

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"Man will never be that which he can and should be until, by a conscious following of that inner natural necessity which is the only true necessity, he makes his life a mirror of nature, and frees himself from thralldom to outer artificial counterfeits. Then will he first become a living man, who is now a mere wheel in the mechanism of this or that Religion, Nationality, or State."

—Richard Wagner.

DEVIL DODGERS.

Most people suppose this phrase to be a recent Americanism. It occurs, however, in the Memoirs of James Lackington, published in 1791. Speaking of certain ranting preachers, he says—"These *devil-dodgers* happened to be so very powerful that they soon sent John home, crying out, that he should be damned."

Admitting the age of the phrase, some will ask, Is it respectable? Well, that is a matter of taste. Is there any standard of respectability? Does it not vary with time, place, and circumstance? Some people hate wearing gloves, while other people feel half naked without them. A box hat is a great sign of respectability; when a vestryman wears one he overawes philosophers; yet some men would as soon wear the helmet of Don Quixote. Flannel suits are quite shocking in town; at the seaside they are the height of fashion. And as it is with dress so it is with speech. The "respectable" classes are apt to rob language of its savor, clipping and trimming it like the trees in a Dutch garden. You must go to the common, unrespectable classes for racy vigor of tongue. They avoid circumlocutions, eschew diffuseness, go straight to the point, and prefer concrete to abstract expressions. They don't speak of a foolish man, they call him a fool; a cowardly talebearer they call a sneak; and so on to the end of the chapter. But is this really vulgar? Open your Shakespeare, or any other dramatic poet, and you will find it is not so. A look, a gesture, is more expressive than words; and concrete language carries more weight than the biggest abstractions.

Let us break up the phrase, and see where the "vulgarity" comes in. There is nothing vulgar about the Devil. He is reputed to be a highly-accomplished gentleman. Milton, Goethe, and Byron have even felt his grandeur. And is not "dodger" clear as well as expressive? David dodged Saul's javelin. That was smart and proper. Afterwards he attempted a dodge on Uriah. That was mean and dirty. So that "dodge" may be good, bad, or indifferent, like "man" or "woman." There is nothing objectionable about it *per se*. And if "devil" and "dodger" are respectable in their single state, how do they become vulgar when they are married?

Of course it is quite natural for the clergy and their thorough-paced dupes to cry out against plain language. The clerical trade is founded on mystery, and "behind every mystery there is a cheat." Calling things by their right names will always be ugly to

impostors. "Reverend" sounds so much nicer than "mystery-man," "priest" is more dignified than "fortune-teller," "clergyman" is pleasanter than "sky-pilot," and "minister" is more soothing than "devil-dodger." But plain speech is always wholesome if you keep within the bounds of truth. It does us good to see ourselves occasionally as others see us. And if this article should fall under the eyes of a Christian man of God, we beg him to keep his temper and read on to the end.

We tell the men of God, of every denomination, that they are Devil Dodgers, and when they cease to be that their occupation is going. Old Nick, in some form or other, is the basis of every kind of Christianity. Indeed, the dread of evil, the terror of calamity, is at the bottom of all religion; while the science which gives us foresight and power, and enables us to protect ourselves and promote our comfort, is religion's deadliest enemy. Science wars against evil practically; religion wars against it theoretically. Science sees the material causes that are at work, and counteracts them; religion is too lazy and conceited to study the causes, it takes the evil in a lump, personifies it, and christens it "the Devil." Thus it keeps men off the real path of deliverance, and teaches them to fear the Bogie-Man, who is simply a phantom of superstition, and always vanishes at the first forward step of courage.

What is the Christian scheme in a nutshell? God made man perfect—though some people, after reading the life of Adam, say that God made him a perfect fool. This perfect man was tackled by the Devil, a sort of spiritual Pasteur, who inoculated him with sin, which was transmitted to his posterity as *original* sin. God desires man's welfare, but the Devil is too strong for Omnipotence. Jesus Christ steps in with the Holy Ghost and saves a few men and women, but the Devil bags all the rest, and Hell is thronged while Heaven is half empty; the one place having three families on every flat, and the other having leagues of spacious mansions "to let."

Now in every generation the Devil is after us. Without schools, or churches, or armies of professional helpers, or even so much as an occasional collection, he carries on single-handed a most successful business. The clergy tell us, as the Bible tells them, that he is monstrously able, active, and enterprising; never overlooking a single customer, and delivering damnation at the door, and even carrying it upstairs, without charging for carriage or waiting for his bill. All that sort of thing he leaves to the opposition firm, whose agents are clamorous for payment, and contrive to accumulate immense sums of the filthy lucre which they affect to despise.

This accommodating fiend is the *bête noir* of the clergy. They are always on his track, or rather he is always on theirs. They help us to dodge him, to get out of his way, to be from home when he calls, to escape his meshes, to frustrate his wiles, to save our souls alive-O. "Here you are," they say, "he's coming down the street. We are just running an escape party. If you want to keep out of Hell,

come and join us. Don't ask questions. There's no time for that. Hurry up, or you'll be left behind." And when the party turns the corner the clergy say, "Ah, that was a narrow escape. Some of you had a very close shave." And the next day a collector calls for a subscription for the gentlemen who saved you from the Devil.

Nearly fifty thousand gentlemen are engaged in this line of business, to say nothing of the Salvation Army. Fifty thousand Devil Dodgers! And this in England alone. If we include Europe, America, South Africa, and Australia, there are hundreds of thousands of them, maintained at the expenae of probably a hundred millions a year. Yet the Devil is not outwitted. Mr. Spurgeon says he is as successful as ever; and, to use Mr. Stead's expression, Spurgeon has "tips from God."

By their own confession, therefore, the Devil Dodgers are perfectly useless. They take our money but they do little else. Honesty would make them disband. But they will never do that. They will have to be cashiered, or starved out by cutting off the supplies. The real truth is, they never were useful. They were always parasites. They gained their livings by false pretences. They dodged an imaginary enemy. The Devil is played out in educated circles. Presently he will be laughed at by everybody. Then the people will dismiss the priests, and there will be an end of Devil Dodgers.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF INQUIRY. THE CASE STATED.

THIS paper represents the views of the writer, who, being Chairman of the Liberty Bequest Committee, the Editor of this journal is willing that the reader shall be informed of the aims and proceedings of that Committee.

The necessity of the power of bequest for the promotion of independent opinion has long been felt by all earnest propagandists of new ideas. The object of the Committee is to obtain for Secular Societies the same legal right of bequest which orthodox churches possess. They have sought the opinion of gentlemen "learned in law," who not being themselves Secularists, yet admit that all sincere opinion should have equal recognition under the statutes. Dr. Clair J. Greco was one of these, and Mr. F. J. Dowsett, who at my request drew up a case which included the highest opinions ascertainable upon the subject. Mr. Dowsett kindly prepared for the Committee a draft of a Bill, the principle of which was that trusts created for Secular and Freethought purposes should be eligible for administration by the Charity Trusts Commissioners, as in cases of religious endowment. On the advice of Mr. Carvell Williams (who as secretary of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Control and formerly member of Parliament, has a wide a knowledge as any man of what the House of Commons is likely to do) a second Bill was framed less likely to excite the hostility of adversaries in Parliament. An eminent barrister was at the trouble to draw it for the Committee, the principle of which was, that no bequest should be deemed void because it may be devoted to any purpose educational or speculative, towards the maintenance and propagation of any opinions supposed to be hostile to natural or revealed religion. But even in that form grave objections were raised by influential friends of the civil and religious equality, who were opposed, as the Non-conformists are, to all endowment of opinion. A third bill has been differently expressed. It appeared to me that all we require is that it should be legal

to create or endow any trust for inquiry into the foundation and tendency of religious and ethical beliefs, which from time to time may prevail. This principle, like Cassell's *Encyclopædic Dictionary*, "contains every word in the language"—of Freethought.

First, I will quote the letters of two eminent correspondents, whose views will be informing to all readers.

THE FIRST CORRESPONDENT.

"I have received your letter, and learn from it for the first time that it is illegal to make bequests for the propagation of freethinking opinions. I agree with you that this is unjust, so long as it is permitted to make bequests for the propagation of other opinions. If therefore I had a vote I should give it in your favor. At the same time I confess that it is a matter upon which I am not disposed to agitate.

"My reason is that I object to all bequests for the propagation of any set of opinions. I am inclined to think that all such bequests do more harm than good.

"I should be glad to see a chair founded in some university for Biblical criticism; but I should desire to see the professor absolutely unfettered. I would pay a competent person to inquire and to make his results known. I would not pay him on condition of his reaching certain predetermined results. By so doing I destroy his authority with rational minds. A professor pledged to orthodoxy is pledged to believe in the flood and the miracle of the pigs. Therefore no weight is attached to his belief. If he were pledged to disbelieve in them his authority would suffer in the same way.

"If a man is paid for preaching a creed he may be accused of preaching the creed for the pay. At present we have the advantage of not being liable to that charge, and I do not wish to lose the advantage. We who advocate absolute freedom of inquiry ought not, it seems to me, to want any pledges.

"Therefore, while I hold the prohibition in question to be unjust, I think that it would be injudicious to make such bequests as are now prohibited. We should rather aim at getting rid of all restrictions whether they are intended in our interest or in the interest of our antagonist."

THE SECOND CORRESPONDENT.

"I understand your complaint to be, in effect, this: that whereas a person may leave money by will for propagating the doctrines of Little Bethel, he may not leave money by will for propagating the doctrines of the Hall of Science. I quite sympathise with your complaint, which seems thoroughly reasonable; but I am afraid I cannot consent to assist you: first, because I have quite enough irons in the fire already, and secondly, because I think you have not hit upon the right remedy. If you have access to Professor F. W. Newman's pamphlet on *Religious Endowments* (Manchester: A. Ireland and Co.; 1874), you will, I think, understand my objections. The Professor observes (page 10):

"The State once thought itself competent to enact a public creed in religion; apparently it no longer holds itself competent, if we judge by its conduct in our colonies; but if it still felt its own competence for such a work, that surely is no reason why it should undertake to be a universal enforcer and perpetuator of every man's private creed, if he will only give his money for it. If the principle be morally right now, it must be right always; think then what would come of it to every old and law-abiding State. All the superstitions of antiquity would be artificially continued in existence. No wise State should allow individuals the right to perpetuate their own creed by the force of mere money. The very least that the State can enact, if it permits any tying up of funds by the act of dead men, is that the living who hold and enjoy the property shall be as free in a religious as in an astronomical or chemical foundation. A devotion of funds to propagate falsehoods is a public nuisance. It would be far better to disallow all endowments than to permit the dictation of what doctrines shall be taught."

"I apply the principles here laid down as well to the prohibition of dictating Agnostic or Secular doctrines as to the prohibition of dictating the doctrines of religious sectarianism. No doubt it may be argued that the existing inequality of rule is not consistent with fairness, and is prejudicial to truth: but I cannot think I can be called on to assist a false principle, even to remedy an injustice of this kind. We have no right to permit private persons to dictate to posterity."

