

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"The thought goes before the deed, as the lightning precedes the thunder."  
—Heine.

## FORWARD!

FOR Freethought the past year has been one of trouble and trial. Before the first month closed our great leader, Charles Bradlaugh, had fought his last battle on a field where all men must lose, and had succumbed to omnipotent Death. Words can hardly describe the effect of this blow upon the party he had led for so many years. The stronger hearts felt grief, the weaker ones dismay. It was to some as though the very sun were blotted out of the sky. They hardly looked for daylight again. But the great consoler, Time, laid his soothing hand upon their lacerated hearts. As the weeks passed by the prospect grew less gloomy. The old leader had gone the way of all leaders, to the place where

Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

But his work survived him, and the Freethought party still existed, with his memory for a fresh inspiration, and a responsibility only deepened by the loss of its chief.

Mr. Bradlaugh's death, as was natural, accentuated the defection of Mrs. Besant. From the moment she became a Theosophist I was free from illusion as to her future. Charles Bradlaugh's personality was a link still attaching her, however loosely, to the Freethought party; but when that was snapped the severance was complete. She has decisively joined the ranks of the enemy, for all superstition is of the same camp. There are but two great opposites—Reason and Faith, Science and Religion, Positivism and Supernaturalism (various names for the same two things)—and whosoever is not with the one is necessarily with the other.

Mrs. Besant has given a handle to the common foes of Freethought. They smile fatuously, and ask us, "How now?" They bid us observe how impossible it is for "the cold negations of Atheism" to satisfy the aspirations of a cultivated lady. Of course they forget—perhaps they do not know—that there are other cultivated ladies in the Freethought party, though they have not Mrs. Besant's gift of advocacy, who do not share her dissatisfaction. The superstitionists, in fact, are guilty of the rash generalisation of "converted infidel" stories. Twenty people, say, have left Secularism and gone back to religion. Well, what of that? Twenty thousand have left religion and come over to Secularism.

Beyond giving the Philistines cause to blaspheme, it is difficult to see what injury Mrs. Besant's defection has caused us. All the Freethinkers she has taken over to Theosophy might, I fancy, be counted on the fingers of one hand. For my part, I never suspected any serious danger in this direction; the real danger lay in the possibility of an old Free-

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thought leader, gone over to the enemy, yet pretending otherwise, being a cause of internal embarrassment and division. Happily that danger is now over, but to guard against it, while it threatened, was not so easy as some imagine.

During all this past year of trouble and trial the Freethought party has asserted its strength and vindicated its dignity. The liabilities of its great dead leader, contracted in many struggles for liberty and justice, have been legally discharged. Hundreds of pounds have also been raised for a permanent Memorial to his character and genius. A further sum has been subscribed for a handsome monument over his grave. And amidst all this financial strain, although the ordinary income of our organisation has naturally been diminished, our work has been carried on with greater, rather than less, vigor and efficiency. The "decay of Secularism" only obtains as yet in the pious imagination of our enemies.

One of the best tests of our progress is the circulation of our literature, and that is steadily improving. I am not in a position to speak for other journals, but I know that *this* journal stands in a far better position than it occupied twelve months ago. The increase from eight to twelve pages stimulated its circulation. Since the recent enlargement to sixteen pages a still greater improvement has been realised. And here I should thank the many friends who have rendered me assistance; and yet not me, but the cause I advocate. Those who have taken extra copies, those who have bombarded the news-agents, those who have helped in a hundred different ways, are one and all entitled to my gratitude—and they have it. I hope soon to be able to tell them that the *Freethinker* pays me, as well as others, for the work put into its columns.

Look at the National Secular Society's *Almanack* again; compare the present list of Branches with the previous one, and you will see progress, not retrogression. At the next Conference the Executive's report will probably excel that of any year except at the acme of some period of forced excitement.

