied to the facts of nature, it will be at once apparent that the individual man passes away, and the race alone will remain.

The destiny of man is here understood to involve his future in this world, and in no other; and of this we can only judge by analogy, seeing that no direct and positive information can be obtained on the subject. The past, however, if properly studied, will always tend to throw light on the future, for the same laws are ever in operation. We know pretty clearly whence man has come, and from that we may infer the goal that lies ahead to which he is tending. As an individual he was born, and as such he will die. What lies beyond the tomb no mortal man can possibly discover, for knowledge cannot penetrate the realms of darkness where death reigns supreme. We have seen that science not only does not disclose a future life, but that all the evidence that it does furnish points the other way. The matter must, therefore, remain in uncertainty. Even on the ground of probability the balance is largely against a conscious existence after the dissolution of the body. With these facts before us, Agnosticism enjoins modesty, bids us above all things to avoid dogmatism, and to rest contented with such knowledge as we possess, seeking not to learn that which we have not the requisite faculties to discover. As a poet has well said—

No mortal man, however keen his eye,
Can into Nature's deepest secrets pry.

We can walk with steady steps where the pathway is clear and the road along which we travel is well marked out, but beyond that point we must be careful how we advance. Where certainty prevails in the field of knowledge we are entitled to speak with the authority which indicates no doubt; but when we arrive at the point where science is silent and nature dumb, we bow our heads in reverence before the inscrutable mystery of the Universe and wait for further light. Should the time ever arrive when that light will come, we will gratefully hail its approach and walk by the luminous power of its beams; but if it never appears, we shall rest content, and not be ashamed to confess our ignorance on matters where knowledge cannot be obtained.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

SOME ABSURDITIES OF THE CHURCH PRAYER-BOOK.

THE merits and demerits of the Bible have been discussed in pamphlets and examined on Freethought platforms with a persistency of iteration which can only be justified upon the ground of imperative necessity. That justification I hold to be complete and final; but, in the excitement of Biblical controversy, little or no attention is given to a book which is also invested with a kind of pseudo-sanctity by the orthodox. I mean the "Book of Common Prayer," that chubby little volume which every church-goer tucks under his arm together with the Bible.

This book, it may be noted, is open to criticism and comment, from which exemption can be fairly claimed for other devotional works. Whilst the Church of England remains a state-established and state-endowed institution, its adherents cannot justly complain if citizens exercise their critical faculties upon its liturgy. The Church of England has, in its wisdom, fastened the public devotions of its members upon a Procrustes-bed. It affords us scope for development or expansion; it makes but the smallest possible provision for special petitions to the throne of grace. There are the same forms of morning and evening prayer to be repeated daily, year in and year out, generation after generation. What is the inevitable effect of such mechanical, monotonous repetition? In the vast majority of cases the "worshipper" ceases after a time to attach any meaning in value to the words which he is uttering; he becomes, in fact, a devotional phonograph, repeating *ad lib* the conventional phrases which the Church of England has impressed upon his mind.

The Tibetan folds his written prayer around the barrel of a primitive machine, and accomplishes his devotional task by turning the crank with pious patience. The Roman Catholic devotee repeats her *Ave Maria* or her *Paternoster* a specified number of times, checking off each prayer by shifting a bead on her rosary, so that there may be no praying to waste. The English Churchman treads the dull round of "morning" or "evening prayer" with stolid vacuity. How is he to be differentiated from the Tibetan with his hurdy-gurdy, or the nun with her beads?

Let us contrast the Church of England clergyman with a dissenting minister. The former has his path marked out, his every syllable set down; he must not say a word this year that he did not say last year and that he will not repeat next year. His mind (if he have any) will be subdued to the medium in which it works: the liturgical strait-waistcoat will cramp and confine him until he loses the power of volition. But the dissenting minister is bound by none of these fetters. He can wrestle with the Lord in prayer; he may take hold of the horns of the altar and rattle the very tabernacle; he may pray (as I have heard a Wesleyan minister pray) for his congregation, for his sect, for the population of the United Kingdom, and

finally for everybody, everywhere. Even *he* could not get beyond this.

In my younger days it was my fortune, good or ill, to watch for many moons the demeanor of parsons and congregation in a London church. It was the utter hollowness and unreality of "public worship" which first caused me to examine the fundamental doctrines of a creed which I afterwards rejected.

Let us follow an English orthodox citizen into his church and see in what manner of exercise he indulges therein. Having been exhorted by the parson to "acknowledge and confess" his "manifold sins and wickedness," our pious friend—whom we will call Smith—proceeds to do so as follows:

"Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders," etc.

Now in all probability Smith is a decent, honest, hardworking man who has during the past week been earning his living and discharging his duties as a citizen. Why, then, should poor Smith be called upon to abase himself in the dust of the church, to declare that morally he is in a state of utter corruption? Why should Smith be required to describe himself as a "miserable offender"? Of course in the case of a vestryman the confession would have some appropriateness, but the average citizen libels himself basely and gratuitously when he makes this abject "confession."

But does Smith really believe he is the wretch and rogue that he glibly confesses himself to be? Not he! Test this outside the church door; denounce him *there* as a "miserable offender," as one who neglects all his duties and indulges in every form of wickedness; and you shall soon see what opinion Smith has of himself—and of you also. But on the charmed and consecrated ground of the church Smith is another man: he humbly "confesses" sins which he has not committed and receives an "absolution" for which he does not care a d—enarius.

But the Church is not satisfied with simply forcing Smith to declare himself an unmitigated scoundrel. It compels him to stand up and make an ass of himself. In the form for morning prayer there occurs a "canticle" which is recited in "Evangelical" and sung in "High" churches. Many times I have heard men and women of average intelligence gravely singing the following sentences:

"O ye Frost and Cold, bless ye the Lord; praise him and magnify him for ever."

"O ye Ice and Snow, bless ye the Lord," etc.

"O all ye Green Things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord," etc.

"O ye Whales, and all that move in the Waters, bless ye the Lord," etc.

Now, Smith has said or sung this rigmarole so many times that there is to him not the faintest suggestion of absurdity in the idea of the praises of the Lord being sounded by an icicle, or a snowball, or a whale. But if some miscreant were to substitute the word "bloat" for "whale" in all the prayer-books used in a given church on a given morning, there would be some lively scenes in that establishment. And yet, there is no obvious reason why a bloater should not be able to "bless the Lord" as efficiently as any whale that ever spouted.

I should exhaust the patience of the editor and of my readers long before I had exhausted the elements of absurdity in the Church prayer-book. The Athanasian Creed is a farrago of ignorance to everybody save the devout believer. The Litany contains a petition to the effect that the "nobility" may be "endued" with "grace, wisdom, and understanding," and the

Church perpetrates the crowning absurdity of praying for the Prince of Wales, who has long been past praying for. To the Freethinker, there are rich stores of humor in the "Prayers and Thanksgivings," and in the "Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony," which, as has been pointed out, begins with "Dearly beloved" and ends with "amazement." G. STANDING.

THE LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE.

The Syndicate formed to purchase the present lessee's interest in the London Hall of Science, and to secure the premises for eighty-six years for the use of the Secular party, has deposited its Rules at the Registrar's, and is awaiting the tardy sanction of a department of the great "Circumlocution Office."

Until the Rules are formally approved the very name of the enterprise is a matter of uncertainty. We propose to call it "The National Secular Hall Society." This will cover further operations if the opportunity should arise to obtain Secular Halls in other parts of London or in the provinces.

The Syndicate is issuing Prospectuses on the existing basis. Should any alteration be made in the Rules by the Registrar, it will not invalidate what has been done, and absolute accuracy can be secured before the shares are allotted. No alteration can be made in the essential part of the Rules.

The shares are £1 each, payable 2s. 6d. on application, 2s. 6d. on allotment, and in subsequent calls as may be found necessary. Mr. Robert Forder acts for the present as honorary secretary, and applications can be forwarded to him immediately. Many are already received, and all are acknowledged in the usual manner through the post.

Freethinkers who will not take shares, but will give donations, should forward the same to me. They will be acknowledged in due course, and placed in the safe keeping of Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the National Secular Society's treasurer. Ultimately I will myself appoint the persons to hold shares in trust to the amount of the subscriptions.

It is vitally important to the interest of the Freethought movement that the Hall of Science should be secured. The front part of the premises, when rebuilt, will make a handsome and commodious Institute. There is a space of fifty feet by thirty before coming to the Hall, which can be built upon to the height of three, four, or five storeys. The Hall itself—which will seat a thousand people, and in which I have had seventeen hundred—can be left standing until the money is available for rebuilding it on a handsome and more commodious plan.