The true remedy is to enact that attempts to dictate a creed to posterity shall not be supported by the law."

The first writer is as fair as he is instructive. He would not perpetuate the disqualification to which rationalism is subjected, until all irrationalism is deprived of the protection of the law. So long as it is permitted to make bequests for the propagation of orthodox opinion, he would, if he had a vote, give it in favor of the equality of heresy. In this he agrees with Mr. Carvell Williams (although he and all Nonconformists are opposed to the endowment of opinion), he would give his vote in favor of religious equality. While many bodies have undesirable advantages, he would not permit that a single and unfriended party should alone have their property confiscated. The question is not—as these writers suppose—purely one of hurtful privilege on one side, and the other side simply deprived of it. The orthodox side has not only the right of endowment, but the power of confiscating whatever property its adversaries may bequeath for the maintenance of their opinions. Both writers agree in advising the friends of equality of opinion, who have been subjected for centuries to the confiscation of their bequests, to voluntarily continue the disqualification another century at least—until those who are privileged shall be deprived of their advantages. Of the error of endowing opinion, which Professor Newman long ago made clear, Freethinkers have always been agreed. They have always regretted, before Lord Houghton wrote:—

That while the world rolls on from change to change
And realms of thought expand,
The letter stands without expanse or range,
Stiff as a dead man's hand.

Freethought, by its very nature, is opposed to the dead man's hand. Secularism is not a dogma—its principle is that of Science, seeking new truth as evidences reveals it. The Bill of the Committee seeks the Extension of Civil and Religious Liberty by legalising trusts for the maintenance of inquiry into the foundation and tendency of religious and ethical beliefs irrespective of whether the result arrived at confirms or confutes prevailing opinion. Free, unfettered, unpredetermined inquiry is not dogma. Some judges have held, and some still hold, that Christianity is not part and parcel of the law of England. Lord Cranworth used to say, "How would you go about indicting a man for not loving his neighbor as himself?" If it were done, every Christian would be in the law courts in a month. But the Bequest Committee dispute none of these things, but simply demand the legalisation of the right of making bequests for inquiry into truth. This is the case of the Committee.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

WHY PEOPLE DO NOT GO TO CHURCH.

CHURCH conferences, pulpit utterances, pious editorials, and contributed letters, both to the religious and ordinary newspapers, are frequently occupied with the question how to stay the growing alienation of the masses of the people from the churches. The subject has been glanced at in a number of letters in the *Times*, during the dull season recently, and now the *Church Times* devotes to it a leading article. It says, and I think justly, that the excuses usually assigned for non-church attendance "are chiefly remarkable for two things—their triviality and their inconsistency." They remind me of the many reasons sometimes given for drinking, the true reason being usually kept in the background. So with the various explanations given of the absence of working men from church, it is questionable if those we hear the most of are the most important. It is generally kept out of sight that unbelief in church teachings, and aversion to the humbug and insincerity of the hypo-

crites who play at believing they believe what they do not believe, has any share in keeping people from "the house of God."

It is easy to see why those who are obliged to keep up social pretensions should attend church. Down to the present century no man could hope for the smallest office in the country without being a communicant. Round the wealthy establishment still clings the air of respectability—which is more powerful than any odor of sanctity. But the working man is less under the influence of Mrs. Grundy and her conventions than the middle class, and can afford to assert his manhood, at least in his hours of leisure. And why should he attend church to feed on the dry husks of withered dogmas from which all nutriment has long departed, when he can gather the living science of to-day that will be of practical use to him in his own life? True, the clericals will not let him improve his knowledge or tastes in the public institutions of the country on his one day of leisure, but they cannot prevent him using it otherwise much as he pleases, though there is still a statute unrepealed by which every one can be fined for non-attendance at church. For a few pence he can regale himself with the best the world has thought in all ages. Why should he support an antiquated superstition, which has been the most powerful instrument of the oppression of his class?

The pulpit is behind the age. It is recruited from the mediocrities of the college. The fool of the family still does for the parson. No intellect is needed to drone out the old service, to read from the barbarous old Jewish records, or to reiterate the stale dogmas. It would be different if they had to be defended. Working men see that the clerical business is a trade, and to them a useless one. They know they are not really cared for, while every effort is made to secure the rich and influential, and the utmost indulgence shown to their vices once within the fold. The voice of the church is ever more heard, like that of the daughter of the horseleech, crying, Give! give! and the working men properly think those should subscribe who derive advantage.

Appeals are often made to the selfishness of capitalists to induce them to shell out to the support of the multitudinous pious coin-extracting schemes, on the ground that Christianity will make working men more contented. The pulpit points its assertions of the dependence of social stability (by which they mean the *status quo*) upon Christianity, by instancing the destructive tendencies of those who have lost faith in dear old Mother Church and her blessed creed, and want to make their heaven here below. The implication is that if working men were only regular attendants on the parsons' palaver, submitting to the restraints and enjoying the consolations of religion in the shape of the promised rewards of poverty in another and a better world, all the strained relations between capital and labor would cease. Well, if working men only believed that poverty here was compensated for by heaven hereafter, that God had commanded them to order themselves lowly and reverently to their betters, and to obey their pastors and masters under pain of damnation; if they believed that unless they resisted not evil and were patient and submissive here they would never be happy hereafter, perhaps this devoutly-wished consummation might ensue. But working men do not believe and do not care to listen to such nonsense. To make Christianity palatable to them it must be secularised, and the church must pose as the friend of the people. This can only be done where the people know nothing of the history of State-endowed Christianity.

One of the most farcical of the many queer religious organisations is the so-called Church of England Working Men's Society. It outrivals the Christian Want of Evidence Society. It has an enterprising

secretary, and as it pretends to do a deal in the way of Church Defence, he should not lack for funds. But he has never published a list of its *bona fide* working members; and the fact that its financial support is derived from well-to-do sacerdotalists and Romanisers is a sufficient comment on its pretensions. The Guild of St. Matthew—which I do not class with the before-mentioned farcical organisations, for the members, if few, are at least earnest and well-disposed—takes for its object “to justify God to the people.” It is a largo order, and to carry it out Mr. Stewart Headlam and those connected with him have to make such concessions that they are tabooed by the heads of their own church. For—although they profess to study social and political questions “in the light of the Incarnation,” which is perhaps why Bishop Moorhouse calls it “a rather eccentric Church of England guild”—they virtually admit that, to retain its position, Christianity must become secularised. And this indeed is being gradually forced on all denominations.

The churches have no longer that air of cold and solemn gloom which, in their palmy days, inspired awe and devotion. They are, as the *Church Times* boasts, nowadays “nearly invariably well-lit and well-ventilated, and well-warmed, and well-provided in respect of personal comfort”—at any rate for those shown to the better seats. The Ritualists, with their mass in masquerade, have triumphed simply because bright lights, flowers, robes, and the musical and other accessories of Ritualism, are more attractive. The leading soprano is becoming of more importance than the preacher. Advertisements show it is a better recommendation to a curate that he should be “a good intoner” than that he should be “powerful in prayer.” The Nonconformists follow suit in advertising “bright, attractive, musical services.” Their conventicles are built like churches, and like churches they run in debt for stained-glassed windows and big organs. The sects, in short, vie with each other in offering a cheap entertainment for the people. All this is good. But it is not good enough. There are still some people who think too well of God to suppose him gratified by all this mummery and flummery, and others too independent to be thus bribed into letting the ministers do their thinking for them. They weary of the repetition of “the old old story,” or, to put it plainly, the antiquated lies, and object to sit like empty buckets to receive whatever slush the sky-pilot chooses to pour into them from his coward’s castle of the pulpit.

Church frequenters are influenced more by convention than devotion. Take from the congregations those who go in search of social position or financial profit, to please the family, or Mrs. Grundy, or to encourage the others, and there would be a beggarly account of empty pews. Women are less independent and more the slaves of convention than men, and they are consequently better church-goers. The fact is patent. It is indeed admitted by the *Church Times*, which says: “Young men mostly, and to a large extent men in their prime, do not attend church” . . . “mothers and daughters, sisters and wives, go to church; but the men, the husbands and the brothers, the fathers and sons, do not.” The *Church Times* does not investigate “why this is thus.” It can be briefly explained. Women in the past have been kept in subjection, under-educated, dependent, and driven to the consolations of religion for all they have to undergo in this world. What Freethinkers have to do is to aid in the work of their emancipation. We must show them how much the Bible has been the instrument of their degradation. We too must have bright attractive musical services. We must cultivate the social element, and find a sphere for women’s benevolent activities. Once we have gained them the reign of superstition will be over.

J. M. WHEELER.

IS THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION A FAILURE?

THE editor of the *Echo* is very fond of admitting to the columns of his journal correspondence upon subjects of a very vague character—subjects upon which all sorts of disputants may engage in an apparently earnest and desperate warfare without coming within measurable distance of the real matter in dispute. For example, during the past few months the dull season has been enlivened by the appearance in this popular evening journal of a very animated discussion on “Is Religion a Failure?” Naturally most of the disputants understand the word “religion” in a widely different sense, and therefore each of them tilts ineffectually at the other, to the amusement but certainly not to the edification of the spectators. Of course, if the disputants understood the first principles of logical discussion, they would begin by asking which religion was meant, and in what respects it was claimed that the religion in question had failed. But those who proceed in this way would soon find that the editor—who no doubt has a certain constituency of readers to please—was not prepared to insert letters that went to the root of the matter, but only those which touched the fringe of the subject. Indeed, as soon as this point was reached the reader would find an editorial note inserted to the effect that the discussion was not on the question whether the Christian religion was true, but whether “*Religion itself was or was not a failure.*” Obviously this is only asking disputants to fire off their shots without having any real target in view. The question “Is the Christian religion a failure?” is a much more definite subject of discussion, although directly the question is put a variety of persons will rise who “profess and call themselves Christians”; who will say that it is not their Christianity that has been assailed, but somebody else’s; that they never held such absurd beliefs, although they would generally confess that they knew some other Christians who did.

The best method, therefore, is for each disputant to state his case and define his terms. The question is put, “Is the Christian religion a failure?” To answer this point effectually, a number of questions must be asked. I believe that the Christian religion is a palpable failure. But why? In the first place, because it is *not true*.

Now, I admit at once that a false religion may succeed for a time, as many false religions have succeeded; but even few Christians would be prepared to argue that Christianity deserved to succeed, if it could be demonstrated to be fundamentally untrue. And that is precisely what I maintain it is; it is false from the very foundation. Christianity rests upon the doctrine of the Fall; if that be not true, it follows as “the night the day” that all the rest, which is based upon the assumption of the truth of this doctrine, must be false. That man did not fall in the Garden of Eden six thousand years ago can be demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt. Man’s career upon this earth is not be numbered by six or even by sixty thousands, but by probably hundreds of thousands of years. Of this even a superficial study of geology or palæontology will afford ample evidence. But we have the further evidence that the Mosaic story is nothing but a repetition of an old Persian myth, and that it is neither true in substance nor in fact.

