

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XI.—No. 44.]

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1891.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"Surely if any one is persuaded, whether rightly or wrongly, that his fellows are expending the best part of their imaginations and feelings on a dream and a delusion, and by so doing moreover they are retarding to an indefinite degree the wider spread of light and happiness, then nothing that he can tell them about chemistry or psychology or history can in his eyes be comparable in importance to the duty of telling them this."—*John Morley.*

DIRTY BOOKS.

A STORM in a teapot is just as instructive, if you look at it in the right way, as a storm on a grand scale. Was it not by watching the lid of a teakettle, lifted up by the steam, that James Watt was led to one of the greatest of modern discoveries? To the philosopher, in fact, there is nothing trivial. Mountains are only big heaps of earth and stone, and oceans are only huge collections of drops of water. Quantity does not alter quality. The principles are the same. A grain of sand will illustrate the law of gravitation as well as a planet wheeling around its sun.

This must be our excuse—or rather our explanation—for drawing the reader's attention to a squabble at Stoke Newington. It appears that the Public Free Library of that northern suburb of the Modern Babylon has been enriched, or, as the bigots would say, polluted, by a present of Freethought books from Mrs. Louisa Samson, whose husband is one of the Commissioners of the Library. These books have all been labelled, stamped, and placed in the catalogue by the Librarian. But some of the Commissioners are troubled in mind about this heretical literature, and their grievances are ventilated in the *North London Guardian*.

Before going any further we pause to give a list of these obnoxious writings. They are as follows:—The *Bible Handbook*, edited by Messrs. G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball; *Darwin on God*, by G. W. Foote; the *Trial of Theism*, by G. J. Holyoake; and the same author's *Collected Works*, in two volumes; *Essays and Lectures*, by Colonel Ingersoll, in two volumes; and a collection, in another two volumes, of *Heretical Tracts* by Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, Foote, and others.

This innocent collection of "blasphemy"—to borrow the language of our Christian friends—has excited the loud-mouthed fury of several local bigots. One of these fanatics, signing himself W. J. L., calls upon the Rector, who is one of the Library Commissioners, to expel this "vile rubbish," which includes, not only the "works of Tom Paine," but "some of the most scurrilous writings of Foote." This epistolary busy-body seems to suffer from "Foote" on the brain. He confesses that Paine's works are "classics in blasphemy"—probably because they were written nearly a century ago; but "Foote's writings, while possessing all the evil qualities of Paine's, display in addition a thorough lack of literary ability."

We do not dispute this judgment. Let it be assumed, for the sake of argument at least, that "Foote" is a sciolist in knowledge and a tyro in composition. That very fact should make his writings less dreaded, for the danger of heretical works lies in

their logical power and literary dexterity. Surely there is a screw loose in W. J. L.'s rational apparatus. He would expect the writings of "Foote," which he affects to despise; and at the same time, if he *must* make an exception, he would retain the brilliant, incisive, "classic," and perilous writings of "Paine."

Another fanatic, signing himself W. Woods, indulges in a still wilder flight of impudent absurdity. He does not assert, but he insinuates, that the heretical works in question are obscene. He professes an anxiety to shield the ratepayers' "sons and daughters" against the contamination of these "pernicious books." If they are, after all, to be kept in the Library, he pleads for their being "placed under the special charge of the Librarian, with strict instructions, that in no single instance they be issued to any borrower under the age of twenty." Why "twenty" he does not say. Would not "seventy" be just as reasonable? The fact is, the object of this correspondent is to prejudice the Stoke Newington people against Freethought literature. For this reason he descends—if, indeed he *does* descend—to a base and malicious innuendo. He suggests that the writings of Paine, Bradlaugh, Holyoake, Ingersoll, and Foote are indecent. If he has read them he knows better; if he has not, his ignorance is no excuse for his malignity. We defy him to discover a single indecency in all those writings—unless it be a quotation from the Bible.

The Bible! Ay, there's the rub! The editor of the *North London Guardian* lets the cat out of the bag. He declares that "the most vulgar" of these Freethought works "is the *Bible Handbook*, one portion of which is headed 'Bible Indecencies.'" Perfectly true; one portion is so headed; and the fact should turn every Bibliolator red with shame. For who wrote the *Bible Handbook*? Not Mr. Foote and Mr. Ball. They are only the editors. The book was written by the *Holy Ghost*. The editors let the "Sacred Volume" speak for itself. Nay, they have not quite done that; for in the portion of the book which is headed "Bible Indecencies," the language of the Holy Ghost was found to be too disgusting for reproduction; the editors, therefore, merely gave the references, without polluting their own pages with the filthiness of the Christian Scriptures.

Certainly the *Bible Handbook* is "vulgar" to that extent, and to that extent only. The Christians who denounce it are simply impeaching their own "Word of God." That they should hate it is natural; that they should libel it is not surprising; that they should seek to suppress it is to be expected; that they should, above all, strive to keep it out of the hands of persons "under the age of twenty" is a matter of course. The surest way to destroy belief in the Bible is to get people to read it; the most certain way to damage it is to show what it really contains.

Everybody who has read the Bible with any care knows it to be the most offensively brutal and obscene book in general circulation. Some parts of it, even in our mollified translation, are disgusting; but were they rendered faithfully into English, they would shock the most callous sensibilities. Such passages are perfectly

disgraceful in a book which is lauded as divine, which is forced into our public schools, and thrust into the hands of our children.

And what is the effect of the early reading of the Bible, with its purple patches of obscenity, upon the mind of the English people? Look at our music-halls; look at our principal streets by night; listen to the language of Tom, Dick, and Harry on a Bank Holiday. Nay, let us take a more crucial test. We will try the very purists themselves. The sincerity of these "good" people was curiously exemplified in connexion with Sir Richard Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights*. That fine scholar, and finer gentleman, treated the work as a great classic. He rendered it word for word into English, keeping back nothing naked and unadorned. But he issued the work by subscription, to prevent its falling into improper hands. This, however, did not satisfy the purists. With Stead as their leader they howled in a frightful chorus. They declared that Sir Richard Burton should have omitted the naughty parts, and published the work openly. Poor Lady Burton was deceived by this clamor. She brought out an expurgated edition. But the pure-minded public did not purchase. Oh dear no! The publication was a frost, and Lady Burton lost a few thousand pounds. So much for the sincerity of the very purists in Bible-loving England!

One of the Commissioners of the Stoke Newington Library may be cited as an instance of Bible-fed purity. He strongly objects to Mrs. Samson's present of Freethought books; but he has himself bought for the Library—of course with the ratepayers' money—not only the morbidly sensational *Chronicles of Crime*, but also the *Memoirs* of the famous Count de Grammont, a French gentleman at the court of Charles II., who gives the spiciest stories of the Merry Monarch's amours, and lewd anecdotes about frail beauties like Nell Gwynne, Lady Chesterfield, and the Duchess of Cleveland. This delectable book is *not* kept back from persons "under twenty years of age." What are we to think, then, of the Christians who gloat over Grammont's *Memoirs*, and protest against the reading of Freethought works, written with a scrupulous regard to decency and decorum?

We are glad to see that local Freethinkers are writing to the *Guardian* on this matter. Mrs. Samson is herself joining in the fray. She is a lady of culture and refinement, and one of the last persons in the world to present filthy or suggestive books to a Public Library. Neither she nor her husband will rest under this stigma. They will defend Freethought writings, and resist the attempt to turn a public institution, supported by the ratepayers, into a seminary of sectarian opinions.

If the Christians engage in a real crusade against dirty books, they will never need to trouble Freethought publishers. Knowing that our writings are read by both sexes, we exercise a scrupulous vigilance over our columns, without falling into the finical prudery which is satirised in one of the most terrible epigrams of Swift. Again and again we have declined advertisements that are freely inserted in more "respectable" journals; and, after all, the sacrifice of hard cash—especially when you need it—is one of the best tests of sincerity.

There is plenty of filth in England already. Freethinkers are not anxious to swell the mud-heap. All that the world requires, and a great deal more, is supplied by persons who would scorn the epithet of "infidel." A very extensive traffic in dirty books is carried on in England. The police know it, and very wisely leave it alone, so long as the vendors do not try to corrupt youth and innocence. It is useless to trust to law to purify society. As John Bright said, force is no remedy. Prevention is better than cure. Education is better than suppression. Let a watch be kept over the minds and lives of our children. Above all keep the Bible out of their hands. G. W. FOOTE.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SECULARISM AND ATHEISM.

As the question has arisen elsewhere as to the "Meaning of Secularism," it may interest the readers of this journal to see what has to be said upon the subject. The writer is alone responsible for the opinions which follow.

There is hardly any remark among the common-places of discussion which denotes more looseness of thought than the saying "It is not worth while to dispute about names." Names are the signs of ideas in the minds of those who use them. The selection of right names is the object of free discussion.

A man comes into this world without being consulted as to time, or place, or part he has to play. He soon hears that there is another world also. People had found this world ready-made, not badly furnished, and concluded that some being, whom they called Deity, had provided it and personally conducted it. But as this being was never seen about, nor had any address in this world, it was concluded that his abode is in another world, and that there were two worlds—one known and one unknown. The interpreter of this real world is Experience, the interpreter of the supposed world is Theology. One thing appears quite clear, that these two worlds are distinct.

In course of time, it comes to be perceived that this world is but part of an infinite system called Nature, and the other world is described as an illimitable dominion to which is given the name of spirit. Then two persons arise, the first, who is called the Theist, declares his belief that Nature is incapable of self-existence and self-sustainment, and that it was originated by the Lord of the spirit dominions. The second person, who bears the name of Atheist, avows his belief that Nature is self-sufficient, self-acting, without beginning or end, and that it is self-contained, bearing within its eternal womb all secrets, all mysteries, all miracles, all time, all destiny. The Theist may be right or the Atheist may be right, but neither knows whether he is or not.

At the same time there are other persons, not less reflective but more diffident and unpretending, described by the name of Neutralists or Secularists, who say that upon questions so vast they give no opinion—not having sufficient knowledge. Belief implies evidence. To arrive at a conclusion upon infinite things the premises must be infinite, and to marshal infinite premises and to judge them, are beyond finite capacity, and not necessary for the practical purposes of life and duty.

The origin of this world not being obvious or determinable, all men would perish were they called upon to make the discovery as a condition of enjoyment of this world. The question of the authorship of this world is as distinct from its uses as is the architect from a house or the owner from an estate. An occupier can tell whether his habitation is well built, well drained, well ventilated, well situated, although he may never know who was the architect. Any competent person can tell whether an estate is well wooded, well watered, well cultivated, although the landlord may be unknown. In the same way the fitness of this world as a pleasant and profitable dwelling-place is quite distinct from our knowledge of who designed it or who owns it. From all appearances the contriver and proprietor of this world looks for no acknowledgment save the happiness of the inhabitants, and exacts no rental save that of progress.