Personally, I regard an eighty-six years' lease as almost as good as a freehold. We need not provide for the distant future. Eighty years hence the Freethought party will be in a very different position, and able to look after its own affairs. We have only to consider what must be done now and in the immediate future. Should it be required, however, to purchase the freehold at any time, I believe there will be no great difficulty in doing so.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago Charles Bradlaugh struggled against many obstacles to secure the Sunday use of the Hall of Science for the Freethought party. Since then the spot has been consecrated by his habitual presence. The sound of his leonine voice lingers about the building, which is associated with his name in every part of the civilised world.

As Charles Bradlaugh's successor in the leadership of the Freethought party I call upon his admirers and my comrades to secure the Hall of Science absolutely. Round the corner, in the City Road, the Methodists have just expended £10,000 in renovating the Wesley Memorial Chapel. They love it because John Wesley preached there. Surely, then, the Secular party will raise a part of that sum to retain,

rebuild, and beautify the place where Charles Bradlaugh preached the Gospel of Freethought.

G. W. FOOTE.

President, National Secular Secular.

THE VANITY OF JESUS.

If the smug self-satisfied Moses was the "meekest man that ever lived," Christ was, without doubt, the vainest. No man more vigorously blew his own trumpet, and no prophet more magnified his own office, than the despised and rejected prophet of Nazareth. Nature seems to have fitted him with a wonderful faculty of self-adulation and with a woful lack of appreciation of every good or great man—except himself. Both these traits are exemplified by his outrageous declaration that all that ever came before him were thieves and robbers (John x. 8)—a sufficiently sweeping condemnation, it must be admitted, and scarcely a just reflection on the world's worthies who had thought and fought ages before he wore napkins. In his fatuous presumption he actually claimed a degree of greatness superior to that of Solomon (Matt. xii. 42) whose wisdom—if properly sampled for us in the books ascribed to the much-married monarch—soars immensely higher than the tawdry sentimentality ascribed to His Lowliness.

Despite these pretensions, the lost sheep of the house of Israel were wickedly unwilling to accept this self-esteeming young man as "the good shepherd." On the contrary, "many of them said, he hath a devil, and is mad" (John x. 20). Even his friends thought he was "beside himself" (Mark iii. 21). Yet it could not have been his "much learning" that thus bedevilled him—his scholastic acquirements having clearly been deficient (see John vii. 15). We are also assured—and the admission is certainly suggestive—that his brethren did not believe in him (John vii. 5), and even his mother and sisters were, apparently, estranged from him (vide Matthew to his own and his own received him not. The only consolation—and that a poor one—left to him was the bitter reflection, so mortifying to one's *amour propre*, that "a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house."

But if Jesus sank to zero in the estimation of others, he never dropped a peg in his own. On the contrary, the Lord had certainly given him—like he did the presbyterian elder—a good conceit of himself. Listen, for example, to this modest little speech: "Come unto me—is his invitation—all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 28—29). This does not savor of humility: it scarcely even sounds like the language of sanity. In fact, a tone of arrogant pretension and bumptious self-advertisement vitiates the recorded utterances of the man who preached meekness but did not practise it.

An impartial study of the gospel narrative will show—as we have already indicated—that self-glorification, combined with an extravagant exaggeration of the importance of his mission, are the chief characteristics of the sayings ascribed to Christ. Dominated by these ideas his notions of morality—from filial piety up to the most complex social duties—grew fine by degrees and beautifully less. Already, at the outset of his career, we note the tone of precocious impertinence assumed by the divine boy towards his sorrowing parents: "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" Take again, in a later stage of his life, the cold-blooded speech: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." Viewing all things as subservient to one object, of saving the world—he declares that he came to set a man at variance with his father, and generally that he

purposed to play ducks and drakes with domestic peace. Those who forsake the highest interests and the dearest ties "for my name's sake" are bribed with promise of an unlimited supply of lollypops in kingdom come (Matt. xix. 29), whilst it is expressly declared that the essential qualification of a good disciple is an all-round hatred of father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and of one's self in the bargain. Like Dr. Johnson, Jesus loved a good hater. His vindictiveness was appalling: "Whosoever shall deny me before men him also will I deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). In this avowal he sinks to the lowest depths of the barbaric lex talionis which elsewhere he so inconsistently condemns. Again, he says: "He that believeth not shall be damned," and those who reject him will rank lower in his estimation than the unclean beasts of Sodom and Gomorrah. He actually calls himself the "Bread of Life" (John v. 35), and tells us that, except we eat his flesh and drink his blood we have no life in us (John vi. 53). Those who scruple not to indulge in this cannibalistic repast shall be raised up at the last day! Man's whole welfare is thus made to depend on his acceptance of Jesus, who, despite his manifold deficiencies of character, is held to be the acme of perfection. For instance—to take two out of many of the flagrant cases of vain-glorious self-praise of which Christ was guilty—we read: "I and my Father are one"; "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He even claims that he utters things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt. xiii. 35), though his doctrines are notoriously as old as the everlasting hills. He meekly advertises himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Bearing all this in mind, we are not in the least surprised that Moses wrote about him in anticipation (John v. 46) a thousand or more years before he deigned to be born, and that, being such a superior person, "all things are delivered unto me of my Father" (Matt. xi. 27). To whom else should they belong when so much un-

Many people—even sceptics of a certain sort—are horrified when the unholy hands of criticism are raised against the idol of Christolatry. We confess to no such qualms of a super-sensitive conscience. The utterances we have culled from the lips of Jesus seem to our mind clearly inconsistent with the humility of true greatness, and we have signalled them in order to help forward a truer appreciation of Christ's character. They are not necessarily the brag and bombast of conscious imposture, but they may quite justly be regarded as the marks of self-deception or the fruits of fanaticism.

It is not surprising that Christ—having such an inordinate conception of his own super-excellence—should have lashed out with unbounded fury and with almost Rabelaisian vigor of vituperation at those who had the awful temerity to differ in opinion with him. "Fools," "liars," "hypocrites," are only some of the milder terms of endearment he habitually employed against his adversaries. The "superior person," with a heavenly mission to convert and save, generally arms himself with a rich vocabulary of abuse in order to verily scourge the rebels against his self-assumed authority. Jesus Christ, as the "superior person" *par excellence*, was no exception to the rule. Wounded vanity must needs find some vent for revenge, and when a saint can't strike his foe it affords him great relief to be able to swear at the unregenerate scoundrel. The impotence of rage was therefore the probable source of the harmless artillery of opprobrious epithets fired off by the irascibility of Christ.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Christianity as such never rose above crusades and persecutions of heretics; it has never even attained to tolerance, which yet is merely the negative side of universal benevolence.

—Strauss.

MAINLY ABOUT HOLY PEOPLE.

The Rev. Wm. Thomas Abbot West, formerly minister of the Chesterton Methodist Church, U.S.A., and now absconded, is wanted for the murder of Susie Beck, his servant girl, who he had seduced and poisoned with arsenic.

Parson Crabtree, of Calvert City, Kentucky, is not a missionary to fool with. Hoodlums stoned his church last Sunday night, and the parson, drawing his revolver and resting his elbow on the open Bible, blazed away at them through the open window. The hoodlums fled, but so did the congregation. The worshippers lacked nerve and failed to hold up his hands, which was not encouraging to a man trying to save their sinful souls.

Albert Morea, colored, hanged at Savannah on the 18th ult. for wife murder, was baptised and declared himself to have received pardon for his sins.

The Salvation Army lass, Louisa Ralph, who trumped up a charge of seduction against P. Smith, was proved to be a most brazen liar, and the case was dismissed.

At Wandsworth Police Court, a widow complained of a clergyman lodger who refused to leave or pay his rent, and who had been in a state of intoxication for the past three months. The magistrates advised the woman to take proceedings to have the man of God ejected.

In the Middle Ages poisoning with the sacramental wine used to be common. Nor is that practice yet dead, as appears by a telegram from Madrid, stating that the vicar of the village of Cana, not in Galilee, in celebrating Mass, noticed the wine was bitter. A few minutes after he fell in a fainting fit and was taken to his house where he died. Another priest is supposed to be the author of the crime. He has been arrested, and suspicious phials found in his house, where it is supposed he doctored the wine, which, though changed into the blood of the Savior, kept it poisonous quality.

Francis Snow, a local preacher and Sunday-school teacher of Stoke-on-Trent, was accused of improper behavior to a young married woman. The Rev. J. M. Ward, his pastor, certified that he was "an excellent Christian," but he was fined £10 or six weeks for his misconduct.

ACID DROPS.

