

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

He who tells me true, though in the tale lie death,
I hear him as he flattered.

—SHAKESPEARE.

DEAD THEOLOGY.

THIS is an age of "series." Every publisher issues one, and the number of them is legion. As far as possible they are written by "eminent hands," as old Jacob Tonson used to call his wretched scribblers in Grub-street garrets. But, not every publisher can secure such an eminent hand as a live Archbishop. This has been achieved, however, by Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston, and Company. Having projected a series of "Preachers of the Age," they were fortunate enough to enlist the Archbishop of Canterbury under their banner. His Grace, as it is etiquette to call him, though his natural name is Edward White Benson, leads off the publishers' attack on the British public with a volume of sermons entitled *Living Theology*. It is well printed on good paper, the binding is appropriate, and the price of three-and-sixpence puts it within the reach of the great middle-class public which cares for such things. We are far from sharing the opinion of a carper who remarked that, as sermons go, this volume is rather dear. Thirteen sermons by an Archbishop! Could any man in his senses expect them for less money? The real wonder is that a man with £15,000 a-year should condescend to publish at all. We ought to feel thankful that he does not charge us a guinea a volume.

Prefixed to the thirteen sermons, at fourpence apiece, including the binding, is an excellent photograph of the Archbishop. The face is keen and scholarly, and not unpleasant. A noticeable nose, a large fluent mouth, shrewd eyes, and a high well-shaped head, make on the whole an agreeable picture. Something about the features shows the preacher, and something more the ecclesiastic. It is the type, and the best type, of the learned priest. Nobody could look at this portrait and call Edward White Benson a fool. But is any one in danger of doing so? Would not every one admit some ability in the unhereditary recipient of fifteen thousand a year? Parsons are not a brilliant body, but to wriggle, or climb, or rise to the top of the Black Army involves the possession of uncommon faculties.

The Archbishop is seldom eloquent, in the popular sense of the word; but his style has a certain force and color, always within the limits of exquisite breeding. If he consigned you to Gehenna, he would do it with bland graciousness; and if he swore at all, he would swear in Latin. His language in these sermons, as in another volume we noticed a year ago, is pure and nervous, with an etymological reason for every word. Sometimes he is quite felicitous. Now and then he uses metaphor with skill and illumination. The habitual concreteness of his style shows the clearness of his perceptions. Occasionally he is

epigrammatic. "Strong enemies," he says in one place, "are better to us than weak friends. They show us our weak points." Finer and higher is another passage in the same sermon—"The yearning of multitudes is not in vain. After yearning comes impulse, volition, movement." It would be difficult, if not impossible, to better this, unless a great poet cast it in the mould of a metaphor.

We confess that, on the whole, we have read the Archbishop's sermons with some pleasure, as well as with much attention. It is to his credit that he defies a superficial reading. We do not expect to find another volume in the series at all comparable with his. Dr. Maclaren, who comes second, is on a lower level, and the next descent to Mr. Price Hughes is a fall into a slough of incapable and reckless sentimentalism.

Living Theology is the title of the Archbishop's volume, but this is a misnomer, for the title belongs only to the first sermon. It misled us in this general application, as it will probably mislead others. We took it to be a setting forth of so much theology as the Archbishop thought *living*, in contradistinction to what he allowed to be *dead*. But we find a very miscellaneous lot of sermons, sometimes rather on Church work than on Church teaching. The title, therefore, is what Walt Whitman would call "a suck and a sell." Yet it is hardly worth while to labor the complaint, for titles are often better than the pages that follow them. Sometimes, indeed, a writer puts all his head into the title, and the rest of the book displays his imbecility. But this cannot be said of the Archbishop.

Another difficulty is this. The Archbishop's sermons are hard for a Freethinker to criticise. He seldom expounds and rarely argues. He addresses an audience who take the fundamentals of Christianity for granted. Yet he lays himself open here and there, and where he does so we propose to meet him.

In the first sermon Dr. Benson is surely going beyond his actual belief in referring to "the earliest race of man, with whom the whole race so nearly passed away." He can scarcely take the early chapters of Genesis literally at this time of day. In the very next sermon he speaks cheerfully of the age of Evolution. That sermon was preached at St. Mary's, Southampton, to the British Association in 1882. It is on "The Spirit of Inquiry." "The Spirit of Inquiry," he says, "is God's spirit working in capable men, to enlarge the measure and the fulness of man's capacity." But if *capable* men are necessary, to say nothing of favorable conditions, the working of God's spirit seems lost in the natural explanation. Still, it is pleasant to find the Archbishop welcoming the Spirit of Inquiry, under any interpretation of its essence; and it may be hoped that he will vote accordingly when the Liberty of Bequest Bill reaches the Upper Chamber. It is also pleasant to read his admission that the Spirit of Inquiry (we keep his capitals) "has made short work not only of the baser religions, but of the baser forms of ours"—to wit,

the Christian. Some of those "baser forms" are indicated in the following passage:

"I know not whether any stern or any sensuous religion of heathendom has held up before men's astonished eyes features more appalling or more repulsive than those of the vindictive father, or of the arbitrary distributor of two eternities, or again of the easy compromiser of offences in return for houses and lands. Dreadful shadows under which thousands have been reared."

Dreadful shadows indeed! And not thousands, but countless millions, have been reared under them. Those dreadful shadows were for centuries the universal objects of Christian worship. They still hover over Spurgeon's tabernacle and a host of other houses of God. But they are hateful to Dr. Benson. To him the God of orthodoxy, the God of the Thirty-nine Articles, is dead. He dismisses Predestination, a vindictive God, and Everlasting Torment. He speaks of the very "prison" where Christ is said to have preached after his death, as a place "where spirits surely unlearn many a bias, many a self-wrought blindness, many a heedless error." Hell is therefore a place of purgation, which is certainly an infinite improvement on the orthodox idea of eternal and irremediable woe, however it fall below the conception that the Creator has no right to punish his own failures.

Let the reader note who makes these admissions of the intellectual and moral death of the "baser forms" of Christianity. It is not an irresponsible *franc-tireur* of the Black Army, nor an expelled soldier like Mr. Voysey, nor a resigned soldier like Dr. Momerie. It is the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest dignitary of the Church of England.

His Grace does not reflect—he cannot afford to reflect—that as the dead theology of to-day was the living theology of the past, so the living theology of to-day may be the dead theology of to-morrow.

The Archbishop still dogmatizes, even in this sermon on the Spirit of Inquiry. In opposition to the man of science who knows of no limits to nature, he declares that "There is a *sum* of created things, and therefore a real end (however far off) to what can be known of them." In a certain sense, truly, there is an end to what can be known of nature, for human knowledge must ever be relative and not absolute. But the Archbishop's limit is not qualitative in man; it is quantitative in the universe. Herein he goes beyond the bounds of knowledge, and indulges in the very dogmatism for which he reprehends the materialist.

It is dogmatism also to assert that "the soul has every reason to believe itself absolutely eternal." Absolutely is a word of vast significance. How can it apply to "the soul"? Were "the soul" to subsist eternally in the future, it could not be *absolutely* eternal if it once began to be. "Every reason" is also too comprehensive. Dr. Benson may think he has good reasons for "the soul's" immortality, but he must be aware that divines of his own church have held the contrary *doc. aue.*

Before the Spirit of Inquiry, says Dr. Benson, every other religion than Christianity fades away; though he has admitted that some parts of Christianity, the "baser forms," have shared the same fate. Every fresh conquest of the Spirit of Inquiry has "brought out some trait in the character, or some divine conception in the mind of Jesus of Nazareth." This sweeping statement is supported by "three very clearly marked" instances.

The first is that science shows us the unity of life. "The latest discovered laws involve at least this, that the Life of man is one Life." And this is "no more than the scientific verification of what was long ago stated, and by Christians (at least for a while) acted on."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

BROWNING'S RELIGION.

It is with no desire to erase the name of Robert Browning from the list of eminent Christians in order to place it on the list of eminent Freethinkers that I draw attention to the recent utterances of Mrs. Sutherland Orr and Mr. Robert Buchanan on the poet's religion. Freethought does not depend on the authority of great names, or it could produce a sufficient list, without needing to include any questionable ones. For Browning, there is much reason to claim him both as eminent Christian and as eminent Freethinker. He writes:

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

And the soul-sides of Browning, as of some well-cut diamond, are numerous enough to reflect most varied lights. Judging, as the mass of the world must judge, solely from his writings, I should have thought him less of a Freethinker than either Mrs. Orr or Mr. Buchanan, who both knew him personally, make him out to have been. Asked as to his religion, I should have said, "A fervent optimist, with Theism so intense that logically it ends in Pantheism, emancipated from Christian dogmas, yet permeated with Christian ideas and sentiments; if to be classed with any sect, then with the Universalists, since unmistakably he does not believe in any eternal hell, but in the triumph of good, even for so mean a wretch as Guido Franceschini."

But where will God be absent? In His face
Is light; but in His shadow healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!

Even the Pope but consigns him

Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain; which must not be.

Religious optimism seems to me the distinctive note of Browning's poetry. And I confess it "sunners" me as much as orthodox Christianity itself. That

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world!

must be taken on faith. We must believe in God's goodness, not because the facts warrant the belief, but on the strength of Browning's creative genius. This faith in God, with its outcome, "no plan nor project, God shall care," seems to me "an Atlas of error, holding on its broad shoulders a world of immoralities." As Browning so often says, suppose we "put case." Take his own greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*, that Old Bailey story, as Carlyle called it, which Browning so infused with his own insight, that we are led from the world's outside speculations into the very inmost hearts of the actors. Suppose the priest, who, risking the world's judgment, runs away with the outraged wife of Franceshini, had instead bade her trust in God, she and her unborn babe would have remained the victims of greed and lust and cruelty. His very virtue was that he dared put himself in place of God, and since God helped not, gave human aid. And her's was not in her submission to the Archbishop and her husband—that she repented—but that her instinct of motherhood made her seek protection for her child. The theory that there is a God who cares for all his creatures is so false that every action of every believer refutes it. Logically, it would lead to quietism. No one would seek to assuage heaven-sent suffering, lest they might be found fighting against God's will. No one would stir a finger for improvement lest he thwart his God.* My heart answers to

* This outcome of the belief in Karma is seen in Browning's line, "He must be wicked to deserve such pain," the abominable doctrine that the maimed and fallen are objects of divine punishment justly receiving their due. This is the legitimate outcome of Theism.

another tune. Rather than adopt this sleek optimism I would be an orthodox Christian, holding there was a veritable Devil to fight against, a hell to overcome.

