

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

GOD IN JAPAN.

JAPAN has just been visited by a terrible earthquake. Without a moment's warning it swept along, wrecking towns, killing people, and altering the very shape of mountains. A vast tidal wave also rushed against the coast and deluged whole tracts of low-lying country. It is estimated that 50,000 houses have been destroyed, and at least 5,000 men, women, and children. The first reports gave a total of 25,000 slain, but this is said to be an exaggeration. Nevertheless, as a hundred miles or so of railway is torn to pieces, and it is difficult to convey relief to the suffering survivors, the butcher's bill of this catastrophe may be doubled before the finish.

If earthquakes are the work of blind, unconscious Nature, it is idle to spend our breath in discussion or recrimination. Even regret is foolish. We have to take the world as we find it, with all its disadvantages, and make the best of a not too brilliant bargain. Instead of screaming we must study; instead of wailing we must reflect; and eventually, as we gain a deeper knowledge of the secrets of Nature, and a greater mastery over her forces, we shall be better able to foresee the approach of evil and to take precautionary measures against it.

But the standard teaching of England, to say nothing of less civilised nations, is not Naturalism but Theism. We are told that there is a God over all, and that he doeth all things well. On the practical side this deity is called Providence. It is Providence that sends fine weather, and Providence that sends bad weather; Providence that sends floods, and Providence that sends drought; Providence that favors us with a fine harvest, and Providence that blights the crops, reducing millions of people, as in Russia at this moment, to the most desperate shifts of self-preservation. It is Providence that saves Smith's precious life in a railway accident, and of course it is Providence that smashes poor Jones, Brown and Robinson.

Now it will be observed that the favorable or adverse policy of Providence is quite irrespective of human conduct. There is no moral discrimination. If Grace Darling and Jack the Ripper were traveling by the same train, and it met with an accident, everybody knows that their chances of death are precisely equal. If there were any difference it would be in favor of Jack, who seems very careful of his own safety, and would probably take a seat in the least dangerous part of the train.

Some people, of course, and especially parsons, will contend that Providence does discriminate. They have already been heard to hint that the Russian famine is on account of the persecution of the Jews. But this act of brutality is the crime of the Government, and the famine falls upon multitudes of peasants who never saw a Jew in their lives. They have to suffer the pangs of hunger, but the Czar will not go without a single meal or a single bottle of champagne.

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No doubt a pious idiot or two will go to the length of asserting or insinuating that the earthquake in Japan is a divine warning to the people, from the Mikado down to his meanest subject, that they are too slow in accepting Christianity. In fact there is a large collection of such pious idiots, only they are deterred by a wholesome fear of ridicule. Hundreds of thousands of people have seen Mr. Wilson Barrett in *Claudian*, without being in the least astonished that an earthquake, which ruins a whole city, should be got up for the hero's spiritual edification.

Let the pious idiots, however numerous, be swept aside, and let the Christian with a fair supply of brains in his skull consider Providence in the light of this earthquake. It is folly to pretend that the Japanese are particularly wicked at this moment. It is greater folly to pretend that the earthquake killed the most flagitious sinners. It slew like Jehovah's baddits in the land of Canaan, without regard to age, sex, or character. The terrible fact must be faced, that in a country not specially wicked, and in a portion of it not inhabited by select sinners, the Lord sent an earthquake to slay man, woman, and child, and if possible to "leave alive nothing that breatheth."

Lay your hand upon your heart, Christian, and honestly answer this question. Would you have done this deed? Of course not. Your cheek flames at the thought. You would rush to save the victims. You would soothe the dying and reverently bury the dead. Why then do you worship a Moloch who laughs at the writhings of his victims and drinks their tears like wine? See, they are working and playing; they are at business and pleasure; one is toiling to support the loved ones at home; another is sitting with them in peace and joy; another is wooing the maiden who is dearer to him than life itself; another is pondering some benevolent project; another is planning a law or a poem that shall be a blessing and a delight to posterity. And lo the mandate of Moloch goes forth, and "his word shall not return unto him void." Swifter than thought calamity falls upon the gay and busy scene. Hearts that throbbed with joy now quiver with agony. The husband folds his wife in a last embrace. The mother gathers her children like Niobe. The lover clasps in the midst of horror the maiden no longer coy. Homes are shaken to dust, halls fall in ruins, the very temples of the gods are shattered. Brains are dashed out, blood flows in streams, limbs are twisted, bodies are pinned by falling masonry, cries of anguish pierce the air, groans follow, and lastly silence. Moloch then retires to his inmost sanctuary, filled and sated with death and pain.

Is it not better, Christian friend, to defy Moloch instead of worshipping him? Is it not still better to regard this deity as the creation of fanciful ignorance? Is not existence a terror if Providence may swoop upon us with inevitable talons and irresistible beak? And does not life become sweeter when we see no cruel intelligence behind the catastrophes of nature?

G. W. FOOTE.

THE LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE.

THE Syndicate formed for the purpose of securing the London Hall of Science to the Freethought party has received back its Rules from the Registrar, and the further formalities do not prevent the immediate procedure to business. The prospectus will be ready almost as soon as this copy of the *Freethinker*. Copies will be sent to all N. S. S. Branches and to all persons whose addresses we have. Others, it is hoped, will apply for copies to the hon. sec. *pro tem.*, Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. A postcard will do for such applications.

The Syndicate is proceeding under the Industrial and Friendly Societies' Act, which offers certain advantages over the Companies' Act for the objects in view.

As it may hereafter be desirable to carry on operations beyond the Hall of Science, and to erect or obtain Secular Halls in other parts of London or in the provinces, a comprehensive name has been adopted, namely, THE NATIONAL SECULAR HALL SOCIETY (LIMITED).

The Society's rules provide that no member is eligible for election as a Director who is not a member of the National Secular Society. This will give a valuable security against the perversion of the Society by any casual majority of members out of sympathy with the only existing organisation of Secularism.

Another valuable security is that the first Board of Directors sits for three years, and only retires one-third at a time, with eligibility for re-election. This gives stability and continuity to the management.

No single person can hold more than two hundred pounds' worth of shares. Corporate bodies may hold to any extent the Directors may allow. The Board has the power of refusing any person as a member, and a similar control over the transfer of shares.

The shares are £1 each, payable 2s. 6d. on application, 2s. 6d. on allotment, and in subsequent calls, if necessary, of 2s. 6d. after two months' notice. Any member may pay up his shares in full at any time.

The Society has the usual powers of borrowing on its securities, and this will provide for the case of any generous friend who may desire to increase his support beyond the £200 maximum of share money.

Every Secularist not in absolute poverty should see whether he cannot take a share or shares in this Society, whose immediate object is to secure the eighty-six years' lease of the Hall of Science, and convert it into a Freethought Institute of which the party may be proud. The possession of headquarters in London is absolutely vital to the welfare of our movement, and the success of the Sunday and other meetings, now under the direct control of the National Secular Society's Executive, indicates what might be done if the premises were entirely at our disposal.

No rhetorical appeal should be necessary to induce the Secular party to maintain its own interests. It should suffice to point out six things. (1) An opportunity now presents itself that may not occur again. (2) The National Secular Society, and Freethought in general, would be immensely strengthened by seizing the opportunity. (3) The investors will have ample security in the lease and premises, which are always marketable. (4) There is a fair prospect of a reasonable dividend under good management. (5) The neighborhood is an improving one, and the property will increase in value, even for the special purposes in view. (6) The place has an historical value for those purposes in its long association with the name of Charles Bradlaugh.

Personally I have this to say in conclusion. I regard this enterprise as of supreme importance to the future of the Secular party, and I am in a better position to judge than any other man in our movement. If any further information is desired I shall

be happy to give it, but I shall avoid the discussion of trivial details.

Meanwhile it may be well to remind those who have promised donations, rather than to take shares, that the time is ripe for the fulfilment of such promises. One lady (I am glad that a lady starts the ball) has already sent me £5. Whatever donations are received will be placed in the charge of Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the N. S. S. treasurer; and will ultimately be invested in shares in what appears to me the best way to subserve the intention of the donors.

G. W. FOOTE.

WILL MORALITY SURVIVE RELIGION?

SUCH is the question posited by Professor Goldwin Smith in a recent number of the *Forum*. He does not answer it in the negative. He thinks, good man, that in the long run morality may manage to survive. He sees and admits that at present unbelievers in religion are as moral as believers. Yet he views with dismay the surrender of the old beliefs, and looks forward to a period of catastrophe arising from the breakdown of the old foundations of conduct. The catastrophe has not come yet, though these theological foundations have been loosening for a long time. But Prof. Smith evidently takes a melancholy pleasure in being a prophet of evil. We should smile at his vaticinations were it not that the attitude he adopts is largely responsible for the hypocrisy of the age, each pretending to believe what he no longer believes for the sake of the supposed influence of belief on somebody else.

Morality, in my view, is just the one thing people need not get into any terror about. It can take care of itself, and will thrive the better for being allowed to run alone. It is not founded on any book or any church. It has developed from human needs, and while they remain it remains. People may make mistakes about it. They may imagine that they can atone for cheating all the week by going to church on Sunday. But the church-goer is still a cheat, and his real character is not altered by his church-going. Erase every notion of the supernatural, and the conditions of social welfare, and therefore of duty, remain the same. Parents will still love their children, and children their parents. Remove religion entirely, and the foundations of conduct based on human relations are as firm as ever. God or no God sugar is just as sweet, and pleasure as pleasant. The facts are as they are, and the lessons of life, the discipline of circumstances, remain exactly the same. While they so remain the life that is made up of thought and work for the good of others will not only be higher and worthier than one of self-indulgence, but also more satisfactory.

The realities of nature are not altered because we have no belief in their supernatural creation. Sunshine is just as delightful, and love is still the sunshine of the heart. To suppose that right conduct will decline with religion is to suppose that it has no natural guarantees. To rest morality on the arbitrary will of an irresponsible being with "right divine to govern wrong" is indeed to pervert it. Morality has to do with man's ever-present and reciprocal duties to his fellows; religion has to do with suppositious duties to an imaginary God who has no duties towards his creatures. The worst enemies of morality are those who put it on a supernatural basis that will not bear investigation.

What a revelation is that just made by the Bishop of Dover as to the results of Bible Sunday-school training. Of 100 of his own scholars he could trace but 77, and "of these two only were attending church regularly and 39 were confirmed drunkards. At Pentonville prison 757 out of 1,000 prisoners had been Sunday-school scholars. At Leeds the chaplain

of the borough gaol reports 230 out of 282 prisoners as having passed through Sunday-school. Their average time of attendance was three years." What facts could better show the distinction between religious and moral training? Should there be any such *mauvais quart d'heure* as Prof. Goldwin Smith expects in the transition from supernatural to natural morality, the responsibility rests on those who base conduct on insecure foundations, and seek to make shams do the work of realities.