Ever-increasing experience convinces those who observe that science is the providence of life, and human affairs can be conducted without theology, which in its precepts and policy is avowedly alien to this world. By secular precepts, the truth of which can be tested in this life, morality, justice and honor can be inculcated and sustained. The reverence of

that which is true, right and human, is some think religious, even more so than many theories of theology which take that name.

It is said by many that there is one who watches over this world, ready to aid all who call upon him. If this were true, there would be neither error nor want anywhere; for we know that all the inhabitants have been at him with their passionate requests. The rule that theology lays down for success is that we should pray as though there was no help in us, and work as though there was no help in heaven. This is doubling our labor. The Secularist sees that Secular exertion is alone productive, and chooses that course without complaint.

Secularism therefore selects for study the *material* means of this life, with a view to human welfare and improvement. But always avoiding large statements which exceed human knowledge, he does not say with the absolute materialists that there is nothing in Nature save force and matter, because that is more than he knows or can know. The maxim of Pope is ever true:

Say first of God above or man below,
What can we reason but from what we know?

The Secularist may have few principles, but they have that certitude which can be tested by the experience of this life. He does not pretend to see more than he can see. Unambitious common sense is sufficient for him. He takes it for granted that the Unknown is unknown. He does not undertake to say whether Nature is the outcome of intellect or intellect the outcome of nature, and it does not matter which, or we should have been told all about it. He does not blaspheme the universe by denying that Nature is incapable of taking care of itself, nor does he put upon Deity the dread and ceaseless responsibility of eternal vigilance to keep all the worlds going, and in addition answer the petitions of all the millions of mankind on every planet of the stellar system. He makes no exactions, he nurtures no discontent, he gives heaven no trouble. He seeks to express his thankfulness by self-dependent effort for personal improvement, and sums up all duty in endeavors to extend the secular blessings of this life to others, confident that if a future existence shall come to pass, that he will have qualified himself for it, by having made a common-sense use of this. Thus while the Atheist worries himself as to *how* this world came to be and *why* it goes on, the Secularist spends his time in trying to discover the best uses to which the world that is may be put.

How far a Theist may be a Secularist will depend upon the nature of this Theism. He who thinks Deity intends this world to be a vale of tears will be very likely to keep it so, as far as he is concerned. He who thinks the world can be put right by prayer is a fool if he engaged in personal effort to do it. A mendicant Theist, who is always whining to heaven to help him, and really believes heaven will do it, will be a poor hand at self-help. But a Theist who thinks heaven is best pleased with that creed which produces the best deeds for the services of humanity, may be a good Secularist. So may an Atheist who has no theory which diminishes his interest in the secular affairs of this world; but if he makes the acceptance of the Atheistical principle as a condition of secular mindedness, he deters nearly all the world from looking at Secularism, or even wishing to be of that opinion.

The essence of Secularism is separateness. Its study is the laws of the universe, not its cause. The Theist and the Atheist both hold unprovable views; the Secularist deals only with what is provable by experience. His duties lie in the realms of reality. Outside it and distinct from it lie the splendid realms of speculation which all men love to explore but in which no man can live.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE AND EDUCATION.

PRESIDING at the opening of the Manchester Diocesan Conference last week, the Bishop devoted himself chiefly to the education question, and the result of the Act of last session. The position, he said, is a very serious one. So great were the interests at stake that "their immensity tended to make weak heads giddy." It is of course the weak heads of the clergy he was addressing that have become giddy at finding their own interests at stake. The position is serious for them mainly. For the mass of the people free education, though passed, as Mr. Balfour admits, in the interests of denominational schools, with what must in time come with it popular control of all rate and tax supported schools, is a distinct benefit. But the more far-seeing of the clergy, among whom must be included Bishop Moorhouse, who has had the benefit of experience in a colony where free and secular education prevails, know that in the long run educational improvement means the decline of clerical influence.

Said the Bishop: "If he were asked whether he would rather make their children Secularists or see them become members of some other Christian denomination than his own, he answered that rather than risk such a calamity, he would hand them over willingly to the most fanatical or superstitious Christian community in the land. And where is the religious bigot amongst us who would not rather have them Christians of any kind than such stupid and vicious Materialists?" Of course he would. His antipathy to rival organisations is less than towards those who would remove the very foundations of all the sky-pilot tribe. Those who would do this are stupid and vicious, of course, to this most amiable and charitable father in God. Hand all the schools over to Cardinal Manning or to General Booth, and there will be plenty of chances for impostors of Bishop Moorhouse's kind to draw large salaries from the ignorance and supineness of the people. But that children should have their time devoted only to what is of use in after life without any admixture of the supernatural nonsense upon which priestly pretensions are based, would indeed be a calamity to bishops. People would grow up to see that the sky-pilots know less of this world, and no more of any other than themselves. Unless it was daily drilled into them that they must regard religious dogmas with unquestioning reverence they would smile at such nonsense as a three-in-one Deity, who offers up his son as an atonement to himself, as the efficacy of baptism, or taking wine as the blood of a person who died over eighteen hundred years ago. Unless first taught that an ass spoke to Balaam, they would never credit that the Holy Ghost specially rested upon and spoke through Bishop Moorhouse. And Dr. Moorhouse virtually admits this. Speaking of his experience as a colonial bishop, he went on to say:—

"Victoria has purely secular schools, and the ministers of religion have tried vainly over and over again to get the children of those schools to come and receive religious instruction at their hands. We tried at different times to get them to come before school hours, after school hours, and on the Saturday half-holiday. All the ministers of religion combined in the effort, all worked their hardest, all did whatever lay in their power to make their lessons interesting. For a few weeks in each case they had fair success; but after that the religious indifference of the children, their frivolity, their love of play, their weariness of perpetual learning too surely thinned the classes and made the effort hopeless. There is no use in disguising the fact—a fact which Mr. Schou's evidence shows to be as true of British Columbia as it is of Victoria—that a purely secular education in the common schools means a rising generation of unbelievers."

That is the secret. Unless theological trash is forced on the child daily while its mind is plastic, credulous, and imaginative, there is no hope for the mystery-men when its reason becomes developed.

With secular education their priestly occupation would be gone. They live by faith—the faith of their dupes. Religion is the only article taken on trust, and it is so simply because inculcated when the mind is incapable of examination.

The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.

The clerical apostles of obscurantism, like the Bishop, will spare no efforts to retain their hold on the schools. They want to keep out the sunshine to give effect to their own rushlights. They take six millions a-year from the country, which they could not hope to retain were not every generation suborned in their behalf. The mystery-men of other denominations know too that their reputation as God's ministers depends on the inculcation of an alleged will of God. The belief in God is all-important to them, because they are his interpreters, and his will really means their own.

Priests of all religions are the same. Bentham and Grote have well said of them: "They have the strongest interest in the depravation of the human intellect. For the demand for their services for the temporal aid of the Deity altogether depends upon human ignorance and incapacity, and is exactly proportional to it. Why does a man apply for the divine assistance? Because he does not know how to accomplish his ends without it, or how to procure the requisite apparatus for the purpose. If he knew any physical means of attaining it, he would unquestionably prefer them. Every extension, therefore, of physical methods in the gratification of our wishes, displaces and throws out of employment by so much the labor of the aërial functionaries. No one prays for the removal of a disease by supernatural aid, when he once knows an appropriate surgical remedy. He, therefore, who lives by the commission which he charges on the disposal of the former, has a manifest interest in checking the advance and introduction of the latter."*

The Bishop sees that something must be done to uphold clerical influence. His plan is to ask for subscriptions and offer the parents some small voice in the management, provided they contribute to the support of the church schools. The answer is, that as taxpayers they already do support church schools as well as others, and consequently have a right to see to the proper expenditure of the money, without handing anything further to the Bishop. Of course the Bishop does not mean them to have much share in the management. His words show this. He said: "Just as our miners and working people generally like to have their views represented in the Legislature by a few labor members, so will the parents of our children like to have a voice in the management of those institutions in which they are so deeply interested." Yes, and just as the laborers, if wise, will not rest till they have their fair share of representation in the Legislature, the taxpayers, if wise, will not be content till they have their fair share in the management of the schools they support. At present the subscribers to voluntary schools only raise about a penny to every shilling provided by Government. Moreover, the trust deeds of church schools usually only permit a voice in their management to the men of God and a few heavy subscribers. What Dr. Moorhouse wants is to stave off popular control of State-supported schools by being able to say, "We give the children's parents a share in the management, and they all want the catechism"; the truth being that it is he and his like who want the catechism because it teaches submission to themselves.

J. M. WHEELER.

God is the fifth wheel, hitched to the grand chariot of nature by a cunning priesthood for self-aggrandisement.

* *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, p. 124; 1866.

AN ORTHODOX DELUSION.

It requires no profound knowledge to enable one to recognise the fact that some persons indulge in certain delusions until they bring themselves to regard such fancies as realities. We have recently seen a striking illustration of this truth in connection with the profession of Theosophy, whose remarkable pretensions are only equalled by the orthodox assumption that for the present progressive condition of the civilised world we are indebted to the practice and influence of New Testament teachings. That this distorted view of human advancement is entirely delusive is capable of clear demonstration.

To test the power of the orthodox faith to establish and to promote a progressive condition of society, let us suppose that a company of its enthusiastic adherents had taken possession of a hitherto uninhabited island, and had there attempted to form a constitution based on the teachings of the New Testament. In vain would they search the book for any practical instructions in the formation of either a political, scientific, or educational system of government. On the contrary, they would discover in their "inspired guide" not only conflicting statements in reference to some other world, but also very absurd commands as to this. Many of its principal injunctions would be found utterly useless and injurious in enhancing and consolidating the welfare and general happiness of modern society. The primary object of the alleged Founder of Christianity was not so much to teach people how to live as to instruct them how to die. "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world." His great concern, therefore, was not with time, but for "eternity." These orthodox Christians consequently, in their new home, would have to look upon this world as being of secondary importance, inasmuch as their Bible says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," and as an inducement to urge compliance with this request they are further informed to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [food, drink and clothes] shall be added unto you." Therefore, "Take no thought for the morrow," "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Now, it is evident that, if these injunctions were implicitly obeyed, human effort would be necessarily impeded and all progress retarded. If people are not to love the world, their interest in things below will be sacrificed to a concern for things above. It is not to be reasonably expected that persons will long work for a cause in which they have no interest. Under a system of despotism a certain amount of labor may be forced from serfs and slaves, but once give a nation its freedom and the people will willingly strive to advance that cause only which they love.