The Guild of St. Matthew, in which our friend (if he will let us call him so) the Rev. S. D. Headlam is a leading figure, prints its fourteenth annual report in the *Church Reformer*. The first object of this Guild is to get rid of existing prejudices, "especially on the part of Secularists," against the good old Church of England. It is natural, therefore, that Secularism should have a special section to itself in the Guild's report. The death of Mr. Bradlaugh and the defection of Mrs. Besant are duly noted, and it is remarked that "thus Secularism in England loses its two chiefest champions." "These events," it is added, "must exercise an important influence upon the Secularist propaganda generally." What that "important influence" is likely to be is left to the imagination. When the Guild condescends to details it is inaccurate. Mrs. Besant's new philosophy "cannot satisfy man's best aspirations." Up to the present she has completely failed to shake the convictions of her old admirers. She has convinced them that a clever woman may become eccentric and rush into mysticism at a critical time of life. But that is all. She finds a new set of friends in Theosophy; she does not take her old friends with her.

Certainly the death of Mr. Bradlaugh was a terrible blow to the Freethought party. But they are vastly mistaken who fancy the Freethought party was buried with him at Woking. The party is more alive than ever. Mr. Bradlaugh's death has put us all upon our metal, the work of organisation is steadily advancing, lectures are more numerous, audiences are larger, and the circulation of our literature is increasing. A real movement, inspired by ideas, is greater than its greatest leader; it feels his loss, but survives it, and a taste of adversity braces its energies for fresh conquests.

"With Mr. Foote as President," the Guild report says, "and the *Freethinker* as organ, the National Secular Society still endeavors, in spite of the truer teaching on theological matters, to keep the Anti-Christian controversy on the old worn-out lines." In other words, Mr. Foote refuses to take the Guild of St. Matthew at its own valuation. He persists in looking at the Bible as the Christian's one "inspired" book, and the teaching of the great Churches, in their Articles and Formulas, as of higher authority than the compromises and new-fangled Guilds.

Mr. Headlam is a very estimable gentleman, and among the 73 gentlemen in "Holy Orders" out of the 228 members of his Guild there are no doubt a number of "good fellows." But their "assurance" is simply prodigious. The three tailors of Tooley-street were nothing to them.

We heartily shake hands, however, with Mr. Headlam and his colleagues over the Blasphemy Laws. The Guild of St. Matthew really desires the abolition of these odious enactments, and will loyally co-operate with those who are seeking to place Secularists on a footing of civil equality with Christians.

"The Problem of Evangelising London" is dealt with in the *Methodist Times*. One of the editorial specifics is this:— "None but high-minded, intelligent, God-fearing men must be sent to Parliament, and to the County Council, and to the Board of Guardians, and School Board." High-minded and intelligent men may pass muster. London can do with them. But if none but God-fearing men are to be elected, Atheists and Agnostics will be excluded from public life. Men like Mr. Frederic Harrison must go off the County Council. Men like Mr. John Morley must go out of Parliament. And all to please the paltry little bigots of Wesleyan Methodism.

Would it not be well to keep out convicted liars instead of Atheists and Agnostics? In that case the author of *The Atheist Shoemaker* would stand a poor chance.

Those who bossed the show at Trèves must have brought it to a conclusion very reluctantly. No fewer than 1,925,130 pilgrims visited the holy undervest, and on some days as much as 10,000 marks was taken from the collection boxes. Verily there is still room for a long crusade against ignorance and superstition in Europe.

Cyrus Teed, the Messiah of the new sect of Koreshans in America, at first gave out that his followers would never die, but when some of them joined the majority he altered his theory and announced that he primarily had immortality. "You can't expect to overcome death till after my translation. You must first overcome the Devil, even as I do," said he. Teed's followers are said to be mostly infatuated women, to whom he professes platonic affection, and from whom he has inveigled considerable funds.

Elsa D'Esterre Keeling contributes the following verses to the *Academy*:

"MARY AND MARFA."
Scripture as it is taught.
 Jesus loved Mary and Marfa,
 And Mary and Marfa loved him;
 Sometimes they sat togeffer,
 All in Jerushalim.
 And Mary sat quite quiet,
 'cep' now and then to pray;
 But Marfa rattled the teafings
 Till Jesus said, "Go 'way!"
 Jesus didn' love Marfa
 's well as Mary, of course;
 Cos she was always workin',
 'r else slammin' the windows and doors.

These rhymes give with exactness the account of a little national school child, and they were written "on hearing a sermon preached lately in the old city of St. Albans, in which our national schools were extolled to the skies as providing 'sound religious instruction.'"

Miss Helen Gardener, the famous American Freethinker, contributes to *Harper* a fascinating account of a wonderful surgical operation she witnessed. A child's skull had hardened

and solidified, and cramped the brain so that the poor little thing was an idiot, and, unless science came to the rescue, would remain so for the rest of its life. The case was studied by a noble-minded surgeon, who induced the parents to consent to an operation. It was a dangerous one, but death was preferable to permanent imbecility. The child's skull was partly cut away, so as to leave room for expansion; the wound healed rapidly, the cramped brain became active, and the little one "now acts and thinks like other children, laughs and coos and makes glad the hearts of those who love it."

Science thus remedied one of the "Great Designer's" mistakes. The surgeon was wiser and more beneficent than God. Such at least is the conclusion that every Theist must come to.

The parsons' palaver at Rhyl promises to be a very dull affair this year. The advent of a few hundred white-chokers at a pretty Welsh watering place will not do much to turn Welshmen churchwards. One of the principal items for discussion is "Criticism of the Holy Scriptures and the Church's Gains thereby." If for "gains" they wrote "losses," the proposition would be more tangible.

The vicar of Stratford-on-Avon appears to regard Shakespeare's monument not as a national treasure, but as the private appanage of his own church. Some National school teachers applied for permission to view it, and were told that orders were only given to church schools, with the application made through the clergyman. However, as there was a large party, he offered to let them in at half the usual rate, viz., threepence.

A Mr. H. Young, M.A., of Balliol College, Oxford, is, it appears, to be prosecuted at the instance of the Home Secretary for sending by letter post a two-leaved pamphlet recommending that prudence should preside over reproduction of the species in married life. We know nothing of Mr. Young or of the pamphlet, which is called "innocent and praise-worthy" by Dr. Drysdale; but we are concerned to see an attack on free publication initiated by the opening of sealed letters.

"London is a very pious place, a church on every street corner almost, and no street cars on Sunday." Of course it is not the metropolis that is referred to, but its little namesake, a town of thirty-five thousand inhabitants in Ontario, Canada. However, there is one gleam of light, for it is a Freethinker who writes thus. He adds: "Nevertheless, there have been more executions here than in any place I know of its size; and they all went to heaven, so they said."

Some young ladies wrote to the Rev. Heber Newton asking him if the miracles of Jesus were literally true. He sent them a very shuffling answer. He said, "Never mind; trust and follow him, he is a miracle. The reports of his wonders may be twisted in reporting him." We hope the young ladies will follow up their inquiries for themselves.

"Father Ignatius" is much disgusted at such men as Mr. Heber Newton being in the English Episcopal Church of America. He says, in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*: "Our Lord either did rise from the dead or he didn't. If he did not, Christianity is a huge lie; if he did, the American Episcopal Church is going to the Devil next month." "Next month," we fancy, alludes to the confirmation of the appointment of the Rev. Mr. Brooks, who denies the inspiration of the Bible, as Bishop of Massachusetts.

The Aberdeen papers have been having a controversy on the subject of dancing. A leading elder named Burnett wrote that dancing led to a breach of the seventh commandment. "I never dance," said he; "but I do not think that I could dance without breaking that commandment." We hope Mr. Burnett will keep from dancing. He ought to be of those alluded to in Matthew xix., 12, as prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

"Ally Sloper" is not remarkable for dignity, yet he may be useful as a mirth-provoker among the cruder myriads of our population. His views on Atheism, however, are of infinitesimal importance. He is a better judge of whiskey, if he means half he says from week to week. We advise him

therefore, to refrain from printing verses about "infidel preachers" who go to villages and drive a host of "poor hopeless ones" into suicide. "Ally Sloper" will find, if he takes the trouble to inquire, that the vast majority of suicides are Christians.

"Chiel," in the *East Grinstead Observer*, says he recently attended a meeting at which a Nonconformist minister held forth on the "curses of drink." Ten minutes later he saw at the railway station another Nonconformist minister, who had spoken on religious politics, and listened to the temperance exhortations of his clerical brother, which had such an effect upon him that he fortified himself with a glass of whiskey and took a drop more in a flask.

Harvest Thanksgiving services have been held as usual, although the weather has been so detestable. The clergy bid us thank the Lord for the smallest mercies, but they never tell us where to lodge complaints.