We who deliberately reject religion do so because it is not good enough. We believe, whatever its functions in the past, it is now rather an hindrance than a help to human morality. It dwarfs real duties and substitutes fictitious ones. It engenders anti-pathies. We have not sunk beneath its influence, but risen above it. We find a spurious love of God usurping the place of human love, our highest and most sacred possession. We find religious duties taking the place of moral ones, and an immense organisation with wealth and devotion at its command made over to the service of imaginary beings, while actual human beings are in want and suffering. And religion preaches that the poor shall never cease out of the land, bids them indeed to "increase and multiply" as the first command of God, and tells them "blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."

Let there be no mistake. If religion goes, all will not be exactly the same. The morality demanded by the needs and welfare of society must remain. It cannot be resigned without social suicide. But there is a spurious morality, set up by priests in their own interests, which must go. To increase their own influence, they represent acts not only harmless but beneficial as displeasing to God, leading to "the wrath to come" unless repentance and salvation is effected through their agency. To dance on a Sunday is, for instance, more sinful than to flog a child. The one is prohibited, the other permitted by God. Let it be seen that the welfare of society, not the will of God, is the true criterion, and much that has passed itself off as Christian morality will have to depart. But life will be the brighter and happier. Work for humanity will take the place of the vain service of God, and those will be most esteemed who are not the most fervent in prayer but in actively promoting the welfare of others. Religion will fade, but the social conscience will grow as its swaddling bands are removed. The world is for those who develop with it and cease mumbling dead formulas.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE SUNDAY QUESTION IN NEWCASTLE.

On Sunday (November 8), at 3 p.m., a special meeting of the N. S. S. (Newcastle Branch), the Sunday Music Society, Limited, and friends will be held in the Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street, to confer upon the situation arising out of the application of a new byelaw in the borough, rendering it imperative to take out a special licence before giving any musical entertainment. All Freethinkers are earnestly invited to attend.—T. Bowen, President N. S. S.; T. Bertram, Sec.; J. Brown, Chairman S. M. S.; E. Copland, Sec.

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.

THE MALTHUSIAN PROSECUTION.

MR. KEITH FRITH, on behalf of Mr. H. S. Young, has obtained a rule *nisi* for a *mandamus* to compel Mr. Lushington, the Bow-street magistrate, to state a case for the superior Court. Of course the rule has to be argued before it is made absolute, and it is impossible to predict the upshot. This much, however, is clear. Justices Matthew and Smith only granted a rule on one of the four heads. Three fines of ten pounds each are thus practically ratified. The fourth fine was on account of a Malthusian tract couched in what the magistrate called "inoffensive language." But the rule with respect to this one was only granted on the assumption that it alluded to no artificial checks to population.

This creates a grave situation, which all lovers of free discussion are bound to face. If they do not face it, it will face them. Mr. Young has been in communication with me, and I expressed a strong view as to the necessity of an organised agitation, if the authorities are to be checked in their present despotism. I desired him to arrange a meeting between myself and Dr. Drysdale, when I would suggest some practical expedients. The meeting took place on Tuesday morning, Mr. Young being also present, and the result is as follows. (1) A Free Discussion Defence Committee will be formed, and its first meeting will be held on Monday. (2) A manifesto will be issued to the public, setting forth the facts, and appealing for moral and financial support. (3) Subscription sheets will be sent out, the money collected to be held by the Committee's treasurer. (4) Public meetings to expose the prosecution, and stir up the public mind on the principles at stake, will be held in all parts of London.

The Committee will be a working one. Idlers, busybodies, and small notoriety-seekers, will be carefully avoided. Persons of weight, influence, earnestness, conviction, and capacity for service, will be very acceptable.

Freethinkers are not bound to be Malthusians. Many are not, and they have a right to their own opinions. But the difference between rejecting an idea and suppressing it, is the difference between freedom and tyranny. No true Freethinker has any choice in the matter. He need not accept, or even discuss, Mr. Young's social views; but he is bound to defend Mr. Young's right to advocate them in "inoffensive language." If Malthusian doctrines, however decently expounded, may be put down by the police, English freedom is a hollow mockery.

It is on this ground that I join the Free Discussion Defence Committee, and on this ground that I appeal to Freethinkers for support.

G. W. FOOTE.

A female Salvationist met a young man in the street the other day and said to him, "My brother, I am on a mission to save young men like you." "Well," said the young man, "do you save young women too?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then," said the young man, "save one for me, and I will call for her in a day or two."

Miss Garnet in her recent book, *The Women of Turkey*, makes out that Mohammedan ladies are not so much worse off than Christian ones. She says the ordinary Turk is monogamous, if only because two wives involve two establishments, and the expense is in most cases out of the question. An indignant denial is given to the missionary statement, that according to the creed of Islam, women have no souls.

An Irish Jew called Levi Cassidy, a pawnbroker, met with an accident and was taken to the hospital, when the house surgeon ordered him to bed and said it was impossible for him to live long. He was placed on a bed next to an Irishman who was also dying, and who wished to see a priest, who was sent for. When the priest arrived he went to the wrong bed, and thought it was Levi that had sent for him, so he put a gold cross in Levi Cassidy's hand, when Levi coolly asked the priest how much he wanted to borrow on it

WHY LET RELIGION ALONE?

It is useless to disguise from our eyes the fact that, in the prosecution of our crusade against Christianity, we as Freethinkers are looked upon with an air of supercilious disdain by many who, whilst viewing with disfavor all forms of religion, nevertheless consider that all religions should be left severely alone to die a natural death. The aforesaid candid friends deprecate our aggressive proselytism, and affect to believe that the Freethought work carried on by the N. S. S. is a piece of meddling intervention, which can help forward in no appreciable degree the development of liberal ideas on religion, but may—and in many instances does—retard the progress of that very cause of man's intellectual enfranchisement which we seek to promote. They cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace; they abjure us to cease our controversy; to let the Christians furiously rage together, and to leave the pious people to imagine all the vain things in the world. They ask us to allow the churches to crumble to pieces of their own internal dissension and external decay; and advise us, like enlightened Levites, to studiously pass by on the other side whenever we find in our path the hapless wayfarer who, whilst journeying to the Jericho of Rationalism, has fallen amongst theological thieves and been stripped bare of every vestige of intellectual freedom. Let the priests alone, they say; education will ultimately break the bonds of the tyranny they now exercise; and when liberty is finally won, it will be all the more precious and complete because it will have been achieved as the result of a policy of *laissez-faire*.

We do not doubt that Christianity would, in the long run, drop into the grave of oblivion and die out, like many other and less mischievous superstitions, quite irrespective of the efforts we are making to hasten that greatly-to-be-desired end. The Christian creed is so flagrantly incompatible with the refined instincts of a cultivated and progressive humanity, that, apart altogether from any overt promulgation of Freethought, the system would ultimately become played out, and be discarded as an effete and discredited superstition. The churches to-day are confessedly honeycombed with scepticism, and the old doctrines, once so tenaciously held, are being rapidly surrendered in deference to the demands of a more humane theology, which itself is merely a symptom of decaying faith vainly attempting to prolong an agonised existence by pouring the new wine of Reason into the old bottles of Revelation. The crumbling of the creeds goes on apace, and neither the grace of God nor the apathy of dilettante Freethinkers can prevent the final fruition of these disintegrating influences in the definite disruption of the antiquated system which is so plainly smitten with intellectual death. So firm is our assurance that the stars are fighting against the Sisera of supernaturalism, that we can afford to make a present of the above observations to those sapient counsellors who advise a policy of masterly inactivity, and would have us "rest and be thankful" and fold our hands in the sloth of effortless indifference. Our lament is not that the thing we attack is too lively, but that it takes such an unconscionable long time in dying. Knowing, then, that every time a doctrine is pulverised; every time a "believer" is snatched as a brand from the raging fire of Christian superstition; every time the absurd and venomous creed is exposed to the indignation of its whilom professors as a stumbling block to social welfare, the area of its depredations is narrowed, and one more nail driven into its coffin, we feel that our fealty to Freethought will not allow us to leave the beneficent work of destruction to the slow and unassisted processes of time. The mischief daily wrought by the terrors of the ogre of godliness, and the deplorable misdirection of energy occasioned by the maintenance of religion, are evils so great that any measure that will help to curtail the sufferings of humanity, and hasten the moment of man's final

emancipation from the yoke of gods, priests, and other parasites, ought to be adopted with enthusiastic eagerness.

The church to-day which we are thus invited to spare from our onslaughts, is the guardian and inheritor of the old bad traditions of bygone ages of persecution, and remains, as ever, the stronghold of the party of mental stagnation. Its persistence amongst us affords a constant menace to every cause that makes for progress. True, it is shorn of much of its ancient power, but it persecutes to-day to the best of its poor and dilapidated ability, and would gladly rekindle the old fires of persecution. Our Blasphemy Laws are weaknesses of this fact. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Christianity, moreover, still carries on the time-honored policy of lying for the glory of God (*e.g.*, Price Hughes); and betrays the same restless activity as ever in distilling its poisonous doctrines in the ears of intellectual babes and sucklings. All this, to be sure, is but the energy of despair, the last frantic futile efforts of a dying delusion. Nevertheless, these ineffective results are due rather to the active leaven of Freethought in the community, aided and abetted by the *vis inertiae* of Indifferentism (second-cousin to "Infidelity") than to the inherent weakness of the Christian exertions; and in presence of these facts we are conjured and all but cajoled to relinquish the warfare with religion! If, however, the soldiers of freedom should imprudently relax their vigilant watchfulness against the machinations of priestcraft—from the Vatican down to Little Bethel—the penalty that would be exacted would be deservedly sharp and serious.

No slight proof of the utility of our propaganda is offered by the moans and lamentations of the godly. The jeremiads concerning the growth of "artisan Atheism" amply testify to the value of our work. In other words, the measure of our usefulness may be gauged by the bitterness of denunciation which we evoke from the "unco guid." The virulence of the average Christian Evidence-monger—a monstrous abortion of piety and unscrupulousness, compounded of the very dregs of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness—would alone suffice to justify the aggressive, destructive propaganda in which we are engaged. Nay, more; the fish-fag mode of advocacy which these chosen champions of Christ adopt is an indirect compliment to the effectiveness of the policy of exposure which we unsparingly pursue. Every cry of rage, every howl of execration, every act of mud-slinging by and on the part of religionists, witnesses the growing triumph of the cause of man and the waning of the glory of God. Our meat is the parson's poison; what saddens him gladdens us. To the devotee of religion we may thus fittingly address the language of his God—"I will mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh." After all, his "calamity" is simply the ransoming of the slaves of superstition from the greedy grasp of priestcraft; and his "fear" the overthrow of the altar erected to God for the benefit of the priests, and the appropriation of the ill-gotten spoils of credulity to the service of humanity.