The story of the alleged miraculous birth of Jesus, his supernatural power, his crucifixion and resurrection, are all equally mythical, and therefore a religion that is based upon such alleged events cannot be expected to succeed in any but a most ignorant and barbarous age. And in point of truth history demonstrates to the impartial mind that the Christian religion did succeed when the people were steeped in ignorance and superstition, and that it began to decline as soon as the printing press was set in motion, and science began to make its way in the world. Moreover, it must be

remembered that Christianity made very little headway until it became allied with the State as a political power under Constantine in the year 324. After this the new religion succeeded in getting many adherents, but converts were not won by force of argument, but, as Mosheim tells us, by threats of punishment and other disreputable means (*Ecclesiastical History*, p. 141).

A religion that was upheld by fraud, forgery and force could not be expected to accomplish much towards the enlightenment and progress of the people; and consequently we find that the first sixteen centuries of Christian history was nothing but a history of persecution, of bloodshed, of folly, wickedness and crime of which only a barbarous and superstitious people could be guilty. Christianity in the second place failed because, being based upon superstition, it had little or no educational force; it left the people in ignorance—and ignorant people are invariably immoral also. Read the history of the Dark Ages for proof of this. The people were very ignorant and very pious—and very wicked also, we may add. When science came into the field, it came as a disturbing influence. The representatives of Christianity fought it with every weapon in the armory of superstition and brutality—with thumb-screw, rack, iron virgin and the stake. But all this brutal force would not avail against the vital power of truth as expressed through the medium of science and common sense.

The inauguration of the printing press sounded the knell, the death-knell, not only of the Christian superstition, but of all superstitions whatever. This was the means of spreading light in all directions—intellectual and moral light—which made knowledge and progress possible everywhere. And now we ask, In what respect did Christianity succeed during the ages of its ascendancy? Did it dispel ignorance? No. Did it remove poverty? No. Did it help the people to secure their social and political right? No. Did it promote art and science? Certainly not. It did none of these things. These were accomplished not only without its aid, but in direct opposition to it.

To what influence, then, do we owe the advantages which we enjoy to-day? To the little band of heroes and reformers who stood out in defiance of the persecution of the church: to our Brunos, our Spinozas, our Galileos, our Vaninis; to our Voltaires, our Paines, our Priestleys, our Carliles, and lastly, to our Bradlaughs, who in dark and troublous times have ever been ready to sacrifice themselves that the people might march more easily down the narrow path of progress and prosperity. By the aid of such men as these science has been allowed to wield its mighty influence for the benefit of humanity. And what has science done? It has helped us to build our homes, to feed our wives and children, to put books upon our shelves, to cultivate artistic tastes, to fill our homes with music—in short, to dispel the gloom and destroy monotony everywhere and make life worth living. Science has done all this. It has done more; it has given us the steam-engine, the telegraph, the telephone; it has taught us the use of electricity; in fact, it has converted the world from a howling wilderness of barbarians to a comparative home of comfort for man.

What has the Christian or indeed any religion done compared with science? Let the Christians discuss this question, and we will pause awhile for an honest reply.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Dr. Hedley, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Newport, has put forward a little book on *The Science of God*. If he jotted down all he doesn't know of either science or of God, it would make a large volume.

The Catholic Bishop of Nottingham says England no longer has a Christian code of morals. "It has legalised bigamy in the divorce courts, and permits the teaching in all directions of other most immoral doctrines"; the most immoral of all, we may be sure, being the non recognition of the church as the final authority.

THE LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE.

THE advertisement of the Syndicate formed to purchase the Hall of Science will be found in another column. I have all along held that the retention of this place as our headquarters is absolutely vital to the Freethought party; and now, I believe, my view is shared by all but the unconvertible. The chief thing is to act promptly. This is not only a matter for London. Freethinkers in the provinces are interested in the maintenance of headquarters in the metropolis. I appeal to them to apply for shares immediately. Every friend of the movement, every one who cares for its future, is bound to do his very utmost. A strong united effort will put the party in possession of the place where Charles Bradlaugh did his best work and achieved his noblest triumphs, and a splendid Institute will be erected on the spot which is consecrated by his eloquence.

Prospectuses have been sent out pretty widely. Friends who have not received one, and wish to, should drop Mr. Forder a postcard.

Some will prefer to assist with donations. Two ladies (what are the *men* doing?) have sent me £5 and £10 respectively. All the donations I receive will be deposited in the hands of Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the N. S. S. treasurer, and finally invested in shares according to my best judgment.

Subscribers to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, and shareholders in the Memorial Hall Company, have asked me what will become of their money. I have not the slightest doubt of its being available for the Hall of Science scheme when the time is ripe for action. Meanwhile it is in a position of security. Whatever happens, if the Hall of Science is secured, and a part of the premises rebuilt as a Secular Institute, I believe the name of Charles Bradlaugh will occupy a conspicuous place on the frontage.

G. W. FOOTE.

RELIGION AMONG THE LAPPS.

THE Lapps are very religious and keep Sunday taboo as strictly as the superstitious Norwegian fishermen. But the results of the beautiful lessons of God's holy words are not always beneficial. J. D. Caton in *A Summer in Norway* says: "In 1854 some of their religious teachers found some passage in the Scriptures which they construed to enjoin as a religious duty the killing of a thousand or some other large number of men, which alone could insure eternal salvation. It did not much matter who the victims were, so as they should be sure and kill enough. Under the influence of this religious frenzy they preached a crusade, and of course found followers, first from zeal and conviction, and then from fear and compulsion, till they collected a great body of men, women and children and rushed to the coast like an avalanche. They first fell upon Bosekoss, where they killed several, and among others a prominent merchant and a woman named Ruth Kautima. Long before they had sacrificed the requisite number they were arrested in their mad career, the ringleaders apprehended, and the multitude were driven back to the mountains. Some twenty or thirty were tried for their offences and convicted, three were decapitated and the rest suffered imprisonment for various terms."

"Johnny," said the minister, severely, "do you know where little boys who swim on Sunday go?" "Oh, nearly any place where there ain't likely to be no wimmen passin'," was Johnny's reply.

Wife: "My dear, what is the subject of to-morrow's sermon?" Minister: "The 'Fivolities of Modern Dress.'" Wife: "You must postpone it. I shall wear my new bonnet to-morrow for the first time!"

ACID DROPS.

General Li Hung Chang, the Chinese Prime Minister, attributes the outbreak of rebellion and the consequent massacre of foreigners to the intrigues of the French Jesuit missionaries.

Christianity appears to the Chinese a very immoral faith. All their notions of right conduct and of piety are bound up with the idea of filial duty and reverence to parents. When they hear that Christians believe in forsaking father and mother for Christ's sake, they think Christians must be capable of any atrocity. They are astounded at finding in sacred books injunctions to leave father and mother and let the dead bury their dead. Christians say they misconceive Christianity; but is it not also possible that Christians misconceive their religion?

A missionary whose house has been plundered by the Chinese, demands nothing less than war, and says it must come at last and the sooner the better.

No doubt we shall hear more of this cry for European action against China for the crimes of some fanatical rebels. But it should not be forgotten that, in the eyes of the Chinese, Europeans are intruders who have forced themselves upon them, and who are seeking to undermine their religion and gain their territory. They have the example of India before them. The Jingoos who cry for war will probably be personally interested. "Not only have you offended God," said Dr. Keate to some Eton lads he was flogging for stealing apples from his garden, "but you have injured me." The soldiers employed to defend the missionaries may serve to extend the opium traffic.

Christians are surprised at Chinese dislike to Christian missionaries, yet the few Moslem worshippers in Brougham-terrace, Liverpool, are always greeted with stones and jeers from a Christian mob. The authorities do not reflect on the result in India when fifty million of Mohammedans there learn that their creed is persecuted in England.

"Was Robert Browning a Christian?" asks Mrs. Sutherland Orr in the *Contemporary Review*. Speaking from personal knowledge, she says he was not a Christian "in the orthodox sense of the word." He rejected the antithesis of good and evil, and he "would have denied eternal damnation under any conception of sin." Nor does he appear to have believed in the divinity of Christ. Nevertheless he remained a Christian "in his own way." This is Mrs. Orr's way of keeping the poet within the fold. He is very near the gate, and the gate is open.

There are no less than seventeen clericals on the London School Board; eleven Church parsons, five Dissenting ministers and one Catholic priest. With the exception of the Revs. Stewart Headlam and E. Schnadnorst, they may be regarded as sworn enemies of everything but religious education. Anyone with a grain of gumption can see what brings them to the Board. Were public education *secular*, the clergy would have nothing to fight for, and would never trouble themselves about School Board elections.

An incident related to us by Mr. W. T. Leekey illustrates the encouragement given to faith by Bible teaching in Board schools. Last week, at an examination, a class of girls were asked, Was Abraham a good man? All shouted Yes but one, whose No was heard. The teacher asked why he was not. "Because he told the king of Egypt that Sarah, his wife, was his sister," said Mr. Leekey's granddaughter, a girl of ten. The inspector did not put her name down for a prize, but she got one from her grandfather.

A pious gentleman at Bristol has supplied the School Board teachers with a religious volume, which some of them are foolish and cowardly enough to use in the schools. One page of this precious book is devoted to Manna—that funny stuff which the Lord supplied the Jews with in the wilderness, and which the Psalmist says the angels eat in heaven. It is calculated that 9,000,000 pounds of it were provided daily. This would have filled 502 eight-ton trucks, and, at twopence a pound, would have been worth £37,500. The yearly value was £13,687,500, and during the forty years the Jews

saved £517,500,000 through having Jehovah as their caterer.

Fancy such stuff being trotted out in English schools in the nineteenth century! Some of the children, having heard of the famine in Russia, may wonder why Jehovah doesn't forward a regiment of eight-ton trucks of manna, or something a little more toothsome if he has any in stock, to the starving subjects of the Czar. Perhaps, if the children asked a question on the subject, they would be told that the Russians don't get the grub because they persecute the Jews. Well then, as the Jews are starving too, why doesn't Jehovah send on the eight-ton trucks to them? Anyhow, he might try it, though he and all his angels mightn't be able to get them over the frontier.

The wiser ones among the clericals are beginning to see that the days of the sole management of tax-supported schools by priests, who run them in their own interests, must soon depart. To stave off the cry for popular control they now speak of parental control. While the parents paid for the children they never offered them any voice in school management. But some profess themselves willing to do so now they pay little or nothing, in order that, by a pretence of parental consent, they may still keep under clerical management the schools mainly upheld by the State, and thus prevent any interference from ungodly taxpayers.

December 6, the date of our paper, is dedicated by the Catholics to St. Nicholas. This mythical saint was like Mercury, the patron of thieves. He was also the protector of virgins. According to the *Acts of the Saints*, he was so precocious in his pious observance of fasting that even as a baby he refused to take lacteal nourishment on Wednesdays and Fridays. This was beginning early, and ensured him the title of the child bishop. This pretty little story, however, was invented to account for the ceremony of electing a boy bishop towards the end of the year. This ceremony was a Pagan one, akin to the worship of the Christ-child at Christmas. It was a dramatic representation of the life of one year being carried over to the next. The ceremony existed in the church till the time of the Reformation. In 1512 Colet, the Dean of St. Paul's, ordered that the scholars should, every Childermas, "come to Paul's Church, and hear the Child Byshop's sermon." Childermas is now called Innocents, and connected with the legend of the massacre of children at Bethlehem by order of Herod, who died B.C. 4. The old meaning of Childermas, however, was that children symbolise the life carried on when the year was aged and dying.