It is stated that eighty million dollars are spent upon drink in New York, and only three million dollars upon religion. We should like to see the eighty-three million devoted to education.

"General" Evans, of the Gospel Army, Glasgow, has been fined for frightening horses with his cornet and drums. He has appealed, evidently thinking, with his brother "General" Booth, that anything is permissible that is done in the name of religion.

The Mahatmania has worked its way to the East End, where an enterprising showman draws large audiences by advertising a real live Mahatma. The adept proves to be a remarkably fine-looking negro, in gorgeous habiliments, and with a fine spiritual glow upon his face and teeth.

There is nothing sky-pilots more dislike to hear, in their controversies with sceptics, than the creeds which they have sworn to defend. Even some Catholic priests do not like to be reminded that there is no salvation for those outside the pale of the Catholic Church, and will talk of a clause of reservation as to those who live in invincible ignorance. An Anglican parson, who has sworn to believe that "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasant to God," does not like being reminded of the Thirty-nine Articles; while a Presbyterian, sworn to believe and uphold the Westminster Confession of Faith, does not like to hear its definition that it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost "to create, or make of nothing, the world and all things therein in the space of six days," and will talk of days being long periods. Nor do they like to hear that "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." The truth is many have grown beyond these creeds, which they dishonestly swear to support in order to secure their livings.

The Rev. James Nutt Adams went off his nut and shot himself with a rifle at his residence, 112 Edith-road, West Kensington. Intemperance appears to have been the predisposing cause.

The French Catholic pilgrims to Rome did their cause no good by spitting on the register of visitors to the tomb of Victor Emmanuel, and writing on it "Long live the Pope-King! Death to Humbert!" The incident produced an angry demonstration against the pilgrims and clericals and a manifestation of devotion to the reigning house. The pilgrims who caused the disturbance were not the Catholic workmen, but students intended to become Catholic priests.

Russia is going from bad to worse. All advanced literature is under the censorship. Spencer, Mill and Darwin must no longer be circulated. Even Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is tabooed. Some day or other there will be a tremendous upheaval in Russia, and very likely the Czar will go up like the nigger who sat on the safety-valve.

"The Drift in Theology" was the title of a paper read by Dr. Anderson before the West Riding Congregational Ministers' Board. Now the title was a most appropriate one. Dr. Anderson is drifting fast from the old orthodoxy to the new heresy. When a Christian minister declares that "God

cannot be known at all except by means of his organic connection with the universe," and speaks slightly of the Incarnation, Resurrection and Ascension as "historical facts," we see how Science and Freethought are diluting the spirit of the Churches. In fact, the mixture is getting quite mawkish.

Good Words is a pious publication. It was this magazine that published Mr. Gladstone's articles on "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." Its conductors, however, are not above the most vulgar tricks of the trade. In forwarding the October number to the *Pall Mall Gazette* they enclosed a puff for insertion. This puff was to appear as an independent criticism! Such is honesty as understood by the conductors of a religious magazine.

A curious case occurred lately at the Camberwell County Court. The plaintiff was a Christian, and his witness was a Jew. The defendant was a Freethinker, and so were his two witnesses. The case was settled out of court, otherwise it would have puzzled a bigoted judge to hurl his thunberbolts with discrimination.

The Newcastle Branch is advertising a "Challenge to the Clergy" to debate with Mr. Charles Watts on "Christianity or Secularism: Which is True?" We doubt if any clergyman in the district is foolish enough to accept the challenge. Once upon a time infidel-slaying was thought to be easy, but when the men of God found it awfully difficult they discovered that discussion was "unprofitable." So it is—to them.

Celestine Edwards, the negro preacher, has been holding forth at Jarrow. He declared he was passionately fond of discussion, but when he found what was in store for him he fidgetted with his watch, and looked as though he would rather have been in Central Africa. He was opposed by Messrs. Pearson and Dawson, who challenged him to a set debate with Mr. Dipper, which he declined. The ebony infidel-slayer left the platform in a hurry, amid cries of "Coward!" from all parts of the chapel.

One pious old lady struck Mr. Dawson in the face, and swearing was freely indulged in by a gang of Christian young men, who followed the Freethinkers to the station.

Edwards's discourse was all about certain works on the Population Question, which have nothing whatever to do with Secularism. Our party includes Malthusians and anti-Malthusians, Socialists and Individualists, etc., etc. Edwards said that if the ladies would withdraw he would read something from *The Law of Population* (Mrs. Besant's) and let the men judge whether it was fit for publication. "Agreed," said Mr. Pearson, "if you will let me read certain passages from the Bible." But the black gentlemen indignantly replied that he was not dealing with the Bible. Of course not! The Bible is the last thing a Christian does deal with.

Edwards cannot help his color, and we should never think of referring to it if he did not advertise himself as a "negro." Either he is proud of his sable skin or he looks upon it as "good business." In either case he cannot complain of our emphasising his chief qualification.

A London preacher recently stopped in the middle of his sermon and said: "I wish to inform you that there are pick-pockets present. I have not the smallest objection to their being present, and I hope what they hear will do them good. Only I may as well tell them that the eye of Providence is upon them, and that there are policemen in the gallery."

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, October 11, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C., at 7, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

October 18, Hall of Science. 25, Camberwell.
November 1, Portsmouth; 8, Sheffield; 15, Leicester; 22, Wolverhampton; 29, Grimsby.
December 6, Hall of Science; 13, Manchester; 20, Nottingham; 27, Hall of Science.
January 3, Birmingham; 17, Newcastle Sunday Lecture Society; 24 and 31, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—October 11, Manchester; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science—morning and evening. November 1, Hall of Science; 8, Birmingham; 15, Birmingham; 22, Portsmouth. December 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20 and 21, Leicester; 27, Birmingham. Jan. 3 and 10, Hall of Science; 17, Milton Hall; 24 and 31, Birmingham. February 7, Hull.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, London, E.C.

H. SNELL.—Pleased to receive the fraternal message you bear from M. Pasquier and other Paris friends, and glad to know you think last week's *Freethinker* "splendid." Your article will appear next week.

A. WRIGHT.—Thanks for your interesting letter. Freethought is spreading rapidly in the army. For the present you and your Freethought comrades must put up with the galling regulations of the service; but the day of freedom will come, and soldiers will then enjoy religious liberty like civilians. We are glad to hear that our efforts are appreciated. As soon as possible we will see if the Woolwich Branch cannot be put upon a better footing.

W. B. THOMPSON, sec. Chatham Secular Society, writes:—"I have just been having a glorious feed off the *Freethinker*. What a pennyworth it is now!"

C. HEATON.—We do not know such a verse. Thanks for leaving this journal in cars and trains. It is scattering seed, and some will spring up.

F. HAMPTON.—Mr. Foote can offer you January 10 for Bolton. If you accept engage the hall at once, and advise him.

MAGENNIS AND SONS, Ferrier-street, York-road, Wandsworth, S.W., inform us that they expose the *Freethinker* in their window, and make no secret of pushing Secular publications. We hope this will be noted by Wandsworth inquirers.

A. CALDER (Aberdeen).—Mr. Foote was out of town. Contents-sheets shall be forwarded. Kindly write to Mr. Forder on matters of business. Glad to hear you mean to push this journal. It should have a good sale in the Granite City.

J. WITTERING.—We cannot tell you.

D. H.—Read *A Candid Examination of Theism* by "Physicus," published by Trubner. Mill's *Three Essays* should also be studied, and Buchner's *Force and Matter*.

R. ROSETTI has removed to 21 Harrow-road, Harrow-green, Leytonstone, where he supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications. He will also be glad to hear from Freethinkers wishing to form a local Branch of the N. S. S.

J. NEATE.—Being over-crowded with copy we have had to boil your letter down. See "Sugar Plums."

B. HARRIS.—You put that Christian meeting to a painful test when you proposed to read a few awkward texts from the "Word of God." It was cruel on your part, though, like Hamlet, you were cruel only to be kind.

PEMBROKESHIRE MECHANIC keeps up Booth's self-denial week by paying for six copies of this journal to be sent to various addresses.

W. BRADBURN.—Such slanderous stories should be treated with silent contempt.

T. BIRTLEY.—The N. S. S. is doing all it can to promote open-air lecturing. Your own propaganda has been supported by grants to the N. E. Federation. It is impossible to move faster without further funds. You should submit the other proposals to the Federation first. The Executive could be applied to afterwards.

FREETHINKERS in Bishopstoke and neighborhood wishing to form a Branch of the N. S. S., should communicate at once with Mr. R. Pearce, 6 Warwick-terrace, High-street, Eastleigh, where the *Freethinker* and all Secular literature can be obtained.