In this orthodox island the usual and necessary observance of the laws of health would be neglected if its inhabitants acted consistently, for they are enjoined to take no thought for their lives; and when they are sick they are to "call for the elders of the church and let them pray over them," being assured that "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Preparing for old age would be out of the question, as they are not to lay up treasures on earth, but sell what they have and give to the poor, and take up their cross and follow Christ. Law courts and loan offices would not be required, as they are instructed to forgive their brothers seventy times seven, and to "lend hoping for nothing again." The thought of a divorce must not be seriously entertained, because "Whosoever God has joined together, let no man put asunder." If there should be found individuals foolish enough to attempt to invade this Christian territory, its inhabitants must not interfere, for did not Christ say, "Resist not evil"? Should the invading forces succeed in establishing them-

selves as governors of the island, the people thereon must quietly submit, as "the powers that be are ordained of God." If they are smitten on the one cheek they must offer the other to be operated upon in a similar manner. Domestic obligations must give way to the demands of their faith; hence they are authorised to "hate" the members of their own families, and husbands are permitted to forsake their wives and wives their husbands, in order to make themselves good and faithful disciples of their master.

Such would be the condition of a people who succeeded in regulating their lives by many of the teachings of the New Testament. No community living under a constitution framed by these orthodox rulers could possibly be progressive; neither would they be too happy. Apart from the menial, dependent subjection in which they would be placed, they would have to listen to the comforting assurance that the majority of them would be eternally lost in a burning hell—that "many are called but few are chosen"—that of themselves "they could do no good thing"—and that at the last day they will have "to give an account for every idle word" spoken through life. Need one wonder that orthodox Christians frequently appear such "miserable sinners," believing, as they profess to do, that their final doom may depend upon words uttered in the jubilant and joyous moments of life?

Thus it will be seen that no active secular reformer can be a true and consistent follower of orthodox teachings, for the reason that many of these Christian injunctions are the very incarnation and inculcation of forbearance, suffering, and the sacrifice of the noblest instincts of our nature. They teach submission to physical evil, tyranny, and oppression; they favor an unprogressive and a retarding spirit, and draw the energies and desires of men from the duties of this life, and seek to direct them to an unknown future. Until, therefore, it can be shown that the teachings of the New Testament are capable of producing useful actions; until it can be demonstrated that its precepts contain the elements of that greatness which has invariably characterised the careers of the statesmen, the philosophers, and the social reformers of all ages; until the course said to have been pursued by Christ when on earth is adopted by his professed followers of to-day, and made to harmonise with reason and the requirements of modern society; until these things are done, orthodox Christianity will be regarded by the impartial mind as being inadequate to furnish a daily guide by which the human race can be wisely governed, and to which the great intellects of the earth can profitably yield.

CHARLES WATTS.

CHRISTIAN INCONSISTENCY.

The other Sunday I was listening to a Christian lecturer, who is constantly denouncing Secularism. After denouncing the National Secular Society and its principles, he had the effrontery to claim that all these principles had been taken by the N. S. S. from the Bible, that Christianity included all that Secularism taught, and that Christianity was the true Secularism. The Christian audience seemed to thoroughly approve of this joint denunciation and acceptance of the Secular principles and name. They evidently failed to see any logical defect in such conflicting treatment. Yet if Secularism is so good, why should it be condemned so bitterly as vile and mischievous; and if it is so bad, why do Christians charge us with having stolen it from the Bible? Does the Christian simultaneously believe that Secularism is so debasing that it deserves to be beaten with any stick however dirty or brutal, and yet that the same Secularism is so noble and commendable that it must be accepted and glorified as wholly taken from divine revelation?

I have heard precisely the same method of treatment applied to the terms Freethought and Freethinker. Freethought is everything that is infamous; and the Freethinker is a kind of moral monster, destitute of all motive for active virtue, and with nothing to restrain him from the vilest crimes except the fear of the policeman. Yet after all this abuse, we are told that Freethought is not a word to which we have any right; that Freethinkers deny free will, and cannot think freely; that Christians do think freely and honestly, and that therefore Christianity is Freethought, and that Christians are the genuine Freethinkers.

This attempt to appropriate our special designation is encouraging in one respect. It shows that the names in question and the ideas and principles they represent are making progress, and are becoming sufficiently respected or feared to be worth coveting and stealing by an unscrupulous enemy. As soon as the word Atheist begins to be a little popular I do not doubt that certain Christians will similarly seek to wrest it from us. They will point out that Christianity rejected and dethroned the ancient gods, and that the early Christians were denounced as Atheoi, or Atheists.

When Christians claim to be true Secularists, they are like flabby and dishonest Conservatives who claim to be true Liberals. They deprive names of their distinctive use and meaning in order to elate weak minds with the semblance of a victory gained by mere confusion of idea and interconversion of opposites. If a Tory boasted of being a true Radical, and chuckled over thus dishing his opponents, Christians might despise the transparent trickery or impudent lying falsehood; but they cannot detect any moral or logical flaw in such a policy when pursued by religious advocates. Christianity must evidently be in a bad way when its defenders and supporters are so muddle-headed as to welcome the theft of their enemies' designations, though furiously reviling and bespattering these same designations at other times.

W. P. BALL.

DAVID HUME'S DEATH.

In the recently published *Journal of Sir Walter Scott* vol. ii., p. 4) there is a fresh testimony to the fortitude with which the great Scotch sceptic died. Despite his Conservatism, Sir Walter Scott was a man, and one little likely to credit the lying stories of infidel deathbeds which so often do duty as "Christian evidences." At any rate, he had the opportunity of learning the truth upon this matter, which he thus records:

"July 10.—Corrected proofs, but wrote nothing. To Court till two o'clock. I went to Cadell's by the mound, a long roundabout; transacted some business. I met Baron Hume coming home, and walked with him in the gardens. His remarkable account of his celebrated uncle's last moments is in these words:—Dr. Black called on Mr. D. Hume (David Hume, the historian, died August 25, 1776) on the morning on which he died. The patient complained of having suffered a great deal during the night, and expressed a fear that his struggle might be prolonged, to his great distress, for days or weeks longer. 'No, sir,' said Dr. Black, with the remarkable calmness and sincerity which characterised him; 'I have examined the symptoms, and observe several which oblige me to conclude that dissolution is rapidly approaching.' 'Are you certain of that, doctor?' 'Most assuredly so,' answered the physician. The dying philosopher extended his arm, and shook hands with his medical friend. 'I thank you,' he said 'for the news.' So little reason was there for the reports of his having been troubled in mind when on his deathbed."

De Dageraad, of Amsterdam, opens with M. A. H. Gerhard's paper on "Freethought and Morality"; M. J. G. ten Bokkel criticises "General Booth and his Plan"; M. J. V. D. Ende translates Mr. Foote's "Fighting with Spooks" from our columns; and in his *Universal Review* gives extracts from the *Freethinker*, *Truthseeker*, *Liberator*, *Freidenker*, *Menschenstem*, and other Freethought journals.

BEAUTIFUL MARY.

Fancy portraits of Jesus and his times have a great vogue in America. Here is a picture of Mary from the best-read work of that kind by Lew. Wallace, entitled *Ben Hur*. It seems to have served as the source of the inspiration claimed by Sir Edwin Arnold: "Mary at that time was but fifteen years of age, Joseph being about fifty years; Mary's form, voice, and manner belonging to the period of transition from girlhood. Her face was perfectly oval; her complexion more pale than fair; the nose was faultless; the lips slightly parted, were full and ripe, giving to the lines of the mouth warmth, tenderness, and trust. The eyes were blue and large, and shaded by drooping lids and long lashes, and in harmony with all a flood of golden hair, in the style permitted to Jewish brides, fell unconfined down her back. The throat and neck had the downy softness sometimes seen which leaves the artist in doubt whether it is an effect of contour or color."

ACID DROPS.

Mr. G. R. Sims ("Dagonet" of the *Referee*) is by profession a Christian, but he appears to have an infinitesimal belief in the practical value of Christianity. Referring to the "beautiful ideal" of John Burns, he says—"It is the beautiful gospel of the New Testament preached to Labor—an attempt on the part of an engineer to put into practice the theories of the carpenter's Son [note the big S]. But I am afraid it won't do! The world isn't run nowadays on New Testament lines." That is, Mr. Sims is a Christian, but he fears the Gospel of his Lord and Savior Jesus won't do in the nineteenth century. So do we, but we don't profess to believe the impossible creed. Mr. Sims does.

Parsons are splendid cadgers, and the Rev. E. A. Watkins, vicar of Ubbeston, could give most of his holy brethren points in a cadging competition. He is the author of a tract (6d. a dozen) called "Storing and Obtaining," in which he tries to prove that giving to God—that is, to the clergy—is a first-class investment. He tells some wonderful stories of a pious gentleman who trusted in God and always found the money turn up to pay his debts with; and on the strength of them he exclaims, "Happy are those who have recourse to the Bank of Faith."

Parson Watkins appeals to his fellow countrymen to give a tenth of their incomes to the service of God—in other words, to the maintenance of the white-chokered fraternity. Now the total income of all England is about twelve hundred millions, and a tithe of this would yield one hundred and twenty millions to the sky-pilots! No wonder Parson Watkins gloats over this splendid prospect. But it will never be realised. The clergy will have all their work to keep what they possess.

The *Methodist Times*, in an article on Mrs. Besant and Theosophy, takes occasion to praise her at the expense of Charles Bradlaugh, whom it calls "this egotistic, blatant, iconoclastic opponent of her early faith." "Egotistic" is distinctly good from a paper owned and edited by Hugh Price Hughes. "Blatant," however, is a bad hit. No man ever subordinated speech to a purpose more than Charles Bradlaugh. He never talked for talking's sake. Compared with Hughes he was positively reticent. "Blatant" is far more applicable to the editor of the *Methodist Times*, who will "talk (or scream) an infinite deal of nothing more than any man in Venice," or London either.

What a poor show, by the way, would Hughes have made if he had ever crossed swords with Bradlaugh! Their only half-meeting, if we may call it so, was when Bradlaugh called on Hughes to prove one of his lies.

The parsons have been discussing in the *Times* the emptiness and non-attendance of men in their churches. Some suggest there should be shorter services. One says the early Christians had no other service but the communion. If nothing but bread and wine were offered in the churches more might attend. Others think there should be many short services. A London parson says he used to have a good congregation, but, giving way to the prevalent ideas, he changed his 40 minutes' sermons for sermons of 20 minutes, and now men, and especially young men, are conspicuous by their absence. What are they to do?

Opponents of Bible teaching in Board schools should note the important statement as to the results of Sunday school work made by the Bishop of Dover at the Conference of the Canterbury Diocesan Sunday School Teachers, reported in the *Church Times*. He said that he had tried to trace the career of a hundred of his own scholars. He was only able to trace seventy-seven, and of these only two attended church regularly, while thirty-nine were confirmed drunkards. He further stated that at Leeds the chaplain of the gaol reported that 230 out of 282 prisoners had been Sunday scholars. At Pentonville Prison, out of 1,000 convicts 757 had been brought up at Sunday schools.

The *Church Times* confesses these facts show something is radically wrong, but of course never suspects that the real fault lies in immoral Bible teaching, and basing conduct on the will of God instead of on human needs and relationships.