Laissez-faire in religion means connivance with superstition. A policy of non-intervention would, we hold, prolong the servitude of mankind. We must learn to look upon every worshipper of God as a victim of priestly delusion, and constantly endeavor to reclaim him for the exclusive service of mankind. We contend that, if the postulates of religion are true, it behoves us to maintain intact the integrity of faith. But if,—as we think—they are false, then it is folly to aid in prolonging, even for an hour, a system of folly and fraud, the maintenance of which drains off and absorbs the misapplied energies and lavish gifts of myriads of deceived or deceiving men.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Rev. Splicer—"And they shall be whirled into utter darkness." Miserable Sinner—"Whirled without end."

THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE BIBLE.—II.

TURNING now to the general question, the present system of religious instruction may be condemned on four grounds:—

(1) It narrows down the teaching of morality to the pages of the Bible. Morality is the concern of all the world. The principles of morality are illustrated in the experiences of all the world. Therefore the testimony of all the world should be listened to. In other words, we cannot learn the principles of right conduct from one collection of Jewish writings, but must seek them in the facts of our own life and the lives of others as represented in past and contemporary history. Anthropology in its broadest sense, and not merely the limited area of the Bible, must be the gathering ground for the moralist.

(2) It introduces a secret cause of weakness into the unformed minds of the children by engendering an unwholesome scepticism with respect to the working of natural law, and by developing a tendency to accept statements on insufficient evidence. Children are taught out of an old book that men were raised from the dead, and yet neither scholar nor teacher ever sees such things happening in the present day; and so with other miracles. From their earliest years children are accustomed to receive alleged facts for which no evidence is offered them at school, or forthcoming when they reach years of discretion. Such a system fosters loose habits of thinking, and who shall say for how much careless theorising and unwise action this system of loose thinking is responsible? The danger is not less real because so subtle. If you teach a child what is not true, he will not commit a crime or a deed of folly the moment he is past the school-doors. But insensibly his faith in the exactitude of natural law is undermined. Insensibly he forms the habit of believing assertions without examination. Insensibly he is led to use words standing for shams and not realities. Among the people whom one meets in every-day life, how much less of honesty, how much less of truthfulness is there as the result of early training in the habit of falsification? We have no right to teach even a coster's child the thing which we cannot, in the light of day and of reason, prove to be true, and which his future experience will contradict. We may teach the Bible with reverent voice and solemn demeanor, with the approval of the clergy and the sanction of official examiners; yet if the thing we teach is false, what then? In plain language, it is a sin against the child.

(3) It encourages hypocrisy. It is unmixed nonsense to suppose that all the teachers employed by the Board really believe everything they teach, that they all really believe in the God of the Pentateuch, in the Holy Ghost, in the divinity and incarnation of Jesus Christ, in the Devil and his sooty legions, in a life after death, and in miracles. Do the managers of the schools believe all this? Do the inspectors? Do the members of the Board? Do the electors? How many of them could look you in the face and say yes? Would that some recording angel could take and publish a census of the men who say they believe all this and yet do not believe it!

(4) It encourages a habit of using language which is not understood by the user. No child (I say nothing of grown men and women) can understand the doctrine of creation, yet he is taught to speak of God as his maker; or of the incarnation, yet he is taught to speak of God as becoming man; or of the unity of the Son and the Father, yet he is taught to speak of Jesus being "in the Father"; or of demoniacal possession, yet he is taught to speak of the devils entering into the swine of Gadara. The words put into his mouth are not and cannot be accompanied by any clear mental picture of the things signified. One of the great evils of the world is this fashion of uttering words which have no counterpart in the speaker's

mind. The consequences are self-deception, deception of one's neighbors, waste of speech, waste of effort, straining after things shadowy, and neglect of things intellectually profitable.

There are three courses open to those who wish to put an end to the present system of religious instruction:—

(1) To retain the Bible, and allow teachers freedom of interpretation, so that those who prefer the orthodox method might pursue it, and that others might be free to adopt a Rationalistic view; it being provided that, in any case, the main purpose of the teachers should be to inculcate morality. I have myself advocated the retention of the Bible in the Board-schools on this basis. But I am bound to admit the serious difficulties which, in the actual condition of religious thought, would impede the working of such a scheme. In the first place, a very singular divergence of practice would probably manifest itself. A visitor, on passing through successive class-rooms in the same building, might hear enunciated the varying opinions of Secularists, Unitarians, Catholics, High Churchmen, Salvationists, Literalists and Mystics; though even this clashing of methods would be a better alternative than the present uniformity of orthodox platitude. Then again, I have found very few Freethinkers who have approved my proposal. Had Matthew Arnold been alive, he would, I imagine, have coincided with me, though I ought rather to say that I am following his lead. I think that the Bible, viewed as a natural literary production, which has influenced countless individual hearts and modified many important historical movements, and which has a value in the study of anthropology, poetry, and art, ought to be included in any all-round system of education. But I recognise the obstacles in the way of thus revolutionising Bible teaching. I should most certainly not form a cave from the general body of Freethinkers because of my convictions on this subject. I am willing to wait for the time when the Bible, never more to be idolised by bigotry or credulity, shall still be cherished as a noble classic.

(2) To reduce "religious instruction" to the simple reading of the Bible without note or comment. At present I know of only one candidate for the School Board who places this item on his program, and I trust he will be returned.* No great harm will be done to children who listen to Bible extracts largely couched in antique English and read in the perfunctory style of a town-crier. The plan is absolutely useless from an educational point of view. If I were a Christian, I should regard it as an insult to the Word of God. But it is infinitely preferable to the plan in vogue.

(3) To adopt entirely secular education. This is, perhaps, the only practicable solution in the present state of public opinion, and I strongly support it. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the importance of moral instruction. A love of justice, truth, honor, temperance and courage, is not to be imparted by mere reading and ciphering, any more than by the dogmas of the churches. Teachers feel that the child is only touched on the skin who is merely drilled in the three R's. With due assistance and approval from those in authority, they would willingly give more attention to morals and manners than they now devote. Nor do I fear that, in the long run, Freethinkers will overlook this need. Meanwhile, the ballot-box offers another opportunity for the assertion of a great Freethought principle. A determined minority on the secular side could work wonders at the Board. These are times when vast changes are wrought with rapidity; as witness the realisation of free education. There is a good deal of lath and cardboard in the armor of the champions of the Bible. They are neither so enthu-

* Mr. J. C. Horbin, who stands for Hackney.

siastic nor so formidable as they look. And even if orthodoxy be clad in triple steel, the sinews of Free-thought will be rendered all the stronger by an encounter with the enemy.

I have not presumed to write these words as if anything were needed to rouse Freethinkers to a sense of the importance of this question. But I felt I could not be silent any longer on a subject which affects so deeply the moral and intellectual welfare of our sons and daughters, and which has left such strange and indelible marks on the history of my own life.

F. J. GOULD.

ACID DROPS.

Prince Damrong, of Siam, has been telling M. de Blowitz of the *Times* a good many things about that eastern country, one of which will interest our readers, as it *should* interest Christians. "Our priests," says the Prince, "do not in any way mix in politics. They are quiet men, and remain inside their temples, not having the slightest desire to interfere in public affairs. Their salaries are small, and you will have an idea of it when I tell you that the archbishop or chief of our priesthood at Bangkok, the head of our entire clergy, has about £70 a year."

Fancy an archbishop with only £70 a year! Our Archbishop of Canterbury has more than half that income *per day*. Even the humblest curate turns up his nose at twenty-seven shillings a week. Evidently they manage these things much better in Siam.

The incomes of our principal ecclesiastics, both in the Church of England, and in the Nonconformist bodies, are positively scandalous. In the ordinary way of the world we expect men to get as much as they can. But for a priest of the "religion of sorrow" to live on the fat of the land, for a preacher of "blessed be ye poor" to draw hundreds and even thousands a year, is loathsome to every honest mind.

Prince Damrong's religion is a great improvement on that of our princes. "I am a Buddhist," he says, "and so also is the king. He and I profess the modern Buddhism. When you go and travel in the desert you must always take a bottle of water with you. If you find water in the desert, all very well, but if you find none you have your bottle of water. So is it with our creed. We should do as much good as possible, we should do our best. If there is no future, we have in this case in this life the conviction of having done no harm, and if there is a future, the good we have done will follow us in the next life."

From the Christian point of view this Siamese prince is in a very bad way. He is walking to hell without knowing it. But he will not be allowed to damn himself without an effort to save him. The Christian missionaries are at work in Siam, and they are trying as hard as their salaries will permit to teach the poor benighted Siamese that doing their level best in this life is not getting on "the safe side," and that unless they believe in Jesus Christ and him crucified they will "without doubt perish everlastingly."

"There's money in it" may always be said of Christianity. Free-thought, however, never did pay, and it doesn't pay now. Those who throw in their lot with it have to reckon with poverty; at any rate, they are lucky to keep their heads above the fatal water of want. It does not surprise us, therefore, to learn that Mr. Hugh O. Pentecost, the editor of the *Twentieth Century* (New York), some of whose able and spirited Free-thought discourses have been reprinted in our own columns, intends to enter the legal profession. Mr. Pentecost will apparently cease lecturing at Chickering Hall, and may be he will drop his journal. "I am unwilling," he said to a *Herald* reporter, "to be very poor if I can help myself, and still more unwilling to drag my wife and children into poverty. No doubt my practising law is inconsistent with my opinions, but in this case I choose to be so far inconsistent rather than to suffer want if I can help myself. Perhaps it would be more glorious if I should become a martyr, but I am not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, unless I could see that by sacrificing myself I could

help some one else. But I do not see how any good could come to anyone by my being a martyr."

The Rev. H. M'Neile lamented at the Chester Diocesan Conference that, according to his calculation, the amount lost to the church by the establishment of the fee grant was from £40,000 to £50,000 per annum, this being the amount extra paid in some parts by parents in order to have their children educated in church principles. The clergy should not look a gift-horse in the mouth, but accept the Government measure gratefully, lest a worse evil befall them. Mr. M'Neile urged that the clerical schools of the country should combine to raise subscriptions for the continuance of religious education.

Canon Maitland Wood, at the same conference, took a more roseate view of the situation, which, he said, was not so perilous as in 1870, when the Education Act was passed. The number of higher class children has increased in the schools which kept the fees, and if that continued, the result would be a gain to the Church instead of a loss.

How to get the people to church was another subject of the Chester Diocesan Conference. Here there was a difficulty. Most good churchmen are agreed that the blessed sacrament of our Lord's body and blood ought to be taken fasting, so that the sacred elements should not be mingled with vulgar bread and butter, or eggs and bacon. But farm servants cannot attend early communion services, and many others prefer lying in bed on Sunday morning. An evening communion, with a prior application of the stomach-pump, should get over the difficulty.