To justify the ways of God to men, in "the dread machinery of sin and suffering," Browning sees here, he appears to have the usual resource—belief in an after-life, or lives. For here his belief seems of the vaguest; he speaks of "other heights in other lives, God willing," and "worlds we shall traverse not a few." In *La Saisiaz* Fancy opens with the assertion that "this first life claims a second, else I count its good no gain." Yet Reason closes with an intimation that the conviction of certain immortality would lead to suicide. Mrs. Orr says "there were moments when he himself would have welcomed a more positive guarantee for the life beyond the grave than his practically pure Theism could supply." His notion of futurity was "simply a continuance of the life began on earth."

His "practically pure Theism" did not run on orthodox lines. In his treatment of evil he verges on Pantheism. Mrs. Orr says "Caliban upon Setebos" was only a travesty of his natural conviction that a complete Divine experience could contain no motive for the making of a world." According to Mrs. Orr, it was the metaphysical character of his Theism which gave support to his Christianity, such as it was. "The evidence of Divine power is everywhere about us; not so the evidence of Divine Love. That love could only reveal itself to the human heart by some supreme act of human tenderness and devotion; the fact or the fancy of Christ's cross and passion could alone supply such a revelation."

Mrs. Orr says "he rejected the antithesis of good and evil on which orthodox Christianity rests; he would have denied eternal damnation under any conception of sin. He spurned the doctrine with his whole being as incompatible with the attributes of God." "He even spoke of the gospel teachings as valid only for mental states other than his own. But he never ceased to believe in Christ as, mystically or by actual miracle, a manifestation of Divine love." It was to Christ he applied the lines:

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!

Here we have something like an expression of belief in Christ's divinity, the revealer of God—nay, God and the universe himself. Yet Mrs. Orr tells us "the one consistent fact of Mr. Browning's heterodoxy was its exclusion of any belief in Revelation." It is not easy to see why one should believe in Christ, even as an ideal, if revelation is denied. The truth is, I presume, that Browning's religion was the outcome not of logical thought but of poetical feeling.

But Mr. Robert Buchanan, in the dedicatory epistle attached to his latest poem *The Outcast*, tells us that Browning on one occasion answered the question whether or not he was a Christian with an emphatic No! Mrs. Sutherland Orr thinks this must be interpreted as referring to some meaning of the term Mr. Buchanan's words had suggested. "I am not in that sense a Christian"—much as Theodore Parker once said to an orthodox Christian, "Your God is my devil." Mr. Buchanan denies Mrs. Orr's inference. He says (*Echo*, Dec. 4):

"Now, there was no occult meaning of the term attached to my question, which was categoric. I had been saying that, in my opinion, Browning's earlier works seemed to point to a decidedly 'Christian religion and ethics,' and the poet, very naturally, had rather resented that opinion. My question followed, and was answered with a direct negative. There was no qualification whatever, and no question of qualification. Browning, in answering as he did, repudiated 'Christianity' altogether."

This statement—though it may outrage the unconscionable Nonconformist conscience, which took offence at Mrs. Orr's Memoir of the poet, and necessi-

tated these explanations in the current number of the *Contemporary*—is straightforward. It appears to indicate that when it was made, about the time of the publication of *The Ring and the Book*, Mr. Browning's early Evangelical training had left little else than vague poetic feeling. Mr. Buchanan further says:

"On more than one other occasion I conversed with the poet on the same subject, and he never qualified that formal denial. Just after the death of the friend whose fate is chronicled in *La Saisiaz*, he called upon me and told me, in troubled and agitated words, the story of the lady's decease. His sole feeling seemed one of horror at the awful suddenness of the event. Things like that, he said, seemed to shake the very ground beneath our feet, like the shock of earthquake. They were awful, pitiable, inscrutable. He did not utter one word expressing the Christian's faith in a future compensation. Yet he knew that he was speaking to one who, if not a Christian, was a believer in personal immortality."

The truth is, the term "Christian" is becoming used in such a vague indeterminate sense that it may mean anything or nothing. "Christianity" is being whittled down till it becomes as the shadow of a shade. The flabby invertebrate religionist, who believes in everything in general and nothing in particular, confuses fiction with fact and encourages intellectual insincerity, is fast becoming the representative Christian, and tells us, forsooth, that Mr. Bradlaugh was a very good Christian Atheist.* If Christianity means but a belief in an ideal, and that love is better than hate, then let us hope that Jews, Mohammedans, Parsees, Confucians, Buddhists, and Atheists are all Christians. But this is a perversion of the meaning of an historic faith which has come down the ages differentiated from other faiths by definite dogmas, which, if one ceases to believe, he can no more properly claim to be a Christian than to be a Jew without circumcision. Christianity, to take the primary meaning of the word, at least implies that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah prophesied to the Jews. Historically it means far more. It includes that body of faith upon which the great historic churches have been agreed; the belief in revelation, in the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, and eternal rewards and punishments. Those who have given up these beliefs are strictly not Christians, whatever they may fancy themselves. Mr. Buchanan puts the matter pithily, and, I think, justly. He holds that:—

"Infinite harm has been done to correct thinking by enlarging a narrow term in order to include every possible sort of amiable heterodoxy. The object of the enlargement simply is religious appropriation; the result simply is nebulosity. 'He was a Christian in the truest sense of the word, because he was a good man, and loved his kind,' runs the formula. Just so; but why 'a Christian'? May not a good man who loves his kind be a Mohammedan, or a Jew, or a Buddhist, or, for that matter, an Atheist? No sooner does a fine form of intellectual dissent arise than the dominant Religion tries to turn it to his own uses, to appropriate it, to include it, as within the results of its own moral discovery! Hence the endless 'broad' creeds which are no creeds at all; hence the ineffable 'broad' Churchmen, who juggle with reason, in order to remain under the mantle of Christianity."

Mr. Buchanan thus sums up the matter:

"If Christianity simply means a belief in everything that is good, sane, and beautiful in human hope and instinct, in all the power which works for righteousness, in all the enthusiasm of humanity, Robert Browning was, of course, a Christian. If Christianity means a definite adherence to its own established dogmas, to a religious standard which is purely pragmatic, and a moral standard which (in so far as it makes this life's happiness wholly subsidiary to that of another) is absolute self-abnegation, Browning was no Christian at all."

Had Browning been literally a Christian, Mr.

* The French astronomer, Lalande, actually called himself a "Christian Atheist." He swept the heavens with his telescope and found no trace of a God. Like La Place, he had "no need of that hypothesis." As with Comte, the heavens but declared the glory of Kepler and of Newton. But looking on his fellow men, he found most of them fit for nothing better than Christianity.

Buchanan concludes he would never have become a great poet—"A great Christian poet at this time of the day is a moral impossibility." It is only in the interest of straightforward thought and sincerity that any man's religious position concerns us. I have no sympathy with attempting to label and pigeon-hole any mind; and in the case of a dramatic poet like Browning—a man of many moods—the attempt is pretty sure to be futile. It is sufficient that he gave us of his best; that whatever his faith, he was a poet of humanity, dealing with the highest problems, those of human development.

J. M. WHEELER.

A DECAYING FAITH.

If by the term Christianity is meant the teachings of Christ as recorded in the New Testament, it is evident that such a system is becoming more and more inactive as a factor in the regulation of human actions. True, churches exist in abundance, and we have numerous sects holding contradictory views as to the nature of this system; but what is taught in the churches and what is practised by their supporters is clearly not the original faith supposed to have been promulgated eighteen hundred years ago by the alleged founder of Christianity. In fact, according to ecclesiastical records and chronology, Christianity began to alter and to be modified almost immediately after the death of Christ. Paul preached a system that differed in many important respects from that taught by Christ. This was not surprising, inasmuch as the two teachers had but very little in common. The character of Christ was submissive and effeminate, Paul's was defiant and pugnacious. We could no more conceive Christ fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus than we could suppose Paul submitting without protest or resistance to those insults and indignities said to have been heaped upon his Master. Neither could we imagine Paul advising his disciples when anyone smote them on one cheek to offer their assailants the other to be operated upon in a similar manner. Paul introduced by his personal character a certain amount of boldness and energy into the Christian propaganda, and thus largely changed the Christian system. From that time to the present each successive age has left its peculiar mark and impress upon Christianity. No system was ever less rigid and more plastic; it has come up to the injunction of St. Paul, "to be all things to all men." Persons of the most contrary dispositions and the most opposite natures have been its great illustrators, expounders, and living representatives. It has found room for all temperaments—the ascetic and the luxurious enjoyer of life, the man of action and the man of contemplation, the monk and the king, the philanthropist and the destroyer of his race, the iconoclastic hater of all ceremonies and the superstitious devotee. It must not, however, be supposed that this heterogeneous combination is the result of any all-embracing comprehensiveness in the Christian system. It is rather the legitimate effects of principles thoroughly indefinite, incomplete, and undecided. Persons holding antagonistic ideas upon such cardinal doctrines of orthodoxy as the nature of Christ, the Incarnation, Fall, Atonement, Trinity, Freewill, Predestination, and Bible inspiration—all claim to be adherents of this particular faith.

The glory of the distinguishing feature of the primitive Christians was their firm dependence upon supernatural aid for the obtainment of the necessaries of life, contentment with poverty, submission to wrong, and an all-absorbing desire for "a mansion in the skies." Even down to almost the present day the employment of secular agencies for promoting the interests of the church, has been officially condemned by various sections of the Christian community, and the same conservative policy is still adhered to by the church in isolated cases. The

efficacy of prayer, the plain preaching of "the word," with the assistance of his Satanic Majesty and the influence of his warm habitation were relied upon as being all sufficient to advance the Christian cause. Happily conditions are now fast changing. Reason is taking the place of blind belief, Science is dethroning implicit belief, persistent warfare with wrong is considered a virtue, and active thought is succeeding mental indifference. The result is that the "plain word" has now to be clothed with modern ideas, the service of the Devil has been dispensed with, and hell has been finally closed. In the intellectual domain of the church the old notion of Bible inspiration is given up, the supernatural is theorised, prayer is regarded as a mere "aspiration," and doctrines once deemed essential to the orthodox belief are discarded. The clergy have discovered that their preaching will no longer "catch on" unless they aim to teach the people how to live instead of dictating to them how to die.

A similar departure from early Christianity is apparent in its present mode of propagandism. Material means are rapidly supplanting the so-called spiritual. "Love feasts," "experience meetings," and "silent prayer" are found less attractive than musical entertainments, games of amusement, and methods for physical development. The truth is, it is the secular cement that holds the religious body together, but it can readily be discerned from the signs of the times that ultimately the theological parts of the body will decay and disappear, leaving behind the healthy portions to be allied with advanced thought, which is working such a marvellous change in "the faith once delivered unto the saints."