The *Daily News* is reminded by Mr. Oswald Simon that what he calls the influence of a morbid interpretation of the second commandment has acted in the past as a powerful obstacle to the pursuit of painting by the Jews. The interpretation of the Rabbis was natural. God prohibited the making of the likeness of anything whatever. To his jealous disposition art was nearly related to idolatry. But the Jews are losing their dread of this imaginary crime; they are becoming secularised.

Chambers' Journal for December has a paper on "Modern Credulity." It is a large subject. The writer mentions many superstitions that still survive, but does not see, or at any rate does not say, that a foundation for them is laid in the Bible and its inculcation in early youth.

A Mr. Chas. A. Ward has written a big book to prove that Nostradamus was a true prophet. Verily superstition dies hard.

The crops in India have suffered terribly from want of rain, and there is also great scarcity in Upper Burmah. Both at Madras and Burmah experiments have been made with a view of producing rain by the discharge of dynamite. While the weather was under the control of God things always went wrong, so man is now thinking of taking it into his own hands.

Mr. Wallace Nelson, of Brisbane, issued a challenge to General Booth while that worthy was in Australia, to discuss with him the principles and methods of the Salvation Army. The "General" found he had other and more pressing engagements.

It is stated that the average working hours of the bakers

employed in the Salvation Army bakery are sixteen hours per day, and the carmen work fourteen per day. This has gone on since the resignation of ex-Commissioner Frank Smith. The avowed object of the present leader is to make the bakery pay, and this is being done at the expense of the sweated bakers.

The Boothites are a sorry failure in Liverpool. When the Sunday census was taken recently, although "the Army" had accommodation for thousands, its meeting-places were not one-third filled. All the cash of Booth's dupes cannot keep "the Army" from going down hill there.

Ananias Hughes, of the *Methodist Times*, is opposed to the policy of the "Liberal Eight" of the Birmingham School Board. He is not satisfied with the Bible reading in the schools, but desires "notes and comments," and as he is sure he is a Liberal it follows that the "Liberal Eight" are *illiberal*. For our part, we regard neither of the parties as liberal. One form of Christianity has as much, and as little, right in the schools as any other. We object to the Bible and to Bible explanation. Ananias Hughes holds a different view. He likes Bible explanation, only he wishes it to be of the Methodist species; the mischief beginning, in his opinion, when the Church of England gets the upper hand and Methodism has to knuckle under. A plague on both your houses!

Ananias Hughes has been advocating the claims of the London Wesleyan Mission at Preston, where he picked up a tidy sum. In the course of his speech he declared "it was better to be an Atheist than a professedly Christian humbug." Quite so; better even than a professedly Christian concoctor of lies.

Michot, the head of the Neuilly gang of burglars and assassins, once did a fine trade as election agent for the Reactionists. He received the Pope's blessing by telegraph for his zeal as a Clerical wirepuller.

William Peters, of Kettering, is one of the gentlemen who make a living out of "competitions." He generally sets the fools who pay entry money counting certain letters in parts of the Bible. Somehow the folk who win prizes are mainly his personal friends. One of the outsiders has just sued him for £9 16s. 4d., and won the case. But this won't stop the Bible counting business.

A squabble took place at a Baptist Chapel in Westbourne-grove. Blows were exchanged and blood was drawn. Then both sides went to law. The magistrate fined two of the muscular Christians, and called deacon Hoskins "a coward." "Let dogs delight," etc.

John Saunders, deacon of a Wesleyan chapel at Mumbles, has to pay £50 for seducing the daughter of another deacon.

Father Drew, of Millwall, is fond of mastiffs, but when they take to worrying little boys he finds them an expensive luxury. A jury has awarded £15 damages to one victim of his canine pets, although the man of God pleaded that the boy was trespassing. This plea, and Father Drew's whole conduct in the case, seem to show that he cares more for dogs than boys. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

There was a nice little row among the Baptists at Chelmondiston, Suffolk. The Rev. Mr. Cordle, who officiates, lives at some distance, and refuses to have an evening service and will not give up the keys to the elders who wish to have one. The other Sunday they stayed in the vestry and refused to go out. Some strong language was used, and when it became dark, after an attempt to eject the dissentients, which nearly resulted in a standup fight, they were locked in. The prisoners at length found a way of escape, and the question of right is to be fought out in the police courts.

Cyrus Teed, the new Messiah of the Koreshan religion in America, means to show himself a Christ up to date. He promises to build a six track railroad between the Atlantic and Pacific in one year, employing a million men in the work. He also offers to set the type for every newspaper in America by electric wire. One thing only is necessary as a prelude to these new revelations and that is indispensable—abundance of cash.

According to an American paper, a gentleman of Washington proposes to give 100,000 dollars to be used for developing and elevating the monkey race. The plan is to collect together specimens of the most intelligent and most promising of these animals, both male and female, and by a wise supervision of their sexual relations to produce the best stirpicultural consequences. The scheme is as sensible as the devotion of sixty millions annually to sending Christianity to heathens who don't want it.

The old question, Why don't working men go to Church? is being discussed at Wakefield and reported in the local *Express*. The many reasons assigned remind us of the old story of the numerous reasons given for drinking, only one solitary person being found to confess he drank because he liked it. Well, we guess working men don't go to church because they don't like it, and it is questionable if any discussion will make them like it any better.

The New York Presbytery decided not to persecute Dr. Briggs for heresy. The heretic climbed down a bit, and the presbytery recognised that they only injure their own creed by an exposure.

The apostles could have learnt a tip from the Yankees. Talmage says that he never lectures for less than between 500 and 1,000 dollars a night, and boasts of having an offer of 150,000 for a series of discourses. He has one of the handsomest houses in Brooklyn, where the New York city princes dwell.

In an article on St. Paul and Woman, the *Christian World* argues that Paul was not legislating for all time, and this doctrine was only temporary. What a fine divine revelation that stays woman's emancipation all it can and then has to confess it is superseded. We wonder if the *Christian World* will yet come to see that Christianity altogether was only of temporary value, and by no means for all time.

The Archdeacon of Manchester denies a personal Devil, and says hell is not everlasting, and is much cooler than it used to be. Well, if hell is not everlasting, what reason is there to suppose heaven to be so? Christ puts both on the same footing, and uses the same term for the duration of each.

Charles Dudley Warner, in his *Backlog Studies*, offers an explanation why hell is not so much preached nowadays. He says that in the good old times the meeting-houses were cold and cheerless. No wonder the preachers banged their Bibles, warmed up to their subject, and spoke much of the fiery lake and the Person whose presence was a burning shame. But stoves, gas, and cosy cushions have altered the temperature of theology.

Dr. Parker has been accused, in the *Baptist*, of plagiarising from Dr. M'Nulty. The oracle of the City Temple denies this in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which publishes the contradiction but withholds his remarks upon the *Baptist*, which, it says, "exhibit a sadly unchastened spirit." Christian humility comes out in full force and flavor when Christians touch each other on the raw.

A funny story about the recently deceased Bishop of Carlisle appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Once he upset a glass of water placed for him upon the pulpit before he began to speak, and the water trickled down the neck of an unfortunate young man sitting below. The Bishop was unconscious of the mishap, and strange to say his first words were "Accidents will happen."

A French commercial paper, published at Montreal, says that a curious system of fire insurance prevails in that city. The merchants pay the priests to say a number of masses instead of paying premiums to the insurance companies. They go to sleep securely at nights, feeling that the Lord is looking after their premises. This seems an admirable arrangement, but we fear there is too little piety in London to allow of its adoption by our city merchants.

Mr. Wm. Woodville Rockhill's deeply interesting book, *The Land of the Lamus*, contains a reference to the mysteries of the Theosophists. When Mr. Rockhill was at the great lamasery—Thibetan monastery, that is—of Serkok, he told the inmates of "our esoteric Buddhists, the Mahatmas, and

the wonderful doctrines which they claimed to have obtained from Thibet. They were immensely amused. They declared that though in ancient times there were, doubtless, saints and sages who could perform some of the miracles now claimed by the Esoterists, none were living at the present day, and they looked upon this school as rankly heretical, and something approaching to an imposition on our credulity."

Mr. Chelva Rajan, a Hindu gentleman now in London, says the "missionaries of Ceylon announced that on a certain day a free dinner and one penny would be given to all the native Christians in the island. All in want of a dinner came as 'Christian converts,' and having received their pennies gave a halfpenny as a sacrifice to the native gods for their wickedness, and kept the other halfpenny for themselves." Good business.

The *Church Times* is very angry with Mr. Mundella for saying that at the time of the Newcastle Commission "large numbers of the clergy denounced education as dangerous to the State and the Constitution," for be it known the clergy are the very best friends of education—that is of true religious education, kept in their own hand. An elderly speaker at one of Mr. Forder's School Board meetings in Finsbury gave an illustration. The clergyman of the parish met his father and made him take the speaker to the Church school, where, when it was found he could write, the minister said he did not think writing necessary—"any lady or gentleman would write anything for him," and after three years' education, with plenty of collects and catechism, drilling him in his duty to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters, he left school less able to write than when he went there.

Whatever their pretences, the clergy know that ignorance is the great support of their sacred calling. Their real object in seeking to administer on the Board schools is to make them inferior to the church schools, that the latter may benefit. But people are learning that the more time is given to training in nonsensical dogmas, the less can be devoted to secular education, and they are gradually learning, what is proved by the reports of all inspectors, that the training in the Board schools is more thorough and efficient than that given in church schools.

A meeting in favor of disestablishment of the Church of England has been held at West Cowes, Isle of Wight, and has given rise to much perturbation in the island. The vicar of Holy Trinity accuses the promoters of seeking to destroy the church, and of trying to disturb the harmony which has existed between the Church and Dissenters. This is a good deal like the wolf accusing the lamb of troubling his waters.

Parliament is to be moved to appoint a bishop of Birmingham, and the inhabitants of the Midlands are being moved to provide the funds. The Catholics have been beforehand in providing Birmingham with a bishop and claim they have the prior title to the see.

Like the Jews, the gipsies have been pretty well persecuted from the mere fact of their birth. At Durham, in 1592, five men were hanged for "being Egyptians." At Bury St. Edmunds fifteen gipsies were executed shortly before the Restoration, and others at Stafford shortly after it. Only seventy-two years ago, in 1819, it was carried unanimously by the Norfolk Quarter Sessions that all gipsies are punishable by imprisonment and whipping. In 1864, at Hayle in Cornwall, seven gipsies were charged before the Rev. Uriah Tomkin with the heinous offence of "sleeping under tents," and were sentenced to three weeks' imprisonment with hard labor. The criminals were a mother and her six children, aged from eight to twenty. In Roumania till 1856 the gipsies, 200,000 in number, were slaves. Yet it is probably to the gipsies that the world owes one of its greatest steps in civilisation. There is much reason to believe these wandering smiths and tinkers were the first to carry the art of working in bronze from country to country.