County Kildare breeds or supports some curious creatures. There is the Rev. S. G. Cotton, for instance, the rector of Carogh. This man of God keeps an orphanage. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the orphanage keeps the man of God. Anyhow the Irish saint is committed for trial, and according to the reports in the newspapers, he has been guilty of great neglect and cruelty. He is charged with chaining the legs of one girl to a heavy log. Some of the children were covered with vermin. The tots of one child were absolutely rotting off. An infant of six weeks old was dying from cold and inanition. All the poor little orphans were stunted and attenuated, and the sanitary arrangements were appalling. Parson Cotton will have to answer these charges. His wife, who acted as "secretary and treasurer," is also committed for trial.

We commend this case to the attention of Mr. Waugh and the Bishop of Chester. These miserable slanderers of their theological opponents declared that Atheists were most guilty of cruelty to children. Although they were challenged, they have not yet produced a single case in support of their joint assertion. Perhaps they will argue (what will not a minister argue?) that the Irish parson was *really* an Atheist. Anyhow we invite them to say something. Anything is better than their cowardly silence.

"There is no one so feeble and resourceless," the *Rock* says, "as your coddled youth, and we may add that a Christianly-coddled youth is the weakest mortal of them all." The *Rock* is a Christian paper, and ought to know.

Poor Jesus Christ! He came eighteen hundred years too soon for his comfort. This is the age he should have been born in. Look at Mr. Spurgeon, for instance. On the reverend gentleman's arrival at Calais, *en route* to Mentone, he got on board "a saloon carriage placed at his disposal by Baron Rothschild." Of course the worthy Baron is a Jew. The chosen people burked the first Christian; now one of them lends a Christian preacher a saloon carriage. What a change—on both sides!

The *Star* relates the awful death of a stowaway. The poor wretch got on board a ship that left London for Sydney, and crept in between the boilers; not being able to find his way out again, he was slowly roasted to death. His body was burnt to a cinder right under the fires. Before expiring he scratched on a tin plate, "O God; what a death." Poor devil! He took the name of God in vain, with a vengeance. "Our Father which art in heaven . . . deliver us from evil." How nice it sounds! But what utter rot it is when you want the deliverance.

The New York *Sun* sent an interviewer to the Rev. Howard McQueary, who has for his heresy been turned out of the American Episcopal Church. He said: "I occupy a most unenviable position. Having been educated for the ministry, I am to a great extent unfitted by that education for other sort of work. If I should be restored to the ministry I would have great difficulty in getting a parish, simply because I have been so grossly slandered that most Christians consider me a demon in human form, whose very name is odious. This is the good work of a religious press. A politician's path is strewn with flowers compared to that of a heretic. The church papers are far more virulent, unjust, and slanderous in such a case than the secular papers are." Mr. McQueary has since gone to a Universalist church at Saginaw, Michigan.

From America comes an account of a somewhat sudden conversion. A negro religious revival is going on at Richmond, Virginia, and one of the colored waiters at an hotel "found the right path" while carrying a dish of soup to a gentleman, and he immediately dashed the soup to the ground and shouted, "Hallelujah."

Parson Adamson, vicar of St. Paul's, Old Ford, is a bigot whom the Freethinkers of the district have reason to remember. We see from a local journal that he has recently had a row with a meeting of his parishioners. Being in the chair, he insisted on nominating a friend as Trustee of the North Bow Charities. This was resisted by the meeting, and finally he was forced to leave the chair. He then had the gas turned off from the main, but candles were sent for, and two independent gentleman were elected as representatives for the parish.

The Rev. Robert Baynes, formerly vicar of Coventry and honorary canon of Worcester, was charged with obtaining food and lodgings from the Clarence Hotel and Rougemont Hotel, Exeter, on false pretences. The charge was, however, withdrawn when the proprietors and managers of the hotels found they would be responsible for the expense of prosecution.

The Rev. Henry Ellwell Smith, formerly of Christ Church, Hunter-street, Liverpool, has been suspended by his bishop for seducing and assaulting the widow of his late incumbent. He still, however, makes charges against her friends, and has to meet an action for malicious libels.

Samuel J. Stanhope, described as a clerk in holy orders, was charged at Dublin with stealing an oil stove, and attempting to obtain by fraud a large stock of surplices and cassocks. On the application of the police the man of God was remanded.

Mr. Lavington Rooker, a Bideford solicitor, suffers from an overdose of religion, and apparently attempted to commit suicide in the river Yeo. When rescued he declared that "God had cast him aside," and "there was no forgiveness for him."

John Seque, of New York, was found standing on the steps of his home saying to passers-by, "How do you do? I am waiting for a pair of wings." A police officer happened to pass, and asked Seque what he was going to do with the wings. "Why, be an angel, of course, and fly about in the golden streets." The police officer told Seque that he would find a most beautiful pair of wings down the street, and offered to show him the way. Seque accepted the offer, and walked into the insane asylum.

Forest fires have been raging in St. Louis County, U.S., for some days past, and many residences and much valuable property have been destroyed.

The Lord has been busy lately. Earthquakes, floods, famines, disasters, and accidents of all kinds have been attesting that he has not gone to sleep. These are the things which wake people up to his presence, while he sits smiling like the gods in Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters,"

looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deep and
fiery sands,
Changing fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships and
praying hands.

During the quarter ending September, the mortality of infants under one year of age was in the proportion of 146 deaths to 1,000 births. Some Malthusians say there is no disguise about this blessing. None the less we wonder why so many need be born at all only to die in infancy.

A striking illustration of the effects of priestcraft is given in the October number of *Saint Simon's Salford Parish Magazine*. The rector and another certify to a deposition taken from the sister of a woman driven mad by her priest. She and her sister were both of part Catholic parentage, and both married Protestants. When her sister became ill she said she would like to die a Catholic, and a priest was brought in. This worthy, deposes the woman, said: "I and my sister should consider ourselves only living in filth as we were not married in the sight of God." He further told them that their souls were cursed to the depth of hell, and that the devil followed them in the shape of a cat, or dog, or a man. This made the sister afraid of her own cat, and at length the priest actually drove the sick woman into insanity. What a sweet blessed thing is religion.

Squabbles between the rector and his churchwardens have enlivened the Sunday services at the parish church, Castleford, Yorks. The *causus belli* appears to be the collection of the money which the rector desires to take out of the hands of the legally-appointed sidesmen.

Cardinal Lavigerie will please note that slavery still exists in Portuguese India. A Brahmin, at Kalloda, possesses a village of 32 huts, where every soul is as truly his slave and property as in the olden days; and recently a Portuguese travelling from Goa spoke openly of the slaves on his estate.

At the meeting of the Liberation Society last week a Rev. H. W. Clarke mentioned that in a well-paid living in Wiltshire, which was in the gift of New College, Oxford, the rector lived away, and gave him (Mr. Clarke) £50 a year to do all the work. His predecessor had a private income of £5,000 a-year, and spent £1,000 a-year in blankets, boots, and other gifts to the parishioners. But since Mr. Clarke was unable to follow this example, the parishioners would not attend church. An illustration of the real supports of religion.

The *Edinburgh Review*, dealing with the tales of witchcraft in Mr. Atkinson's *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*, says: "All the fables of the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran might with ease be imposed on the 'Theosophic' mind; 'esoteric' religion deals in narratives, if anything, more improbable and certainly less romantically wild, than those of witches rides to Blackkulla or the Brocken; and there is little to choose, in point of feasibility, between transportation on a broomstick and conveyance in the shape of an 'astral body.'"

Father Humphrey is a Jesuit whose zeal outruns his discretion. He stigmatises the boasted continuity of the English Church as a cuckoo continuity, and boldly claims the right of the Catholic Church to all the old endowments. He says, "A continuity of breed can scarcely be pretended between the offspring of the robber bird and the bird that it dispossessed." The spirit of the Reformation, he said, was the spirit of falsehood and rebellion. Not so fast, Father Humphrey, or you will be sent back to a cell. When Rome is ready she will say all this loud enough, but if you hurry on so, you may find the secular bird step in and take the coveted nest and endowments before you are prepared to retake possession.

Mr. G. Graham, of Stockton-on-Tees, having distributed some tickets issued by the Mayor to admit the School Board children to an entertainment at a circus, received a smart reprimand from the Rev. T. Llewellyn-Edwards on the grounds that such performances "are not calculated to aid either the moral or the religious life of the community." Mr. Graham, in reply, asked the rev. gentleman to mind his own business and not interfere with the innocent pleasures of others.

Bramwell Booth is a chip of the old block. While his daddy is conquering the southern hemisphere, Bramwell is holding England, and lest business should get dull he is working up the Eastbourne excitement, by which he obtains a miraculous advertisement at a very trifling expense. Nor is this all. The sublime soul of Bramwell Booth ranges from China to Peru, and it has just occurred to him that there is

something wrong in Russia. Accordingly he has issued an appeal for the starving peasants of that country, as though he had a special interest in the business. Of course the subscriptions, if any, will not be distributed in Russia, for the Czar is putting down such agencies with a high hand. But the money may be useful elsewhere, and in any case Bramwell will get a good advertisement.

The *Catholic Times* extols the Pope for his humanity in seeking to suppress duelling. The *C. T.* forgets two things: first, that, as with slavery, the papal condemnation of the duel comes rather late in the day, since the practice either does not exist or has almost died out in non-Catholic countries; next, it forgets that duelling arose out of a religious idea. Our pious ancestors thought God too just to allow an innocent man to fall under the blows of a guilty one, and the issue of the combat was regarded as a divine decree. Duelling arose from the trial by ordeal, one form of which is divinely directed in the fifth chapter of Numbers.

M. Buisson, the Director of Elementary Education in France, has been appealed to as to the correctness of Bishop Moorhouse's account of a sort of Freethinking catechism, which the Bishop alleged was used with official sanction in French schools. M. Buisson pronounces the whole story to be pure fiction.

The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* devotes a leaderette to the statistics of suicide in France, and refers to the charge that it is due to the spread of irreligion, but without accepting this as a satisfactory explanation. But why give any prominence to the ridiculous charge? The real reason for the increase of suicides is the ever-growing strain of modern life. The social environment is changing a good deal faster than the average man's power of adjustment, and many will give way under the pressure until we reach a state of greater equilibrium. One fact, at least, is certain; religion does not prevent suicide; and, on the other hand, irreligion does not increase it. Those who assert the contrary should prove their case by comparative statistics, instead of turning their prejudices into arguments.

How many persons are brought to lunatic asylums by Atheism? Yet religious mania is well-known in those establishments. There are thousands of sufferers from the malady, and of all unfortunates they are perhaps the most to be pitied.