It is amusing to note the desperate methods that Christian apologists resort to in their endeavors to save their decaying faith. For instance, they urge that Christianity should be judged as a whole—"a complete system." To this we have no objection so far as such "completeness" can be recognised. As set forth in the Bible, the "complete system" is this. God having the power to make man perfect, formed him out of such inferior material and organised him so badly that his weakness was manifested at the first test to which he was subjected. The result was that he fell, and although God is supposed to be omnipotent, he did not improve the work of his own hand, but by a cold water process he actually destroyed the whole of mankind, one family excepted. By and by the human race again multiplied; wickedness and misfortune, however, still marked their fallen conditions. Therefore, God decided to send his son, who was of the same age as himself, to correct the errors of the original creation, with the merciful injunction that those who did not believe in the son should perish everlastingly. Notwithstanding that this belief was necessary to salvation, no provision was made to impart a universal knowledge of this plan of redemption. The consequence is that at the present time, after the scheme has existed nearly two thousand years, only about one-third of the human race know anything about it; and if we divide this one-third by three we shall find that the first portion do not understand it, the second portion has discovered that its application is personally impracticable, and the third portion reject it altogether. No marvel that such a "complete system" has proved itself incomplete to satisfy the intellectual demands of the nineteenth century.

Of course there are some believers in Christianity yet remaining, such as the members of the Salvation Army and many of the Methodists, whose mental vision has been so blinded by their theological folly that they are unable to read correctly the signs of the times. Hence, they delude themselves with the idea that any society which does not reverence and worship God after the manner of either the Mosaic or Christian dispensation will sooner or later revert into semi-

barbarism. Does the history of these "dispensations" justify such a delusion? Were the people who lived under this "divine influence" remarkable for high civilisation? Did they excel in usefulness of conduct or nobility of character? Were their lives such as could be emulated with advantage by the present generation? Let us see. First, what were the morality and culture of the Jews of the Exodus? Led by Moses under God's guidance, we read that they manifested the lowest possible moral qualities, the most utter forgetfulness of virtue, and the least self-reliance and energy. They resorted to falsehood, theft and murder, and ultimately, without any rational grounds for so doing, they forsook their God and worshiped a golden calf. How many of the earth's population were the better for Adam's revelation? We have a decided answer to this in the story of the destruction of the race by the Flood. How many were improved through Abraham's call? But few indeed outside his own family, and even within that circle the revelation failed to inspire the members with either truth, honor or honesty. How many benefited from Moses' dispensation? Simply the Jewish people—a mere handful of the human race. Where at this period do we discover their works of art, their philosophers, and their advanced institutions?

Under the succeeding "dispensation" what do we behold? The Christian church overturning old literature, opposing the extension of knowledge, destroying teachers, banishing learning, and doing its best to extinguish the light of reason. From the reign of the first Christian monarch to the partial renunciation of the then "national" faith in the sixteenth century the state of society earned for that period the appropriate name of the Dark Ages.

Fortunately we have now another "dispensation," one born of human genius and mental freedom. It is of earth, not from heaven, and it teaches service to man before worship of God. It deals, not with the mystics of the past but with the realities of the present; and before this new force old faiths are disappearing. Of all systems orthodoxy is dying the most easy but certain death. Other systems, like Paganism, have to be extirpated by the sword, or have been proscribed by the State; but Christian orthodoxy is decaying from its own inherent weakness—its inability to withstand the test of modern thought. It is not here meant that the whole of what is termed Christianity will disappear. It will be its errors, its creeds, and its dogmas that will fade before man's cultured intellect; but its truths, like all verities, will remain and become allied with systems more practicable, and with principles more in accordance with the requirements of an advanced civilisation.

CHARLES WATTS.

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Says the Rev. Dr. Strong in the *American Sentinel*:—"The introduction of religion into the public schools is the introduction of the church into the public schools, and is, therefore, a union of church and state. The distinction is further attempted upon the question of religion, that it is not dogmas of faith, but fundamental truths of religion, that are to be taught. But how shall religion be taught without dogmas? It may be taught without some dogma in which you do not believe; but it cannot be taught without some dogma in which you *do* believe. We cannot conceive of a church without doctrine. And religion cannot be introduced into the public schools unless it is doctrinal in the sense of being definite, positive, and precise. To speak of the church without doctrine is to talk of daylight without the sun, of an effect without a cause."

Herr C. Tischian, preacher to the Free Religious Congregation at Breslau, has started a paper with the title *Freireligiöses Familienblatt* as an organ for the Free Congregations of Germany.

BOOK CHAT.

One of the important French books of next year—for it is dated 1892—is the contribution to the *Bibliothèque des Sciences Contemporaines* by M. André Lefèvre, entitled *La Religion*. M. Lefèvre is one of the ablest of the brave band who in the dark days of the Third Empire upheld the standard of Freethought in *La Libre Pensée* and *La Pensée Nouvelle*. He has already written an important work on the subject of *Religions and Mythologies Compared*, and has contributed a *History of Philosophy* to the Library of Contemporary Science. As president of the French Anthropological Society he is specially fitted to investigate religion from its true standpoint as a department of anthropology. His work is one which we shall have to introduce to our readers at greater length than can be done in this column.

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The second and concluding volume of Mr. M. D. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* will, he informs us, be ready in January. In the first volume he has acknowledged indebtedness to Mr. Wheeler, among others, for some of his facts. The volumes will show much research, and, we expect, will take their place as the standard biography of the author-hero of the American Revolution, and the writer of *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and the *Age of Reason*.

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Political events even more than the alleged existence of bogie Mahatmas lend an interest to unexplored Thibet, and the English edition of Bonvalot's travels *Across Thibet*, which will shortly be published in two volumes by Messrs. Cassell and Co., will be sure to be much asked for at the libraries.

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The *Boston Investigator* suggests that as the Prize Manual for which Dr. Westbrook paid the 1,000 dols. subscribed by the Freethinkers of America falls below the standard, some of the writers of the rejected manuscripts might try publication. Perhaps the stone which the builders rejected may become the head of the corner.

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A new edition of Prof. Ludwig Büchner's *Force and Matter* has been published in America, translated from the fifteenth German edition. It is now thirty-five years since Prof. Büchner completed the draft of this work, which remains a text-book of materialism, translated into most of the living languages. Dr. Büchner claims that the advance of science has rather confirmed than controverted his views.

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The *Liberty Annual* for 1892, edited by W. E. Crawshaw and F. Millar, is a counterblast to State Socialism. Mr. Auberon Herbert opens with an article on "Liberty in Land," in which he advocates the full liberty of those who have got the land to keep it and do as they like with it—a doctrine that has never gained acceptance in any civilised country. The other articles are mostly written by gentlemen of little notoriety. They expound Individualism, as the writers understand it, in relation to Art, Literature, Education, Labor, the Drink Traffic, and Money Lending. The article of chief interest to our readers is Mr. Holyoake's on "Liberty in Religion." It is temperate yet forcible, and will do good if it falls into the hands of general readers. We are glad to see that space is given at the end of this Annual to the prosecution of Mr. H. S. Young.

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A collected edition of the poetic works of Phillip Bourke Marston, a Freethinking poet and friend of James Thomson (B.V.), will be edited by Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton and published simultaneously in England and America next spring.

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A new edition of Prof. Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites* is called for. The work is one that helps to show that the religion of the Jews was no more inspired than those of other surrounding nations, and that, like them, it has evident traces of savage barbarity.

* * *

In the series of French works on Les Grands Ecrivains Français, the latest addition is the monograph on Henri Beyle (de Stendhal), by M. Rod. Beyle was a pronounced Freethinker, as shown in the little book on H. B., published after his death by Prosper Mérimée.

HE WOULD AND HE WOULDN'T.

For some time past a gentleman (?) named Stanton has been holding forth on the evils of alcoholic drinking, varying his discourses by very free reflections on all and sundry who deal in the said drug. For some reason unknown, the president of the South Shields Branch of the National Secular Society came in for a share of his amiable criticism. Now this individual is a kind of phlegmatic person, who is vastly amused when someone is abusing him, and just waits his time. On Nov. 8 he happened to be one of a crowd who were listening to this Stanton; time about 9.15 p.m. For some unexplained reason, in less than five minutes after the said president's arrival the following challenge was thrown out—"I defy any Secularist to prove that the Bible, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation, sanctions the use of intoxicating drink." It so happened that a certain Mr. Dipper, a meek man, was also amongst the crowd, having just come up after delivering a lecture on the "Origin of Life" to the Secularists. When he heard the challenge given he gently suggested that a reply to it should be his subject on the following Sunday, and the place to be the same as that occupied by Mr. Stanton, viz., the Cross steps. It was understood that intimation of the Secularist's intentions was that night given to the challenger; and, to judge from the unanimous uproar that greeted Mr. Dipper on the following Sunday, one is inclined to fully believe the information was correct, especially as it was supplied by one of Mr. Stanton's own committee. Mr. Stanton then threw out charges of cowardice in not taking his challenge up at the time it was made, etc. However, Mr. Dipper got a good forty-five minutes' speech in, and on the next morning (Monday) a letter (of which the following is a copy) was sent to Mr. Stanton:

"South Shields, Nov. 16, 1891.

"Dear Sir,—As you state that you consider it cowardly not to answer a challenge the same night it is given, without reference to time or opportunity, Mr. Dipper, who happened to be one of your audience on the 8th inst., will be most happy to discuss your challenge of that date on the 22nd inst., but thinks it would be as well to appoint someone as chairman. Whoever, therefore, you name as such our party will accept. I think your usual time of commencing is about 6.30; if it does nothing else, it will keep a certain number out of the P.H., and that will be something gained on behalf of temperance.—Yours faithfully,

"Mr. L. Stanton.

"S. M. PEACOCK.

Which elicited this reply:

"South Shields, Nov. 19, 1891.

"Dear Sir,—Your letter to hand. I do not consider either the time or place suitable for a discussion such as you name.—Yours truly,

"L. STANTON.

"Mr. S. M. Peacock."

And now 'tis said the Shields folks have to mourn the lost of their Sunday night Market-place entertainer.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING, held at the Hall of Science Dec. 3, Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair. Present: Messrs. G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler (vice-presidents), R. O. Smith (treasurer); Miss Vance, Messrs. Baker, Bax, Brown, Enderby, Guest, Renn, Rutland, Rutt, Smuin, Sutcliffe, Thomas, Turner, and Williams. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The recommendation of the Sub-committee on the lecture system was brought forward for discussion, but no action was taken thereon. Two courses of lectures were ordered to be arranged by the officers, subject to certain conditions. The Dinner Committee reported, and Mr. Guest was elected to fill the place of Mr. Thomas (unable to attend). Mr. Enderby moved that Mr. C. Cohen be added to the list of lecturers for the Federation; and this was agreed to. It was decided to meet again on Thursday, Dec. 31, at 7.30 p.m., for consideration of the Annual Report and Balance Sheet, Messrs. J. M. Wheeler and Williams being chosen as auditors. After a formal vote had been taken for the printing of the lecture list, Mr. Turner moved and Mr. Renn seconded "that in future the meetings of the Council be held on Wednesdays"; and, after discussion, this was carried. The Council then adjourned.—EDMD. POWNOBY, Sec.