A THREE MONTHS' READER (Ipswich) is pleased with the enlarged *Freethinker*, and has induced a local newsagent to exhibit a contents-sheet. Some other friend seeing this, walked into the shop and offered to take all copies of this journal that might be left over, so the newsagent intends to push the sale.

W. H. W.—We know absolutely nothing about the matter. We do not believe that Celestine Edwards and his friends are maintaining an old Atheist who lent Charles Bradlaugh the room in which he delivered his first lecture. We are accustomed to these pious inventions. Mr. Edwards is impudent or frivolous in referring you to us.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

F. MARGETSON.—Nothing the fellow says is entitled to a moment's consideration.

A. HOLLAND, 5 Wood-street, Bilston, will be glad to hear from Freethinkers in the district willing to co-operate in the scheme of a Secular Federation for the Midlands which Mr. Watts is contemplating.

LOVER OF TRUTH (Liverpool), who accidentally came into possession of a copy of the *Freethinker* about three months ago, has read it with great profit ever since. Being anxious to promote our circulation, he asked his newsagent—with whom he laid out a shilling or two every week—to sell the paper, but the godly purveyor of publications would have nothing to do with it. Thereupon our correspondent transferred his custom to a more pliant tradesman; and he advises other friends of the *Freethinker* to follow his example.

E. M. VANCE writes:—"I must congratulate you upon the new number of the *Freethinker*. We could have sold another quire at Milton Hall."

R. KNIGHT.—See "Acid Drops."

G. COOKE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

S. SODDY.—Under consideration.

VERACITY.—No sensible German would despise the French intellect. France and Germany are at enmity, and you should not regard the foolish things they say of each other.

B. H. JONES suggests that a Branch should be started at Gorton, where the open-air propaganda has been carried on. But is there room at present for two Branches at Manchester? The question should be decided on the spot.

C. H. KELF.—Received. Will try to use it.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—Freethought—Ironclad Age—Monschenthum—Echo—Neues 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—Clevedon News—Liverpool Courier—Eastern Argus—Standard—Sheffield Independent—Yorkshire Evening Post—Hackney Express—St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat—Sheffield Evening Telegraph and Star—Auckland Times—Auditor—Twentieth Century—Kansas Lucifer.

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.

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SUGAR PLUMS.

The enlarged *Freethinker* bids fair to be a great success. We printed an extra quantity of the first number, but every copy was sold out on Saturday morning, and orders had to be turned away—a fact which lacerates the editorial heart. This week we are printing a larger supply. We hope our friends will continue to press newsagents to sell the *Freethinker* and display a contents-sheet. If they will only keep pegging away at the newsagents till Christmas, no doubt our circulation by that time will pay for the increased cost and leave a little profit for the editor.

There is another way in which Freethinkers might help us with profit to themselves. Dr. Allison assures us that he finds this journal one of his best advertising mediums. Mr. Gott, of Bradford, also says: "I have had a fair experience in advertising, but I have advertised in no paper where the result has been better than in yours." This should be a very broad hint to Freethinkers who are in the habit of advertising. They might at least give this journal a trial, and we believe they would find it to their advantage. Many journals with only half, a third, or a quarter of our circulation, are sustained by advertisements; but there is a foolish prejudice against Freethought journals among ordinary traders, and the consequence is that we suffer a heavy financial loss. We appeal earnestly, therefore, to our friends to support us in this direction.

The National 'Secular Society opened its twelve months campaign at the London Hall of Science on Sunday. In the morning Mr. Foote lectured on "The True Path of Progress," Mr. Pownceby, the secretary of the London Secular Federation, occupying the chair. There was a very fair attendance for a commencement, and Miss Vance and Miss Brown took up a good collection. No doubt the morning audiences will improve as the winter advances and the meetings get better known.

The evening audience was a capital one. Mr. Forder occupied the chair, and humorously referred to the "service," which would consist of singing, a lesson, and a sermon. Mr. Osborne, of the Finsbury Park Branch, opened with a pianoforte solo. This was followed by two vocal pieces rendered by the Milton Hall quartette party, which were much applauded. Mr. Foote then read a portion of the Grave Scene from "Hamlet," after which there was more singing, and then came the lecture. Mr. Foote's subject was "Life, Death, and After." The audience was very appreciative, and gave the lecturer quite an ovation as he resumed his seat. Discussion was invited, but none was forthcoming, and Mr. Osborne wound up the proceedings with a selection on the piano.

Altogether the N. S. S. may be congratulated on its prospect of success with this experiment. To-day (Oct. 11) the morning lecture will be delivered by the Rev. S. D. Headlam, who will explain how Freethinkers and other folk mistake the church's teaching. In the evening Mr. Foote lectures again, on "Who wrote the Bible?" He will deal with the important new works of Canon Driver and Canon Cheyne. During the "service" he will give a reading from "The Merchant of Venice."

By the way, there was a misunderstanding as to the time. Henceforth, let it be noted, the musical part of the program will begin at 6.45. The lecture will begin as nearly as possible at 7.15.

Miss Vance, who is kindly superintending the musical arrangements at the Hall of Science, will be glad to hear from any lady or gentleman able and willing to render assistance. Letters can be addressed to her at the Hall, 142 Old-street, E.C.

Mr. Charles Watts commenced his work under the new arrangements at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, last Sunday. In the evening there was a brilliant audience, who cheered most enthusiastically Mr. Watts's denunciation of the follies of Theosophy. There was a large demand for the *Freethinker*; every copy on hand was sold, and many more could have been disposed of. In future it is intended to devote Sunday mornings at Baskerville Hall to open discussions upon "The topics of the week," except on those dates when lecturers from London, or elsewhere out of Birmingham, occupy the platform.

Mr. Watts having become proprietor of Baskerville Hall, he proposes in connection therewith—1. To establish an Institute based upon Rationalist principles. 2. To have regular Sunday lectures upon Secular and Freethought subjects. 3. To form week-night classes for singing, music, dramatic recitals, and general social recreation. 4. To circulate Agnostic and other Freethought literature. 5. To make Birmingham the centre of a Secular Federation for the Midland counties. 6. To provide a reading and consulting room for the use of members of the Institute and their friends. We hope the friends in Birmingham and the surrounding districts will render Mr. Watts all possible aid in his efforts to improve the Secular propaganda in the Midland counties.

To-day (Oct. 11) Mr. Watts delivers three lectures in the Secular Hall, Manchester. No doubt the South Lancashire Freethinkers will give him a hearty reception.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake has taken twenty shares in the Syndicate formed for purchasing and partly rebuilding the London Hall of Science. He has also, by instruction, taken ten shares for Mr. Alfred Marsh, and five shares for Miss Louisa Marsh.

Mr. Holyoake informs us that Mr. Thomas Allsop, in addition to other gifts which our readers have seen recorded, will give £25 to the "Liberty of Bequest Committee" on

condition that seven other persons can be found to subscribe a similar sum. We hope the other seven subscribers will come forward. If they do so, a fund of £200 will be at the disposal of the Committee, of which Mr. Holyoake is president, and whose object is to promote and carry a Bill for the Legalisation of Bequests for Freethought purposes.

Mr. A. Marsh gives £10 absolutely to this Fund, and will increase it to £25 if six other persons join in Mr. Allsop's proposal. Mr. Marsh has already subscribed, through Mr. Holyoake, £10 towards the fund for settling Mr. Charles Watts at Birmingham.

We congratulate Mr. Holyoake on the activity he is displaying at his time of life, and we are sure our readers will all be delighted to see that Mr. Holyoake's interest in the Freethought movement only deepens with age.

The Finsbury Park Branch will formally open its premises, the Rock Hall, Rock-street, Finsbury Park, on Wednesday evening, Oct. 21. The function is to begin at eight o'clock, and the doors will be open at seven. Mr. Foote has promised to deliver an address.

Mr. Touzeau Parris had a bad night for opening the London Secular Federation's course of Free Lectures at the London Hall of Science. The weather was wet, but for all that there was a fairly good meeting and a "respectable" collection. We are informed that Mr. Parris's lecture was highly interesting and instructive.

Mr. A. B. Moss delivers the second Free Lecture on Thursday, October 8, his subject being "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?" Mr. Forder delivers the third lecture on the following Thursday (Oct. 15), his subject being "Theosophy: Old and New."

Mr. Stanley Jones lectured out of doors on Sunday morning for the Battersea Branch. The annual collection for the N. S. S. was made and realised £1 6s.