The Rev. Joseph Lyne, or as he chooses to call himself, Father Ignatius, is a regular Peter the Hermit in preaching a crusade against heresy. He recently went over to America inveighing against Dr. Brookes and Heber Newton, the rationalists. He placarded the walls of New York with announcements of the "Bold Repudiation of the Christian Religion in the Episcopal Church," thereby well advertising the views he seeks to overthrow. Now he is denouncing Dr. Momerie, taking as the title of his lecture, "The corruptions of Dr. Momerie." He says Dr. Momerie is only the outcome of the teachings of Dean Stanley, Dr. Haweis, and other Broad Church heretics, whom he incites his hearers to "ferret out" and out from the orthodox fold.

Mr. Avon, the Hersham schoolmaster, on whose prosecution for beating a boy we had a paragraph in our last issue, puts a different complexion on the case in his letter to the *Star*. He declares his innocence, and says that, being a Dissenter, he is the victim of Church of England managers and magistrates. We should be sorry to do Mr. Avon an injustice, and we give publicity to this correction.

They know how to raise the wind at Exeter Hall, but they rarely do it more effectively than at the meeting of the Church Missionary Society last Friday. Bishop Tucker, before leaving for East Africa, declared the position in Uganda was one of extreme peril. The withdrawal of the British East Africa Co. would be followed by the massacre of the converts and the murder of the missionaries. £15,000 only was necessary to avert this disaster. Then the good people sent up their money, one enthusiast divesting himself of his gold watch, and altogether £8,000 was raised, more than half the amount required. Following on the heels of this comes a report that Captain Legard has defeated the Mohammedans at Uganda, and inflicted heavy losses on them. So probably the missionaries and converts are quite safe after all.

German anti-Semitism, says the *Jewish World*, is usually founded on the notion that the hated race are to be punished for crucifying their Savior, although at the time the events are said to have taken place the Romans only, and not the Jews, had the power of life and death in Palestine. But a book has been published which throws the onus of the crucifixion on the Germans; for it says Pontius Pilate was certainly a German, for he was a native of Forcheim, near Bamberg. His guards would also probably be Germans.

As an instance how false versions spread, we notice the blunder cited in the *New York Truthseeker* of Oct. 24 from the *New York Sun*. That paper pledges Mrs. Besant's credit to the assertion that "since Madame Blavatsky 'left' I have had letters from her in her own handwriting." This is used generally in America as an argument for spiritualism. But what Mrs. Besant said was that Madame Blavatsky could not have written certain alleged Mahatma letters because since her death she had received some in the same handwriting. A circumstance which might be explained by a practical joker is made into testimony to a miracle.

We have ourselves had one of these mysterious letters recently. It came, however, through the ordinary post, stamped London, E.C. The communication, which was signed "Sat Bhai," was in apparently oriental characters, written in the Mahatmic manner with blue pencil on red paper. It was submitted to a lady Theosophist, who suggested it should be "psychologised," i.e., given to a clairvoyante to see where it came from. The lady clairvoyante said it gave her an impression of intense heat, so she was sure it came from India. It was also from a person of power; but no definite information could be given. Submitted to oriental experts, the handwriting was declared to be a bogus imitation; and placed before a mirror the word "crackpot" could be deciphered in English characters. Evidently jokers are about. The Mahatma letter will be on view at Mr. Foote's lecture on Theosophy at the Hall of Science on Thursday.

The *Sunday Oregonian* says that the only saloon keepers who have taken any interest in the question of closing the World's Fair on Sunday are those of Chicago, who have arrayed themselves with the church people in favor of closing the Fair on Sundays. If the working people of Chicago are denied admission to the Fair on Sundays they will seek recreation in the open-air saloons, beer gardens, and concert halls, to the financial gain of the whiskey sellers. These facts have been published before.

The *Church Review* congratulates itself that prayers for the dead are offered in the Barony Parish Church, Glasgow. Surely there is some mistake. Can the godly Protestant Scotch permit this in the church of Norman Macleod?

The *English Churchman* cites a hymn in use in a village day-school in Yorkshire. We give two verses.

How shall I get my sins forgiven?
How cleansed from every stain?
Baptismal purity brought back,
My soul restored again.

First to confession I must go,
And tell out all my shame;
My list of sins all one by one
In penitence must name.

Confession finds such support among sacerdotalists because it means the power of the clergy.

The Congregationalists are discussing having colleges for ladies to bring out lady preachers. They evidently disregard the injunctions of St. Paul, "I suffer not a woman to teach" (1 Timothy ii. 12), "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. xiv. 34).

"I was at the manse the other day," said the percentor to an old crony, "an' the minister and me got on the crack. He says to me—'Jim,' says he, 'I'm very sorry to tell you that I must advise you to give up your post, for there are several people complaining that you cannot sing.' 'Weel sir,' said I, 'I dinna think you should be in sic a hurry to advise me. I've been tel't a dizzen times ye canna preach, but I never advised ye to gie up your place.' I saw he was vexed, so I jist said—'Ne'er heed, sir; the fules'll hao taed hear us till we think fit to stop.'"

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, November 8, Hall of Science, Rockingham-street, Sheffield:—at 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; at 3, The Follies of Theosophy"; at 7, "The Way to Heaven."

Thursday, November 12, Hall of Science, Old-street, E.C.: at 8, "Theosophy."

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

December 6, Hall of Science; 13, Manchester; 14, Blackburn; 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, Merthyr.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Nov. 8 and 15, Birmingham; 22, Portsmouth; 29, Leeds. Dec. 6, Bolton; 7 and 8, Blackburn; 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; 14 and 21, Hall of Science, London; 28, Birmingham. April 4, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

S. GORDON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

S. G. Y.—Any bookseller almost will supply you with a copy of *Cruden's Concordance* for a few shillings.

H. RUSHTON.—That pious yarn about the poor Christian man who rebuked Mrs. Harriet Law and spoiled her meeting, was contradicted and exposed many years ago. It is another lie "in one chapter."

E. LONGSTAFFE.—We are obliged. See paragraph.

H. LONG (Dewsbury).—It shall be stopped until we hear from you again. Thanks for your successful efforts to promote our circulation.

R. X. REGES.—(1) We do not trouble our head about Monism or any other form of metaphysic. All we trouble about is the order of the succession of phenomena. In other words, we are in the positive stage, having left the theological and metaphysical stages behind us. Whoever grasps the principle of the relativity of human knowledge, sees the futility of ontological speculation. (2) We share your opinion of the worship of the Unknowable. Capital letters do not make ignorance an entity. The savage worships the "Unknown" in detail, and some Agnostics perform the same folly wholesale.

N. ASHWORTH.—The date is booked.

E. J. IERNEY.—The poem you refer to is included in one of our Tracts. Mr. Forder will supply you with any quantity at sixpence per hundred. The matter of the certificate shall be seen to.

F. J. LAST.—Thanks. See paragraphs.

J. BUTLER.—See paragraph.

W. GOODBURN.—Mr. Foote has no engagement booked for Hull.

J. D. CLAY.—Mr. Foote will try to visit Oldham later on.

P. W. BALDWIN.—Some heads are impervious to arithmetic.

J. H. EARLY.—Glad to hear the Brighton newsagent is finding a sale for this journal. Thanks for your kind assistance.

G. MACRADDY.—Peg away. The Branch will grow in time.

W. HOLLAND.—Send direct to Mr. Stanley Jones, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Bradford Observer—Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette—Leeds Mercury—Northern Echo—North London Guardian—Castleford Gazette—Retford Evangelist—National Press—Manchester Evening Mail—Hindoo Magazine—Jewish World—Kentish Mercury—Bournemouth Guardian—West Sussex Gazette—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Manchester Evening Times—Church Reformer.

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.

If 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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's meetings at Portsmouth on Sunday were not so large as usual, probably owing to the great diminution of the posters announcing the lectures. No doubt the advertising will be bolder on the next occasion. The evening meeting was a fairly good one, and was followed by some discussion. General Synge came to the platform and spoke earnestly on behalf of the Christian faith.

The Portsmouth Branch has lost a good deal by Mr. Brumage's departure for London. Nevertheless it is making progress. The magistrates have granted a music license to the Wellington Hall, which has just been re-decorated and presents a decidedly improved appearance. The mortgage on the property is also being reduced.

A young Freethinker, who came from a little place near Southampton to hear Mr. Foote's lectures at Portsmouth, stated that he had induced a newsagent to display this journal for sale, half a dozen copies being taken for the purpose, with a guarantee against unsold copies. That newsagent now sells thirty copies, and the total cost of the experiment has been *sevenpence!* This should encourage our friends in other parts of the country to follow the same method.

It is a long while since Mr. Foote visited Sheffield, but he is lecturing there to-day (Nov. 8), and no doubt the readers of the *Freethinker* in the district will take the opportunity to hear him.

Mr. George Standing occupied the London Hall of Science platform on Sunday morning, and delivered a racy address on Theosophy. In the evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured to a large and enthusiastic audience on "The Difficulties of Theism." The musical part of "the service" was good, and Mr. Tovey read a piece of poetry.

Fund for settling Mr. Charles Watts at Birmingham:—J. Umpleby, £1.

To-day (Nov. 8) the Hall of Science lecturers are Mr. W. Heaford in the morning, and Dr. T. R. Allinson in the evening. We hope they will both be well supported.

We have tried to get the very best information as to the School Board Election dispute in East Lambeth, but the business is too mixed for us to come to a clear decision. There seems to be a good deal of local wirepulling and quarreling. Mr. Gibbon, an old supporter of Mr. Bradlaugh, is one of the four official Liberal and Radical candidates. The program of the Committee includes "secular" education, but Mr. Gibbon does not say a word about it in his address to the electors. One of the other official candidates, Mr. G. W. Keesey, drops "secular" education altogether, and turns it into "unsectarian." Mr. C. F. Cooper, the independent candidate, professes himself a Socialist and a Secularist, and makes a point of "secular" education. On the other hand, his prospects of success do not seem very brilliant. The Peckham and Dulwich Radical Club, for instance, which supported him at first, has now thrown him over.

At the very best we can only offer a little safe advice. I seems to us that the Secularists of East Lambeth should see what chance Mr. Cooper has before they give him their votes. If they find he has no chance, or a very poor one, it would probably be best to put a little pressure on Mr. Gibbon, bringing the point of "secular" education into prominence. The same might be done with Messrs. Keesey and Whiteley, and Lord Sandhurst. If they say they will, in practice when on the Board, adhere to the official program, it might be well to support them at the poll. If they evade the point, it might be well to vote for the candidate who is open and straightforward upon it. Even if he loses it will teach the others a lesson.