ACID DROPS.

Ananias Hughes is at his old tricks. Commenting on the Finsbury election for the School Board, he chuckles over Mr. Forder's defeat, but forgets to say how near it was to a victory. Mr. Forder, he declares, was "for many years Mr. Bradlaugh's right-hand man," and his defeat shows "the smallness of Mr. Bradlaugh's following in the very seat of his long agitation." Now the Hall of Science is certainly in the Finsbury division, but the people who went there to hear Mr. Bradlaugh lecture came from all parts of London. Mr. Hughes knows this very well, but it suits him to pretend otherwise.

Ananias Hughes then bullies the Liberal party for having any traffic with "secularists, infidels, and atheists." He also refers to "a certain infidel and immoral section of the Liberal party" which must be opposed at the London County Council elections. "The Atheists and the immoral" he lumps together as "a curse," and he obviously means that no Atheist should be voted for, however able, honest, and popular. Such is religious liberty as it is understood by Ananias Hughes, who, by the way, is always crying out against the "tyranny" of the State Church. He is himself more narrow and bigoted than most clergymen, besides being a veritable "father of lies."

The Czar has issued a fresh rescript against the Stundists, who "injure even more and more the faith of our fathers." Poor old faith of our fathers! Why doesn't it go into the graves where they lie and lie with them, instead of lying at large?

Parnell said that Justin M'Carthy hadn't a grain of steel in his composition, and he seems to have been right. Someone asked about Mr. M'Carthy's religion, and instead of replying that questions of that sort ought not to be put at political meetings, he said, "I never was, am not, and never, please God, shall be an Atheist. I am, as I always have been, a member of the Roman Catholic Church." Mr. M'Carthy forgets that being an Atheist and also a member of the Roman Catholic Church are not, in fact, absolutely incompatible. As for the "please God," it implies that God allows men to become Atheists. Why then does he damn them for it afterwards?

Mr. Stead, having accumulated sufficient "authentic narratives of real ghosts," will, it is asserted, turn his attention to other ancient beliefs. He wants communications from all who have had their fortunes told by gipsies, all who have been saved from drowning by wearing a child's caul, and from all thieves who have been saved from being nabbed by keeping a lucky stone in their pockets. Communications to be directed to W. T. Stead, Mowbray House, Strand.

Some people affect alarm at the spread of Atheism, and expatiate on the idea of the Throne of the Universe being vacant. They may be perfectly serene. There will be plenty of candidates for the post. Joseph Parker or W. T. Stead would undertake to rule the universe single-handed at any moment. God has had a long innings, and now his failure and incapacity are becoming generally known, what better can he do than abdicate in favor of Stead?

Somebody sends us a copy of a tract on "The Excellency of Prayer," by William Huntingdon, S.S., i.e. Sinner Saved. This was the gentleman who got God to measure him for a pair of breeches. At any rate he prayed for them and they came direct, and as he says in his *Bank of Faith* they were an exact fit, for the God who heard his prayer also knew his exact wants. William Huntingdon, S.S., began as a coal-heaver and ended minister of a wealthy congregation, one of the wealthiest of whom he married, which proves "the excellency of prayer."

It is stated that a distinguished feature of the new translation of the old Jew books undertaken by Prof. Paul Haupt, of the Johns Hopkins University, U.S.A., will be a system of printing in various colors, whereby the student may detect at a glance the portions assigned, in accordance with modern criticism, to various authors and dates. All that will then be wanted will be to unmistakably distinguish between what is the word of God and what the word of man. This is a

task to which we invite the whole of the clergy to contribute such brains as they may happen to possess.

According to a Central News telegram, the Rev. John Bruce, Free Church minister, of Strichen, Aberdeenshire, has been ordered to support an illegitimate child. "The misconduct," it is said, "took place in the vestry of the church, and even in the pulpit." The "meenister" seems to have taken too literally and comprehensively the text "Be ye fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

Christina Thomson, a domestic servant lately in the employ of the Rev. James McHardy, minister of the established Church of Scotland, at Latheron, Caithness, sues him for alimony for a child, of which she alleges he is the father.

George Lee, founder of a sect called "The Savior's Missionary Army," fell under suspicion at Dublin. He is now doing five years for obtaining money under false pretences. Poor George Lee! The Philistines are upon thee, and there is no balm in Gilead.

Pastor Henry W. George, of Catskill (U.S.), who seduced his very young adopted daughter, and performed an illegal operation which killed her, has been found guilty of manslaughter in the first degree, and sentenced to fifteen years in Clifton Prison. He took his sentence calmly, bearing his cross like a Christian.

There has been a difference between the churchwardens and the minister at Trinity Church, Southend; the quarrel, as usual, being about money. The wardens and sidesmen collected the filthy lucre and took it to their own vestry, utterly ignoring the Rev. A. Waller, who was standing holding the alms dish in front of him to receive the same, and had to replace it empty on the communion table. Mr. Waller had been informed before as to what would take place if he did not give his word to hand over the contents of the alms dish exactly as he received them. This the man of God refused to do unless the churchwardens signed a document giving the minister power to take the offertories. The affair will probably end in the law courts.

Michael Prussky, a converted Russian Jew, is doing three months with hard labor. This horrible sentence was inflicted by Mr. Plowden, the Wandsworth magistrate. Poor Prussky was converted by the Rev. T. J. Meyer, the Presbyterian missionary to the Jews in London. After accepting Christ, and him crucified, he called on Christian ministers and obtained money, as most of them do, on false pretences. He also picked up any unconsidered trifles of an easily portable character that happened to be lying about. Hence these tears.

Poor Prussky, while in the dock, tried to round on his converter. He asked the Rev. Jew Converting Meyer what was his salary. No answer. How many converts had he made during the past five years? No answer. Poor Prussky! He evidently thinks some other folk ought to go to jail with him, and perhaps he is right.

A good tale is told of the late Archdeacon Balston. He had been chaplain to an almshouse for women, and was also Fellow of Eton. Having to preach in Eton chapel on an emergency, he seized one of his old sermons, and electrified boys and masters alike by the announcement, "You are all of you old, and most of you are mothers."

An interesting lecture on "Hypnotism and Magnetism" was delivered at Toynbee Hall recently by Mr. E. A. Hart, editor of the *British Medical Journal*. By experimental demonstration he showed that the will of the operator and the supposed currents proceeding from him were either imaginary or fictitious, and certainly unnecessary to produce the result achieved. Animal magnetism was a misnomer, and played no part in the phenomena. Everything depended on the person operated on. The curative results were excessively meagre and inadequate, as well as valueless. On the other hand, they had proved in certain hands both demoralising and mentally destructive. These scientific floatings in the air, thought-readings, and foretellings were only the stunted remnants of the period when such follies and fallacies were the universal heritage of mankind, leading to burnings, drownings, torture, and wholesale misery; when imposture was widespread and high-placed; when philosophers

were the dupes of their own self-deception; and when the mischiefs of hypnotic suggestions were extended over large districts, and ruined the lives of thousands. There were still publications which, in their follies and capacities for mischief, reverted to some of those of the darkest periods of ignorance and superstition, but they were now curiosities and eccentricities, and provoked laughter and amusement where formerly they would have led to insanity and persecution.

The Belgian Chambers have made the public exhibition of hypnotism illegal.

Hell is pretty close after all, if we may believe the Rev. C. A. Taylor, D.D., of Florida. He publishes his opinion that "Hell, or hades, or gehenna, or sheol, or whatever you may want to call it, is a lake of fire and brimstone, exactly fifty-two miles below the surface of the earth at sea level, and has the cubic contents of 542,900,000 miles."

This opinion is not exactly original with Pastor Taylor, but he wishes it known that he had come to it from careful consideration of the Bible. He notices that it always speaks of hell as "down," and to be down, not up, it must be in the centre of the earth. Estimating the increased heat as we go downward, he figures it out that hell begins at fifty-two miles down, where it will be hot enough to melt anything. The man of God finds in oil-wells and volcanoes a confirmation of his lunacy.

The pious Emperor William tells his dutiful subjects that the will of the ruler is the highest law. He concluded his address to the recruits at Potsdam by saying, "Should I perhaps be forced (which God forbid) to order you to fire at your own relations—your brothers or parents—then remember your oath. But above all things do not forget the Lord's Prayer, which you have learned as children. It helps in trouble; I know it from experience." William knows pretty well that spiritual despotism is a fine support to temporal tyranny.

A correspondent from China informs us that the priests always make great fortunes in China. He declares that the missionaries themselves foment disturbances in order to squeeze money afterwards from the Chinese government.

The *Hong Kong Telegraph* (Oct. 29) says emphatically that missionaries should stay in the back slums at home. It says: "The Chinese don't want missionaries and the vast majority of Europeans and all the Americans regard them as an unmitigated nuisance and ever-recurring source of trouble. We shall have to place a poll-tax on missionaries landing in Hong Kong very soon."

Christianity is known in the vast Hunan district of China as the pig-goat devil religion. The missionaries could doubtless explain how they got this cognomen.

The Vestry of St. George the Martyr having the public spirit to refuse to make a rate for the maintenance of the rector, he has applied for and obtained a mandamus compelling them to do so. We hope they will see their way to carry the case further.

The English gamblers at Monte Carlo are contributing towards stationing a special chaplain there. His name is Raikes. Monte Carlo is evidently the place for Raikes' progress.

The *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, tells a sad story of a Russian father, Dmitri Kurtan, who believed the Lord asked him to sacrifice his only son Grisha, and who accordingly stabbed him to death. He afterwards starved himself to death in jail. This was the effect of Bible reading.

Father Ignatius has been replying to Dr. Momerie. "Hellish lie" and similar phrases flew about freely. Evidently the Father is badly hit. It appears that he could forgive Dr. Momerie for leaving the church if her teachings were false, but he cannot forgive the heretic for pulling his dear old false Mother to pieces.

A short time since an elderly man complained to Mr. Dickin-son at the Thames Police Court about the systematic annoyance he received from the drum and fife band attached to a mission hall which adjoined his house. He again attended

the court, and declared that the drumming every night was making him very ill. The magistrate informed him he could do nothing, and the applicant (who appears to be like the mission hall pastor, a true Christian) then asked what he could legally do to annoy him in return.

The row at Eastbourne continues, and Booth is getting a splendid cheap advertisement. The mayor is taking more energetic measures than ever, and the Salvationists carry their tootling instruments in a more gingerly fashion.