The Charity Organisation Society has published a further examination of the statements of "General" Booth as to Darkest England. It shows from police reports that the great nomadic army of the night supposed to shelter on the Thames bridges is a pure coinage of the Stead-Boothian brain; the refuge accommodation is declared to be in excess of the demand; the number of the homeless are reported as decreasing, and the impression is given that the work of the army is no more wanted in London than it is at Eastbourne.

The Mayor of Eastbourne replies to the Salvationist attacks in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He alleges that the desire of the authorities to protect the Salvationist processions is frustrated by their own tactics. "They make protection very difficult," he says, "by sometimes sending out five separate detachments in different directions, and sometimes announcing one hour for their processions and coming out another." Evidently the Boothites think the police should attend to their whims as well as their convenience.

Insulting letters from pious friends of "the Army" pour in upon the Mayor. One of them, on a postcard, says—"Mr. Morison, Agent of the Devil: You vile reptile, you want shooting; you want burning," etc.

Thomas Taylor, of Stockport, attended the Wesleyan chapel on Sunday, and dropped dead during the service. He suffered from heart disease, and his sudden death was natural; but if a Freethinker died in that way at a Secular meeting, there are Christian journals and lecturers that would regard it as a "judgment." We should soon see a pious announcement—"Awful death of an Atheist! God took him in the midst of his sin! Blasphemers beware!"

The *Rock* suggests that Bishop Moorhouse and Dr. Dale should discuss Disestablishment at the next Church Congress. When the discussion is over we shall be happy to arrange a debate with the victor on the still more important question of the truth of Christianity.

"Has prayer lost its efficacy?" writes "An Old-fashioned Churchman" to the *Southern Times*. He points out that formerly the prayers for fine or wet weather were used often; in fact, as he says, "whenever necessary." Now they are seldom used. The present wet summer, he points out, was surely the time in which to pray for seasonable weather. Yet, though all the crops were spoiling, the clergy would not pray; and even the few who did waited till signs of better weather appeared. The fact is, the clergy are getting afraid of subjecting themselves to the ridicule of the more instructed of their congregations.

"Peter Lombard," in the *Church Times*, tells an anecdote illustrating the amount of religious liberty in the army. A sergeant-major was examining a number of recruits on Sunday morning. "What are you?" he said to one. "A Plymouth brother," was the reply. "There ain't any such religion in the British army," was the reply. "Fall in with the Roman Catholics."

Horsham Board School is under the control of Church of England trustees, who insist upon denominational religious instruction being given. Mr. Henry Avon, the head master, is even more Churchy than the trustees. He has been fined £5 for assaulting a boy named Skeet, whose father objected to his being kept in school after twelve o'clock to be dosed

with religion. Two previous convictions for similar assaults were proved, and the magistrate said the defendant would be sent to prison next time without the option of a fine. Mr. Henry Avon, schoolmaster, Churchman, and child-beater, will have to be careful.

Take your Bible with you to business, says Joseph Parker, in his "Advice to Young Men." Yes, and Give to him that asketh; Lay not up treasures on earth; and Take no thought for the morrow—and you will soon find that the children of Mammon are wiser than the children of light.

The secret instructions of the esoteric section of the T. S. left by Madame Blavatsky are directed to the means of developing a third eye, which is said to reside at the back of the head. This explains why it is so attractive to females. They are always wanting to see their own back hair.

We know two cases of persons being driven mad by Theosophy. One of them is in a lunatic asylum, and the other is dying. No doubt there are many other cases of which we are ignorant. One is just reported from Manchester. Harry Millward was charged by the police with being destitute and apparently of unsound mind. He explained that he was haunted, and he believed his pursuers were Mahatmas. He asked the stipendiary to restrain them, or to instruct the police to lock them up. The luckless student of Theosophy was remanded to the workhouse.

The question whether a picture in a church at Rome opened its eyes is being gravely inquired into. We have heard of a party of sailors going to a church where one of the pictures of a winking virgin was shown. The picture was in a recess, and so situated that alternate light and shadow flickered over the eyes. The exclamations of the sailors—"Damn it, she winks," "Devil a bit," "By God, she does," "By God, she don't," etc.—were more amusing than edifying.

The *English Churchman* continues to inveigh against the idolatry of Catholicism as evinced in the pilgrimages to Trèves and the worship of relics. Does not the *E. C.* remember how the woman was cured by touching the hem of the magnetised garment of Christ, and how the handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul's body healed diseases and cast out evil spirits (Matt. ix., 20; Acts xix., 12). Protestants keep the foundation of the superstitions, but object to the superstitions themselves.

"Something worse threatens us," the Pope exclaims in a letter to a French Archbishop. We hope his Infallibility is right for once.

The idea of the Salvation Army was by no means original with Booth, not to mention the religious military orders of the Middle Ages. The last Pope instituted an order of papal militia recruited from both sexes and from the children in convents and schools. An account of this pontifical army—which may possibly yet supply pilgrims to Rome—may be found in M. C. Sauvestre's "Sur les genoux de l'église" ("On the knees of the church").

A Rutland, Vt., dispatch says: "Two men are now hard at work cutting the Lord's Prayer on the face of a big rock on the Bristol road. They are hired by Dr. Green. The rock is about the hardest place in Vermont for a team, and in the season when teaming is liveliest there is more cussing there every day than anywhere else in Vermont. It is possible that Dr. Green's idea is to furnish the drivers with some new quotations."

In a trial in the criminal court in this city last week one of the witnesses was a seven year old boy. Objection that he was too young to testify was made, whereupon Judge Fitzgerald examined the little fellow to discover the extent of his knowledge. "Who is God, my boy?" the judge asked. The boy answered, "God is the man up in the sky who built the world." On this answer the judge ruled that the lad was a competent witness, and he proceeded to give evidence which helped to convict his own father of a crime. If to the question, "Who is God, my boy?" the lad had answered, "I do not know," no doubt he would have been considered too ignorant to testify. Is it fair to suppose that the learned judge accepted the little boy's description of God as correct? It would appear so.—*Twentieth Century.*

The Rev. John Hozan, a Roman Catholic priest, of Nottingham, came to London and laid in a cargo of liquor. Perhaps he only took "a little wine for his stomach's sake." Anyhow it got into his head, and he was taken in tow by a couple of disinterested fellow-Christians, who brought him to a private house in Eccleston-place, where they soused his head with cold water and did their utmost to restore him to his senses. But before the cold water took effect they eased him of his gold watch and chain. One of them was afterwards arrested, and is now committed for trial. There seems no prospect, however, that the priest will recover his watch; but if he swears off liquor, and saves up, he may be able to buy another.

Henry Bishop, an elderly man with a turn for pious expressions, is doing five weeks' hard labor. He tried to kiss Mrs. Mackney, a lady living at Penge, and when she resisted he struck her a violent blow in the eye, breaking her glasses. He also threw a large stone through William Moss's window because he thought Mrs. Mackney was inside. When his sentence was pronounced, he exclaimed, "Oh, gentlemen, for God's sake make it a fine. It will be my death if you don't." The bench, however, wouldn't let him off "for God's sake," and he will have to pick his tally of oakum.

"Doth God care for oxen?" asked Saint Paul. Whether he does or not, he has no care for goats. It is the goats who are to be kicked into Hades at the day of judgment. This holy truth must have sunk into the mind (if he has a mind) of the Rev. C. J. Hickson, the Protestant rector of Athy, in county Kildare. Four unlucky goats trespassed on his grounds, and the reverend gentleman (if he is a gentleman; there's no doubt about the reverend) cut their throats. For this display of Christian tenderness he has been fined £5, but he has appealed against the magistrate's sentence. His plea is that goats are not cattle, and, when they stray, should not be impounded. The case will therefore be tried in a higher court, where the Athy man of God hopes to sustain his right to cut goats' throats with impunity. Whether he sustains it or not, he is an illustrious example of clerical kindness and Christian humility.

"Evenings for the People" at Peterborough have been started by the Rev. J. H. Molesworth, the vicar of St. Mark's. In his opening address he made the confession that, "With the approaching wave of agnosticism and infidelity it needed the combined forces of Christianity to resist." No doubt it will, and a good deal more. Jesus Christ will have to come a second time if his church is to be saved from shipwreck. Nothing short of that will meet the emergency.

Parson Molesworth has braced himself up to the task of answering questions. Discussion is more than he can stand. Even the questions have to be written out and handed up, and are answered "next week."

"Bad Bargains" was the title of a sermon by the Rev. R. Bentley (Wesleyan) at Luton. Among the "bad bargains" was "plunging into the awful gulf of infidelity"—in other words, thinking for yourself; a sin which, if we may judge from Mr. Bentley's sermon, he is in no danger of committing.

Mr. Bentley describes Atheism as "blasted at both ends and reeking with corruption in the middle." This sounds strong, but what does it mean? If Mr. Bentley were to bet five shillings that he could explain himself, he would make another "bad bargain."

One of our readers in Russia is "thankful to say" that he gets his *Freethinker* regularly every week. The censors seem to be taking a nap. Perhaps they are occupied with local business, keeping up the good old Greek Church and stamping out domestic heresy. Religion in Russia is extremely useful, if we may believe our correspondent. One day this gentleman saw an excited Russian walking along the street and vigorously cursing a fellow native. Presently the fellow passed a gospel-shop; pausing in the midst of his raving, he crossed himself; then, having gained fresh vigor by this religious exercise, he "went for" his adversary and nearly knocked the life out of him.

The dearth of rain at Madura (India) has led to a revival of "hookswinging." Iron hooks were fastened in the back of a voluntary martyr, who was hoisted in the air and sus-

pended for upwards of an hour. The object of this atrocity was to propitiate the offended deity who withheld the rain.

"I don't like to attack the clergy indiscriminately. I can see, and I am sure, that many of the country clergy are even entitled to every respect, and are doing an invaluable work in the dark corners of the land. But as I move about and talk with the people I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that half the evils of village life could be remedied if the parsons were worth their salt. Half of them seem to me to be mere nonentities, with no understanding of the people, no sympathy with them in their hopes and fears, their struggles and sufferings, no sort of fellow-feeling with them whatever."—*Daily News* Special Commissioner on "Life in our Villages."

Christians are very anxious not to get to heaven too soon. At Swanage it was reported that the children of a newsagent had the scarlet fever. This was enough to destroy his business. When told that the papers would be taken by a boy direct to houses from the office, one clergyman consented to have his paper left as usual, but he gave strict orders it should be taken in from the door with tongs and put into the oven and baked before being delivered to him.

How these Christians love one another. The *Liberator* cites from the *Saturday Review* a church article speaking of "ying with Dissenters and Salvationists and such like cattle," and from the *Church Times* which spoke of the cemetery chapels in which Nonconformists unite for their funeral services as *sentinae communis* or common sewers.