With respect to my own policy as President, I have to say that while I have listened to all honest counsel I have always acted on my own judgment. I do not regard the presidency as a chairmanship. It is an office of power and responsibility. I believe the Freethought party looks to its President first of all to safeguard its interests. His very eminence enables him to see far if he has any eyesight, and he often knows what he cannot tell completely, though it must sway his decision. If need be, he is bound to exert his authority and use the full power of his position, even against resolute opposition if it will not be conciliated; waiting for the verdict, not of the hour or of fragments, but of the whole party at the appointed day of reckoning. A president without a policy of his own, and the courage to pursue it, is no fit successor of Charles Bradlaugh; and the Freethought party would never feel safe with such a man at the head of its affairs. An adequate successor to Charles Bradlaugh I do not pretend to

be, but I have a clear notion of my duty, and I shall fulfil it—in my own way.

Vastly important matters lie before us. There is Mr. Holyoake's Bequests Bill, which touches our dearest interests. There is the general question of Organisation, which must be dealt with afresh now the sad old year is over. Mr. Charles Watts is firmly settled at Birmingham, and Mr. Sam Standring has gone to Manchester. From these settlements I hope to see arise, in each case, a good, strong, active Federation of the N. S. S. Branches. Mr. Watts, at any rate, should make headway; he is an "old hand," with long experience as well as platform ability. I have co-operated in settling him at Birmingham, in the belief that he will be of great service to our party.

But London, after all, is the vital centre of all national movements; and London is to be the scene of the most gigantic effort our party has ever made in such a direction.

From the moment I knew that circumstances had compelled Mr. R. O. Smith to relinquish his responsibilities at the Hall of Science, I have never had a moment's doubt as to the necessity of securing it as our headquarters. Going out of it means a sheer dead loss. Keeping in it means the possession of a basis for all our operations. Securing it as our own property means a splendid advantage, such as I hardly dreamed of as possible for many years to come.

The question of headquarters for our party is not one for London alone. It is a question for all Freethinkers in the provinces, ay, and in every part of the English-speaking world.

I beg my readers, one and all, to read carefully the fresh Prospectus of the National Secular Hall Society, which they will find on another page. They will see the conditions on which it is proposed to purchase the Hall of Science. They will see that the Directors—including Mr. George Anderson, a first-rate man of business, and the most generous of Mr. Bradlaugh's supporters—are satisfied that money thus invested will bring a fair return, besides helping the Freethought movement. They will see that Mr. R. O. Smith gives an ample guarantee of his faith in the enterprise; and I can assure them, unless I am utterly mistaken in a man I have known for half my lifetime, that Mr. Smith will continue to give this enterprise the benefit of his knowledge, experience, and business capacity. He wants to see it succeed, and he will help to make it succeed. Personally, I want no guarantee. I know him. But others do not know him, and they have a guarantee in the conditions of purchase.

And now, in this New Year's number of the *Freethinker*, I appeal to the party which elected me as President to enable me to carry this scheme to a successful issue. My view of the vital necessity of its success is clear and decisive. I do not profess to lean over Charles Bradlaugh's grave and catch whispers from his coffin, but I know the history of his connection with the Hall of Science, and I believe he would approve the course I am taking. Further, I have with me the chief members of the Old Guard—not men of my appointment, but men who fought and worked around Charles Bradlaugh before I was so much as a vice-president.

Am I not entitled, also, to make a personal appeal? Eight years ago I sat on a low stool, in a dark prison cell, dreaming of what I might do for Freethought when I stood once more in the daylight of freedom. How many have said to me, "Nothing could ever compensate you." Well, something can. Let my friends, poor and rich, take one, ten, a hundred shares in this scheme; let them enable me and my colleagues to secure good headquarters for the Freethought party, and I will write against my account "Paid in Full."

G. W. FOOTE.

## WOMEN AND FREETHOUGHT.

WOMEN are, and always have been, more devoted to religion than men. Enter any church or chapel and you find the majority of worshippers are of the devouter sex. They furnish the larger number of confirmations and communicants. This phenomenon is not confined to any sect, or even to any religion. It is still more noticeable in Catholic countries than in Protestant ones. In France and Italy the churches are crowded with women and almost deserted by men. In India the majority of worshippers and pilgrims are females, and the same is observed in Japan. Many reasons have been assigned for the observed fact. It is the custom of their pulpit flatterers to ascribe woman's devotion to religion to her finer sensibilities. Yet it is by no means found that women of the finest sensibility are the most susceptible to the influence of religion. If these are conjoined with a good share of intellect, as in the cases of George Sand and George Eliot, we find they are rather emancipated from its influence.