Unless the *Daily News* is a circulator of fables there has been an extraordinary freak of nature at Goldington, a village in Bedfordshire. An enterprising cow gave birth to a calf with three jaws, each possessing a distinct tongue, two noses, three ears, four eyes, and six legs. Advocates of the design argument should explain this monstrosity. How does it fit into the theory of "a divine artificer"? Was he off

duty when that calf was branching out so luxuriantly? Was he trying a fresh experiment? Or was he producing a new animal for what Heine calls "the menagerie of the Apocalypse"? On any ordinary ideas of business that calf was a failure, especially as it died soon after birth. What the Theist has to do is to tell us how the great Designer, who has been making calves so many thousands of years, turned out such a comical specimen. What should we think of a watchmaker, as many millenniums in the business, who turned out a watch with two main-springs, two or three superfluous wheels, an extra minute hand, and thirteen hours on the dial.

Religious dogmas are gradually dying under the suffocating pressure of science and Freethought. Hell has long been cooling down and run on a terminable lease, and heaven itself is in a so-so condition. Here is the Rev. W. J. Dawson, a Methodist, stating to his brother Methodists at the Washington Conference, that "Too long has the church been so busy keeping its eye upon heaven that it has had no time to deal with the injustices of earth." But all this, he says, is rapidly changing, and "in the Church of the Future the creed will occupy the smallest possible space, and character will occupy the largest." In other words, the churches are being rapidly secularised. In face of all this, how funny it is to hear the sky-pilots talking about "the decay of Secularism."

"The Red Church" in Bethnal Green, we believe, is the place denounced in Mr. Arnold White's *Problems of a Great City*. Marriages are celebrated there, free, gratis, for nothing; and lads and lasses who are out of work, and have nothing better to do, go there and get married, with a view to improving the state of the labor market. A good many social reformers will not be sorry to hear that this House of God is in danger. The upper part of the structure is in a very insecure condition, and as the parson in charge has not complied with the notice of the London County Council, a magistrate's order has been obtained to take down the spire and other upper portions at the expense of "the owner." If no "owner" is to be found, the Council will have to get the bill out of the church itself, by taking possession and selling it.

The Edmonton justices were puzzled by Henry Lewington, who refused to kiss the court copy of the New Testament on two grounds; first, it was dirty, and second, he didn't believe in it. After consulting many law books they told him to stand down. Finally they sentenced the thieves who stole his clock, but they did not order its return because he wouldn't slobber the book.

Dr. Rowland Rogers, who has been organist at Bangor Cathedral for upwards of twenty years, has had to resign his appointment. He was announced to assist in an instrumental recital at Menai Bridge Presbyterian Church, in aid of a young musician. The Dean of Bangor sent him a sharp letter, expressing strong disapproval of the Cathedral organist taking part in a Dissenting performance, and expressing his intention of bringing the matter before a special chapter of the cathedral. Dr. Rogers thereupon promptly resigned, and the cathedral will have to advertise for another organist.

Professor Issulén, lecturing before the Academy of Science at St. Petersburg, computed that forty millions of people are now suffering from want in Russia. Poor people dependant on a Czar who does but little for them, and on a God who does absolutely nothing.

Influenza is stated to have attacked no fewer than forty thousand persons in Berlin during the past week. The epidemic is also spreading in Silesia and other parts. Another proof of the goodness of Deity in making illness contagious instead of health.

"No, sir!" said the deacon, with virtuous indignation, "none of your Sabbath-breaking Sunday papers for me. When church is out I just sit quietly in my library and block out my business for the coming week—what notes I've got to collect, what tenants must be warned to pay up or look out for the sheriff, what collections have got to be put in the hands of my lawyer, and just what stock I've got to get to make it possible for me to divide all the high-salaried offices in the Squeezem bank among my boys. Then, Monday, I've got everything ready for biz. No, none of your Sabbath-breaking papers for me."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Friday, Dec. 4, Gladstone Hall, Military-road, Chatham, at 8, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Sunday, December 6, Hall of Science, 112 Old-street, E.C.; at 11.15, "Hope for the People"; at 7.15, "The Way to Heaven."

Thursday, December 10, Hall of Science, London; at 8, "Shelley and the Poetry of Atheism."

December 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.—Dec. 4, Wolverhampton; 6, Bolton; 7 and 8, Blackburn; 13, Birmingham; 20 and 21, Leicester; 27, Birmingham. January 3 and 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Milton Hall, London; 24 and 31, Birmingham. February 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; 11, Birmingham; 25, Sheffield.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

J. HONLIHAM.—Celestine Edwards is constitutionally inaccurate, unless he has taken immense pains to acquire the vice. He is not worth a great deal of notice. It is only his color that gives him any distinction. The newspaper report shows that he did not use the word he disowned when you spoke to him.

J. COOKE.—Thanks for calling on Mrs. Vaughan and reassuring her.—We did not intend to reprint "The Cat is Out" as a pamphlet.

J. H. ROGERS.—In the Armstrong case Mr. Bramwell Booth got off, but Mr. W. T. Stead was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. He only served about a fortnight as an ordinary convict.—The separate parts of the *Crimes of Christianity* were all burnt in our fire.

F. TURNER.—Taylor's *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* sells in this country for a guinea, and may be obtained from E. Menken, Bury-street, W.C.

G. G.—Papers and even letters are often lost in the post. Sorry to hear of your misfortune.

J. JUDGE.—Pleased to hear of Mr. Watts's hearty reception at Leeds.

THE COMMITTEE of the London Freethinkers' Ball will please meet at the Hall of Science this evening (Dec. 6) after Mr. Foote's lecture, for the purpose of settling the accounts and arranging for another party on Dec. 31.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges £1 1s. from W. Reynolds.

E. LARKIN.—Mr. Foote cannot lecture for you on a Sunday. He is pledged to the important experiment at the Hall of Science.—This correspondent acknowledges the following for the Brown Memorial:—W. Powell, 2s.; A. Swinney, 1s.; E. Larkin, 1s.; J. Redway, 6d.

L. KEEN.—We have no room for a discussion of the gentleman's hypnotic performances; consequently we cannot insert your unfavorable criticism. Better leave such things alone, unless you want to increase the statistics of lunacy.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear of your success at Deptford.—As the *Freethinker* is supplied on sale or return we must leave the Branch to provide itself with the requisite number of copies.

J. G. BARRAM.—We note your favorable report of Miss Ada Campbell's lectures at Newcastle.—Mr. Foote will remember January 17.

E. POWNCEBY, secretary of Mr. Forder's Election Committee, desires to thank the ladies and gentlemen who assisted in the work.—He also requests Branch secretaries to settle at once for the Freethinkers' Ball tickets.

ANTI-THEOLOGIST.—We don't know the particulars of Mr. Watts's forthcoming debate at Glasgow.—We can hardly advise you on the other matter. Get the new edition of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (2s. 6d.) and choose something yourself.

MRS. WALLIS, 70A Corporation-street, Manchester, supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

R. G. LEES.—Certainly pressure should be brought to bear on members of parliament and candidates with respect to the Blasphemy Laws, but we doubt the wisdom of organising the N. S. S. Branches as political machinery. It is better, in our opinion, to work with the advanced political associations, except where they positively refuse to consider our grievances.

J. R. WILLOCK.—See "Sugar Plum." We hope the arrangement with Mr. Sam Standring will realise your sanguine expectations.

M. H. HUMPHREYS.—It is an old piece of verse, and has often, in former years, appeared in Freethought and other journals.

W. HOLLAND.—That parrot story has done duty in a hundred various forms.

T. CLARK.—Probably that street preacher who said the human heart was incurably wicked spoke from personal experience. We are quite ready to take him at his word.

W. T. LEEKEY.—Yes, the present Lord Russell, who is appearing in the divorce court, is the son of Lord Amberley. His father, by his will, left him to be brought up by a sceptical tutor, Mr. Spalding; but the family got the will set aside, the boy was taken out of Mr. Spalding's hands and educated as a Christian, and the result is—what we see.

VERB SAP.—You are quite right. Simple, plain teaching without mystery or fear is what is needed. Astronomy is a great corrective to Christian prejudices.

J. BURRELL.—Collecting-sheets are being printed.

H. P. BOWDEN.—Thanks for your good wishes. The Christian lecturer you refer to is a poor empty creature, not worth your attention.

F. MORGAN.—We have seen to it personally. Thanks for arranging with the newsagent.

ANONYMOUS correspondents are once more warned that their letters cannot be answered.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Echo—Newcastle Daily Leader—Standard—Wellington Journal—Shrewsbury News—Leeds Evening Express—Aberdeen Evening Gazette—Natural Food—Salopian and Montgomeryshire Post—Stockport Chronicle—Isle of Wight Herald—Newsagent—Ironclad Age—Evening News and Post—Hull Critic—Leominster News—Light, Love and Truth—Church Reformer—Open Court—Better Way—Independent Pulpit—Lancashire Evening Post—Twentieth Century.

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.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

Now that the circulation of the *Freethinker* is so improving, and the paper is finding its way into so many thousands of hands in all parts of England and Scotland, to say nothing of Ireland and the colonies, we again venture to draw attention to it as a valuable advertising medium. Hundreds of business men among our readers would find it advantageous to advertise in our columns. Will they not give it a trial? Those who do advertise find it answers.

After five Sunday visits to the provinces Mr. Foote is to-day (Dec. 6) lecturing in London at the Hall of Science. In the morning he will deliver a social discourse on "Hope for the People." In the evening he will give his new lecture, "The Way to Heaven." It has been particularly relished in the provinces. Before the evening lecture there will be some good music, and Mr. Foote will read a poetical selection, probably from George Meredith.

Mr. Foote paid a successful visit to Grimsby on Sunday. His audiences were the largest he has ever had there, many friends coming in from the district around, some travelling forty or fifty miles. The lectures were followed with close attention, and the enthusiasm was unbounded. Mr. G. L. Alward presided in the morning, Dr. Spring in the afternoon, and Mr. James Alward in the evening. At five o'clock between seventy and eighty persons sat down to a complimentary tea, generously provided by Mr. and Mrs. Alward. A large number of ladies were present, and it was delightful

to see the happy faces and hear the murmur of genial conversation. Mr. Foote spoke a few words as President; other brief speeches were made by Messrs. G. Alward, S. Alward, and J. Darrel; and the party broke up with a feeling that Secularism is progressing in Grimsby as well as elsewhere.

There was an unusually good sale of Freethought literature at Grimsby. We are glad to hear that the circulation of the *Freethinker* in the town has considerably increased and is still improving. Mr. Wittering, the active secretary of the local Branch, is himself a newsagent, and makes a good display of the paper in the main thoroughfare.