Distraints had to be made to collect the last tithes under the old Act in Denbighshire, the tenants refusing to pay. The church will not be done out of its dues, but in future will get them from the landlord, who will of course recoup himself from the tenant.

The Irish priest who calls himself Father Fidelis, of the Order of St. Francis, is a good specimen of his tribe. Preaching a political sermon at Kilkenny last Sunday, he denounced the working men's club there as a synagogue of hell. The girls who took part in the recent election tumults were worse than the abandoned women of the streets, who had the merit of retaining great respect for the priests. The name usually bestowed on these creatures was not bad enough for the girls that took part in tumults in honor of the most depraved monster that ever lived, who had now been swept off the face of the earth. He could call them nothing else than limbs of the Devil. As for the working men's club, it was the cause of all the crime in Kilkenny for the last ten months.

The Rev. J. C. Clutterbuck, of Bath, is prosecuted by Government on a charge of obtaining cheques to the value of £1600 from a lady named Turner, under pretence of investing the money with Government at 10 per cent. According to Mrs. Turner, the man of God told her that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was going to let him, and certain other privileged persons, have these exceptionally good terms for money lent. Needless to say Mr. Goschen was no party to this preposterous idea. The assurance of heaven as his reward would hardly induce him to offer more than the current rate of interest.

The Rev. Dr. Clutterbuck was arrested on Sunday, his sureties having withdrawn their bail. He is trying to obtain fresh sureties, that will have to be approved by the police.

Dr. Gott, the new Bishop of Truro, has inaugurated his overseership of souls by setting up two establishments on the ground that the residence of his predecessors is not big enough for him. This, as the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* says "in face of the fact that scores of his clergy can hardly keep a roof at all over their heads."

Dr. Vaughan, the Catholic Bishop of Salford, has been following in the wake of Bishop Moorhouse, and preaching on the Education Act. Free Education he contended, existed before the Reformation, which destroyed that good work. He did not explain to how many its benefits extended. Now he is above all things anxious that the rate and taxpayers shall not have control of the schools, in this quite agreeing with his Anglican brother, the Bishop of Manchester.

Prophet Baxter has reprinted at the *Christian Herald* office some articles on the Millennium by Professor Totten, an Anglo-Israelite crank, who argues that the Millennium will begin in March, 1899. This fits in near enough with Prophet Baxter's own theories now he has shifted his dates forward. The true inwardness of this end-of-the-world business is the same as that of the nursery bogey. It is an expedient to engender fanatics and frighten dupes into submission. And the game continues to pay, though Christ's promise of the end of the world in his own generation is 1800 years behind date. Professor Totten, your Christ-begotten creed is rotten.

Absolute proof that religion is declining in at least one great centre of population is afforded by the census of church and chapel attendance, published in the *Liverpool Post* of October 22. Despite a large increase in the number of churches and chapels, there are actually less attendants at public worship now than ten years ago. We have no doubt that somewhat similar, if not quite such marked, results would be found in other large cities.

Since 1881 the number of Established churches in Liverpool has increased from 71 to 91; the Wesleyans have now 51 chapels compared with 39 ten years ago; the Presbyterians 20 against 17; the Congregationalists 14, where before they had only 9; the Baptists 17 where in 1881 they had 14. There are altogether now in Liverpool 270 places of worship for 218 in 1881. The number of ministers and religious agencies have been increased in full proportion. Yet the total attendance is now but 63,439 persons, against 63,579 ten years ago, an absolute decline of 140, though the number of sittings has increased by 18,513. This, however, does not fully represent the decrease, for in 1881 several important churches were omitted from the census, and about 2,000 more should be added to the total of ten years ago.

Mr. Gladstone, speaking of this census, says "to have but 63,000 out of half a million and odd attending churches at any one time was and still is a very dismal spectacle and a great reproach."

Canon Body held forth to a demonstration of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants at Bishop Auckland. By some subtle process of cogitation he found that the movement was "eminently religious." On the other hand, he emphasised the maxim that God helps those who help themselves. Yes, and no one else, Canon Body. When people say "God help you!" they mean it is all over with you.

Stead the Great has been preaching again, this time in a Wesleyan chapel at Islington. His sermon was on making use of Sunday, and his chief prescription was this—Let the day be begun by reciting a Bible text from memory. Stuff of this kind commands a half-column report; another evidence of the truth of Carlyle's famous epigram.

A sermon by the Rev. Frank James on "The Foolishness of Infidelity" is reported in the *Holborn Newsman*. Mr. James said, "It was ignorance that created Atheism." If this be true, Mr. James should be a leading Atheist. What he says about La Place and the moon shows a plentiful lack of knowledge. Mr. James should read the *Système du Monde* before criticising its author. What La Place really pointed out was, that the moon's distance and orbit should be different if it was intended to give light to the world by night. During more than half the time at present the moon is useless for that purpose.

Ben Tillet says: "I will go to the most ignorant set of workmen in the country, and get a cheer for Christ." We quite believe him.

Colonel Shepherd, of New York, has a Bible text printed over the leader in each issue of the *Mail and Express*. One day the bit of Scripture was missing; bells were rung all over the office, and voices cried from room to room, "Where the hell is that text?"

Colonel Shepherd's habit causes a good deal of amusement in New York. The page begins with a Bible text and always ends with a racing tip.

"No," she answered, when he asked whether she would go to evening service with him. "I am not a church belle."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Thursday, October 29, Lecture Hall, High-street, Deptford, at 8, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Sunday, November 1, The Alhambra, Station-street, Portsmouth: at 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; at 3, "The Follies of Theosophy"; at 7, "The Way to Heaven."

November 5, Hall of Science; 8, Sheffield; 12, Hall of Science; 15, Leicester; 18, Finsbury Park; 19, Hall of Science; 22, Wolverhampton; 29, Grimsby.

December 6, Hall of Science; 13, Manchester; 20, Nottingham; 27, Hall of Science.

January 3, Birmingham; 10, Bolton; 17, Newcastle Sunday Lecture Society; 24 and 31, Hall of Science.

February 7, Bradford; 14, Leeds; 21 and 28, Hall of Science.

March 6, Morthyr.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—November 1, Hall of Science; 8, Birmingham; 15, Birmingham; 22, Portsmouth; 29, Leeds. Dec. 6, Bolton; 13, Birmingham; 20 and 21, Leicester; 27, Birmingham. Jan. 3 and 10, Hall of Science; 17, Milton Hall; 24 and 31, Birmingham. Feb. 7, Hull; 14, Glasgow; 15, Hamilton; 16, 17, 18 and 19, public debate in Glasgow; 21, Edinburgh; 28, Birmingham. March 7, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

J. HARTLEY.—We are obliged to you and your two friends for getting the newsagent to display the *Freethinker*, and guaranteeing him against loss or unsold copies. Mr. Forder will send contents-sheet weekly.

W. ROSS.—The cutting is very funny, but rather long; still we may find room for it. We never said Scotsmen couldn't see a joke. We know better. We know this, though that Scotsmen are generally thorough; and when a native of the land of thistles doesn't see a joke, as sometimes happens—especially when he has swallowed too many three-hour sermons—he is more hopeless than the dullest Englishman. He not only doesn't see it, but will argue it out with you.

W. ANDERSON.—The balance is put to the N. S. S. fund. Glad to have your approval.

W. CHAPMAN.—(1) Be under no apprehension. Once in ten years is often enough. (2) It is just possible that the teacher you refer to was James Thomson (B.V.), but we have no means of being sure.

D. MUMBY.—We thank you for taking two copies of the enlarged *Freethinker*. A thousand readers, who can afford it, should do the same. Thanks for your donation (10s. 6d.) to the N. S. S.

F. CARTER.—Glad to hear you think this journal "the best pennyworth out." Danton's exclamation means—"Daring, and still daring, and ever daring."

G. H. H.—Pleased to hear from you, and glad to have your strong approval. See paragraph, etc. Mr. Foote is in good health, but sometimes feels overworked.

P. GALBRAITH.—Thanks. See paragraph.

C. MARTIN writes—"I have guaranteed six copies of the *Freethinker* to Tendall, 6 Artillery-row, Westminster, on condition that he displays a contents-sheet. In a few weeks, if he continues without my guarantee, I will commence operations in another district." We thank Mr. Martin, and we say to every reader who can afford it, "Go thou and do likewise." For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

J. B.—In the Bull "Unam Sanctam," issued by Boniface VIII. in 1302, it says: "We declare, affirm, define, and pronounce, that it is altogether necessary for salvation, that every human creature should be subject to the Roman pontiff."

D. BAKER, N. S. S. vice-president, Birmingham, who sends four copies of this journal every week to persons who may become subscribers, says—"It is certainly the best pennyworth that comes under my notice, and shall not fail for want of support."

A. DAVIDGE.—Try again.

P. STRZELECKI.—(1) Glad to hear the enlarged *Freethinker* is so well appreciated in Newcastle. It is a bold venture, but "rest and be thankful" was never our philosophy, and fortune often smiles on daring. (2) The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* is in active preparation and will soon be in the press. Others, like yourself, have found the first volume of very great assistance. (3) We have not the slightest doubt that our policy is approved by the overwhelming majority of the Secular party. It is the business of a leader to lead, and we intend to go straight on. Vacillation is as bad as want of sagacity.

T. PHILLIPS (Spennymoor).—(1) Mr. Foote is quite willing to meet the reverend gentleman in a set debate. But he does not wish to step in between the reverend gentleman and Mr. Watte, who is fully competent to defend the Freethought position. (2) We have plenty of good reports of Mr. Dipper's work in the North. He deserves encouragement and support.

R. F. F.—Thanks for the cuttings.

L. WORNALL.—Cuttings are always welcome. Pleased to know you appreciate our article on "Fire!" Thanks for your promise to press your newsagent.

G. HAVILLAND.—Glad to hear you are "much pleased" with the *Bible Handbook* and consider it "a splendid little work." Of course the contents might be added to, but we did not wish to swell their bulk unduly.

S. SMALLWOOD.—Verbatim reports of lectures are very costly, and imperfect reports are useless.

A. A.—Flinging rice at bridal couples is a very old practice, and has nothing to do with Christianity. The story you refer to is certainly "rot" to appear in a labor journal.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges the following:—Wood Green collection, 2s. 1d.; J. Hawkey, 10s.

C. DOUG.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Glad to hear the thirtieth new member since you took the secretaryship has just been enrolled. Messrs. Dipper, Dawson, Selkirk and Pearson, have evidently done good work at outdoor meetings. Mr. Foote will try to comply with your request.

W. DAVIES.—Astronomy is now treated in cheap scientific publications. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

F. HEADIS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. BALFOUR (Bombay).—We are obliged. With the exception of a few works like Lingard's *History of England*, Catholic histories are full of falsehood.

R. W. DOWDING.—Contents-sheet shall be sent. Thanks. Will you see it is exhibited?

D. MARTIN.—The Conscience Clause applies to all Board schools and all State-aided schools where there are no School Boards.