Every N. S. S. Branch, according to the Rules, should make at least one collection annually for the central exchequer. Some Branches neglect to do so. This is very bad business. We hope the rule will be observed by all in future. Those who have neglected it this year should make their collection as soon as possible, for the N. S. S. is short of funds at present. As many new members are made as ever, but special subscriptions have told upon the ordinary income.

The *Overland Mail* gives a sketch of Mr. Bradlaugh as a soldier by a correspondent who had an account of his career by a comrade who employed him as a clerk in the paymaster's office in the 17th Dragoons. Bradlaugh, he says, was no horseman, but a good soldier, learning his drills and his duties well. He was quiet, well-conducted, but taciturn, "keeping himself to himself." Still he was not unpopular, and showed no surliness or want of camaraderie. The army term for him, indeed, was the very fitting one of a "lawyer"—i.e., a man busy with his own and other people's grievances. Clearly the lad Charles Bradlaugh was father of the man. Our sub. remembers seeing Mr. Bradlaugh on horseback as one of the marshals of a great Reform demonstration in 1866. He was certainly then the best horseman in the assembly.

Mr. A. D. Downes, a peripatetic Freethought missionary in Australasia, reports having a meeting of two thousand people on the wharf at Launceston, Tasmania, where some little time ago Mr. Symes was mobbed.

The Fifteenth Annual Congress of the American Secular Union meets on October 31 and Nov. 1, in the Industrial Hall, Broad-street, Philadelphia. The equitable taxation of church property, in common with other property, will be a leading feature of the program. It is reported that a revision of the constitution of the Union will be proposed.

Mr. N. S. Johnson, of Sioux Falls, Dakota, who has already put forward *Is the Bible God's Word?* in Norwegian for propaganda among the numerous Scandinavians in the United States, has now got out another little book of 112 pages. It is entitled, *Evolution in Heaven and Earth*. It is a story of development from the standpoint of Science and Freethought.

Professor Ernst Haeckel writes to the Secretary of the Brooklyn Ethical Society, and appends the following theses :

1. The general doctrine of evolution appears to be already unassailably established.

2. Thereby every supernatural creation is completely excluded.

3. Transformism and the Theory of Descent are inseparable constituents of the Doctrine of Evolution.

4. The necessary conclusion of this proposition is the descent of man from a series of vertebrates (anthropogeny).

5. The belief in "an immortal soul" and in "a personal God" are therewith completely incompatible (*vollig unvereinbar*).

We have received from Mr. K. O. Meynsma a copy of his article on Omar Khayyam of Nishapoor, and his place in Persian Literature, reprinted from *De Gids*, the chief Dutch literary review. Mr. Meynsma is a competent scholar, and his notice of the great Persian sceptic and Epicurean poet and his translators is an adequate one. Specimens are given of the renderings of Bodenstedt in German, and of Fitzgerald in English.

We regret to learn that Captain Otto Thomson is reduced in circumstances through his constant efforts to propagate Freethought in Sweden. Circumstances compel him to cease his connection as business manager to *Fritänkaren*, but he loses none of his interest in the cause, and hopes his foreign friends will continue to send him their papers. Captain Otto Thomson, Stockholm, Sweden, will be sufficient address.

According to the *Liverpool Courier*, the lectures of Miss Ada Campbell in that city were well received by a large audience.

The *Hackney Express* inserts a well-written letter from Mr. F. J. Gould against Bible teaching in Board schools.

The newly-formed Northampton Branch meets at the Coffee Tavern, St. Michael's-road, at seven this evening (Oct. 11). All who desire to help are requested to attend.

The Bethnal Green Branch has engaged a hall that will seat 200 people. The rent is moderate, and the Branch looks forward to a successful winter's work. Great assistance is rendered by two new lecturers, Messrs. Cohen and Steventou.

The Clerkenwell Library is now open on Sunday. Whether it will continue so will depend upon whether the inhabitants avail themselves of the privilege or not.

Monday next is the Jews' *Yom Kippur*, and the Freethought section of the London Jews intend to have another field-day at the Hall of Science. Messrs. Foote, Forder and Standing have promised to attend and address the meeting.

M. Léon Fournemont, secretary of the International Freethought Federation, congratulates us on the enlargement of the *Freethinker*.

A further list of subscriptions to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund will appear in our next. There is not room for it this week.

A worthy bookseller in the Friesland town of Sneek translated *Robert Elsnere* into his native tongue, and was rewarded for his pains by gaining a ready sale for the volume. The translator, however, has imparted to a British traveller the information that though Mrs. Humphrey Ward's opinions about society and human relationships were new and acceptable to Sneek on the ground of their novelty, Sneek was by no means struck with the religious element in her story. This last element seemed to it insipid, obsolete, and quite behind the times.

M. Arango, in the *Nouvelle Revue*, gives an interesting sketch of Benjamin Constant Botelho de Magalhães, the founder of the Brazilian Republic. He was a Positivist, and as Professor at the Military College he imbued the officers of the army with his advanced principles. He took a leading part in the Revolution, but when it was successful he stepped aside and declined all honors. But he was forced to take the post of Minister of War, and in that position taught the citizen soldier to regard himself as the guardian of "peace, progress,

and reform." He died of heart disease in January, and his name is inscribed upon the records of Congress as the Founder of the Brazilian Republic. The *Truthseeker*, by the way, gives a picture of Brazil first with emperor and priest strapped to the back of impending progress, then free with the emperor shifted across the water and the priest thrown on the ground.

Dr. Cheyne's recent work on *The Origin and Contents of the Psalter* is highly praised by that able critic Mr. A. W. Benn in the *Academy*. He says "the general result of recent criticism has been to detach large portions of the Old Testament from their moorings and lodge them much lower down on the stream of history." According to Dr. Cheyne, the whole Psalter attributed to David is post-exilic, or some five hundred years later than the time of the man after God's heart.

The *Weekly Bulletin* (Sept. 5) has the following: "Nobody in this year 1891 believes in a hell or in the extraordinary Biblical tales of the Ark, or Jonah and the whale, or Joshua and the sun, or, in fact, any of it. We simply laugh at the whole gamut of twaddling tales. But, nevertheless, up till to-day we have paid for the dissemination of the rubbish. But not much longer, and members of the Church will do well to sell out their advowsons, etc., just as quickly as they can. Those left will have only themselves to blame."

THE MYSTIC FIVE AND THIRTEEN.

Is it not about time the mystic numbers three and seven got a rest, and that the attention of open-mouthed initiates should be called to the wonderful portent of some of the other numericals? Let us take five and thirteen for instance. Had the geometricians who discovered these numbers any idea of their full significance? It is most probable that they trod the path, searched the mysteries, and emerged triumphant with these awful additions to our notation. What a hidden depth of meaning lies beneath their apparently immobile exteriors! Think of the fearful loss to humanity if these flexible and mysterious figures had not been revealed like twin meteors lighting up the unknown and unthought-of recesses of mundane existence.

Five is exactly the half of that extraordinary combination the decimal. Herein lies more than meets the physical eye. It can only be cognised by developing a multiple of five eyes capable of appreciating this truth. Man has five senses. Here is a startling coincidence. Is there a sceptic after such demonstration who would dare to deny that man has a five-fold being enwrapped in a cycle represented by thirteen? If such a one exists, let him ponder on the marvellous analogy between five and his five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot, and if this does not start him at a trot for the nearest lodge of initiates he is hopelessly obstinate. There are five orifices in the head, viz., one mouth, two nostrils, and two ears. Again, the pre-name of the latest mystic contains five letters—thus, A-N-N-I-E. Has this surprising analogy never occurred to those who doubt? Our alphabet contains five vowels, and the total number of letters is twenty-six, or twice the mystic thirteen. Each hour is divided into sixty minutes, or twelve times five, and each minute has a similar significant division into seconds. There are seventy-three times five days in each year. The superior power of five over the old numbers seven and three may here be observed, as it takes them both together to make the year out of fives, and once every four years they fail. The ancient game of fives may be referred to as full of secret meaning to those who search. Many constellations are made up of five stars, and to this, no doubt, may be traced the division of land on the earth into five great continents. The musical stave consists of five lines, and although it may be argued that there are seven tones in the scale, it must be remembered that only five of these are full tones, the remaining two being only half tones. Other strange combinations and analogies of five will surely reveal themselves to the diligent looker for mystic marvels, and each and all will be found to point to and confirm the fact of man's five-fold character.