The Grimsby Town Council includes three live Atheists; not muffled ones, but open and avowed, and elected in spite of orthodox bigotry. This is a splendid sign of real progress. It shows that intolerance is declining, and that Freethought is steadily winning public respect.

The first social party under the new auspices at the London Hall of Science was a gratifying success. The London Freethinkers' Ball, on Thursday, Nov. 26, brought Secularists from all parts of the metropolis. Nearly every Branch furnished a contingent, and the gathering was the largest of the kind that has been seen at the Hall for several years. Had the weather been less miserable it would have been still larger. In the minor hall upstairs a smoking concert gave entertainment to the more elderly visitors. It was under Miss Vance's supervision, and seemed to be much appreciated. In the large hall downstairs the "light fantastic toe" was tripping over the polished floor. Soon after ten o'clock all the visitors assembled in the large hall, where an illuminated address was presented to Mr. Robert Forder. Mr. G. Standing took the chair and made a neat introductory speech. Mr. Foote then presented the address, declaring that its language expressed less instead of more than the truth as to Mr. Forder's character and service to the Freethought cause. Mr. Forder replied in feeling terms, and the interesting function closed with a burst of hearty applause.

The illuminated address was executed by Mr. John Austin. It is a beautiful piece of work, and, being finely framed, it will be an ornament as well as a mark of honor in Mr. Forder's house. The words of the address are as follows:—
"To ROBERT FORDER—The National Secular Society presents you with this testimonial on your resigning the secretaryship after holding it for sixteen years. During the whole of that time you have served the Freethought cause with zeal, ability and devotion. You have been entirely faithful to your trust, patient amidst difficulties, serene in danger, and your equable geniality has endeared you to your colleagues. In retiring from your post you take with you their unanimous good wishes for your future success and happiness, and they derive pleasure from knowing that your life will still be spent in service to Freethought. Signed on behalf of the N. S. S., G. W. FOOTE, President. July 8, 1891."

These social parties at the Hall of Science will be continued. They bring Freethinkers together, to enjoy themselves and get acquainted with each other. They also bring in a little revenue, which can be spent on the sterner work of Freethought. Another party will be held on the last Thursday in December, which happens to be New Year's Eve.

On the following Thursday there is to be another social assembly—the London Secular Federation's annual dinner. The tickets are half-a-crown, and can be obtained at the Hall of Science, at 28 Stonecutter-street, of Mr. Pownceby (sec.), 7 Finsbury-street, E.C., and of the Branch secretaries. A big gathering is expected. Mr. Foote will preside, Mr. Charles Watts will be present, and the speakers to toasts will include the most prominent workers in London. Of course there will be plenty of vocal and instrumental music.

Mr. H. Snell delivered his first (but, it may be hoped, not his last) lecture at the Hall of Science on Sunday morning last. The weather was detestable, even for England; but a fairly large audience gathered to hear Mr. Snell's views on "Atheism and Death." The discussion was enlivened by an ingenious old Christian who said he had laid up *his* riches "where moth and rust do not break through and steal." Mr. Snell's reply was terse, pointed, and full of humor.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake unfolded his "New Method of Criti-

cising the Christian Scriptures" to the evening audience. The lecturer dealt in detail with some of the more absurd passages of the Old Testament, contending that to impute the authorship of such work to God was blasphemous, if blasphemy be possible.

The Thursday evening lectures at the London Hall of Science are being continued. Mr. Cohen takes Thursday, Dec. 3, his subject being "Evolution *versus* Special Creation." He is a young lecturer of whom we have heard good reports. On the following Thursday (Dec. 10) Mr. Foote will lecture on "Shelley and the Poetry of Atheism," with selections. The admission to these lectures is free.

On Sunday last Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times in Leeds. Friends attended from Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Farsley, and other surrounding districts. The audiences in the morning and afternoon were not so large as Mr. Watts usually has, but in the evening the gathering was a considerable improvement. Great enthusiasm was manifested at each of the meetings, and Mr. Watts received numerous personal congratulations from his Yorkshire friends, who met him for the first time on Sunday since his return from Canada.

The alterations and redecorations at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, will be completed next week. About £250 will have been spent in renovating the entire building, which has been cleaned and put in thorough repair throughout. The hall is now heated, while adequate ventilation has been secured. The subscriptions to pay for the improvements and for settling Mr. Watts in Birmingham have hitherto come in exceedingly well, but we are informed an additional hundred pounds is still required for this purpose. We shall, therefore, be pleased to receive any further donations that any of our readers may be able to forward.

Baskerville Hall is closed to-day (December 6), but it will be re-opened under the new management on Sunday next, Dec. 13, when the following program will be carried out. In the morning, at 11 o'clock, Mr. Watts will lecture on "Secularism: What it Teaches and Why it is Taught." Mr. George Jacob Holyoake will preside. In the afternoon addresses will be given by Mr. Holyoake, Mr. Watts, and several local friends. In the evening, at seven o'clock, Mr. Holyoake will lecture, his subject being "The Interest of the Public in Freethought." Previous to the evening lecture Mrs. Charles Watts will recite "The Lifeboat," and there will also be music and singing. Freethinkers in the Midland districts should muster in good force on this occasion.

Fund for settling Mr. Watts in Birmingham.—Bilston, per A. Holland: M. H., 2s. 6d.; Mr. B., 2s. 6d.; Mr. C., 1s.; G. G., 1s.; Mr. J., 1s.; A Friend, 1s.; Mr. T., 1s.; Mr. G., 6d.; T. C., 6d.

Mr. Forder made a brave fight for a seat on the London School Board, and was thoroughly well supported by his Secularist colleagues. He did not succeed in the Finsbury division, though he might have done so had he begun his candidature earlier. As it was he polled 8,943 votes. The highest successful candidate only polled 14,660 votes, and the lowest 9,080. On the whole we are pretty well satisfied. Our party's power has been demonstrated, and we are not sure that Mr. Forder's physical strength would not have been unduly taxed if he had carried the seat and thrown himself into the hard work of the Board.

FORDER ELECTION FUND.—S. Soper, 3s.; J. F. Armilstead, £1; J. A. P., 2s. 6d.; Geo. French, 2s. 6d.; J. Wadmore, 2s.; Dr. Lewins, £1; D. Jones, 2s.; S. W. Haynes, 2s. 6d.; A. G. Fisher, 10s.; N. V. L., 5s.; W. S. Hurstleigh, 5s.; T. Francis, 1s.; F. F., 1s.; Goliath, 5s.; T. Hall, 2s. 6d.; J. J. T., £1 1s.; W. H. Putz, 2s.; R. H. Side, £1; W. Varley, 5s.; W. M. G., 2s. 6d.; H. H. Hele (per J. Anderson), 10s.—G. STANDING, Treasurer, 7 and 9 Finsbury-street, E.C.

The Bethnal Green Branch has of course discontinued its meetings in Victoria Park until next summer. The Sunday morning lectures are now given in the Libra Hall.

Mr. Tappin, of the Bethnal Green Branch, having long been ill and out of work, is to have a concert on his behalf at the Hall of Science. It takes place next Wednesday

evening (Dec. 9). The Branch hopes to be able to hand over a good surplus to Mr. Tappin. The tickets are 3d. and 6d. Mr. Votier, treasurer of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, will preside.

A member of the National Secular Society has sent packets of Freethought literature to the following military and naval stations: Port Said, Egypt, Eshowe, Zululand, Malta; two other stations in Malta; Portland, Mediterranean; Fermoy and Cork, Ireland; Queensferry, Scotland; Fort William, Calcutta; and two stations in Gibraltar. No matter as to whom they were sent, but no doubt the recipients were delighted. Go thou and do likewise.

As a rival scheme to that for erecting a monument in America to Queen Isabella, the patron of Columbus, and also of Torquemada, the German Americans have resolved to subscribe for a statue to Lessing, the freethinking champion of tolerance.

Mr. Sam Standing will shortly leave London for Manchester, where he has made an arrangement with the N. S. S. Branch. We are not in possession of full details, but we understand that the Branch has a first claim on Mr. Standing's services, and the rest of his time will be occupied in Freethought propaganda and organisation in Lancashire and Yorkshire. As the arrangement commences with the new year, and the Manchester Branch means business, other Branches that wish to secure his services should apply for dates immediately. Mr. Standing is full of "go," and we wish him all success in his new enterprise.

Color-Sergeant Shepherd, of the Fourth Middlesex Rifles, is a respected member of the West London Branch of the National Secular Society. This does not prevent his being respected in his regiment. He was one of the four principal recipients of honors at the recent annual distribution of prizes.

Every member of the National Secular Society should purchase a copy of its 1892 *Almanack*. That would necessitate a second edition, but the trouble would be undertaken cheerfully. The *Almanack* is now the Society's property; every penny of profit, therefore, accrues to the Society's exchequer. Freethinkers who can afford it might purchase a second copy to circulate among their liberal-minded friends and show what the Secular party is doing. There are excellent articles by all the leading Freethinkers, which admirably diversify the business features.

Liverpool Secularism lost a sturdy friend by the death of Mr. W. W. Hardwick, but good hopes are entertained of Mr. Laurence Small, B.Sc., who has been elected in his place as president of the N. S. S. Branch.

The Cheshire Branch of the N. S. S. foregathered at Stockport on Sunday, when Mr. C. Lewis, of Crewe, lectured on "Is the Bible a Moral Book?" His discourse was well received. There seems to be plenty of Freethought in Stockport; it only wants organising.

Mr. J. D. Shaw, editor of the Waco, Texas, *Independent Pulpit*, recently finished a tour of twenty-seven days in Colorado. He sums it up: "During that time we travelled over 2,000 miles, lectured thirteen times, took over fifty new subscribers, and sold several hundred books."

There is a Freethought Society at Vancouver, British Columbia, and Mr. C. B. Reynolds has recently been lecturing in the Market Hall there to audiences of from six to eight hundred.

The *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News* has admitted a controversy on "The Church and Freethought," in which our views are ably sustained by "An Advocate for Freethought" and "Salopian."

Mr. Holyoake's article in this week's *Freethinker* is of very grave importance. We have not seen the draft Bill which he refers to, but if it does no more than legitimate bequests to promote "inquiry" it will scarcely meet the needs of the Freethought party. Whether it is a good or bad thing to endow opinions is, in the circumstances, a question of merely academical interest; nor is it true that Nonconformists object to "the endowment of opinion." They only object to the

State endowment of religion, which is a very different thing. What Secularists want is exactly the same legal rights as Christians with regard to their own property. If Mr. Holyoake's Bill will secure this, it is worth fighting for; if it will not, we are strongly of opinion that the matter had better be left for a more favorable opportunity.

THE SELFISHNESS OF CHRIST'S TEACHINGS.

THE Religious Tract Society lately issued a pamphlet entitled *The Secularist Program*, in which the principles of the N. S. S. are criticised by the Rev. W. H. Harris, Victoria Docks. Referring to the proposition that the promotion of human happiness is the highest aim, and utility the test of morality, the writer says that "it is hardly necessary to point out that this view of life is directly opposed to the Christian view and to the commands of Christ."