A. ARNBY.—The address of *La Verité Philosophique* is 28 Rue Mont Thabor, Paris. The price of subscription is two francs for six months.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Liberty—FreeThought—Ironclad Age—Menschenthum—Echo—Neues Freireligioses Sontags-Blatt—Freidenker—The Liberator—Der Arno Teufel—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—La Verité Philosophique—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Flaming Sword—Loyal American—Better Way—Twentieth Century—Le Bluet—Modern Thought—Dundee Advertiser—Liverpool Daily Post—Manchester Guardian—Manchester Evening News—Southern Times—True Thinker—Manchester Evening Times—Dundee Evening Telegraph—Derbyshire Courier—Gad Lef—Dorset County Chronicle—Auckland Times and Herald—Spennymoor and Tudhoe Chronicle—Halifax Guardian—Devon Weekly Times—Yorkshire Evening Post—Royal Cornwall Gazette.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

IT being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Last week's *Freethinker* ran out of print, although we had put on an extra supply. It is very evident that our enlargement gives general satisfaction. It is also evident that an impression is being made on the newsagents. We hope our friends will continue to worry those gentlemen. If they could only be got to do bare justice to the *Freethinker*, its circulation would speedily double. Sometimes the wholesale agent is at fault. We have just heard of one who will not supply this journal, although he will supply any other Free-thought paper. He is either bigoted or cowardly. In such cases, the retail vendor should insist on being supplied, and threaten to transfer his custom to a more accommodating house.

Several quires of the *Freethinker* containing Mr. Foote's article on Charles Stewart Parnell have gone to Dublin and

other parts of Ireland. The article seems to have attracted a good deal of attention among the Anti-Clerical party. We hope it will lead to the increased circulation of this journal in priest-ridden Ireland.

Despite the rain there was a good audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Way to Heaven." The deluge thinned the front seats, but the sturdy back-seat folk were there in full force. Mr. Thomas took the chair, and made an earnest appeal on behalf of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, for which a good collection was taken at the door.

The Thursday evening lectures at the London Hall of Science will be continued. Mr. Foote lectured on Thursday last (Oct. 22) to a very good audience, considering the wretched weather, and there were two opponents on the Christian side. This Thursday (Oct. 29) the lecture will be delivered by Mr. Stanley Jones, the N. S. S. secretary. On the three following Thursdays (Nov. 5, 12, and 19) a special course of lectures will be delivered by Mr. Foote, to which a charge will be made for admission. At the request of several friends he has decided to give a full, detailed exposure of Theosophy. Handbills announcing the course are in circulation. Friends who can distribute any of these may obtain them (post free) of Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street.

The Sunday morning audiences at the Hall of Science are gradually improving. Mr. Charles Watts occupied the platform last Sunday, and delivered an eloquent address on "Secularism in Relation to Politics." Mr. Foote presided, and there was a capital meeting. This morning (Nov. 1) Mr. G. Standing will discourse on "Mrs. Besant's 'Theosophy and its Evidences.'"

Mr. Charles Watts lectured again in the evening on "The Christian Superstition." Of course the weather kept some people away, but he had a good audience nevertheless. Mr. Watts was in good form, and was very warmly cheered at many points of the lecture. The musical part of the program was excellent and keenly relished. This evening (Nov. 1) Mr. Watts lectures again from the same platform, his subject being "The Difficulties of Theism."

Fund for settling Mr. Charles Watts at Birmingham:— J. Illingworth (per Mr. Holyoake), 10s. 6d.; J. D., £10; Mrs. Elivas, £1; Dr. Hardwick, £1; Mr. Gibson, 10s.; T. Chalmers, 5s.

The Registrar promised on Tuesday to return the Rules of the Hall of Science Syndicate "to-morrow." We hope, therefore, to make a full announcement next week, and to see the Prospectuses in circulation within a few days. Directly we are out of the clutch of the Circumlocution Office we shall go "full steam ahead."

Freethinkers should bestir themselves for the coming School Board elections. Although all that is possible in many places is to vote for the least objectionable candidates, these should be made to see that there is at least one party not apathetic, and that is those who believe in purely secular education.

One of the School Board candidates of the United Liberal and Radical Committee in East Lambeth is Mr. Gibbon, an old supporter of Charles Bradlaugh. This is the only division in London where the official Liberal program includes Secular Education. Will the East Lambeth friends, who sent us the notice of Mr. Ford's candidature, kindly explain why a special "Secular" candidate is being run in the division? The matter should be cleared up at once. It will be our duty to see that the Secular vote in East Lambeth is not wasted.

The new Secular Hall, Rock-street, Blackstock-road, Finsbury Park, was well filled on the opening night, Wednesday, Oct. 21. The hall has been tastefully painted and decorated by the members, and at the back of the platform appears a library of over 500 volumes. Mr. Foote presided, and formally opened the hall, expressing a hope that at the expiration of the lease the society would be able to take a larger building. Speeches were also delivered by Messrs. Forder, Heaford, Jones, G. and S. Standing, Touzeau Parris, and H. Snell. Mr. Samson spoke of the library; and Mr. Ward, who has done much to make the hall a success, thanked the visitors for their attendance. An entertainment

was then given, in which Mdme. Burgwitz, Mr. Hyatt, and the Milton Hall Dramatic Company took part.

Mr. Foote has arranged to visit South Wales early in March. A large hall has been engaged for Sunday lectures at Merthyr, and other fixtures will probably be made in the district. In April it is Mr. Foote's intention to arrange, if possible, a week or ten day's tour in Scotland.

On Friday evening (Oct. 23) a crowded public meeting was held at South Place Institute to protest against the prosecution of Mr. H. S. Young for sending literature on the population question through the post. Dr. Drysdale occupied the chair, and the speakers were G. W. Foote, G. Standing, Dr. Allinson, Dr. Alice Vickery, Mrs. Heatherley and Miss Wade. Mr. Young was himself present on the platform. He made an able statement of his case, and was very heartily applauded. Mr. Foote followed, and worked up the audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. He pointed out that it was not a Malthusian meeting, but a meeting in defence of free speech and publication. On that basis, persons of all parties, so long as they valued liberty, could unite in supporting Mr. Young's right to use the Post Office for the dissemination of his views, especially as the Bow-street magistrate had allowed that they were expressed in inoffensive language. Unfortunately some of the subsequent speakers rather lost sight of the real point at issue. They spent most of their time in arguing the population question, which, considering the general character of the audience, was totally unnecessary. The ladies also, though we shrink from saying it, were too diffuse. Dr. Drysdale will have to look to this in future. He is too inveterately good-natured as a chairman, and is apt to forget that a tired-out meeting is half a failure.

Mr. Young is applying for a mandamus to compel Mr. Lushington, the magistrate, to state a case. How he will fare it is impossible to say. But he evidently means fighting to the bitter end, and he will be generously supported. Dr. Drysdale, 23 Sackville-street, W., is receiving subscriptions for the struggle.

Freethinkers are all bound to resist the claim of the Post Office authorities to open letters they are paid for conveying. It is a perfectly monstrous claim; only tyrants could make it, and only slaves submit to it. Freethinkers are also bound to defend the right of citizens to discuss every social problem in decent language. The question at issue is not whether Mr. Young's opinions are right, but whether he has a right to express them. Those who cannot see this are blind; those who will not see it are cowards.

There was a good report of the South-place Institute meeting in the *Weekly Times and Echo*. Monday's *Echo* also devoted a leading article to the prosecution. The other London papers are dumb dogs.

The National Secular Society's *Almanack* for 1892 is being edited by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler. It will be published the second week in November. Among the contributors are G. J. Holyoake, Charles Watts, J. M. Robertson, Touzeau Parris, W. P. Ball, A. B. Moos, G. Standing, S. Standing, and W. Heaford. The Calendar is revised and added to, and the information as to Freethought work and organisation in all parts of the world is "up to date." The profits of this publication accrue to the N. S. S.

There is still room for advertisements in the *Almanack*. Surely there are Freethinkers who would find it pay to print their business announcements in a publication which is widely circulated and preserved.

"Is Religion a Failure?" is the heading of a correspondence which is going on in the *London Echo*. Several letters have appeared on the Freethought side, amongst them being a very able one from Mrs. Louisa Samson, an active and valuable member of the Finsbury Park Branch of the National Secular Society.

The *Catholic Standard* remarks: "Liberal advanced Protestantism is not only paving the way to infidelity; it is transforming Protestants themselves into practical infidels."

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* is to be enlarged to eighty pages next year, and several new features introduced.

At Reading, Pennsylvania, there was a dispute about reading the Catholic version of the Bible in the public schools. The Supplies Committee of the Board reported in favor of substituting Shakespeare instead of the Bible. The recommendation was overruled by the full Board, but it made some stir, and people have been brought forcibly to see that the word of Shakespeare is not so much an occasion of dispute as the alleged word of God. —

Ex-Mayor M. M. Secor, of Racine, Wis., is an enterprising Freethinker. He has distributed some thousands of handbills with this challenge:—"A good proposition to our reverend gentlemen.—I will become one of your followers provided you go through a test I prescribe. On some good, stormy day I want our firm believing orthodox ministers to place themselves on a scow, be taken out into the middle of Lake Michigan, and left there without any oars, rudder or sails. But I want them to have all the Bibles and prayer-books they want for their assistance and depend upon the Lord only. No human hand must help them. If they make a success of such a voyage and reach port in safety I will then join an orthodox church and attend regularly, and many others will join me. Prayers and the Lord must save them alone, and no human hand. Yours truly, M. M. SECOR."—*Secular Thought*.

The new paper, *Science Siftings*, promises to be a popular instructor that may aid in dispelling popular superstitions.

A letter from Frau Elsie Dulk to the *Freethinker* informs us that Frau Hedwig Henrich Wilhelmi is put in prison for lecturing in Germany. We do not gather whether it is on account of blasphemy, sedition or Socialism. Frau Wilhelmi is to be released on Nov. 14, and will lecture again at Stuttgart on Nov. 26.

A History of Hampton Court, by Ernest Law, tells how the old palace came to be opened on Sundays. It appears it had originated with a housekeeper intent upon increasing her fees. The Sabbatarians shouted, as usual, about Hampton Court becoming "a hell upon earth," and told fearful stories of scenes of drunkenness, all as true as gospel, but the palace continued to set a good example of a place devoted to Sunday recreation, and this was followed by the opening of Kew Gardens on Sunday afternoons, both places illustrating the beneficial effects of a rational use of Sunday.

A Dorsetshire friend offers to pay the expense of sending the *Freethinker* for the use of the reading-room in Free Libraries that will accept it, for a period of twelve months; and also to pay the cost of sending the first copies at large with a letter offering to send the paper weekly.

Miss Ada Campbell's address is, the Royal Hotel, Lord Nelson-street, Liverpool.