The Ball's Pond Branch is raising a memorial to Mr. J. W. Brown, a recently deceased member who was held in very high esteem. It is intended, if possible, to purchase a case of books for reference, to be kept in the Branch's library. Subscriptions can be sent to the secretary, E. Larkin, 3 Bradbury-street, Kingsland, N. All donations will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

The Leyton Branch held its first annual meeting on Sunday. The secretary read an encouraging report, which included a financial balance on the right side. All the old officers were elected, and two new members enrolled.

The first Social Evening at the new hall of the Finsbury Park Branch was held on Saturday last, and a very encouraging commencement was made. Songs, duets, pianoforte solos, recitations, and a sketch were contributed by members and friends. It is intended to continue these gatherings every Saturday evening, commencing at eight o'clock. All friends are cordially invited.

Mr. W. M. Rossetti, the chairman of the Shelley Society, has called a meeting of Shelley students for the purpose of forming a strong Committee to provide for the celebration of the centenary of the poet's birth in 1892. The meeting is to be held next Wednesday evening (Nov. 11), at 8 o'clock, at University College, Gower-street. All lovers of Shelley are invited to attend. Mr. Foote hopes to be present.

Mr. Robert Forder visits Southampton to-day (Nov. 8), and will lecture in the Philharmonic Rooms at 7 o'clock. We hope the local Freethinkers will all endeavor to be present. Mr. Forder wants to put the Branch on a better footing.

Cheltenham, of all places, is waking up with regard to Freethought. A Branch of the N. S. S. has just been formed there. The secretary is Mr. B. S. Cooke, 1 Regent-street. This should incite the Freethinkers of Bath and Gloucester to be up and doing.

New Branches of the N. S. S. are in process of formation at Norwich and Maidstone.

A special members' meeting of the Grimsby Branch will be held this evening (Nov. 8), at 6.30, at the Hall of Science, Freeman-street. Important business has to be transacted.

There are several readers of the *Freethinker* in Harwich. Will they, if they care about organisation, communicate with Mr. Leon du Plergny, at the Ordnance Office? We should be glad to see a practical result from this appeal.

Mr. A. Guest turned up at the Market Place, Preston, on Sunday, to hold the announced public debate, but his Christian opponent did not put in an appearance. The opportunity was not wasted, however, for Mr. Guest delivered an address on Christianity in relation to progress. Several Freethinkers were present, and after the lecture it was decided to form a Branch of the N. S. S. Mr. Baldwin, 2 Plant-street, Ashton-on-Ribble, will be glad to hear from persons willing to cooperate.

We are delighted to hear that the Ulster Branch is still progressing. Its meetings in the new hall at Belfast are better attended than ever, and the members' list is lengthening. Mr. Knox, the active and genial secretary, informs us that four years ago the Branch sold *six* copies of the *Freethinker* weekly; now it sells *sixty*, and more on special occasions.

Mr. A. B. Moss is making an experiment in which we wish him success. He has taken the upstairs Lecture Hall, High-street, Deptford, for Sunday evening lectures till Christmas. The Deptford Branch is going to do the advertising, etc., and the expenses are to be defrayed by collections. Particulars were not sent us in time for a notice in last week's *Freethinker*, otherwise we should have had pleasure in drawing attention to the opening lecture, which was delivered last Sunday. We hope the local Freethinkers will bring their orthodox friends to hear Mr. Moss's lectures.

Since writing the previous paragraph we have heard that Mr. Moss made a good start on Sunday evening. He had an audience of about 150 persons. This included a small rowdy element, which failed to hinder the proceedings; in fact, it disgusted the Christians. Three new members were enrolled.

The *North London Guardian* inserts letters from Mrs. Louisa Samson, and Messrs. Larkin, Ward and Rowney, on the proposed exclusion of Freethought works from the Stoke Newington Free Library. Bold advertisements are inserted in the same journal of the *Bible Handbook*, etc., and of the

Finsbury Branch's Sunday lectures. We fancy the bigots will be sorry they spoke.

Atheists are horrible creatures only to those who have never seen them. *Apropos* of this there is an anecdote of David Hume in the autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, of Inveresk. When Robert Adam, the celebrated architect and his brother lived in Edinburgh with their mother, she said to her sons "I shall be glad to see any of your companions to dinner, but I hope you will never bring the Atheist here to disturb my peace." But Robert fell on a method to reconcile her to him, for he introduced him under another name, or concealed it carefully from her. When the company parted, she said to her son, "I must confess that you bring very agreeable companions about you, but the large jolly man who set next me is the most agreeable of them all." "This was the very Atheist," said he "mother that you was so much afraid of." Well, she replied, "you may bring him here as much as you please, for he is the most innocent, agreeable, facetious man I ever met with."

Dr. Paul Haupt, the professor of Semitic at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, is with a number of other scholars—mostly Americans—about to produce a "new translation of the Bible." The more of such versions there are the better. They help to destroy the glamor of reverence and infallibility which has gathered round the old book.

A prize of 10,000 francs is offered for the best model of a statue to Garibaldi, to be placed in one of the new squares in Naples. Some difference now from the time when Naples was ruled by Bomba and the priests.

The Federation of Free Religious Societies of Germany, of which until his recent prosecution Dr. Voelkel was chief lecturer, numbers 79 societies and 10 auxiliary divisions. The society of Berlin has 4,000 members; of Offenbach, 1,600; of Magdeburg, 1,000; of Mannheim, 755. About 10,000 members are found in Prussia, 7,000 in Hesse, 200 in Baden. The Federation numbers about 50,000 members, and aside from the property owned by the individual societies has a bank account of 3,675 marks.

Italy is a bad place for the clergy to prosecute unbelievers. Editor Novelli, of the Florence *Vero Monello* (The True Rogue), who was indicted for irreverence and blasphemy of the holy Catholic humbug, was discharged. The audience that crowded the spacious courtroom could not refrain from cheering the verdict. The sky-pilots made themselves small, and disappeared down the back stairs.

Everybody knows (says the *New York Advertiser*) how busy Col. Ingersoll is, but everybody does not know that, no matter how busy he may be, he has always a moment or so to spare to give advice to the young. Quite a number of letters come to him every week soliciting knowledge on almost every subject. Yesterday one of these letters came to him when he was head and heels in work. It began, "Dear Sir,—I am broken-hearted—." Col. "Bob" hadn't time to read more, but he made time to return a prompt reply. He wrote, "My Dear Boy,—In a month from now you will feel only half broken-hearted. In six months you won't feel broken-hearted at all, and in a year you will probably be engaged to some other girl."

The Rev. Stewart Headlam gives his address to the Hackney electors of the London School Board in the *Church Reformer*. As he continues to proclaim that the education given in Board schools "should be secular, pure and simple," and that "the time now devoted to Bible lessons might be much better spent," we recommend our friends in Hackney to do their best to ensure his return.

The Hon. Lyulph Stanley's idea of Universal Board Schools should not be lost sight of. A good sprinkling oven of the religious are now found to favor the idea, especially under the hope that money now employed to support voluntary schools may be used to augment the incomes of poorly-paid curates. The Hon. Lyulph Stanley puts up again for Mary-lebone, and should be supported in that district.

Our ever-welcome Freethought contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*, contains the following:—"The London *Freethinker* has been enlarged from twelve to sixteen pages.

With the exception of the *Truthseeker* it is probably the only Freethought journal which has supported itself from its initial number, and undoubtedly Mr. Foote, like Mr. Bennett, saw some gloomy periods. And even unto this day there are probably times with it as with us when 'times are hard.' Mr. Foote has annexed Mr. Watts, and together they will have little difficulty in keeping the Secular party up to its work. We shall not be surprised to see Mr. Watts, and perhaps Mr. Foote, in the British Parliament within a few years."

Friend Macdonald doesn't know the British Parliament as well as we do. It took Charles Bradlaugh thirteen years to get returned for Northampton—to say nothing of the time it took him to sit for Northampton. We fear that the political prospects of avowed Atheists, and especially militant ones, are very shadowy. However, we don't intend to prophesy. What will be will be. Yes, says the cynic, and what won't be won't be.

We have received from the Excelsior Press, 65 Okhil Mistrys-lane, Calcutta, the first number of *The Hindoo Magazine*, a monthly review edited by Amrita Lal Roy, and intended to give its readers a view of Hindoo philosophy and religion. Hindooism is far more philosophical and worthy of attention than the jumble of Kabbalism and Buddhism put forward by Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Sinnett; and while Theosophy is the rage there should be a chance for *The Hindoo Magazine*.

There are two Freethought articles in the November number of the *Nineteenth Century*. The first is on "The Christian Hell," by Mr. James Mew, who goes over much the same ground as Mr. Wheeler in his *Christian Doctrine of Hell*. He shows that the Christian view was immeasurably more horrible than that held by Pagans, and that "the evils of mediæval life were transformed into our creed." Among others he mentions Pinamonti's *Sight of Hell* and the work of another Catholic contemporary, who maintained that the rotation of the earth was due to the efforts of the damned to escape from their central fire. Climbing up the walls of hell, they caused the earth to revolve as a squirrel its cage or a dog the spit. Mr. Mew gives in conclusion the views of Freethinkers, which it is easy to see are identical with his own.

The other paper to which we refer is by Dr. Louis Robinson, and entitled "Darwinism in the Nursery." Dr. Robinson shows what light may be cast on the early history of man by watching the development of infants. He instances the gift of grip and other particulars, only to be explained by inheritance from an earlier stage. His concluding words also reveal his standpoint towards the orthodox doctrines. He says: "Devils and devil-worship might easily have originated from a nightmare, and since even dogmas have pedigrees and are subject to the laws of evolution, it is perhaps no very wild suggestion that some of the more sombre tenets of our gentle nineteenth-century creeds may owe their embryonic beginnings to the sleeping attitude of some palæolithic divine who had gorged himself in an unwise degree with wild-boar flesh."

A METHODIST DIVINE ON SCEPTICISM.