Disgusting accounts are published of the way in which the rowdies treat the Salvation lasses. Personally we should be pleased to knock one of the said rowdies down. But after all, that sort of thing must be reckoned with if the Boothites persist in making a row in the public streets. The rowdies like a good afternoon's sport and the Boothites provide it. Anyhow, if they mean business, and intend to fight to the bitter end, they should leave the lasses in the barracks, and let the male Boothites bear the brunt of the battle. When Freethinkers maintained open-air stations they never took women with them to face danger.

Bramwell Booth prints extracts from a lot of sympathetic letters from politicians. They all say he is fighting the battle of freedom, though he keeps a long way off the danger. They maintain the right of the Boothites to play bands through as many streets as they like on Sundays. But not one of these politicians has a word to say for the Socialists and others who are chivvied from an old, legitimate outdoor meeting-place at Chelsea. Boothites may appropriate the whole street and other folk may not occupy a spare corner.

An "Eight Days' Battle for Souls" is being waged by the Boothites in a railway arch at Bethnal Green. There will also be an eight days' battle for a good collection.

Mrs. Krause, the wife of a German tailor in the East of London, had a baby nine weeks old suffering from acute bronchitis. She took it (the baby, not the bronchitis—no, no, the baby and the bronchitis) to be christened at the German Church in the Commercial-road, and the poor little thing died in the tramcar. Mrs. Krause was afraid if her baby wasn't christened it wouldn't go to heaven. The baby wasn't christened after all, and if it has gone to the other place, the superstitious mother hurried it there.

The vicar of All Saints, Barrington, has for some time been contemplating the restoration of his church. Now the matter is brought to a crisis. While the angel in charge of that gospel-shop was off duty, loafing round the public-house or somewhere, the clerestory fell in with a crash. The angel should be sued for damages.

Fresh earthquakes are reported from Japan. Four hundred thousand people are said to be homeless. Towns of ten thousand inhabitants have been wiped out of existence. Hundreds of men, women and children have been burnt alive in the conflagrated ruins of their homes. No such appalling calamity has happened in the present century. We commend it to the attention of our Christian friends who are always talking about Providence. Whether that party looks after the sparrows or not, he does not seem to care for human beings.

"A Colony of Benevolence" is the title of a begging pamphlet by the Rev. T. Given-Wilson, of St. Mary's vicarage, Upton-lane, London, E. The reverend gentleman is assisted in his good work by "the loving care" of his spouse. He boasts of having made a mission hall of the Cromwell Club, which the Atheists once used for "the promulgation of their infidel views." "The very room," he says, "where the Atheists declaimed is given up to works of Christian mercy, and the walls which once resounded with coarse jests and revilings of the religion of Jesus Christ now echo with praises of his name."

No doubt this is "good business." Very likely it will bring in subscriptions from credulous Christians. But we guess they would change their unctuous smiles if they heard that the "Atheist stronghold" at West Ham is by no means abolished. The fact is, as Mr. Given-Wilson well knows, it has only shifted its quarters. It has more members and is doing more work than ever. It is even contemplating another

removal to still larger premises, and we dare say, when the removal is effected, Mr. Given-Wilson will point to the abandoned place as a fresh evidence of his wonderful success in quashing "infidelity."

Mr. Given-Wilson should visit Portsmouth and Manchester, and give his parishioners the benefit of his reflections. In both places he will find flourishing Secular halls that once were Christian chapels. The Freethinkers in possession will be very happy to show him round.

They have started an Anti-Church Bell Association in New York. Many sufferers would be glad to see a similar movement here.

Next Sunday is to be held as a peace Sunday, but it is very doubtful if the sky-pilots' prayers for peace will do as much good as their alarmist prognostications of war will do harm.

We never saw the people reading *The People*. It seems to be nice and orthodox in every way, and we suppose it is a "kept" paper. One of its paragraphs sounds the praises of the Rev. William Moore, who visits Hyde Park every Sunday and champions Christianity "against the whole host of infidels, atheists, anarchists, and other apostles of the Devil." He is a splendid hand at abolishing their "flimsy foolery." But, alas, his pecuniary circumstances are not so good as they might be, and the friends of the people (or rather *The People*) are requested to stretch out "a helping hand" and provide him with "a reasonably comfortable living." For our part, we never before heard of the famous Moore; nevertheless we hope he will get "a reasonably comfortable living," though the prospect is somewhat poor when the writer who begs for him heads the list with nothing.

Already the Jews are beginning to complain that March 5 has been selected for the London County Council elections, for that day falls on their holy Sabbath, and they cannot vote without infringing the divine command. It is not likely the day will be altered to suit them, since Saturday is certainly more convenient for the mass than any other day except Sunday. And why should not Sunday be used as the day on which all votes are taken? Christians could not plead they are breaking God's commands, for the Bible says nothing about keeping the first day of the week, and Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Working men cannot afford to lose time to record their votes. The last School Board election should show that the time has come for demanding that all elections take place on the people's one day of leisure.

The Newark Freethinkers wanted a lecture from Mr. Foot next Saturday, but every hall in the place is closed against "the infidel." Perhaps someone will send some Freethought literature for distribution in that bigoted hole. Address it to Mr. L. Coleman, 9 Bowbridge-lane.

Mr. A. E. Pease, M.P., speaking at a Wesleyan Bazaar at Darlington, uttered some truths that must have been very unpalatable. He said he had "often felt that our Christianity did not shine in foreign countries." He had lately visited Asiatic Turkey, where the people were mostly Mohammedans, and he had "found them a most devout and religious people almost without exception." As for the practical fruits of their religion, they were "great abstinence, humanity, charity, and hospitality," and he had found these virtues practised by them "to an extent which he had never seen in Europe." The inhabitants had a contempt for Christianity, and it was no wonder when they saw "those who professed it coming into their country and spreading immorality, vice, and drunkenness."

Mr. Pease is too much of a Christian to recognise the moral superiority of Mohammedans, so he gets up the consoling little theory that Mohammedans have an inferior religion, only they obey it, while Christians don't. Perhaps a few minutes' steady reflection would show him that a religion that cannot get itself obeyed is inferior to one that can, especially when the disobedience refers to its moral aspects. The fact is, the Bible speaks in uncertain and contradictory tones. Christians who want to keep themselves in countenance can find texts to support any line of conduct they prefer.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, December 13, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester: 11, "Who Wrote the Bible"; at 3, "Wanted, a Christian who Believes in Christ"; at 0.30, "Man, Nature, and God."

Monday, Dec. 14, Lee's Hall, Mincing-lane, Blackburn; at 7.30, "The Follies of Theosophy."

December 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. 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. G. FISHER.—Sorry we cannot reproduce your letter from the Leeds newspaper.

J. COOK.—You will find an account of Hypatia in Mr. Wheeler's article on "A Christian Saint and a Freethought Martyr," in the N. S. S. Almanack for 1892.

HENRY.—*Matins* has but one *t*. The clerical ass who spelt it with two should go to an evening school.

J. F.—Of course men and women have the same number of ribs. They can be counted with the finger if the sides are not too fat. If your Christian friend doesn't believe us let him ask any doctor. Besides, if men had a rib more than women, one of the two sexes would be lopsided. Tell your Christian friend to put his Bible on the shelf and read a manual of physiology.

H. F. M.—We cannot tell you which is "the most popular book issued since January 1, 1891." The most popular issued from our office is *The Grand Old Book*.

R. BROWN.—Mr. Forder will execute your order and enclose catalogue. Shall be glad to hear from you.

BETHSHAN.—The explanation of the cures at Bethshan is simple; most of the cases are nervous, requiring a strong excitant to cure them. There is nothing miraculous in curing without medicine. Dr. Allinson, for instance, rarely uses drugs in his practice, yet he cures more than the average drug doctor. He is also physician to a drugless hospital. Read his *System of Hygienic Medicine*. It will enlighten you.

J. P. CHACE.—You need not defend Home Rule in writing to us. It is quite superfluous. We have, however, nothing to do in this journal with the political aspects of the Irish question. The action of the Catholic priests, when they act in concert under the direction of their bishops, is *ecclesiastical*. It is a pity you cannot see the difference, and a still greater pity that myriads of Irishmen cannot, or will not, see it.

L. N. CLIFTON.—We thank you for inducing Mr. Hogan, Bilston-street, Wolverhampton, to display a contents-sheet and place the *Freethinker* in his window. We also thank you for guaranteeing him against unsold copies. No doubt the local Secularists will patronise a newsagent who does justice to their own paper. If all our friends would do as you are doing our circulation would increase more rapidly.

F. WESTON.—Mr. Foote has nothing to do with any sort of meetings at the Hall of Science except those organised by the National Secular Society or the London Secular Federation. The N. S. S. rents the hall on Sundays till 9 p.m. After that it is used by the Club, which is an entirely independent body, including hundreds of people who are not Secularists. Of course a different responsibility will exist if the Freethought party takes complete possession of the premises. As to the smoking concerts, we notice that they are becoming extremely common; the Prince of Wales attends them, and clergymen may be seen at the Alhambra. Whether they are any worse for taking place on Sunday, is a matter on which Secularists and Christians are likely to differ.

A. FINCKEN.—Glad to receive your account of the matter, but it does not call for further attention in our columns. Mesmerism, hypnotism, and humbug too frequently go together.

C. B. HYDE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

T. DOBSON.—Pleased to hear from one who was shocked by the first number of the *Freethinker*, but soon got to like it, and is now an active Secularist. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. It is a good idea to leave the paper about, first writing on it the address of a newsagent who sells it.

R. F. F.—Thanks for batch of cuttings.

S. TOWNSEND.—At present we just make both ends meet. Our increased sale covers a good deal of our increased cost of production. But we receive nothing for our own editorial work, and we pay two or three contributors out of our own pocket. So you see the fortune we are making.

E. CHAPMAN.—Mr. Baldwin certainly made a big guess in taking twenty-five million years for the existence of the human race. But the Christians say the time is six thousand years, and he probably went to a facetious extreme.—Mr. Wheeler knows where Shakespeare was buried. The poet's "tomb" in Westminster Abbey was a pardonable slip for "memorial."

F. HAMPSON.—Glad to hear you made three new members after Mr. Watts's lecture at Bolton; also that you had good reports in the local press.

W. TURNER.—You will find the information you require in the N. S. S. Almanack. Every Secularist should take a copy. It contains good reading as well as information.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—We dealt with the Bishop of Dover and Sunday Schools some weeks ago.—The Darwinian Creed you refer to has appeared in our columns.

J. G. B. STONE.—Cuttings are always welcome. See paragraph.

G. MARTIN.—Mr. Foote will be pleased to see you at Nottingham. Glad to hear that our circulation is improving at Derby.

W. BLYTH AND F. SWATTS.—Thanks. See paragraph.

H. COURTNEY.—We have no reason for advertising Mr. Engstrom's sermons. Mr. Donisthorpe is quite able to take care of himself.