Mr. A. Guest, of the N. W. London Branch, is for the moment at Preston, where he has fixed up a debate with a local Christian. It is to be held in the Market Place at 8 15 p.m. to-day (Nov. 1). The question for discussion is, "Which is best for the World, Christianity or Secularism?" Preston Freethinkers should go and support Mr. Guest, who is fighting a forlorn hope in that bigoted town.

This evening (Nov. 1), at 7, the first annual meeting of the Leyton Branch will be held at 10 Daisey-villas, Manor-road. A favorable report of the summer's work will be presented by the secretary, and a proposition submitted for hiring premises for winter meetings. A good attendance is desired. Secular literature, including the *Freethinker*, can be obtained at Brown's, newsagent, High-road, Leyton.

The Bethnal Green Branch is making headway in its new premises. Forty new members have been enrolled since the first of September. The Sunday lectures are well attended, as it is hoped the week-night lectures will be when they are better known.

The *Auckland Times and Herald* inserts a letter from Mr. Charles Watts in reply to the Rev. S. M. Thompson. Mr. Watts challenges the rev. gentleman to a public discussion.

Wolverhampton Freethinkers meet on Tuesday, Nov. 3, at No. 1 Coffee House, North-street, for the purpose of organising. Time, 8 o'clock prompt.

The Huddersfield Branch's lectures last winter cost £60, which was raised by collections and donations. This winter the lectures are being continued, still on the plan of free admission. Freethinkers in the district who are willing to support the enterprise should communicate with Mr. J. G. Dobson, 4 Thornton-road, Huddersfield.

Mr. Balfour reports in *Modern Thought* that the number of members of the Bombay Secular Society is increasing. There should be a large field for Secular activity in India.

A good report of the French Conference of Freethinkers is found in *La Lanterne* of Oct. 27. A large number of societies were represented, and the hall was too small. Resolutions in favor of M. Forcioli's proposal to make the form of oath a secular one, and for the more complete secularisation of schools, were carried.

M. Ernest Desmarest, ex-president of the Paris Bar, replying to M. Crispi's recent scolding of the French for the support of the Pope and clericalism, says: "Reason and science are penetrating every day more and more into the sanctuaries; the majority of Frenchmen no longer believe in miracles; their religion is either the result of prudence or hypocrisy." Referring to the French peasants, M. Desmarest informs the Italian ex-Premier that they have long ago been imbued with the Voltairean spirit, and, shrewd at bottom, have passed from scepticism to Freethought. Catholicism, says M. Desmarest, has the rattle in its throat, and Christianity is investigated and probed in its very origin and essence. He ridicules the idea that M. Carnot has any design of upholding the temporal power of the Pope. Italy can do what she likes with the Vatican for all the French Republic cares.

THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE BIBLE.

THE election of the new London School Board is nearly due, and the prospects of the Progressive party are hopeful. It may be taken as settled that all future Boards will take generous views of the labor question and provide as liberal an education as possible. The one point on which even Progressive candidates will hesitate is that of religious instruction. It has lately been the fashion among certain Radical educationists to insist vehemently upon the necessity of preserving the unsectarian character of the Scripture lessons. There is singularly little meaning in this cry. As a matter of fact, the teachers (with possible exceptions of which I have never heard) have always imparted, and still impart, nothing but unsectarian instruction. That is to say, while avoiding the inculcation of the special tenets of Church or Dissent, they have taught and have been expected to teach the Bible on the orthodox basis. They teach the miracles without suggesting their doubtfulness as historical facts, they refer to God as though the existence of deity had never been questioned since the days of the Pharaohs, and enlarge upon the duty and benefit of prayer with a passable amount of zeal. Take them all round, the London Board-school teachers are as honest and conscientious a body of men and women as could be found on the face of the globe. I am quite sure, however, that some of them (and probably there are a considerable number) comply with the orthodox system of Bible teaching with inward reluctance. If, like Naaman the Syrian, they bow before an altar which they do not truly reverence, I do not think, considering how widely a timid and secret scepticism is spread in the respectable classes of society, that they are to be severely blamed. To all outward appearance, and so far as public confession of the fact is concerned, I am the only "infidel" in the schools.

Before proceeding to discuss the general question of Bible instruction, perhaps I may be permitted to make a short statement of the peculiar position I occupy. In doing so, I may remark that no one can accuse me of trying to blaze abroad a personal grievance. It is four years ago since the difficulty connected with my opinions first arose. I have only

once referred to the matter in print, and that was in a letter to the *National Reformer* of last March 1, replying to some criticisms upon my action which were advanced by Mrs. Besant. To any member of the Board who may be prepared to dispute my right to discuss publicly the present religious policy of the Board, and who may be inclined to intimate that if I do not find myself in accordance with this policy I ought to transfer myself to some other employment, I may frankly confess that I am anxious to leave the Board until a radical change has been effected; but after one has been engaged for twenty years continuously in teaching, it is no easy task to provide one's self with a new means of livelihood. For the sake of the many Freethinkers who will read this statement, I may here say that I am an Agnostic, that I do not believe in any article of the "Apostles' Creed," and that, while entertaining sentiments of respect for those who profess Theosophy, Spiritualism and Mysticism, I can give no adhesion to any of these forms of thought. Perhaps this plain affirmation will clear me of the suspicion, of which I have heard occasional whispers, that my Freethought is not whole-hearted, and that I may be classed among the species of the genus *Homo* which is characterised by habits of trimming and sitting more or less uneasily on fences.

In December, 1887, I was taxed with, and acknowledged, writing aggressive anti-Christian articles. The Chairman of the Board suggested that I ought to apply for exemption from the duty of giving Bible lessons. I did so; though I anticipated that if my request were granted I should be placed in an anomalous position. Some one else would be obliged to give the lessons in my place, and I should be marked out as a sort of Cain, with the brand of infidelity on my brow. It was hinted to me, *but not in writing*, that I should be compelled to abandon all public expression of Freethought. The problem, having once been raised, was a difficult one for all concerned. Ought I, a Rationalist whose opinions were now officially known to the Board, to be permitted to teach from a book which contained doctrines contrary to my belief? Had the Board any right to inquire into any expressions which I used outside the school walls and which were antagonistic to Christianity? Did the regulations of the Board lay down that the Bible could only be taught on orthodox principles and only by professing Christians? Had the Board power to forbid me to give utterance to Rationalistic views of the Bible in school (which I was not accused of doing), or out of school? On the other hand, had the Board power to grant me exemption from the duty of Bible teaching? As Mr. Bradlaugh pointed out to me at the time, the law provided a conscience clause for children, but not for teachers, nor did he know of any precedent justifying such a course being taken. I asked the advice of a good many persons besides Mr. Bradlaugh. One member of Parliament mentioned my case in the House of Commons during a discussion on the education estimates. But nobody seemed prepared to supply me with definite counsel. The Board acceded to my application, on condition that I should maintain an attitude of neutrality on the question of religion, and that I should be transferred to another school. I thanked the Board, and wrote a letter in such terms as to raise the issue whether I was or was not forbidden to publish Freethought opinions out of school. This letter was simply acknowledged, and I have since written a considerable quantity of Freethought pamphlets and articles without let or hindrance. I desire to make no complaint against the Board or any member of the Board. On the whole I was treated with consideration, and it must be admitted that the Board was confronted with a peculiar dilemma. On the one hand, the regulations provided, or were supposed to provide for orthodox religious teaching, and I was

not orthodox. On the other hand, however undistinguished I might be personally, any intolerance manifested towards me would open up very grave issues, and especially raise embarrassing questions as to the religious opinions of the teachers in general. All the same, the consequences of the new arrangement were the reverse of pleasant. Every morning I must quit the class-room while the Bible-lesson is being delivered. So that, while the stigma of unbelief (of which I am not ashamed) rests on me, the actual burden falls upon the shoulders of another teacher. After enduring this daily humiliation for three years I approached the Board in February last, and asked to be allowed to resume Bible teaching. And in order that there should be no misunderstanding, I stated that I was an Agnostic—the implication of course being that I wished to exercise freedom of interpretation in reading and explaining the Bible to the children. The Rev. Stewart Hoadlam most courageously and generously acted as my spokesman in the debates that ensued at the Board. He was supported by Mr. James Hart, of Hackney, and the Rev. Copeland Bowic. When I mention that Mrs. Besant opposed my application, I do so with the fullest recognition of the excellence of her motives. Mrs. Besant argued, in effect, that the majority of parents sent their children to school in the expectation that they would be taught in the orthodox manner, and that it was not honest for the teacher to introduce anti-Christian views into the minds of the children. I received a reply from the School Management Committee, in which my request was declined without the intimation of any reason. Practically, therefore, the Board now expiring has decided that when the regulations direct that the Bible shall be read and explained, only orthodox explanation is intended. There, for the present, the personal matter rests.

F. J. GOULD.

(To be concluded.)

PRAISE THE LORD.

Praise God for famine and for frost,
For shipwrecks, all ye tempest tost.

Praise the Lord.

Praise God for vermin, bugs and fleas,
For pestilence and foul disease.

Praise the Lord.

Praise God for carnage and for crime,
For war and slaughter all the time.

Praise the Lord.

Praise God he doeth all things well,
Oh praise him for creating hell.

Praise the Lord.

BIAD.

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.

OBITUARY.

We regret to record the death of Catherine Leeky, wife of W. T. Leeky, well known as a hard worker for many years for the cause of Freethought in North London. Mrs. Leeky died, after long suffering, as she had lived, a Freethinker, and will be buried in Abney Park Cemetery on Saturday at 3.30. Mr. Haslam is expected to read the funeral service.

BOOK CHAT.

The firm of G. Carré et Cie., Paris, have published an important rationalistic study, entitled *Jesus de Nazareth*, by M. Paul de Réglé. Like MM. Renan and Didon, M. de Réglé went to Palestine before writing his study. The view he sustains is somewhat similar to that advocated by the author of *Rabbi Jeshua* and others, viz., that Jesus was, like his forerunner John the Baptist, an Essene or Therapeut. He maintains that Jesus did not die on the cross, which may, as he says, explain his belief in his bodily resurrection, but which leaves unexplained what became of him. The book shows much acquaintance with Oriental life, and is exciting some attention across the channel.

* * *

The Dictionary of National Biography, which, despite some defects, is among the greatest literary works of our time, has now reached its twenty-eighth volume. Though Mr. Leslie Stephen has resigned to Mr. Sidney Lee the editorship, he contributes one of the most important biographies, that of Hume, to the present volume. To Hume he has already given considerable attention in his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*.

* * *

The book of the week is Mr. J. A. Froude's *Divorce of Catherine of Aragon*, published by Messrs. Longman and Co. Mr. Froude has had access to the Spanish archives, and his narrative is based on the report of the Spanish Ambassador at the Court of Henry VIII. It fully supports the view advanced by Mr. Froude in his history, that the divorce took place entirely from reasons of State and not on account of the king's passion for Anne Boleyn, which is the popular tradition founded on Catholic calumnies.