THE Rev. Dr. Jenkins, an ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, recently gave an address on Agnosticism and Christianity. In the course of his remarks he said "he had read all the philosophies and studied them, but found nothing like Christianity"—an observation we can quite believe. Like the cholera, one sample is enough to satisfy the wildest ambition. "Agnosticism might live on for a time if the Bible were put away, the churches closed, and Christianity treated as being no force; but if so, it would be with the impulse that Christianity had given it. See? making it safe for Christianity anyhow, dead or alive, sink or swim, survive or perish. This reminds us of Christians claiming Charles Bradlaugh as one of their own without his being aware of the fact. This was after he became looked upon as "respectable." We can't get on without Christianity at all, but if we do happen to manage without it, some time in the future we shall be equally indebted to it on account

of the "impulse" it had given us! Good old impulse. "Let that impulse die away," says Dr. Jenkins, "and then there would be no moral impulse, no restraint, no moral foundation, and the world would speedily go to ruin." Well, of course, if the "impulse" were foolish enough to go and die, well then, there would be no impulse, so to speak, worth speaking of, and he needn't have troubled telling us. And I wonder why the world didn't go to ruin before Christianity arrived here. As for the "no restraint," "no moral foundation" argument, we fancy we have heard it before many a time. Dr. Jenkins is a religious Sir Leicester Deadlock, who, it will be remembered, had a great horror of "obliterating the landmarks," "opening the floodgates," and "cracking the framework of society," etc. "Greece, Rome, and Egypt were cultivated," said the Doctor, "but that could not save these countries, and so it would be with England if Christianity were destroyed." Old England will always be Old England as long as it keeps a firm grip of Christianity, or rather as long as Christianity keeps a firm grip of Old England. While the Doctor was about it he might have told his audience that Christianity destroyed the Roman Empire, but he didn't. He might also have informed them that the fall of Spain from being a mighty power to one of fifth or sixth rate of importance was not brought about by Agnosticism, but that Christianity had a good deal to do with it. But perhaps the Doctor is not particularly well up in history.

"He was not in the least afraid of Atheism and Infidelity. He had read the books of Atheists and Infidels, and found their arguments were hollow"; as hollow, he might have added, as the heads of those of his audience who applauded the statement.

Of course Christians never are the least afraid of infidels and infidelity—in their pulpits. But somehow they don't seem to care about facing them on their platform. If the arguments of infidels are so hollow and so easily answered as it is pretended, surely Christian ministers are greatly to blame for not pointing out their hollowness. A serious responsibility rests upon them. It is no trifling matter that thousands of people are annually going to hell through the instrumentality and arguments of "infidel" lecturers, while the Dr. Jenkinses of the Christian Church, who could so easily explain things satisfactorily, are content to go on convincing Christian congregations, who need no convincing, that Christianity is the true religion, without trying to put a stop to the tropical emigration. It shows a callous indifference to the eternal interests of so many of their fellow countrymen that is dreadful to contemplate. Let us generously hope that this dereliction of duty on the part of Dr. Jenkins will in no way interfere with his promotion in the upper-circles.

H. J.

THE OX AND THE ASS.

There is nothing in the canonical gospels telling the nature of the cattle that occupied the Bethlehem stable in which God descended to be born, but there is a current tradition that it was between an ox and an ass. A far-fetched prophecy, "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib" (Isaiah i., 3), has been lugged in to account for this, and mention of the two animals is also made in the apocryphal gospel known as the Gospel of the Pseudo Matthew, though the first of the Synoptics is as fully entitled to that designation. The tradition has, however, been a pretty constant one. All the ancient pictures of the nativity show this trinity—ox, ass, and infant. It is alluded to in the well-known old Latin Christmas carol—

Cognovit bos et asinus
Quod puer erat Dominus.

Of course, the ox and the ass knew that the child was the Lord, for this trinity were a trinity in unity. In other words, the ox and the ass were as much the Lord as the boy. The truth is, they were all three astronomical symbols, and are found depicted together as such on Mithraic and Gnostic gems.

BOOK CHAT.

Lord Coleridge delivered a speech of characteristic eloquence at the unveiling of the Matthew Arnold memorial in Westminster Abbey. We think he overrated Arnold's power as a thinker. That exquisite writer produced some poetry of a very high order. But his chief distinction in prose was a certain dexterous satire, very playful and graceful, but very keen and penetrating. His religious criticism was only the expression of personal preferences; and his attempt to construct a natural Jesus, of almost supernatural wisdom and purity, out of the Gospels, was a futile absurdity. His work on this side was unfruitful; but lovers of literature will long relish his graces of style, and treasure some of the verses in which he gave consummate expression to the *malaise* of our transitional age. Here and there too, as in the *Forsaken Merman*, he gave us that pure gold of poetry which is everlasting.

Himself a religious man, it was natural that Lord Coleridge should speak of Arnold as a "striver after the eternal truths of scripture and religion." But no such striving will give him a place in the mind of posterity. It will have to be found for him by his other gifts. Religious writers are only remembered when they have something else than religion; either a special genius for literature, or a special position in ecclesiastical history. Hooker, Taylor, Barrow and South are dead as theologians. They live as great writers, masters of dialectic and style; qualities that are quite independent of their theology, and may be valued and relished by the most pronounced Freethinkers.

Genius went into the Church when it offered the highest rewards of power and position, as it now goes elsewhere. It is a fallacy to talk of Christianity *producing* great men. It simply attracted them, found them employment, and paid them in money or distinction. Those rewards are now found in law, medicine, literature, art, commerce, and politics. Hence the Church is absolutely destitute of genius. Men of real greatness want popular respect as well as cash, and it is no longer secured by serving the Church, which only attracts second and third-rate intellects at the very best. This century has added no name to the list of great divines. The theology remains, but the genius is gone. Compared with the great divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, even to the time of Bishop Butler, the first religious writers of to-day are insignificant. Archdeacon Farrar is said to be eloquent, but good judges know his style is "wind and fizzle."

Mr. William Morris is to bring out at his own press a *History of Socialism*, in which he has had the assistance of Mr. H. Sparling.

Oscar Wilde is writing a novel which will deal with Christianity from the standpoint of one who regards it as a great world force, and without any doctrinal bias. One of the scenes will be laid in Palestine, but the story will deal with modern, not early Christianity. Something fantastic may be expected.

Edgar Fawcett, who boldly announces himself as an Agnostic, some of whose poems we have brought before our readers attention, has another volume of verse ready for publication.

Mr. C. G. Leland's *Gypsy Seer and Fortune-telling* (T. Fisher Unwin) is a book at once for the student and for the general reader. No evolutionist needs to be told of the advantage, we might say the necessity, of studying savage beliefs as an introduction to the understanding of even the highest faiths. Their very foundations may be discovered in the seemingly senseless superstitions connected with witchcraft, spells, and exorcisms still in vogue among the gypsies, and which are charmingly described by the president of the Gypsy Lore Society.

Mr. Leland, the creator of Hans Breitmann and the translator of Heine, is *facile princeps* in all that relates to that interesting people the gypsies. Like his predecessor Borrow, he has lived with them almost as one of themselves. He has brought together a mass of entertaining information in regard to their superstitions, with translations of their

incantations, love-songs, and charms. That prayers are a development of sorcerer's spells is forcibly suggested by some of the illustrations.

In his preface Mr. Leland shows that the belief in sorcery is still prevalent. He says: "There is not a town in England or in Europe in which witchcraft (its beginning) is not extensively practised, although this is done with a secrecy the success of which is of itself almost a miracle. We may erect churches and print books, but wherever the pre-historic man exists—and he is still to be found everywhere by millions—he will cling to the old witchcraft of his remote ancestors. Until you change his very nature, the only form in which he can *realise* supernaturalism will be by means of superstition, and the grossest superstition at that."

Mr. Leland not only sees but says that the beliefs now regarded as gross superstition are the foundation of theology, and that its endorsement of the belief in evil spirits makes its lasting condemnation, and, in his own words, "utterly destroys the whole platform of dogmatism and the immutable and eternal truth of any dogma whatever." Mr. Leland's book is full of interesting and curious matter, and is one to which we shall return.

SONG OF FREETHOUGHT.

HARK! the sound of battle's thunder—

See! onmarching Freethought's van,

Driving many a pious blunder

From the waking mind of man.

Who will swell the gath'ring numbers?

What tho' Christians cry us "shame"—

Leave faith's enervating slumbers,

Join to spoil the parsons' game.

Lift yourselves from old-world stories,

Priestcraft lives by manhood's loss.

Think no more of cloudland glories,

Supplicate no corpse-hung cross.

Lies, not truths, need God-vouched teaching;

Jesus has no power to save,

Be not led by cant and preaching,

Make a heaven this side the grave.

Come, who are not craven-hearted,

All old custom's shackles break;

Think of heroes who have parted

With dear life for Freethought's sake.

Martyrs' blood cries out for action,

Vengeance on this tale of old,

Whose fanatic, priest-bound faction

Scares the timid, kills the bold.

Rally round our banner, nations;

Brethren, spite of bigot's wrath.

Ignorance's dark creations

Fly before our widening path.

Onward march, all evil fighting,

Peace shall crown our present strife;

Down with Superstition blighting,

Up with Reason, Science, Life.

Chorus—Forward hand in hand we go,

Forward to give religion blow for blow,

Though we suffer unjust laws,

Time aids our victorious cause.

E. ANDERSON.

The preponderant *role* of the religions in past times is explained by the fact that then they were almost the only means by which men could set their intellectual and moral activity to work. They were the unique opening for all the higher aspirations of our being. At that epoch, with the exception of religion, there was no mental occupation other than coarse and material, nothing between the visionary and the most common reality. In the present day the necessary and natural middle course is found. Science and art have spread before our eyes their domains with never-ending perspectives, where everyone can expend their surplus activity without wasting it needlessly. Science permits of disinterested research, without tolerating the wanderings of the imagination. It gives enthusiasm without delirium. It has a beauty of its own, consisting of truth.—M. J. Guyau, "The Irreligion of the Future."

DAVID AND ORPHEUS.

Our old and much esteemed—by the Christians—Hebrew friend David was born at Bethlehem, six miles from Jerusalem, about 1080 B.C.—so says Calmet. It would be a very difficult puzzle for a modern geographer to show where this town Bethlehem existed at the above date; and I think it would be quite as awkward to even tell us where Jerusalem was situated over a thousand years before our present era. It was very naughty of Herodotus not to mention these towns, seeing he was in the neighborhood near four and a half centuries before they tell us Christ was born. The natives of this town that the Christians call Jerusalem never call the place by that name. Herodotus alludes to a city that he found in that district, which he names Cadytis, and he tells us that it was about the same size as Sardis. An English gentleman, who was there two hundred years ago (A.D. 1684), says "that the natives then called the town Condscherif." Volney, near an hundred years since, asserted that the orientals never call Jerusalem by any other name than El-Kods, the holy. Prideaux said that "Al-Kuds and Kadytis were the same, and meant the holy." Now there is enough evidence here to make us think that the birthplace of David is rather mythical. But to proceed.

There are several supposed personages in the pagan mythology comparable to David, but the principle one is the Grecian Orpheus, who is quite as mythical. Orpheus is generally said to have lived before Homer. Mr. Gladstone has decisively fixed the period of Homer's poems at least 1300 B.C. ("Synchronisms of Homer.") Orpheus, some writers say, was the son of Apollo, and the Muse, Calliope. His birthplace is rather uncertain, but the preference, from the evidence, is in favor of Thrace as being the scene of his nativity. And the learned Huetsaid: "That by an easy transposition of two letters, or radicals, the Hebrew name of Palestine, became the Hebrew name of the Thracians." Orpheus is allowed by the ancient Greeks to have excelled all other poets in sacred and religious hymns, and I am sure every Christian to-day says the same of their great erratic, exemplar David.