Thirteen has long been revered by all the truly superstitious, and not without reason. Its presence in the number of letters of the alphabet has already been referred to. The aged mystery of thirteen at dinner is too well known to require anything further than its mention. The baker's dozen may not be popularly known to consist of thirteen, and it must unquestionably have had its origin in the rites of old Egyptian bakers, who were initiates and necessarily knew its full meaning. Each suite of a set of cards consists, again, of thirteen, which in all likelihood gave rise to the division of the year into quarters of thirteen weeks each. The intimate connection between twelve and thirteen clearly suggests the mysteries again; it is obvious that whoever placed thirteen in such orderly succession to twelve as we now find it must have pierced to the very inmost of the hidden hoards of boundless astral lore and the full and glorious knowledge of the Absolute.

If we have in this short essay made out successfully a *prima facie* case for further investigation into the meaning of numerals and their weird and symbolic succession, our mission will have been fulfilled. Yet verily there is enough material of this style to fill any quantity of volumes of "Unveilings," well worth a guinea a volume. The harvest of fools is perennial and the reapers are never few. W. M. KNOX.

REVEALED.

AFTER long waiting I've seen a Mahatma,
More heavenly still than the beautiful Fatma
(In London exhibited some time ago).
Though I was doubtful about their existence,
The evidence simply defies all resistance,
And with Mrs. Besant I say that "I know."

It was in the street that is known as Threadneedle
I entered the Bank, with a nod to the beadle,
A bundle of notes in my hand to exchange.
On the counter I checked them,
And, while I inspect them,
The Master addressed me in tones sweet and strange.

He stood at my side, and his mien was imposing,
He spoke softly, dreamily, like one half dozing.
Mysterious accents that made my soul thrill.
He said, "There's one more, sir,
You've dropt on the floor, sir."
His voice was so sweet I remember it still.

I gazed on the flooring both long and intensely—
I wished to recover that dropped note immensely—
Then turned to the noble one, querying "Where?"
Oh, marvellous history!
Esoteric mystery!
The beautiful stranger had vanished in air.

Vanished and gone like a mist in the morning.
Yes, he had "left" without one word of warning.
Ah! that I only could meet him again;
The wonder was dazing,
And, still more amazing,
My notes had "left" too, for the astral plane.

Is there a sceptic so cruel as to doubt me?
Am I a liar, that any should flout me,
As though naught remained for our souls to explore?
To the Bank go as I did,
With notes well provided,
And perhaps the great marvel will happen once more.
E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

REVIEW.

The Man of the Past: The Evidence of his Natural Origin and Great Antiquity. By CHARLES C. CATTELL. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, and Co. 6d.—Mr. Cattell, who announces this as the last effort of his veteran pen, adduces strong evidence to show the high antiquity of man, and that he is to be accounted for by natural evolution, not by supernatural creation. Apt passages are quoted from Darwin, Huxley, Vogt, Lyell, Tylor, Lubbock, and others, and the little book may be recommended as an introduction to the study of important works.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. UNAUTHORISED VERSION.

- 1 And seeing the gaping multitude he went up into a mountain;
- 2 And he opened his mouth, and wagged his jaw, and taught them saying:
- 3 Blessed are the poor; for their's is the workhouse.
- 4 Blessed are they which do not mourn; for they shall not need comforting.
- 5 Blessed are the landowners; for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst; for a good appetite needeth no medicine.
- 7 Blessed are they who love mercy for mercy's sake and not merely in order to obtain it.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God in his hind parts and be admitted to the exhibition free.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall prevent the children of God from fighting each other—if possible.
- 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for their's is Holloway Gaol.
- 11 Blessed are ye when men do *not* revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake.
- 12 Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven—when you get there. The society of a choice selection of criminals is guaranteed.
- 13 Ye are the salt of the earth; consequently a little of you goes a long way.
- 14 Ye are the light of the world; that accounts for the prevailing darkness.
- 15 Put your candles in candlesticks and mend your dirty habits.
- 16 Let your lights so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven with a good collection. J. M.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING held at the Hall of Science, on Thursday Oct. 1. The president being unable to attend, the chair was taken by Mr. R. O. Smith. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. Mr. A. B. Moss sent by letter some "Questions to School Board Candidates," which was ordered to be entered on the minutes; and a vote of thanks accorded to Mr. Moss for his suggestions. The report of sub-committee appointed to consider the re-organisation of lecture system, was read; and the discussion thereon adjourned till next meeting. The offer by the Finsbury Park Branch of the use of their hall for a course of Free Lectures was accepted; also a similar offer by the Bethnal Green Branch for a later series of lectures. A vote was taken on the printing account; and the matter of the Children's Party was considered. Eventually a committee—Miss Vance, Messrs. Forder, Enderby and Guest—was appointed to carry out the necessary business. Some minor matters were disposed of, and a vote taken for the printing of the monthly programs. The Council adjourned till first Thursday in November.—EDMUND POUNCEBY, Secretary.

[Ladies and gentlemen willing to co-operate in the work of the Children's Party Committee, will oblige by communicating with the Secretary, E. Pounceby, 9 Finsbury-street, E.C.]

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS.—Battersea Branch, £1 6s.; Newcastle Branch, £1 3s. 7d.; West Ham Branch, 4s.; G. A. Henning, 10s.; T. Campbell, 5s.; M. Christopher, 2s. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Finsbury Branch, 5s.; East London Branch, 3s.; M. Christopher, 1s. STANLEY JONES, Sec.

OBITUARY.

Died at 5 West-street, Gravesend, on Sept. 25, John Cowling, at the ripe age of 85. An earnest and staunch Freethinker since he was twenty; he never sought to hide his opinions. In 1887 he was one of the first to help in the formation of a Branch of the N. S. S. When the question was put, "Father, do you know you are going?" he replied, "Well, what of that?" He then fell into unconsciousness, from which he never woke. An application to have the ceremony at the grave conducted in accordance with his life-long principles was refused by his daughter. A wreath "From his Freethought friends" was laid on his grave.—DAVID MARTIN.

BOOK CHAT.

The fourth part of Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Ethics*, recently published, deals with "The Ethics of Social Life: Justice." He states at the outset that this work covers much the same field as *Social Statics* published in 1850. "One difference is that what there was in my first book of supernaturalistic interpretation has disappeared, and the interpretation has become exclusively naturalistic—that is, evolutionary." This is further indicated in the first chapter which deals with "Animal Ethics," and in the appendix at the end of the book in which are given some instructive and conclusive illustrations of animal conscience recorded by Mr. Mann Jones, and an account of Mr. Spencer's controversy with the Rev. J. Llewelyn Davies on the existence of the sense of duty without the sense of the supernatural, in which he says that his own sense of indignation at injustice arises "quite apart from any thought of divine command, quite apart from any thought of reward or punishment here or hereafter." It will then be seen that Herbert Spencer is even a more pronounced Freethinker than ever.

There are many points of interest to Freethinkers in Mr. Spencer's book. Chapter xvii for instance is devoted to "The Rights of Free Belief and Worship," which, he insists, cannot be equitably interfered with "so long as they do not inflict nuisances on neighboring people, as does the untimely and persistent jangling of bells in some Catholic countries, or as does the uproar of Salvation Army processions in our own, permitted with contemptible weakness by our authorities." Mr. Spencer shows that freedom is of slow growth. "When we read that in Guinea, a man who does not fulfil the prophecy of the fetish by getting well, is strangled because he has made the fetish lie, we may readily understand that the expression of scepticism is practically unknown."

Mr. Spencer, by the way, makes a decided slip in his chapter on The Right of Bequest. He shows how this has only gradually been accorded in society, and concludes by saying that whatever restrictions on the right of bequest remain, such as the law of mortmain, are in accordance with ethical convictions. Mr. Spencer has surely forgotten how Freethinkers have been and can be still defrauded of bequests left to propagate their principles.

Prof. Minto, the author of the popular *Manual of English Prose Literature*, is engaged on a memoir of William Bell Scott, the poet, artist, and Freethinker.

Ludwig Feuerbach, whose *Essence of Religion* we publish, was a remarkable personality who did much for the cause of Freethought in Germany. An exposition of his life and philosophy has been brought out by W. Bolin at Stuttgart.

Lord Tennyson has written a new play, in which Miss Ada Rehan will take the part of the heroine. According to Mr. Theodore Watts—an excellent judge—the play is very beautiful. Mr. Watts also announces the publication of a new volume of poems by Lord Tennyson "mainly written in the poet's eighty-second year." The contents will be varied, comprising "Hellenic legend, Oriental tradition, humorous *patois*, idyl, and even stories of the wild brigand life of Southern Europe."

What a Grand Old Man! The "Lord" before Tennyson only seems to belittle him. It heightens one's sense of human dignity to see the fire of genius burning in the very dregs of bodily life.