T. CRISFIELD.—We cannot give space to the matter. In our opinion, Secular halls are not the places for Sunday evening hypnotic entertainments.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Echo—Better Way—Daily News—Aston-under-Lyne Reporter—Western Daily Press—Open Court—Yorkshire Post—Hong-Kong Telegraph—Southend Standard—Reading Observer—Secular Thought—Sunday Chronicle—Stockport Chronicle—Liberty.

FRRIENDS 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 Stonecutting 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.

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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.

Mr. Foote lectures three times to-day (Dec. 13) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. He will be glad to see as many as possible of his South Lancashire friends.

There were good meetings at the London Hall of Science on Sunday. Mr. Foote lectured in the morning on "Hope for the People." Several questions were asked, but there was no discussion. The fine audience in the evening appreciated some good singing, and the lecture on "The Way to Heaven" was punctuated with laughter and applause. Owing to Mr. Foote's being a little hoarse, in consequence of a slight cold caught in visiting Chatham, the reading from George Meredith was omitted from the "service." All being well, it will be given the next time Mr. Foote occupies the platform.

After the lecture a rare old Christian, apparently of the Methodist persuasion, mounted the platform and threw the audience into convulsions of laughter. He told how he found salvation while praying in a bathroom on the 6th of May, 1862. All at once it came, and he jumped up exclaiming, "I've got it." And he certainly had. One man in the audience ejaculated, "Take him over the way"—to wit, the asylum. But the poor Christian was quite harmless. What is more, he is only a specimen of millions. Speeches like

his are excruciatingly funny to Freethinkers, but they are solemnly swallowed at Methodist meetings.

Mr. Foote's lecture at Chatham was attended by a much improved audience in comparison with the one he addressed twelve months ago. A good many ladies were present. In the hall, too, was a grandson of Robert Cooper, good-looking and intelligent, and wearing the uniform of a soldier. He introduced himself after the lecture. Mr. Foote has met several members of the Cooper family, every one of them obviously cast in a superior mould. Robert Cooper must have been a man of real distinction.

One good-tempered old clergyman took advantage of the opportunity for discussion. Two or three questions were asked by other persons, and then the meeting, which had been extremely enthusiastic, broke up to make way for a social party.

There is every likelihood of the Chatham Secular Society rejoining the N. S. S. The committee will recommend it to the annual members' meeting in January. Late in the spring, or early in the summer, the society expects to see the hall built for which it has long been saving. It will cost about £280. The structure is to be of iron, with a frontage of thirty feet, and seating accommodation for 250 persons, besides a committee room and two retiring rooms. We congratulate the Chatham friends on the splendid patience and tenacity with which they have brought their old dream so near to its realisation.

On Thursday, December 31, New Year's Eve, another social party will take place at the London Hall of Science. The tickets are one shilling each, and can be obtained as usual. None will be sold on the night of the party, so those who mean to join it should secure them early. There will be a good entertainment—songs, readings, dancing, etc., etc.

On the following Thursday, in the large hall, will be held the annual dinner of the London Secular Federation. A good caterer is to supply the repast, and the menu will be superior to that on former occasions. Mr. Foote will preside as usual. Last week we mentioned that Mr. Charles Watts would be present. We have now to announce that Mr. G. J. Holyoake has promised to come. The price of the dinner tickets is half-a-crown. And as this includes a good dinner, good company, good (short) speeches, and good music, it is dirt cheap at the money. This year there should be a bigger gathering than ever.

Mr. Touzeau Parris occupies the London Hall of Science platform to-day (Dec. 13), morning and evening. His subjects will be found in the Lecture Notices. There will be music before the evening lecture. We hope Mr. Parris will have good meetings.

Mr. Charles Watts has commenced operations in the Black Country. His reception at Wolverhampton was highly gratifying. The Branch has arranged for a visit from him on a Sunday afternoon a few weeks hence.

The Lancashire friends gave Mr. Charles Watts a real hearty reception last Sunday at Bolton, where he lectured twice to good and most enthusiastic audiences. Many of the old Freethinkers from Darwen, Farnley, Bury and Blackburn were present, and congratulated Mr. Watts on his return to England and his co-operation with Mr. Foote. They also expressed a hope that the National Secular Hall Society would be successful, as retaining the Hall of Science in the hands of the Secular party would be a fitting tribute to the memory of Mr. Bradlaugh. The sale of literature was good at both meetings, every copy of the *Freethinker* being sold.

We ask our readers in the Midland counties to remember that Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, is to be reopened to-day (Dec. 13), when Mr. Watts and Mr. George Jacob Holyoake lecture. Over £200 have been expended in renovating and heating the hall, and we shall be glad to learn that the Midland friends show their appreciation of the improvements Mr. Watts has made by attending and rendering him all the support they can. We hope to give in these columns next week a special report of the opening proceedings.

Finsbury is a monstrous division to fight, being nearly

as big as Manchester, and Mr. Forder's election expenses amounted to £62 0s. 3d. Up to the present the subscriptions amount to £24 6s. 6d. Mr. Forder doesn't ask for a penny, but we should be glad to see that heavy balance reduced. He fought gallantly and nearly succeeded, and he deserves encouragement.

FORDER ELECTION FUND.—E. Moon, 5s.; A. Pope, 2s. 6d.; "Pater," 2s. Per R. Forder: J. F., 5s.; Mr. Heritage, £1 1s.; Stanley Jones, 2s. 6d.; J. Chamberlain, 2s. 6d.; J. Henning, 10s. 6d.; J. Brockbank, 1s.; J. K. Sykes, 2s. 6d.; Dr. Allbutt, 5s.; J. Hoare, 1s.; Rev. T. Clarke, 2s. 6d.—GEORGE STANDRING, *Treasurer*.

The Liverpool mosque last week was the scene of another marriage, in which one of the parties was a convert to Islamism. The bridegroom was a graduate at the Lahore University, and the bride Miss Amelia Danes, of Landedown-terrace, Russell-square, London.

Mr. Alfred W. Benn, reviewing Graetz's *History of the Jews in the Academy*, says: "The noblest Jews seem unconscious of any obligation to keep faith to an enemy of their race. Apart from sexual morality, the countrymen of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius had little to learn from such a race either before or after its political destruction. The law disapproved of manumission. What a contrast to Roman jurisprudence in its attitude towards slavery. According to Rabbi Eleazar ben Hyrcanus, whose theories on female education, we are told, finally prevailed, 'to initiate one's daughters in the Torah is as good as to initiate them in prostitution.' What a contrast to the lessons of Plato and the example of Plotinus."

George Augustus Sala, being asked permission by a Glasgow publisher to include in a book of readings his story of "The Conversion of Col. Quagg," remarks that thirty years ago the reading of that profane narrative excited an ebullition of the *odium theologicum*. The *Glasgow Herald* says: "Sala should take a holiday in Scotland next summer, just to learn how we are advancing. He cannot have been the recipient of certain fervid literature which has been scattered broadcast from Townhill, Dunfermline, or he would have known that an honored dignitary of the Auld Kirk had perscruted Solomon in all his glory at a recent entertainment. He might learn during his visit that a Dundee clergyman has doubts whether the pulpit is a greater moral teacher than the stage, that a Glasgow parson is liberal enough to have good to say of a ballet in abbreviated skirts, and that an assistant minister is tolerant enough to study a comic part for the church literary association's dramatic entertainment."

A concert in aid of the funds of the Woolwich Branch takes place on Friday, Dec. 18, at the "Sussex Arms" Assembly Rooms, Plumstead-road, Plumstead. A good program is arranged.

The Leyton Branch is a young one, but it is getting on capitally. It is going to have an annual dinner (so it's out of the sucking-bottle stage) on Saturday, Dec. 12, at the "Rose and Crown" Dining Rooms, the Broadway, Leyton. Tickets (2s. 6d.) can be had of W. Jenkinson, 6 Tenby-road, Angel-lane, Stratford.

Mr. Stanley Jones lectured to good audiences at Liverpool on Sunday. He is on tour for the N. S. S. To-day (Dec. 13) he lectures at Belfast.

A Branch of the N. S. S. has been formed at Derby. A meeting for important business will be held this evening (Dec. 13) at 41 Copeland-street, at 7.

The Nottingham Branch (God bless it! Amen.) has resolved to employ boys to sell the *Freethinker* in the streets. A large supply is ordered this week, and we hope the experiment will succeed. If it does, other Branches will probably follow suit.

Next Sunday afternoon, after Mr. Foote's lecture in the Skating Rink, a tea will be held at the Secular Hall, Nottingham, for local friends and visitors from a distance. Mr. Foote will join the party. The tickets are sixpence.

The Rev. F. H. Wood, Fellow of St. John's, Oxford, is

delivering the Warburton Lectures in Lincoln's Inn Chapel. He has taken the subject of the Messianic Prophecies, and, according to report, the result of his doing so is to entirely confirm the Jews in their disbelief that the prophecies applied to Jesus. The ministers are gradually coming round to the views enunciated by Paine in his *Age of Reason*.

Arrangements are being made by a joint-committee for a public debate at Bristol between Mr. G. W. Foote and the Rev. Mr. Logan. It will probably take place in February.

Applications are coming in for shares in the National Secular Hall Society, Limited. We appeal to all who intend to help to apply for shares as promptly as possible. The sooner the scheme is carried to a successful issue the better. One or two of the wealthier Freethinkers, who may be depended upon for good support if there is a fair prospect of success, are waiting to see how the party in general responds to the appeal. There will be no allotment of shares until the Directors see a pretty clear road before them.

INGERSOLL ON RELIGION AND CHURCHES.

My belief is that the supernatural has had its day. The church must either change or abdicate. That is to say, it must keep step with the progress of the world or be trampled under foot. The church as a power has ceased to exist. To-day it is a matter of infinite indifference what the pulpit thinks unless there comes the voice of heresy from the sacred place. Every orthodox minister in the United States is listened to just in the proportion that he preaches heresy. The real Simon-pure, orthodox clergyman delivers his homilies to empty benches and to a few ancient people who know nothing of the tides and currents of modern thought. The orthodox pulpit to-day has no thought, and the pews are substantially in the same condition. There was a time when the curse of the church whitened the face of a race, but now its anathema is the food of laughter.

PEOPLE ARE ENJOYING THE PRESENT.