Doubtless there are many causes which contribute towards favoring the religiosity of women, but I think the primary one is the long state of subjection which has been their condition in the past. It is this which has occasioned that defective education, incapacity for logical reflection, and, above all, that dependent attitude of mind which the priest loves and the Freethinker deprecates. Slavery in every form is favorable to superstition. See how revivalism, that would be scouted by whites, spreads among the negroes. The great religions have risen among subject races. Christianity spread first among the women and slaves of the Roman Empire. The attitude of slavery and of religion is the same. It is that of prostration. The worshipper of God but bows before "a magnified non-natural man," and thus easily becomes the dupe or tool of those of superior strength or cunning. Men have had to work and fight, but women have been taught to pray and to live in abject submission to force, with no other aid than that which came from her own longings. What could she be but fanciful and superstitious, and devoted to religion, which alone took her away from her surroundings.

The view that the devoutness of women is rather to be ascribed to their sufferings, their dependent position and their lack of education, is confirmed by observing that religion has less hold on the happy, the free, and the educated. It is because her lot here has been so miserable, that she has been led to look to another world for redress, because, so dependent on man, that she has vainly looked up to God. When education has reached the masses of woman-kind, as it has reached the masses of mankind, women will be no more content to believe that which offends her reason than man.

The truth is this conservative dependant attitude of mind has been and is still encouraged by unworthy men, who perceive it to be the necessary condition for their own mastery. There are those who, emancipated from superstition themselves, will not only "leave their sisters while they pray," but will send their wives to church and their daughters to the Sunday-school. Wives generally do not share in their husbands' reading or their thoughts. Among the masses their lives are a round of domestic drudgery, from which the Sunday at the church or chapel comes as a blessed relief. Can we wonder that they cling to religion, as to a stimulant or narcotic, which gives momentary relief? Thomas Adams, an old Puritan divine, said "A poor and afflicted life makes a man bold for religion." And this, I think, is especially true of women. The moral, then, is, if we wish women to grow up free from the thralldom of the priest, we must work for their general education, happiness, and welfare. They need more

leisure, more opportunities of freely participating in the thought and work of the world. Man and woman must advance side by side; if woman is left behind she will infallibly retard the progress of humanity. When she does learn that the Bible, reflecting a barbarous and polygamous state of society where woman was little better than a chattel, has been an instrument in her subjection; that it is her sex that has suffered most from the anxieties and terrors attendant upon the doctrines of hell and the difficulty of salvation; that, in short, in the words of Mrs. Rose, "the churches are built on the necks of women," she will become the most ardent emancipator of others.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### POOR EVE!

I PITY my grandmother Eve—

She ne'er knew the joys of young life;  
She at once had to roll up her sleeve,  
And become an old bachelor's wife.

She ne'er had a mother to dress her,  
And fix her up smartly each day;  
No papa to hug and caress her  
As homewards she ran from her play.

She ne'er owned a doll or a kitten,  
Their faces to smudge with delight;  
She'd to stay in the old man's dark kitchen  
From sunrise till sundown at night.

Poor Eve never danced in a mud-pool,  
And laughed when she saw the mud fly;  
Nor when wet and bespattered all over  
Did she ever indulge in a cry.

She never went skating in winter,  
Upheld by the arm of the boy;  
Nor enjoyed a fast sleigh-drive by moonlight,  
With all its hilarious joy.

Mother Eve never went to the circus,  
Or the fair, the grand sights to see;  
She ne'er got a kiss from young Adam  
As homeward they went from the spree.

I pity the poor dear old lady,  
Though some say she caused all the evil,  
I with care have examined the story,  
And can blame neither her nor the Devil.

—*Secular Thought.*

EDWARD PANTON.

#### CHRIST AND THE THREE GREAT SOCIAL EVILS.

I WAS reading in a Christian weekly some time back that in a certain town in the North of England, four members of an adult Bible class were going to address a Working Men's Conference on the following subjects: "The Bible the Book, and Christ the Friend of the Working Man," "The Influence of Christ on Labor Emancipation," "The Laborer's Indebtedness to Christianity," and lastly, "The Influence of Christ's Social Teaching." The editor remarked that "Our (the Christian's) one paramount duty at the present time is to bring home to the working men of England the great fact that their best and truest friend is the Carpenter of Nazareth."