Under the title of *Collectivism*, Mr. William Heaford—an old contributor to the *Freethinker*, whose pen is again active in our columns—translates a criticism of *Collective Socialism* by A. Naquet, one of the deputies of Paris. The volume is published by Sonnenschein and Co., the price being half-a-crown. Mr. Heaford appears to have done his work admirably. He is himself a Freethinker and a Socialist, and he shows his impartiality of mind by translating for English readers the work of another Freethinker who is opposed to Socialism. Naquet's book is capital reading. He is never dull. He is always alert and rapid, bright and trenchant—in other words a true Frenchman.

This is not the place to criticise his position; but we have no hesitation in recommending the volume to Socialists and Individualists as (to use Mr. Heaford's own words) "a most concise and valuable contribution to the discussion of the social question."

Lovers of dainty verse will be delighted with *Ionica*, a little volume issued by Mr. Ruskin's publisher, Mr. George Allen. The author is a modest man. His name is not on the title-page. Mr. Croly was a college friend of Tennyson and Fitzgerald. He published, under the same title, a portion of the contents of this volume ever so many years ago. All the poems are worth reading, many are admirable, and some are exquisite. One of the best, if not the best, is as follows:

MIMNERMUS IN CHURCH.

You promise heavens free from strife,
Pure truth, and perfect change of will;
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This warm kind world is all I know.

You say there is no substance here,
One great reality above:
Back from that void I shrink in fear,
And child-like hide myself in love:
Show me what angels feel. Till then,
I cling, a mere weak man, to men.

You bid me lift my mean desires
From faltering lips and fitful veins
To sexless souls, ideal quires,
Unwearied voices, wordless strains:
My mind with fonder welcome owns
One dear dead friend's remembered tones.

Forsooth the present we must give
To that which cannot pass away;
All beauteous things for which we live
By laws of time and space decay.
But oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die.

Miss Constance Naden died too early for her fame either as poet or philosopher; but she left behind her friends who will not willingly let her works die, and who are publishing *Further Reliques* from her pen.

Canon Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, which is just published, is said to put the results of criticism about as plainly as the recent work of Canon Cheyne on the Psalter. We hope to call our readers' attention to the work shortly.

The Agnostic Annual for 1891, edited by C. A. Watts, and published by Stewart and Co., has just reached us. It is an extremely good sixpennyworth. The most noticeable article is one on "Possibilities and Impossibilities," by Professor Huxley, in which the ground is taken that no one has the right to say that miracles are impossible, unless they involve a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, it is maintained, after Hume, that no recorded miracle is supported by the requisite amount of evidence. Logically, this position is sound enough, but there is another side to the question, and we purpose dealing with it in a special article.

Dr. Momerie's article on "Ecclesiasticism" is well written and good in its way. But the writer occupies a strange position in defending "the Christianity of Christ," which is an arbitrary creation without any historical basis.

Mr. Charles Watts writes ably on "Religion without Superstition," though by religion he only means moral idealism. There are many other good features in the *Agnostic Annual*, including a bright paper on "Sundays and Holydays" by Samuel Laing.

We are struck with the general character of this Agnostic publication. All the writers really have in common is a spirit of opposition to Christianity. New names do not always cover new things. Agnosticism, practically, is nothing but Atheism after all. The word "God" is used, as in "Saladin's" poem, but as Vanini said at the stake, when reproached for exclaiming "O God!" it is "only a fashion of speech."

PROFANE JOKES.

Girl: "Yes, I like to live here, but I think I shall go to heaven when I die, and I know what I shall do first thing when I get there; I shall go straight to my Uncle John." Mother; " 'Sh! don't talk so." Uncle John had died recently a Freethinker.

A little boy had been instructed that when people were buried in the adjacent cemetery they had gone to Jesus. On one occasion he saw a coffin being carried from the cemetery. "Oh, look," he exclaimed, "they are bringing somebody back from Jesus; Jesus won't have him."

"So you have taken the teetotal pledge, Mrs. Spicer," said Miss De Gay, sarcastically.—Mrs. Spicer: "Yes."—Miss De Gay: "But did not St. Paul tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake?"—Mrs. Spicer: "So he did; but my name is not Timothy, and there's nothing wrong with my stomach."

Brown: "Yes, Mr. Gusher is a fine pulpit orator; but I like to see a man consistent. He preached a most pathetic sermon on the parable of the good Samaritan last Sunday, and then went home and threatened to set his dog on a little beggar girl that came to his door. That's a nice man to be in the pulpit now, ain't it?" Fog: "It certainly shows him to be a man of good breeding. When he gets through with his work he sinks the shop."

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, 38 Newington Green-road: 7, Mr. Toleman-Garner, "The Lord's Prayer, from a Freethought Point of View."

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Christianity and Materialism." Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road: 7.30, recitations by members and friends.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 4, quarterly meeting; 6, tea; 7, entertainment (members 6d., public 9d.).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, Mr. C. Cohen, "How Christianity Grows."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Rev. S. D. Headlam, "Some Popular Mistakes about the Church's Teaching" (admission free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Who Wrote the Bible?" Thursday, at 8, Mr. Robert Forder, "Theosophy: Old and New."

Milton Hall, Rawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mr. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Age of the Earth." Monday, at 8.30, social meeting.

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, Mr. C. J. Steinberg, "Miracles—I." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—17 Andover-place, Kilburn: 8, special meeting of members residing in or near Kilburn. Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): discussion.

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, Mr. J. Fagan, "Is there any Efficacy in Prayer?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Mr. A. Johnson, "An Hour with some Meek and Lowly Ones."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity and Woman."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "History of the Inquisition."

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 6.30, Mr. Sam Standing will lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): Mr. Sam Standing, 11.30, "Thoughts on Charles Bradlaugh"; 3.30, "Thoughts on Mrs. Besant."

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 3.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Christian Creed."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. Lucretius Keen, "Christians and Christianity"

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (close to Queen's Park Station): 6, Mr. H. Courtney will lecture.

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Scepticism Justified."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, "God's Promises."

North Finchley—Coleridge-road: 11, a lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Narrow Path." Collection for Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

Plaistow Green (near the Station): 11.30, Mr. C. J. Steinberg, "Miracles—I."

Stratford—Matthew's Park Estate, Ham Park-road: 3.30, Mr. C. J. Steinberg, "Miracles—II."

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, Mr. F. W. Dowdall, "Savior Myths."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 3.15, Mr. C. Cohen, "Science v. Supernaturalism."

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's-hill: 11.30, a lecture.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, members' annual meeting; 7, Mr. A. Holland, "Genesis ii., 7."

Glasgow—Albion Hall, College-street: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11.30, "The Marvels and Dangers of Hypnotism"; 2.30, "Crucified Saviors"; 6.30, "Theosophy and Occultism."

Grimsby—Hall of Science, Freeman-street: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Hereditry: how to Improve the Human Race, Physically, Mentally, and Morally"; 7, "The March of the Gods." Tuesday, at 8, Miss Ada Campbell, "Why I am Not a Theosophist—a Reply to Mrs. Besant."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, Mr. Adams, "Socialism and its Teaching."

Hetton-le-Hole—Committee Room, Miner's Hall: 6, Mr. James Murray, "The Rudiments of Politics."

Leicester—Humberstone Gate: 6.30, Mr. J. M. Robertson, "Modern English Politicians."

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 7, Mr. Harry Smith, "Will ye speak wickedly for God?" (Job iii., 4-7).

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Mr. Charles Watts, 11, "Freethought in England and America"; 3, "Atheism and the French Revolution"; 6.30, "The Christian Superstition: its Origin and Influence."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, financial meeting of members; 7, Mr. T. Pearson, "Eternal Damnation."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, readings and discussion.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: Mr. Stanley Jones, 3, "Jesus and his Parents"; 7, "Christian Opposition to Science."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West-street: Mr. Haslam, 11, "English Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century"; 3, "Life and Times of Voltaire"; 7, "Civilisation: its Rise and Progress."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, Mr. E. W. Fenwick, a reading.

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas Street: 6.30, Mr. T. Phillips, a reading from Huxley.

Sunderland—Albert Rooms, Coronation-street: 7, Mr. T. R. Fox will lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, Mr. G. Selkirk will lecture.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Nov. 1, Battersea; 8, Milton Hall; 22, Hall of Science; 23, Camberwell.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Oct. 11, 11, Portsmouth; 18, morning, Finsbury Park; 25, Birmingham. Nov. 1, West Ham; 8, Nottingham.

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

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Oct. 11, morning, Camberwell; 18, morning, Mile End; 25, Manchester.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk street, Woolwich.—Oct. 11, evening, Battersea; 15, Plumstead Radical Club; 18, morning, Hyde Park. Nov. 15, evening, Camberwell; 22, evening, Ball's Pond. Dec. 20, evening, Camberwell.

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

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