My idea is that people more and more are declining the postponement of happiness to another world. The general tendency is to enjoy the present. All religions have taught men that the pleasures of this world are of no account; that they are nothing but husks, and rags, and chaff, and disappointment; that whoever expects to be happy in this world makes a mistake; that there is nothing on the earth worth striving for; that the principal business of mankind should be to get ready to be happy in another world; that the great occupation is to save your soul, and when you get it saved, when you are satisfied that you are one of the elect, then pack up all your worldly things in a very small trunk, take it to the dock of time that runs out into the ocean of eternity, sit down on it, and wait for the ship of death. And of course each church is the only one that sells a through ticket which can be depended on. In all religion, so far as I know, is an admixture of asceticism, and the greater the quantity the more beautiful the religion has been considered. The tendency of the world to-day is to enjoy life while you have it; it is to get something out of the present moment; and we have found that there are things worth living for even in this world. We have found that a man can enjoy himself with wife and children; that we can be happy in the acquisition of knowledge; that we can be very happy in assisting others; in helping those we love; that there is some joy in poetry, in science, and in the enlargement and development of the mind; that there is some delight in music, and in the drama, and in the arts. We are finding, poor as the world is, that it beats a promise the fulfilment of which is not to take place until after death. The world is also finding out another thing, and that is that the gentlemen who preach these various religions, and promise these rewards, and threaten these punishments, know nothing whatever

of the subject; that they are as blindly ignorant as the people they pretend to teach, and the people are as blindly ignorant as the animals below them. We have finally concluded that no human being has the slightest conception of origin or of destiny, and that this life, not only in its commencement but in its end, is just as mysterious to-day as it was to the first man whose eyes greeted the rising sun. We are no nearer the solution of the problem than those who lived thousands of years before us, and we are just as near it as those who will live millions of years after we are dead. So many people having arrived at the conclusion that nobody knows and that nobody can know, like sensible folks they have made up their minds to enjoy this life. I have often said, and I say again, that I feel as though I were on a ship not knowing the port from which it sailed, not knowing the harbor to which it was going, not having a speaking acquaintance with any of the officers, and I have made up my mind to have as good a time with the other passengers as possible under the circumstances. If this ship goes down in midsea I have at least made something, and if it reaches a harbor of perpetual delight I have lost nothing, and I have had a happy voyage. And I think millions and millions are agreeing with me.

DOING AS THEY MUST.

Now, understand, I am not finding fault with any of these religions or with any of these ministers. These religions and these ministers are the necessary and natural products of sufficient causes. Mankind has travelled from barbarism to what we now call civilisation by many paths, all of which under the circumstances were absolutely necessary; and while I think the individual does as he must I think the same of the church, of the corporation, and of the nation, and not only of the nation but of the whole human race. Consequently I have no malice and no prejudices. I have likes and dislikes. I do not blame a gourd for not being a canteloupe, but I like canteloupes. So I do not blame the old hard-shell Presbyterian for not being a philosopher, but I like philosophers. So to wind it all up with regard to the tendency of modern thought, or as to the outcome of what you call religion, my own belief is that what is known as religion will disappear from the human mind. And by "religion" I mean the supernatural. By "religion" I mean living in this world for another, or living in this world to gratify some supposed being, whom we never saw and about whom we know nothing, and of whose existence we know nothing. In other words, religion consists of the duties we are supposed to owe to the first great cause, and of certain things necessary for us to do here to insure happiness hereafter. These ideas, in my judgment, are destined to perish, and men will become convinced that all their duties are within their reach, and that obligations can exist only between them and other sentient beings. Another idea, I think, will force itself upon the mind, which is this: That he who lives the best for this world lives the best for another if there be one. In other words, humanity will take the place of what is called "religion." Science will displace superstition, and to do justice will be the ambition of men.

My creed is this: Happiness is the only good. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to make others so.

A CHURCH ON A SENSIBLE BASIS.

I have for a long time wondered why somebody didn't start a church on a sensible basis. My idea is this—There are, of course, in every community lawyers, doctors, merchants, and people of all trades and professions who have not the time during the week to pay any particular attention to history, poetry, art, or song. Now, it seems to me that it would be a good thing to have a church and for these men to employ a man of ability, of talent, to preach to them on Sundays, and let this man say to this congregation—"Now, I am going to preach to you for the first few Sundays—"

eight or ten or twenty, we will say—on the art, poetry, and intellectual achievements of the Greeks." Let this man study all the week, and tell his congregation on Sunday what he has ascertained. Let him give to his people the history of such men as Plato, as Socrates, what they did; of Aristotle, of his philosophy; of the great Greeks, their statesmen, their dramatists, their poets, actors, and sculptors, and let him show the debt that modern civilisation owes to these people. Let him, too, give their religions, their mythology—a mythology that has sown the seeds of beauty in every land. Then let him take up Rome. Let him show what a wonderful and practical people they were; let him give an idea of their statesmen, orators, poets, lawyers—because probably the Romans were the greatest lawyers. And so let him go through with nation after nation, biography after biography. And at the same time let there be a Sunday school connected with this church, where the children shall be taught something of importance. For instance, teach them botany, and when a Sunday is fair, clear, and beautiful, let them go to the fields and woods with their teachers, and in a little while they will become acquainted with all kinds of trees and shrubs and flowering plants. They could also be taught entomology, so that every bug would be interesting, for they would see the facts in science—something of use to them. I believe that such a church and such a Sunday school would at the end of a few years be the most intelligent collection of people in the United States. To teach the children all of these things, and to teach their parents, too, the outlines of every science so that every listener would know something of geology, something of astronomy, so that every member could tell the manner in which they find the distance of a star—how much better that would be than the old talk about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and quotations from Haggai and Zephaniah, and all this eternal talk about the fall of man and the garden of Eden, and the flood and the atonement, and the wonders of Revelation! Even if the religious scheme be true, it can be told and understood as well in one day as in a hundred years. The church says—"He that hath ears to hear let him hear." I say—"He that hath brains to think, let him think."

THEATRES DISPLACING CHURCHES.

So, too, the pulpit is being displaced by what are called places of amusement, which are really places where men go because they find there a something which satisfies in a greater or less degree the hunger of the brain. Never before was the theatre as popular as it is now. Never before was as much money lavished upon the stage as now. Very few men having their choice would go to hear a sermon, especially of the orthodox kind, when they had a chance to see Joseph Jefferson. The man must be a curious combination who would prefer an orthodox sermon, we will say, to a concert given by Theodore Thomas. And I may say in passing that I have great respect for Theodore Thomas because it was he who first of all opened to the American people the golden gates of music. He made the American people acquainted with the great masters, and especially with Wagner, and it is a debt that we shall always owe him. In this day the opera—that is to say, music in every form—is tending to displace the pulpit. The pulpits have to go in partnership with music now. Hundreds of people have excused themselves to me for going to church, saying they have splendid music. Long ago the Catholic church was forced to go into partnership not only with music but with painting and with architecture. The Protestant church for a long time thought it could do without these beggarly elements, and the Protestant church was simply a dry-goods box with a small steeple on top of it, its walls as bleak and bare and unpromising as the creed. But even Protestants have been forced to hire a choir of ungodly people who happened to have beautiful voices, and they, too,

have appealed to the organ. Music is taking the place of creed, and there is more real devotional feeling summoned from the temple of the mind by great music than by any sermon ever delivered. Music, of all other things, gives wings to thought and allows the soul to rise above all the pains and troubles of this life, and to feel for a moment as though it were absolutely free, above all clouds, destined to enjoy forever. So, too, science is beckoning with countless hands. Men of genius are everywhere beckoning men to discoveries, promising them fortunes compared with which Aladdin's lamp was weak and poor. All these things take men from the church; take men from the pulpit. In other words, prosperity is the enemy of the pulpit. When men enjoy life, when they are prosperous here, they are in love with the arts, with the sciences, with everything that gives joy, with everything that promises plenty, and they care nothing about the prophecies of evil that fall from the solemn faces of the parsons. They look in other directions. They are not thinking about the end of the world. They hate the lugubrious and they enjoy the sunshine of to-day. And this, in my judgment, is the highest philosophy: First, do not regret having lost yesterday; second, do not fear that you will lose to-morrow; third, enjoy to-day.

Astrology was displaced by astronomy. Alchemy and the black art gave way to chemistry. Science is destined to take the place of superstition. In my judgment the religion of the future will be Reason.

THE JOY OF LIVING.

Tell me not of heaven, what is all the bliss
Of that world supernal, to the joys of this?
What its solemn worship, and its great white throne?
Where ten thousand seraphs praise the great unknown.

What, to me, its music, wrung from harps untold;
Jasper walls, pearl gateways, and its streets of gold.
Emerald, topaz, sapphire; tell me, what are they?
Toys to suit the whimsies of a child at play.

Tell me not of angels, what are they to me?
See the little children laughing wild with glee,
Hear their merry voices, see their twinkling feet;
Loving little children, O, how passing sweet.

Give to me a cottage, gemmed with human joys,
Hearts that throb with kindness, love that never cloy's;
Pearls such, as in parting, ruby lips may show,
Eyes surpassing diamonds in their tender glow.

Souls that thrill responsive to the touch of love;
These, I prize as treasures all things else above.
Where white arms of lov'd ones 'round my neck entwine;
There to me is heaven, holy and divine.

O, what beautiful flowers bloom along life's way;
Love in every bower, joy on every spray.
O, what wondrous music charms each human ear;
Why should pleasure fail us, with so much to cheer?

Though sometimes a sorrow o'er my bosom stray,
And perchance a shadow flit across my way,
Yet these human pleasures I would not forego
For the joys ecstatic seraphims may know.

G. W. THURSTON.

A naturalist living at Edinburgh has communicated his views on the question of monkeys' speech to an interviewer from the *Scottish Leader*. He says he has often seen their sign of submission by lying on the ground and putting out the tongue. He considers that some of the lower South American savages as very little, if anything, higher in the scale than the chimpanzee, and tells of one of his own who would take up his keys and unlock his drawers. There were two keys on the ring, of almost the same size. One unlocked the drawer, the other did not. "I have seen," he says, "Sally put the wrong key into the lock, or try to do so, and finding she had made a mistake, search for the right one, insert it, and unlock the drawer in triumph." If this was not a use of reason, what was it?

THE RELIGION MARKET.

ONE day I wandered into the land of fancy. I noticed many strange things and saw many new faces. However, the incident I am about to relate happened when I had been some time travelling.