It struck me when I read the foregoing that it will take a lot of "bringing home" to the working men of England that a young Jewish peasant who lived two thousand years ago is their best and truest friend. How a person who has been dead two thousand years can be anybody's friend is more than I can imagine. But Christ is credited with being so many things that nothing surprises one. We have Christ as this, Christ as that, and Christ in one character and Christ in another, till, if we were not used to it and hadn't an intimate knowledge of the wonderful imagination of Christians we should stand aghast in wonderment, and

with Dominic Sampson cry "Prodigious!" Probably if Christ could only come to life again, nothing would astonish him more than to discover what an encyclopedic authority he was and what a number of popular questions, political and social, he was acquainted with. How he would smile and wink the other eye! Or perhaps his feelings would be something like those of the man who was charged with a certain crime and was acquitted through the able pleading of his lawyer. When he was afterwards confidentially asked if he really *was* guilty he replied that before he heard his lawyer speak he thought he was, but he had made such a splendid defence, that he was quite persuaded he was innocent. Only the other day the irrepressible Mr. Atkinson, M.P., caused quite a commotion in the Methodist Ecumenical Conference by claiming Christ as a Unionist on the Home Rule question; but I think it was reserved for a recent correspondent of the *Freethinker* to "beat the record" when he declared that Christ was at least an Agnostic if not an Atheist!

When inquiring young Methodists write to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes to inquire whether they should, as Christians and Methodists, do this, that, or the other, he advises them to ask themselves what Christ would do under the circumstances—not ask their own common sense; that would be useless apparently; but get to know the mind of Christ on the subject. Christ is turned into a sort of "Consult me" or "Inquire within" upon every imaginable subject. Should they dance? Would Christ dance? Should they kick football? Would Christ kick football? Should they smoke? Would Christ smoke? Should they take their girls for a sail on a Sunday? Would Christ take *his* girl for a sail on a Sunday? and so on. No doubt the inquiring young Methodists will see that the answer in each case suits the occasion. We are afraid that they will sometimes decide that Christ would do some very peculiar things.

Well, as Christ is held up as our great pattern, and appealed to as our great authority on so many subjects, I propose to consider, not what Christ would do in some problematical case, or what some of his followers imagine he would do, but what he really had to say when he was alive about certain social evils which afflict society.

The religious press are at present making a great deal of noise about what they label the three great social evils—gambling, intemperance, and prostitution. Let us see what their divine founder had to say on these matters, as he is to be our guide in everything. Therefore we appeal to Christ.

What has he to say about the evil of gambling? Absolutely nothing. We look in vain for one solitary word on the subject during his whole public career, from the time when we first come across him at twelve years of age, astonishing the doctors in the temple with his marvellous debating powers, up to the time of his crucifixion. Evidently we are not indebted to him for any help on the gambling question. And right here let me say that I have always considered the denunciation of gambling by Christian ministers rather comical, because is not religion itself a huge gambling concern and nothing more? Christian ministers are religious bookmakers, who induce us to "go nap" on Christ for the New Jerusalem Stakes. There is this difference though, and it is in favor of the ordinary bookmaker: We don't get to know the winner of the celestial "event" till we are dead, and consequently don't get paid over it.

What does Christ say of intemperance? Next to nothing. Only once throughout his whole ministry does he condemn drunkenness. That was when he told his hearers to be on the look out for his second coming and not get drunk, as the day might come on them unawares (Luke xxi. 34). Neither by precept nor example does he anywhere else condemn intemperance. On the other hand, we not only find him drinking wine himself, but manufacturing it for others to

drink. Clearly the temperance movement owes nothing to Christ. Of course Christians do not like the idea of Christ in the character of an amateur brewer, and therefore endeavor to explain away the situation by saying that it was not intoxicating wine that he made. The people who can make a day mean anything from twenty-four hours to a million years or so, as they do in relation to the creation story, can do anything. They are to be congratulated, not only on their own powers of distorting the plainest statements of facts, but on possessing an inspired book that has such wonderful qualities of elasticity and adaptation. No doubt in time we shall learn that Noah got drunk on ginger-beer, and that when Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, he merely meant him to have a "Bovril served hot."