It is well to have a clerical declaration that the promotion of human happiness is "directly opposed to the Christian view," although we hardly needed it. Secularists hold, with Ingersoll, that "the object of life is to be happy, the place to be happy is here, the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make other people happy." Christians seem to think that the object of life is to be miserable, the place to be miserable is here, the time to be miserable is now, and the best way to be miserable is to make everybody else miserable.

Further on Mr. Harris says that the Christian view is doing right because it is right, "being righteous for righteousness sake," not because of its utility. How we are to know what is right except by the test of utility he does not inform us. Certainly he quotes the so-called Golden Rule, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." This means under similar circumstances of course. But if a burglar were breaking into our house, and we applied the Golden Rule to the situation, we ought to allow the burglar to rob the house, as this is what we should desire to be "done unto us" if we were in the burglar's position. It would never do to give him in charge or shoot him; we should never want him to do that to us.

However, we can let that pass. What I wish to point out is the fact that Christ never at any time tells us to do right for right's sake. It is a figment of the Christian imagination. Christ's moral teaching is eminently and essentially a selfish teaching. He continually and expressly appeals to the selfish interests and the fears of his hearers. He is always either promising rewards or threatening punishments. The Sermon on the Mount is full of it. Everyone of the beatitudes ends with a promise of reward. Throughout the whole of his ministry he deals out death and destruction on every hand to those who reject his teaching. He even goes so far as to urge his disciples on one occasion to murder those who would not believe in him (Luke xix., 27). His intolerance and arbitrariness is something to be remembered. That his pretensions and teachings should ever be reasonably questioned and investigated never seems to have crossed his mind. His hearers were to yield unquestioning and complete submission to his authority under penalty of the direst punishment. Belief was to take the place of reason, and faith was exalted above all the virtues. What should we think of a modern philosopher or moralist who appealed to threatenings and slaughter, to the interests and fears of his audience to obtain converts?

His apostles were promised that they should sit upon thrones when he established his kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Every one that forsook home and friends for his sake was to receive an hundredfold in this life and inherit life eternal hereafter (Luke xviii. 30; Matt. xix. 29); and those who should keep and teach the commandments should be called great in the kingdom of heaven. They were to "agree with their adversary quickly," not because it was right, but lest

"thou be cast into prison" (Matt. v. 25). They were to give alms secretly and they would be rewarded openly hereafter (Matt. vi. 4). They were to forgive men so that they should be forgiven by God, not merely because it was right to cultivate a forgiving spirit. If they did not forgive neither would God forgive them (Matt. vi. 14, 15). A certain young man was to sell all he had and give to the poor, not on the ideal and imaginary ground of being righteous for righteousness sake, but because he should be recouped with treasures in heaven. In his (Christ's) father's house were many mansions, and he was going to prepare places for his disciples.

Many other examples might be given, but these are quite sufficient to show that Christ's teaching was anything but to do right for right's sake.

It is quite true, as the Rev. Mr. Harris contends, that Christ never taught "the greatest happiness for the greatest number," or that utility was the test of morality. And for a sufficient reason. "We do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles," and Secularists at all events do not expect philosophic teachings of an ignorant Jewish peasant. It is the veriest imbecility to consider Jesus as a philosopher. That he taught much excellent morality amongst much of a spurious kind we will allow; but the doctrine of believe or be damned, with which his name will ever be infamously associated, which is essentially opposed to all investigation and liberty of thought, and has caused more crime, bloodshed, and misery than all other doctrines put together, is sufficient to make his name a "hissing and reproach," and to be handed down to posterity as the worst "teacher" that ever afflicted suffering humanity with his teachings. H. J.

NEW JERUSALEM TOO SMALL.

In the Revelation of John Logos, chap. xxi., v. 16, we find the dimensions of the New Jerusalem, a four-square city, whose length and breadth each measure twelve thousand furlongs. Now, as Christians are so proverbially impervious to arithmetic, the following calculations are deduced for the amusement of their more logical opponents. Squaring 12,000 we get an area of 144,000,000 square furlongs. And as there are ten acres in a square furlong, and 4,840 square yards in an acre: $144,000,000 \times 10 \times 4,840 = 6,969,600,000,000$ square yards, or nearly seven billions. Now, let us consider if this space will be ample even for the few who enter the straight gate that leads to eternal life. Astronomers and geologists suppose the earth to be hundreds of millions of years old, and we propose to claim that for 25 millions of years it has been peopled, and that for the same period in the future it will continue to be peopled. Here, then, we have a modest 50 million years for human existence on this earth. We will write 1,200 million as the average population, 20 per thousand as the annual death-rate, and 5 per cent. as the number of the elect—a much greater percentage than the scriptures warrant. At a death-rate of 20 per thousand, 1,200 million people would die every 50 years for 50 million years, i.e., a total of 1,200,000,000,000,000; 1,200 billions, of which one-twentieth, or 60 billions, will be saved; and nineteen-twentieths, or 1,140,000,000,000,000, will be damned. Dividing the 60 billions of elect cattle by 7 billions of square yards, we find the poor souls in this Apocalyptic China huddling together—NINE to the square yard. Gracious! And assuming that hell will be similarly crowded, we get its area, 133 billions of square yards. What a scorcher! To keep up a bonfire of these dimensions, allowing daily 2 cwt. of coal per square yard, would require every minute the arrival of 20 million trains, each made up of 45 waggons, each containing 10 tons of fuel. Now, suppose Jahveh paid 8s. per ton on delivery, our merciful "father" would be appeasing his wrath at an hourly expense of £220,800,000,000 sterling, a sum equivalent to 300 times our National Debt. Selah! Let us pray.

P. W. BALDWIN.

In Mexico quite a number of males rejoice in the baptismal name of Jesus. A bootblack by that name at San Antonio, Texas, recently had a sign placed over his stand which reads: "If you want your boots blacked, come to Jesus!"

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly meeting of the Executive was held on Nov. 25, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Wheeler, Ellis, Brumage, Killick, Hunt, Warren, Bater, Samson, Heaford, Roger, Hartmann, Heard, Quinton, and Jones, secretary.

The minutes of last meeting were read and adopted; also the report of the Organisation Committee. The financial statement was then presented. The President informed the meeting how few Branches had made the annual collection to the General Fund and the Benevolent Fund. Mr. Hunt proposed and Mr. Heaford seconded "that a printed circular be sent to the Branches on the subject"; carried.

Mr. Samson suggested that a small sum should be set aside to supply free libraries with Freethought books. The idea was remitted to the Organisation Committee for consideration.

Mr. Hunt proposed, and Mr. Wheeler seconded, that a form be printed by the Executive for the use of Branches in obtaining the subscriptions of their members; carried. The President reported that the Society's Almanac for 1892 was on sale.

A letter was read from Mr. J. M. Robertson announcing the resignation of his delegation from the Glasgow Branch.

Mr. George Standing read the minutes of the Hall of Science Committee, and announced that he had handed over to the treasurer the sum of £32 13s., the balance after paying all current expenses. STANLEY JONES, Sec.

A BRAVE SOLDIER GONE.

It is with extreme regret we record the death of Dr. Jasper Roland Monroe, editor of the *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis, U.S.A., who died suddenly of heart disease on Nov. 9, aged sixty-eight. Dr. Monroe was a thorough, sterling Freethinker, who for nearly forty years avowed his principles in the public press. In 1855 he started the *Rochford Herald*, and in 1857 the *Seymour Times*, which developed into the *Ironclad Age*. He was a clever writer, with a large fund of quaint racy humor. His paragraphs rippled with fun and sarcasm. Irreverent to the gods he was full of the tenderest humanity for men, women, children and animals. His writings, by which alone we knew him, endeared him to us for his large heart and clear head. He was an uncompromising Atheist, rejoicing in the term "infidel," and he kept as the aim of his paper—

Goodness without a God
Happiness without a heaven,
Salvation without a Savior,
And redemption without a redeemer.

Dr. Monroe died as he had lived, a brave Freethinker. An eloquent address at his grave was delivered by his friend, Mr. B. F. Underwood. The *Ironclad Age* will be continued by Mr. Henry C. Monroe, who has for some years assisted in its production, but we shall miss the gay wisdom and quaint irreverence of the original founder, and many a Freethinker's heart will be saddened by the loss.

OBITUARY.

It is with deep regret we have to record the death of Mr. W. Nelson, an old member and earnest worker of the Birmingham Branch. He died firm in the opinions he had so long held, and his express desire was that he should have a Secular burial. His family readily made arrangements to have his wishes carried out, and on Wednesday the 25th ult. he was buried at Witton Cemetery. Old friends carried him to the grave, and the Secular Service was impressively read by Mr. Charles Watts.—J. PARTRIDGE.

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. Fordor 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.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. Lecky's *Poems* will doubtless have a good sale. His historical works are valuable and well known, and many readers will be curious to see him in a new character. Mr. Lecky is a versifier, but no poet. The following lines are perhaps the best in the volume:—

He found his work, but far behind
Lay something that he could not find:
Deep springs of passion that can make
A life sublime for others' sake,
And lend to work the living glow
That saints and bards and heroes know.
The power lay there—unfolded power—
A bud that never bloomed a flower;
For half beliefs and jaded moods
Of worldlings, critics, cynics, prudes,
Lay round his path and dimmed and chilled.
Illusions past. High hopes were killed;
But duty lived. He sought not far
The "might be" in the things that are;
His ear caught no celestial strain;
He dreamed of no millennial reign.
Brave, true, unhoping, calm, austere,
He labored in a narrow sphere,
And found in work his spirit needs—
The last, if not the best, of creeds.

Eugene Lee Hamilton, whose sonnet entitled "A Flight from Heaven" we inserted from the *Academy*, has put forward what he calls "a fantastic tragedy" in five acts, entitled, *The Fountain of Youth*. The tragedy is interspersed with some exquisite lyrics.

In the latest volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, some particulars are given of a little known Freethinker of last century, who suffered from the Blasphemy Laws. This was Jacob Ilive, of whom some account may be found in Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. Ilive was a letter-founder, printer and author, who issued several pamphlets dealing somewhat freely with religion. One was an "Oration on the plurality of worlds and against the doctrine of eternal punishment," delivered in 1733, also "A Dialogue between a Doctor of the Church of England and Mr. Jacob Ilive upon the subject of the Oration at Joyner's Hall, wherein is proved that the Miracles said to be wrought by Moses were Artificial Acts only." We also find him hiring Carpenter's Hall, London Wall, and lecturing on "the religion of nature," a favorite phrase of those days.

On June 20, 1756, Ilive was sentenced to three years' imprisonment with hard labor in the House of Correction at Clerkenwell, for writing, printing, and publishing *Some Remarks on the Excellent Discourses lately Published by a Very Worthy Prelate*. This very worthy prelate was Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London, who allowed this sentence to be passed on his critic. The pamphlet is not in the British Museum, but from those by Ilive which are there we should expect it was sufficiently mild. It was, however, declared to be "a most blasphemous book. . . . denying in a ludicrous manner the divinity of Jesus Christ," as well as "all revealed religion." Ilive remained in gaol till June 10, 1758, employing himself "continually in writing." He published plans for the improvement of the House of Correction, then in a very disgraceful state. Ilive died in 1763, aged 58.