I heard afar off a roar of voices as of people wrangling or disputing, and, attracted by the sound, thither I wended my way. Following a path leading in the direction whence the voices proceeded, I ultimately emerged into a large, open square, like a market place. It was from here the noises came. I surveyed the place. All around were tents or booths of all sizes, colors, and shapes, some being shaped like a cross, others in the form of a crescent. There were several hundred tents in all. In the centre of the square was a large crowd of people, each one apparently considering which tent he would enter. At the door of each booth stood a man dressed, in most cases, in black. He proclaimed that all who did not enter his shop would suffer the most terrible tortures; those in his booth would alone be safe. I was astonished at this strange scene. I went up to one doorkeeper; I saw the words "Roman Catholic Church" on his booth. He told me that he propounded the word of God; he constantly referred to "God" in the same way that I would speak of my friend Jones, saying God would do this and not do that, and be annoyed at my doing the other thing. Naturally, therefore, I thought God was some intimate personal acquaintance of his; and since he seemed to regard this person with so much importance, I ventured to ask him who was Mr. God, what was his occupation, and where did he live? To these questions he gave no answer, but, with a look of despair and horror, he said, "My friend, if you do not immediately enter and confess your sins and be baptised, you shall surely be punished hereafter." I questioned him as to how one could enter, and I found that, before you were allowed to go in, you had to pay. My curiosity by this time was greatly aroused; "I will see what these other booths are for," I thought. I went up to the next; I saw it had a flag flying, on which were the words "Church of England." Here the person at the door flourished a large book with gilt edges. On questioning him, he told me that unless I entered his booth I would be "damned." Never having heard the word damned, I asked him its meaning. "Oh," he said, "you will suffer eternal torment after you die." "But," I said, "the gentleman yonder says if I don't enter his tent I will suffer." "He is a liar; he is trying to lead you to perdition," replied the doorkeeper. I was perplexed. I went back to the first booth; the man was still there. I told him of the conversation I had had at the second tent. With a wink, he said, "Don't you believe a word the fellow says; he is a fraud. Remember! if you pay heed to him, you will surely be lost." Well, here was a dilemma. I went to a third tent. Here, however, the keeper told me that both the others were liars, and that only by entering his tent could I escape terrible sufferings. I soon found that everyone had the same story. Not alone did each brand all the others as liars—indeed, several said all the others were "agents of the Devil"—but each threatened me, if I did not enter his booth, with frightful pains after I was dead. Why after I was dead I couldn't understand.

While standing rather confused and astonished, a kindly-looking man accosted me. He wished to know my trouble. I told him. "Well, now," he said, "let us first sit down and reason the matter out." We walked to a quiet nook and sat down on the grass. My companion began speaking, and I did not wish to interrupt his discourse. "Now out of the thousand tents," said he, "999 must be false—the whole thousand may be so. Indeed, it seems probable, on the face of it, that they are all false; each makes precisely the same claim, each backs that claim with precisely the same kind of evidence. Does it not seem that, as we know 999 to be false, we might infer by analogy, since they are all alike, that what applies to the 999 will apply to the whole thousand. And there is nothing illogical in their being all false, as there is in their being all true. But apart from this, how are you to distinguish the one which may be true from the others, or find out whether even one is true at all. How, but by testing and examining the credentials of each? Use your reason on their pretensions, it is the only possible guide you have. If you do so examine their evidences, I will not be surprised, my friend, if you arrive at my conclusion, that they are, veritably, all false; and then you will, I am sure, refuse to part with your money and shut yourself up within any of their walls, only getting so much light as your windows

allow to enter; you will, I feel certain, prefer the sunshine of freedom." I thanked my friend for his advice and traced my steps homewards. I had learnt a lesson. F. RYAN.

A SAMPLE FROM OUR LETTER-BOX
WORTH READING.

SIR,—My object in writing is to thank you for helping me, through your paper and tracts, to free my mind from those absurd dogmas which I have been taught to regard as true. When I became acquainted with your paper I had already begun to entertain doubts as to the truth of Christianity, and certainly disbelieved the stories told in the Old Testament; but I had formed no very definite ideas on the subject. I had a vague notion of the existence of a God somewhere. The reading of the *Freethinker* showed me my position was untenable.

It is a great pity that your paper is so comparatively unknown. I know that there are hundreds who would be eager to read it if they only knew where to get it. At the same time, the number of readers ought not to be judged by the number of purchasers. When I first used to get the *Freethinker* it always was read by two persons before it was handed to me, and I always gave it to a friend or took care to leave it where some one would pick it up. When I left one on a seat or car, I always took care to write on the margin of the paper the bookseller's address from whom it could be obtained in the city. This is a suggestion which I think your readers ought to follow. A person would often call at a bookseller's to buy it when he would not think of writing to the office for numbers to be sent weekly. If Freethinkers will only persevere in their efforts to get newsagents to sell Freethought periodicals, there can be no doubt as to the future of our principles in Scotland.

In the little village from which I came, the Free Church minister is the most bigoted individual, even for a Presbyterian, that one could well imagine; and it has been my misfortune to be compelled to sit under him from ever since I was of age to think until I left school and came to the city, about three years ago. Two of that minister's sons are Freethinkers. The younger one I was partly instrumental, through Ingersoll's lectures, in converting. And I am acquainted with several other young men, who hail from the same district as myself, who have gone in the same direction. The tendency of the educated youth is towards scepticism; it only lacks literature such as the *Freethinker* to guide it in the right direction.

I am under eternal obligation to you for helping me to cast off the old beliefs, and for grounding me in the truth. I hope you may long live to combat error and free the rising generation from the trammels of superstition.—With best wishes, I am, sincerely yours, C. M. G.

A VOICE FROM THE ANTIPODES.

Cronlee Cottage, Brisbane, Queensland.
Oct. 29, 1891.

DEAR MR. FOOTE,—I have much pleasure in informing you that at a meeting of the representative Freethinkers of Brisbane, held on Oct. 21, 1891, at the residence of Mr. George Fish, Stanley-street, Brisbane, the following resolution was unanimously carried: "That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable to forward a letter of sympathy to George William Foote, expressing admiration for the manner in which he has labored for Freethought during the last 18 years, and regret that he should be subjected to opposition from a section of the party in his desire to carry out the work entrusted to him by the late Charles Bradlaugh; and that Mr. Wallace Nelson be requested to write such letter."

I need hardly assure you that I have great pleasure in complying with the request of the meeting. We are all glad here that you are keeping our platform free from the follies of Theosophy, and we sympathise with you in your natural desire to prevent the historic Hall of Science falling into the hands of the enemy. I am quite sure I am expressing the sentiments of hundreds who never saw your face, but who know something of your life and your writings, when I say that by your sacrifices and your services, by your capacity and by your courage, you have won the right to stand where Charles Bradlaugh stood, and to receive the loyalty which to him was ungrudgingly given.

I am, most truly yours,
WALLACE NELSON.

PROFANE JOKES.

Woman is a greedy creature. She robbed man of a rib at the outset of her career, and she has been after his heart ever since.

"The church seems to be packed," said the man on the outside as he paused to look in at the door. "Are they taking a lot of new converts into membership?" "Converts nuthin'!" whispered the sexton. "We don't have any converts at this church. We're tryin' a man for heresy."

Briggs has to read the Bible at family worship when it is too wet to go to church on Sundays. But he sometimes skips and paraphrases the chapters. Beginning afresh at Matthew, he read how Abram begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, etc., till getting tired of the hard names, he said "and so they go on begetting one another down to the seventeenth verse."

"Young man," solemnly announced a long-haired individual, gliding up to the clerk at the stationery counter, "I am a medium, and I want some paper on which to write to the spirits." "O, do you?" responded the young man, in a tone which was almost spirituous in its freshness. "This is the wrong counter. Go back to the other end of the store where they keep the wrapping paper." The next instant the medium fetched him a "wrap" across the parietal bone with an old umbrella, and walked out of the establishment.

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, Miss Eliza Hammond Hills, "The Achilles of our Age." Preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, W. J. Ramsey, "Behold I bring you Good Tidings." Wednesday, at 7.30, dramatic class (a few members wanted).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Secularism"; 7.30, C. J. Stenberg, "The Influence of Religion"; music and recitations will precede the lectures. Monday, at 8.30, social meeting of members and friends. Wednesday, at 8, G. Standing, "Plain Speaking about the Bible." Saturday, at 8.30, social evening for members and friends.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, Mr. Krause, "Individualism"; 7.30, F. Millar, "An Hour with Darwin."

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, A. B. Moss, "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh." Preceded by dramatic recitals and instrumental music.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, F. Haslam, "What we have Gained by Freethought."

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Great French Revolution and Atheism"; 7, E. Toleman-Garner, "And the Lord spake unto Moses." Thursday, at 8, C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Spiritism." Admission free. Saturday, at 8, free social concert.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Touzeau Parris, "What is Property?" (admission free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Touzeau Parris, "The Hope of Immortality" (3d., 6d., and 1s.). Thursday, at 8, James Burns, "Spiritualism as an Inductive Science" (free).

Lambeth—New Nelson Hall, Lower Marsh: 7.30, W. Heaford, "The Plain Truth about Jesus."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Immortality."

Notting Hill—"Yorkshire Stingo": 7.30, discussion forum, adjourned open debate on "The Conflict between Religion and Science."

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, Sam Standing's farewell address.

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, H. Snell, "Atheism and Death." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Court Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, reading—Wordsworth Donisthorpe's article, "Individualism in Regard to Sexual Relations." (rejected by *Liberty Annual*).

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, Mrs. I. M. Fagan (Fabian), "Women and Socialism."

Wood Green—Star Coffee Rooms, High-street: 7, Mr. Herzfeld, "Social and National Ideas."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, C. J. Hunt, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Ladies of the Bible."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. Norrish, "The Devil: where and what is it?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, Charles Watts, "Secularism: what it teaches and why it is taught" (chairman, G. J. Holyoake); 3, addresses by G. J. Holyoake, C. Watts, A. Holland, J. Davidson, and others (chairman, S. G. Middleton); 7, G. J. Holyoake, "The Interest of the Public in Freethought" (chairman, D. Baker). Previous to the evening lecture Mrs. Watts will recite "The Life Boat."

Blackburn—Lee's Hall, Mincing-lane: Monday, at 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Follies of Theosophy."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: noon, debating class, an Essay; 6.30, debate between J. P. Gilmour and M. Gass on "Is Evolution an Adequate Theory of the Universe?" (admission 3d.; proceeds to aid J. M. Cunningham).

Hull—Cobden Hall, School-street, Waltham-street: 6.30, N. B. Billany, "A Night with the Poets."

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: 6.30, Thomas Slater, "The Formation of Character." Admission free.

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': G. W. Foote, 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; 3, "Wanted, a Christian who Believes in Christ"; 6.30, "Man, Nature, and God."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, important meeting of members to consider the best means of assisting the Liberty of Bequest Committee, and also to consider the action of the Branch vs the School Board elections; 7, H. Keppel, "The Christian Religion, Viewed from a Religious Standpoint, a Failure."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, A. Lord "Scepticism and Religion."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, readings by a Member.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 2.45, reading circle (in connection with the National Home Reading Union); 7, Mr. Stoddart, "The Decay of Lying."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West-street: J. M. Robertson, 3, "The Heaven of Myth"; 7, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, Arthur Hunt, "Hypnotism and its Fellow Mysteries."

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, A. T. Dippet, "Are there Falsehoods in the Bible?" a debate.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Dec. 13, 20, and 27, Deptford. Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, Deptford; 31, Camberwell. Feb. 7 and 14, Deptford; 21, Reading; 28, Deptford.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Dec. 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. 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. 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. 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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