I put Orpheus first in this parallel because he is earliest in point of chronology. And here a word or two about Old Testament dates. "Until the fifteenth century, the Jews usually calculated from the era of Seleucides, when their present mode was adopted. Some writers, however, contend for the antiquity of the present era, but it is commonly supposed not to be more ancient than the fifteenth century."* And further: "The chronology attached to the English Bibles dates no farther back for its origin than Charles the First's reign."†

Pluto gave Orpheus his wife on certain conditions, and took her back again. Saul also gave David his wife on special conditions, and also took her back. Orpheus softened the heart of Pluto, the infernal king, with his music. David also softened king Saul in the same manner with his harp. And the words for king Saul in the Hebrew can be radically pointed with the vowels to mean "the infernal king," or Plato.

In the pagan mythology the character of Pluto was inexorable and unmerciful. He drove the dead into Tartarus or hell headlong by the aid of his sceptre and his attendants, the Cereberus, the Furies, etc. Saul did exactly the same—in opposition to David—with the assistance of his ministers of vengeance, who were always in attendance on him. He had his spear (sceptre) in his hand, ready to dart it where his rage directed. Orpheus was skilful in magic, and invented the way of initiation into the sacred mysteries, expiating crimes, curing diseases and how to appease the wrath of the gods of ancient Greece (Pausanias). We find in the Hebrew ritual that David regulated the whole system of the temple services, his prayers stopped a plague, he appeased the divine wrath of Jehovah, and his music even overpowered an evil spirit which possessed Saul.

Pluto was surnamed Agesilaus because he banished laughter out of hell, and Calmet says that "the character of Saul was that of a gloomy, apprehensive and melancholy man."

"Orpheus first taught the ceremonies of Bacchus, and, being an excellent dancer, made dancing a right of initiation at the feast of the gods" (Lucian). David's dancing at the great feast of removing the ark and feasting the people with each a piece of flesh and a flagon of wine is well known to anyone who will read his history in the Old Testament.

R. SHAW.

* Chronology of History, Lardner, 1833.

† Ancient and Modern Egypt,

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly meeting of the Executive was held on Oct. 28, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Messrs. Moss, Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Wheeler, Forder, Ellis, Robertson, Brumage, Ivatts, Killick, Hunt, Bater, Samson, Heaford, Beadle, Roger, Hartmann, Davies, Quinton, Larkin, and Jones, sec. The minutes of last meeting were read and adopted, as was the report of the Organisation Committee. The financial statement for the last two months was presented. A discussion then took place on the recommendations of the Organisation Committee relating to the Society's special lecturer's diploma, and the Executive decided that—(1) No candidate should be eligible who has not been a member of the N. S. S. for two years. (2) Every candidate should be interviewed by a sub-committee of three members of the Executive. (3) Every candidate shall be heard in a public address, at which members of the Executive shall attend, and of which proper notification shall be given to them by the Organisation Committee. (4) A report as to each candidate shall be given by the Organisation Committee with respect to qualifications before the Executive decides upon the application.—The Executive also decided that a printed form should be sent to members of the N. S. S. on the expiration of their subscriptions, requesting a renewal thereof, and that all subscriptions be acknowledged by means of a printed receipt from a receipt cheque-book.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS.—W. Mumby, 10s. 6d.; G. Hellen, 3s.; W. Anderson, 3s. 6d.; J. F. Blanchard, 1s.; Rochdale Branch, £1 1s.; Finsbury Park Branch, 10s. 6d.; Wigan Branch, 18s. 6d.; Blackburn Branch, 6s.; West Ham Branch, 4s.; Nelson Branch, 6s.; Birkenhead Branch, 3s. 6d.; Liverpool Branch, 10s.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Westminster Branch, £1 2s. 6d.; Wood Green Branch, 6s. 3d.; Hanley Branch, 3s. 9d.; G. Hellen (donation), 2s.; T. Noble (donation), 2s.; Camberwell Branch, £1 15s. 9d. STANLEY JONES, Sec.

"THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES'S MA."

An amusing story has been unearthed by the London correspondent of the *Sheffield Independent* concerning Mr. H. P. Hughes's visit to America. It seems that the committees who had undertaken the arrangements of his itinerary were inclined to make the most of his academical degree, and whithersoever he went the full title, "The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A.," flaunted on chapel doors, and gave an air of dignity to the small bills circulated among the congregations. One day it fell to the lot of a deacon in a rustic parish to announce the approach of the celebrated London divine. "On Sunday next," he said, carefully scanning the written announcement with which he had been provided, "the Rev. Hugh Price Hughe's Ma will occupy the pulpit in this church, and," he added, looking cheerfully and hopefully round the congregation, "we have no doubt the old lady will give us a telling discourse."

OBITUARY.

With deep regret I have to record the death, after a long illness, of John Cobley, aged 63. He was a member of the Wellingborough Branch of the N. S. S., and a friend when we needed one. During his illness he distributed many of his books among the members, and asked for a Secularist funeral. From the strong opposition of the family we were obliged to content ourselves with placing a wreath upon his grave.—M. GARFIRTH.

Every church is a kind of insurance society, and proposes, for a small premium, to keep you from eternal fire. Of course, the man who tells you that there is to be no fire, interferes with the business, and is denounced as a malicious meddler and blasphemer.—*Ingersoll*.

I find that the God who had no time to say anything on the subject of slavery, and who found no room upon the tables of stone to say a word against polygamy, and in favor of the rights of woman, wife, and mother, took time to give a recipe for making hair oil.—*Ingersoll*.

When we love our brother for the sake of our brother, we help all men to grow in the right; but when we love our brother for the sake of somebody else, who is very likely to do damn our brother, it very soon comes to burning him alive for his soul's health.—*Professor Clifford*.

PROFANE JOKES.

On one occasion Bishop Wilberforce's pride in his power of recollecting faces had (says his latest biographer) a curious rebuff. At a confirmation he thought he saw a boy whom he had confirmed before, and he sent twice to the lad to say so. The candidate for confirmation, irritated at the Bishop's persistency, said to the second messenger, who was no other than the clergyman presenting him, "Tell him he is a liar."

Adam—"Why did you take the apple?" Eve—"Because it was going at a bargain."

Tommy—"Mamma, will it be wrong if I make a kite to-day?" Mamma—"Yes, my child; to day is Sunday." Tommy—"Well, s'pose I cut it out of the *Christian*; will it be sin then?"

"Barton, the publisher, is an enterprising fellow." "I never suspected it." "Well, he is. He and I went to a spirit medium's séance last night, and Barton called for the recording angel and offered 75,000 dols. for a certified copy of the records for publication."—*New York Herald.*

Mother (giving Bible-lesson to her little son age 5): "Eve was made from a bone which God took from Adam's side when he was asleep." Little Boy (in a tone of deep conviction): "Oh, I don't believe that, mother, it would have tickled him so, he'd have woke."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, Mr. F. J. Last, "The Atonement."

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Mr. H. B. Rogers (candidate), "My School Board Program." Monday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting. Friday, at 8, discussion class. Saturday, at 8, entertainment (free).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: Saturday, Nov. 7, at 8.30, social evening for members and friends. Sunday, at 7.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Evolution v. Special Creation." Monday, at 8.30, Mr. Pearson, "The Outcome of Trade Unionism." Thursday, at 8.30, debate on "Education," opened by Mr. C. Cohen.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Mr. P. Millar, "An Earthly Paradise."

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 8, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Christianity and Evolution." Admission free.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, Mr. H. Snell, "Has the Religion of Christ been of Benefit to the World?"

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11, Mr. Harry Courtney, "Notes on a Harvest Festival"; 7, Mr W. Heaford, "The Plain Truth about Jesus." Wednesday, at 8, Mr. George Standing, "Mrs. Besant's *Theosophy and its Evidences.*" Admission free.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Character of Christ candidly Examined" (admission free); 6.45, musical selections; 7.15, Dr. T. R. Allinson, "The Gospel of Health" (3d., 6d., and 1s).

Lambeth—Mr. Roger's, 114 Kennington-road: 12, important business meeting.

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mr. Touzeau Parris, "A Candid Investigation of the Pretensions of Theosophy."

Stratford—Enterprise Hall, Great Eastern-road; 7, Mr. W. J. Bamsey, "Prayer to God."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mr. F. Haslam, "English Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, discussion.

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, Mr. E. Calvert, "George Stephenson and the Railway System."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, Mr. Toleman-Garner, "The Philosophy of Freethought."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christ: God, Man, or Myth."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. W. Norrish will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butcher's-hill: 11.30, Mr. Sam Standing, "Baal, Jehovah's Rival."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, public discussion on the School Board Election, opened by Mr. Hand; 7, Mr. Charles Watts, "Ought the Bible to be Read in Public Schools?"

Bolton—Spinners' Hall, St. George's-road: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Good and Evil, Vice and Virtue, Men and Women"; 6.30, "Why I am Not a Theosophist—a Reply to Mrs. Besant."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: noon, debating class, Mr. J. Forrester, "Some Biological Questions"; 6.30, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, "Max Müller on Natural Religion, II.—Language in Relation to Thought, Myth, and Religion."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, Mr. H. Hansford, "England's Sacrifice to the God Mammon."

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

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: Mrs. Annie Besant, 3.30, "The Theosophic Basis of Ethics"; 6.30, "Do Christians Believe in Christ?" Admission free.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 3, discussion class; 7, Mr. Booth, "The Childhood of Religion."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Mr. J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Heaven Myth"; 3, "The Past and Future of Women"; 6.30, "The Bible and the Schools—a Reply to the Bishop of Manchester."

Nelson—Secular Room, Market-square: 2.30, Mr. E. C. Johnson, "Some Doubts Concerning Evolution." Admission free.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, special meeting to consider the Sunday question, re music; 7, Mr. T. Pearson, "Christianity and Progress."

Northampton—Coffee Tavern, St. Michael's-road: 7, readings and discussion.

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, reading circle; 7, Mr. Stoddart, "Wild Women as Social Insurgents."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Mr. G. W. Foote, 11, "The Tree of Knowledge"; 3, "The Follies of Theosophy"; 7, "The Way to Heaven."

South Shields—Seamen and Firemen's Union Hall, Coronation-street: 7.30, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Life" (illustrated with diagrams).

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas-street: 6.30, annual meeting, election of officers.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, Mr. A. T. Dipper will lecture.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Nov. 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. 8, Deptford; 15, Reading; 22 and 29, Deptford Dec. 3, Finsbury Park Branch; 6, 13, 20, and 27, Deptford.

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.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Nov. 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.

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

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Nov. 8, Nottingham; 15, Westminster; 22, Luton.

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