As to Prostitution. Although Christ appears to have been frequently in the company of "unfortunates," yet on no occasion do we find him condemning this particular social evil. Social purity people will look in vain for any words of Christ's on their side. On one occasion he told the chief priests and elders that harlots would go to heaven before *they* would (Matt. xxi. 31, 32), and on another he refused to condemn a woman taken in adultery (John viii. 11). The woman of Samaria, too, whom he knew to be living in adultery, received no word of censure from him.

How a man can be regarded as a perfect example to us or a great moral teacher who has practically nothing to say on these and many other important social questions, it is for Christians to decide.

In conclusion I cannot do better than quote the words of a clergyman of the established church, as showing how much superior to Christianity is Mohammedanism in this matter: "Let us remember that in some respects Moslem morality is better than our own. In resignation to God's will, in temperance, charity, veracity, and in the brotherhood of believers, they set us a pattern we should do well to follow. *Islam has abolished drunkenness, gambling and prostitution—the three curses of Christian lands*" (*Missionary Failure*, by Rev. Isaac Taylor, p. 32). The italics are mine.

H. J.

#### THE DEVIL AT EASE.

OLD SATAN sat in his easy chair,  
Smoking his pipe of clay,  
While his soot-smear'd angels, with busy care,  
Were stowing the coal away,  
A big tom-cat, with iron-gray fur,  
By the side of the chair was purring his purr.

Old Satan laid his hand on his knee,  
While a smile o'erspread his face;  
He thought of a priest he roasted that day  
For leading a girl to disgrace,  
And he laughed a laugh in fiendish glee,  
While he gently stroked his gray goatee.

He thought of a preacher in upper life,  
Who had skipped to Canada's shore;  
Of a Sunday-school teacher, who, with another man's wife,  
Had left by the open backdoor.  
And he rubbed his hands, as he thought with a smile,  
"I'll roast them all in a little while."

A mouse-colored bloodhound lay stretched on the floor,  
Amid the soot and the dust;  
The iron-gray eat by the side of the chair  
Was sleeping the sleep of the just.  
"And the old brass clock on the mantel-tree  
Had plodded along to almost three."

Still Old Satan sat in his easy-chair,  
While close to his heaving breast,  
The blackened clay and curved reed stem  
Of his half-smoked pipe were pressed;  
His head bent down tow'rd the cat so gray,  
"Fast asleep were they both on that summer day."

J. CLARENCE SAURLEY.

#### PUDDING AND PANTOMIME.

CHRISTMAS in England is a great feast-time; it is the time when we all abandon ourselves to eating and drinking, or, in other words, to stuffing ourselves uncomfortably full as a means of enjoyment. And above all things at Christmas time, our Christian brethren betake themselves to devouring sundry portions of plum-pudding, many of them attaching some importance to the number and variety of pieces they take as insuring for them so many "happy months" for the succeeding year.

Christmas, as every Freethinker knows by this time, is of Pagan origin. Yuletide was an old Pagan festival; but whether the Pagans, among their other enjoyments, went in for devouring plum-pudding, I have never been able to ascertain. Among English folk, whether Christians or nothingarians, Christmas time is mainly occupied in two ways—eating plum-pudding and witnessing pantomime. How many tons of plum-pudding are "put away" between Christmas and New Year's Day only the recording angel could properly estimate; and even he might be pardoned for making a mistake at such an awfully unbusiness-like season of the year. For plum-pudding I can find no religious origin. People do not seem to have first eaten it either in the name of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; and unless they took it on medical grounds in lieu of physic, I cannot conceive why it was introduced and made to play so important a part in the Christian festival. But the fact remains that it has been introduced, and people will go on eating plum-pudding every Christmas time until some clever theologian discovers a verse in the Bible which will demonstrate to every pudding-eating Christian in the civilised world that the Virgin Mary was the first to make a pudding, and that she made it on the anniversary of the birth of her precious son Jesus Christ.