In Mr. Leslie Stephen's long contribution on David Hume to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he tells how it was sought in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to make Hume the subject of a prosecution. In 1753 a resolution was passed denouncing the "immorality and infidelity openly avowed in several books published of late in this country," and in a committee of the Assembly in the following year it was proposed to transmit to the Assembly a resolution in which Hume was named as the avowed author of attacks upon Christianity, natural religion, and the foundation of morality, "if not establishing direct Atheism," and to appoint a committee to inquire into his writings. The motion, however, fell through, and the matter dropped with the death of G. Anderson, Hume's principal antagonist.

Of Hume's death, Leslie Stephen says, "He died with great composure on Aug. 25, 1776," and he tells us that, according to the author of *A Supplement to the Life of David*

Hume, a hostile crowd gathered at his funeral on Calton-hill, and the grave had to be watched by his friends for eight nights. Mr. Stephen mentions also that Adam Smith's letter upon his friend's last illness "gave great offence by dwelling upon Hume's perfect calmness in meeting death. The facts, indeed, are established beyond all doubt by the testimony of Smith, John Hume, his physicians, Drs. Black and Cullen. Bishop Horne wrote an insolent letter to Adam Smith, by 'one of the people called Christians,' and attempts were made to throw doubts upon the calmness of his last days. The most authentic, according to Dr. McCosh, was a story told by an anonymous, but apparently respectable, old woman in a stage-coach, who said that she had been Hume's nurse, and that he had been much depressed, although he had tried to be cheerful to his friends and to her. It is not, indeed, impossible," adds Mr. Stephen, "that a man dying of cancer may have been sometimes out of spirits; but perhaps it is more likely that the old lady lied."

In noticing a new book on Dante by H. Baynes, the *Church Times* gives the following as a true story: "An English chaplain taking duty for a while on the other side of the Alps one morning remarked to a neighbor at his hotel, 'The people here talk a great deal about one Dante. I suppose he was a celebrity.' 'Well, yes,' said the other, 'he was a great man, a writer.' 'Oh, indeed,' answered the Rev. Simplicitas, 'of what sort of works?' 'He wrote various things, *The Divine Comedy*, for instance.' 'Ah! not a skit upon religion, I hope.'" Collapse of the informant. This anecdote bears out the old saying that the fool of the family is made the parson. Trained in a lot of nonsense of no use to any mortal, they may grow up in ignorance of the greatest poet produced by their own religion.

Although Mr. Balfour, in his Rectorial address on "Progress" at Glasgow last week, did not mention by name Mr. W. P. Ball's book on the question *Are the Effects of Use and Disuse Inherited?* he appears to refer to it as an English authority and to adopt its conclusions. The book should certainly be consulted by all interested in this most important subject. It is reprinted in America and translated into French. We understand that Mr. Ball is engaged on a larger work of equal importance.

GENESIS.

Though of Plato and Pythagoras
They'd never heard a word,
And Bacon, Hegel, and Descartes
Were names they'd never heard,
While Darwin, Huxley, Fiske, and Comte,
And Spencer, above all,
Were men whose minds could not be grasped
By those so young and small,
Two juvenile philosophers
In metaphysic strife,
Discussed with all due seriousness
The genesis of life.

Each one was perched upon a box
And slowly swung his leg
As he tried to solve the riddle
Of the chicken and the egg.
And they pondered and they argued,
But neither one could say
Whether it was the chick or egg
First saw the light of day:
"For," said one, "without a chicken
An egg there cannot be."
"Yet," t'other said, "it takes an egg
To make a chick, you see."

Thus they reasoned in a circle
And the riddle couldn't guess,
Until a third one sitting by
In quiet thoughtfulness,
Said with innocent assurance,
As he whittled on a peg,
"I'll tell you fellows how it was,—
I guess God laid the egg."

(*Twentieth Century*.)

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

"And Johnny, what particular pleasure do you deny yourself during Lent?" Johnnie: "I've stopped putting pennies in the box for the heathen."

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. MORLEY AND ROME RULE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I know the *Freethinker* eschews party politics; but when an enlightened statesman and Freethinker like Mr. Morley touches on the question of priestly influence in Ireland, we cannot but be profoundly interested. Mr. Morley thinks this fear of clerical domination as much a bogey as the cry of "separation." I wish I could share his confidence. It is this I think which has mainly driven good Freethinkers and Liberals like Huxley, Lecky and Tyndall into the ranks of Liberal Unionists. Perhaps some element of distrust in Mr. Gladstone has aided. But this can scarcely exist in regard to Mr. Morley. Now Mr. Morley assures us that the priests are only strong when they are on the side of the Nationalists. He says nothing of the Nationalists being divided, and the priests being able to sway the balance. He asks how is it no petition has been heard, in regard to the elections at Kilkenny, Carlow, Sligo and Cork. Surely he knows the power of the boycott and the difficulty of getting incontestible evidence of priestly intimidation. I do not write with the object of influencing Freethinkers against Home Rule, but I do think cautious people will give some weight to Lord Salisbury's utterance as to the recent influence of Catholic archbishops in Ireland. A strong pronouncement from Mr. Morley on the question of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales would have been more gratifying to

A SAXON.

PROFANE JOKES.

Hicks: "How surprised Lot must have been when he found his wife was salt." Enpec: "No more than I was when I found mine was pepper."

Scene—Parish church Sabbath-school. Teacher: "Maggie, can you tell me who Jonah was?" No answer. Teacher: "You stupid idiot, dae ye no ken wha swallowed the whale?"

"Can you tell me why the lions didn't hurt Daniel?" inquired the Sunday-school teacher of the tough little boy. "'Cause Daniel was a prophet and understood his business," was the startling reply.

I feel astonished, gracious Lord,
At thy ways so inconsequential;
Thou madest a joyous poet, without
The joy that is quite essential.—Heine.

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. J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "Scientific Re-incarnations." Admission free.

Battersea.—Chatham Hall (adjoining Battersea Park Station, L.C.D.): 7.45, Miss Eliza Hammond Hills, "Pagan Patches on the Christian Garment." Admission 3d. and 6d.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 11.30, Mr. C. J. Steinberg, "An Examination of the Evidence of the Existence of God"; 7.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Free Will and Responsibility"; a musical entertainment will precede the lectures. Monday, at 8.30, social meeting of members and friends. Wednesday, at 8, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Theosophy." Saturday, at 8.30, social evening for members and friends.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class; 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, "The Devil, a Liar from the Beginning" (preceded by a dramatic study, "Gabriel Grubb").

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Some Delusions of Theosophy." Preceded by dramatic recitals by Mr. Moss; string band.

Edmonton—Angel Assembly Rooms, Silver-street: 7, a lecture.

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, Mr. E. W. Osborn, "Futurity"; 7, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity and Slavery." Thursday, at 8, Mr. Sam Standing, "Mr. Foote's Bible Handbook." Admission free. Saturday, at 8, free social concert.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Hope for the People" (admission free); 6.45, reading and music; 7.15, Mr. G. W. Foote, "The Way to Heaven" (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Lambeth—New Nelson Hall, Lower Marsh: 7.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Has the Religion of Christ been of Benefit to the World?"

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mr. R. Forder, "Theosophy: its Signs and Symbols."

Stratford—Enterprise Hall, Great Eastern-road: 7, Captain Pfoundes, "Theosophy: its Frauds and Follies."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Immortality." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

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

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, Mr. A. Johnson, "The Existence of Jesus."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism, a Better Guide than Christianity."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Mr. C. Cohen, "The Value of Christianity."

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

COUNTRY.

Blackburn—Lee's Hall, Mincing-lane: Monday, at 7.30, Mr. Charles Watts, "Secularism: its Twofold Advantages." Tuesday, at 7.30, Mr. Charles Watts, "Christianity: its Origin and Influence."

Bolton—Spinners' Hall, St. George's-road: Mr. Charles Watts, 3, "Secularism: its Twofold Advantages"; 6.30, "Unbelief and Modern Thought."

Chatham Secular Society, Gladstone Hall, Military-road: Friday, Dec. 4, at 8, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: noon, debating class, Mr. John Wright, "W. T. Stead's Real Ghost Stories"; 6.30, Mr. T. Robertson, "The Ultimate Standard of Right and Wrong."

Hull—Cobden Hall, School-street, Waltham-street: 6.30, music, recitations, singing, etc.

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

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: Mr. Stanley Jones, 11, "Why I am Not a Christian"; 3, "Man and his Relations"; 7, "The Problems of Life and Mrs. Besant's Theosophy."

Luton—Rudd's Rooms, 57 Bute-street: Mr. Sam Standing, 11, "Why Christians Persecute Heretics"; 2.30, "Are Protestants Bible-Christians?"; 6.30, "The Evil Effects of Sunday Schools." Admission free.

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 6.30, social evening.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Has Man a Soul?"

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, Mr. J. Hooper, "Pretty Bible Stories nicely told"

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a lecture on "Primitive Christianity."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 2.45, reading circle (in connection with the National Home Reading Union); 7, Mr. Pinhorne, "Barnaby Rudge."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Mr. Touzeau Parris, 11, "The World's Curse, an Infallible Religion"; 3, "Theosophy: a Criticism in Reply to Mrs. Besant"; 7, "Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and the Christian Church Demonstrated Failures."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 3, mutual improvement class, inaugural meeting; 7, important business meeting.

Spennymoor—Victoria Hall, Dundas-street: 6.30, Mr. T. Phillips, a reading.

Sunderland—Co-operative Hall, Green-street: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "The March of the Gods; the Progress of the God Idea"; 7, "The Atonement; or, Man's True Savior."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Dec. 6, Sheffield; 13, Hall of Science; 20, Glasgow; 27, Milton Hall. Jan. 7, Finsbury Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Dec. 3, Finsbury Park Branch; 6, 13, 20, and 27, Deptford.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Dec. 6, Bethnal Green; 9, Bethnal Green (L.S.F.); 10, Finsbury Park; 13, Woolwich; 20, Chatham. Jan. 3, Lambeth; 10, Bethnal Green; 17, morning and evening, Battersea; 24, Lambeth; 31, Lambeth. Feb. 14, Chatham.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Dec. 6, evening, New Nelson Hall, Lambeth; 13, evening, Enterprise Hall, Stratford; 20, evening, Camberwell. Jan. 3, evening, Battersea; 10, evening, Finsbury Park; 24, evening, Camberwell. Feb. 21, evening, Camberwell.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Dec. 6, morning, Battersea; evening, Finsbury Park; 20 and 27, Libra Hall.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth-road, Stratford, London, E.—Dec. 13, evening, Finsbury Park; 20, Woolwich.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Dec. 6, Liverpool; 13, Belfast; 20, morning, Finsbury Park; 27, evening, Westminster. Jan. 10, morning and evening, Battersea; 24, Ball's Pond. Feb. 21, Portsmouth.

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