* * *

The Duke of Marlborough is said to have derived his knowledge of English history from the plays of Shakespeare (which shows, by the way, that Shakespeare was an influence at the end of the seventeenth century) and others follow his example. But the guide, though instructive, is not entirely safe. In the play of "Henry VIII," for instance (a large portion of which was probably written by Fletcher), there are plain violations of the order of time. For instance, the banquet scene (1526) precedes that of Buckingham's condemnation (1521), in the latter of which is mentioned the King's scruples about his marriage (1527). The scene in which Anne Boleyn is made Marchioness of Pembroke (1532) precedes that of the legative court (1529). All this confirms the popular view, while the orderly relation of the facts in their historic sequence confirms that of Mr. Froude.

* * *

Archdeacon Denison will be vexed to hear that a cheap popular edition of *Lux Mundi* is to be published.

* * *

Mr. G. W. Foote is preparing an English edition of Voltaire's Theological Works, which will probably extend to two volumes. The editor is himself translating the major portion of the contents. Several sheets of the work are already printed, and the first volume may be expected early in the new year.

* * *

Max Müller's Gifford lectures on "Anthropological Religion" will shortly be issued by Messrs. Longman.

* * *

Professor Max Müller has issued two volumes of his Gifford Lectures, and a third may soon be expected. Dr. Stirling's are also issued, and now appear the Gifford Lectures of Sir G. Stokes. But we hear nothing of Dr. Tylor's. His Gifford Lectures, however, are the most important of all, and it is a thousand pities that they are not published for the instruction and delight of a much wider circle than he addressed in Scotland.

* * *

Sir G. Stokes's volume is before us, but we have not yet had time to peruse it. Unless it shows more philosophical ability than his London lecture on "I," it will hardly be worth a lengthy criticism. However, we shall see, when we cut the pages and study the contents.

* * *

Renan has finished his *History of the People of Israel*, but the two concluding volumes will not be published for another year. Readers of his delightful *Souvenirs* will be glad to learn that he has another volume of the same kind ready for the press. It is a continuation of the *Souvenirs*, and will be entitled *Feuilles Detachées*.

NOT CONVERTED.

THE other Sunday I stopped to listen to a Salvationist, who, judging by the vigor of his discourse, was terribly in earnest. The theme was trite enough, Gord had saved him. Gord had given his only begotten son, and Gord would save any one who accepted him; Gord held us in the hollow of his hand, and Gord prepared a mansion above for those who accepted him. I liked the man's earnestness, and when he had done went up and spoke to him quietly. Our colloquy, as nearly as I can recollect, was as follows:

I. Who is this "Gord" of whose intentions you have spoken so largely?

S. Why doncherno Gord our father which art in heaven?

I. I have not the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance.

S. Well Gord knows you and you'd better repent and be saved.

I. May I ask if you have any mother which art in heaven?

S. Yes, praise Gord, my mother is saved, Glory hallelujah.

I. Then the much mentioned Gord was your lamented mother's husband?

S. Gord was her father too, praise his holy name.

I. Oh, then Gord was your grandfather?

S. Gord's the father of all of us, unless you are of your father the Devil.

I. What is he like?

S. Gord is a spirit, and the Devil is a spirit of evil.

I. And what is a spirit?

S. A spirit hath not flesh and blood as you and I have.

I. What is the difference between Gord and nothing?

S. (shouting) Gord sees you and hears all your blasphemies.

I. Well he doesn't seem to mind. Do not you get angry either if ask how he sees without eyes, and hears without ears?

S. You're an infidel and you will go to hell.

I. You're a Christian.

Exeunt our several ways.

LUCIANUS.

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.

An epidemic of cholera is raging at Amoy. Two of the earliest victims were the doctor of the Church of England Mission and his wife. The Chinese are perishing by hundreds. Their chief preventive measure is spending heaps of money on sacrifices and plays to appease the God of Sickness and Death, who seems to be in a very bad humor. He will probably be appeased when the epidemic has completed its ravages.

Thirty vessels were wrecked off the coast of Labrador during the recent gales, and over fifty lives lost. The fishermen of the coast looted the stores and effects of the stranded vessels.

Throughout the country there have been floods, those in Somersetshire covering more than one hundred thousand acres of land. On the continent storms and floods have done great damage. Several villages in Spain are almost entirely destroyed, and large tracts in Italy and the South of France are inundated. At Carcassone the floods washed away the railway embankment and two persons were drowned; and at Courson every street and house has been invaded by the waters, which have carried away some of the inhabitants. The vineyards and crops have been entirely destroyed, and the distress of the rural population is described as most pitiable.

At New Pesth a lion seized the head of a little boy who went near the cage, and at Belgrade a tiger tore in pieces the keeper who ventured into its cage. But God has made things so. If these isolated instances are horrible, what of the millions of animals killed in this way as the normal state of things?

An English official near St. Petersburg, says: the distress through the famine is simply awful. The usual accompaniments of famine, fever, scurvy and other diseases are largely prevalent.

By a fire at Meiringen, Switzerland, the church prefecture and 250 houses have been destroyed, and two thousand inhabitants rendered homeless. Among the victims of the flames were an old man and a child, and many cattle and domestic animals.

PROFANE JOKES.

"I am going to quit," said a Clifton housemaid this morning to her mistress. "What's the matter?" "I won't live in a house where I am prayed against. Every morning the boss has prayer, and he says, 'O Lord, who hatest nothing but the housemaid!'" "Why, Bridget, he said, 'O Lord, who hatest nothing thou hast made!'"

My grandfather once told me that on his way to Dorking he saw a rustic sitting on the edge of a brook, with his naked legs and knees plunged in the water. "What are you doing there, this bitter cold day?" said my grandfather. "You'll catch a terrible cold." "I hope zo, zur." "Why?" "Because I'se got to sing bass in the aenthem on Zunday marning."

Stranger: "There doesn't seem to be any choir this morning." Texas Sexton: "No; the organist and tenor are both laid up with pistol wounds." Stranger: "Has there been any trouble hereabouts lately?" Texas Sexton: "Oh, no. Them two fellers just got into a little friendly dispute over the hymns to be sung to-day, that's all."

"What is the worst thing about riches?" asked the Sunday-school superintendent. And the new boy in the bad class under the gallery, who only came in last Sunday, stood up and said: "Their scarcity." And in his confusion the superintendent told the school to rise and sing, "Don't be weary, children."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, Readings, grave and gay.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "Why I am Not a Christian" (admission 3d. and 6d.). Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class. Friday, at 8, discussion class. Saturday, at 8, entertainment.

Bethnal Green — Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Ethics and Theology." Monday, at 8.30, Mr. Vining, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement." Thursday, at 8.30, debate on "Is Vaccination Beneficial to the Human Race?" opened by Mr. Lyons. Saturday, at 8.30, social evening for members and friends.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. D. Hyatt, "The Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life." Preceded by a dramatic study—"Othello."

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11, Mr. J. Rowney, "The Bible and Civilisation"; 7, Mr. Thomas Crissfield (of Brighton), "Hypnotism Explained." Wednesday, at 8, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Problem of Life." Admission free.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Mr. George Standring, "An Examination of Mrs. Besant's *Theosophy and its Evidences*" (admission free); 6.45, musical selections; 7.15, Mr. Charles Watts, "Difficulties of Theism."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band: 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "The Place of Jesus in History."

North Finchley—"The Swan": 7, Mr. Sam Standring, "Bible Poison."

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "Slavery: Ancient and Modern."

West Ham — Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. Stanley Jones will lecture. Thursday, at 8, open debate.

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

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, Mr. A. Johnson, "Utilitarianism in Theory and in Practice."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "The English Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century."

OPEN-AIR PRO AGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Mr. W. Heaford, "A Freethinker's View of Christ."

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

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 3.15, Mr. C. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's-hill: 11.30, Mr. Sam Standring, "God's Holy Angels."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham — Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, public discussion on the School Board Election, opened by Mr. S. G. Middleton; 7, Mrs. Charles Watts, "An Hour with Col. R. G. Ingersoll—Liberty for Man, Woman, and Child."

Bradford—Albert Buildings (bottom of Great Horton-road): Mr. John Grange, "Is the Bible a Book of Truth?"; 7, "Theosophy: is it Reasonable?"

Crook — 35 Gladstone-terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law: 6.30, business meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: noon, debating class, Mr. D. Lindsay, "Art and Industry"; 6.30, Mr. James Robertson (President Spiritualists' Association), "Theosophy, II.—The Mahatmas: Men or Demi-Gods?; Madame Blavatsky: Cagliostro or Saint?"

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall, Northumberland-street: Mr. J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Religion of Shakespeare"; 3, "The Past and Future of Woman"; 6.30, "The Bible and Freethought." Admission free.

Leeds—Crampton's Temperance Hotel, Briggate: 7, Mr. J. G. Fisher, "Evolution."

Leicester — Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: 6.30, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, "Progress in Freethought." Admission free.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 11, Tontine Society; 11.30, committee meeting; 3, discussion class; 7, Mr. Doeg, "The Limits of Human Knowledge."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Heredity: How to Improve the Human Race, Physically, Mentally, and Morally"; 6.30, "Why I am Not a Theosophist—a Reply to Mrs. Besant."

Nelson—Secular Room, Market-square: 2.30, Mr. James Horne, "Design and Natural Selection." Admission free.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Eight Years of Platform Work."

Portsmouth—The Alhambra, Station-street: Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; 3, "The Follies of Theosophy"; 7, "The Way to Heaven."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, Mr. W. A. Lill, "Eternal Punishment."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting.

Spennymoor — Victoria Hall, Dundas-street: 6.30, Mr. T. H. Fox (of Sunderland), "An Exposition of Socialism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Bible Arithmetic."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Nov. 1, Battersea; 8, Milton Hall; 15, Leeds; 22, Hall of Science; 29, Camberwell. Dec. 6, Sheffield.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Nov. 15, Reading. Dec. 3, Finsbury Park Branch.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Nov. 8, morning, Battersea; 22, Woolwich; 29, morning, Battersea. Dec. 6, Libra Hall; 14, Woolwich; 21, Chatham.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Nov. 8, Swaby's Coffee Tavern, East London; 15, evening, Camberwell; 22, evening, Ball's Pond; 29, morning, Hall of Science; evening, Finsbury Park Hall. Dec. 20, evening, Camberwell. Jan. 3, evening, Battersea.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Nov. 1, West Ham; 8, Nottingham.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth-road, Stratford, London, E.—Nov. 8, Woolwich; 29, Ball's Pond. Dec. 20, Woolwich.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Nov. 1, 8, 12, 15, 16 and 22, Libra Hall, Roman-road, Old Ford; 29, Edmonton. Dec. 6, morning, Battersea; evening, Finsbury Park; 20 and 27, Libra Hall.

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