But what of pantomime? That does seem to have had a religious origin; for I find, on looking over the stories which form the burlesque "opening" of our pantomimes, that they are based with very few exceptions upon ancient religious stories, or the folklore of ancient peoples. Let me give a few examples. The story of "Little Red Riding Hood" is an old religious myth, which originated in a study of ancient astrology. In the German story "Red Riding Hood" is cut out of the sleeping wolf by a hunter.\* So also is the story of "Tom Thumb," who was swallowed by a cow and came out unhurt; and even the story of Jonah who was swallowed by a sea monster, which ultimately cast him ashore unhurt—is a religious story, based upon a study of astrological phenomena. Indeed, they are all legends of the darkness devouring the sun. The story of the "House that Jack Built" is of religious origin. Edward Clodd tells us there is a poem at the end of the Passover services used by the Jews, which some among them regard as a parable of the past and future of the Holy Land. It contains ten verses, each ending with the refrain "A kid, a kid," and it begins

A kid, a kid, my father bought  
For two pieces of money.

And after telling how a cat came and ate the kid, and a dog came and bit the cat, and a staff came and beat the dog, and so on, it concludes thus:

Then came the Holy One, blessed is he,  
And killed the Angel of Death  
That killed the butcher  
That slew the ox  
That drank the water  
That quenched the fire  
That burned the staff  
That beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
That my father bought  
For two pieces of money. A kid, a kid.†

\* Clodd, *Childhood of Religions*, p. 126.

† *Ibid*, pp. 126, 127.

Here we have undoubtedly the original story of the "House that Jack Built." But while it is interesting, no doubt, to know the source of these stories, it is much more entertaining for us—at all events when we are children—to see these ancient myths enacted upon the stage; to be taken away from the hard, cold realities of the world, and transported into a perfect fairyland of delight. To see our hero Jack-the-Giant-Killer in the flesh, and gaze with fear and wonder upon the great Ogre as he comes out of his castle and repeats the familiar words:

Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum,  
I smell the blood of an Englishman.  
Let him be alive or dead,  
I'll bake his bones to make my bread.

And then when we have witnessed the triumph of Jack, to hear the merry laugh of the clown as he bounds on to the stage as with a merry twinkle of the eye he exclaims, "Here we are again!" we feel quite happy, and as children, decidedly affirm that life is not a failure. On the contrary, we feel that life is full of change, of variety—that life is perpetual joy. It is, however, when we grow to manhood that we realise that these things are but fairy tales, born in the childhood of the world, and our maturer judgments compel us to reject them in favor of the stern realities of life. And once we take upon ourselves the task of fighting life's difficulties; of overcoming the obstacles, real or imaginary, that we find in our path—we shall soon learn that with all its troubles and trials life is worth living, and that duty well done brings its reward in this world, whether there's another or not.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

#### CREDIBILITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

WHAT memorials remain to give us light into the originals of nations and the history of those ages we commonly call the first ages? The Bible, it will be said—that is, the historical part of it in the Old Testament. But even these divine books must be reputed insufficient to the very purpose by every candid and impartial man who considers either their authority as histories or the matter they contain. For what are they, and how came they to us? At the time when Alexander carried his arms into Asia, a people of Syria, till then unknown, became known to the Greeks. This people had been slaves to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, as these several empires prevailed; ten parts in twelve of them had been transplanted by ancient conquerors, and melted down and lost in the east, several ages before the establishment of the empire that Alexander destroyed; the other two parts had been carried captive to Babylon a little before the same era. The captivity was not indeed perpetual, like the other; but it lasted so long, and such circumstances, whatever they were, accompanied it, that the captives forgot their country, and even their language—the Hebrew dialect at least, and character—and a few of them only could be wrought upon, by the zeal of some particular men, to return home when the indulgence of the Persian monarchs gave them leave to rebuild their city and to repeople their ancient patrimony. Even this remnant of the nation did not continue long entire. Another great transmigration followed, and the Jews that settled under the protection of the Ptolemys forgot their language in Egypt, as the forefathers of these Jews had forgot theirs in Chaldea. More attached, however, to their religion in Egypt (for reasons easy to be deduced from the new institutions that prevailed after the captivity among them) than their ancestors had been in Chaldea, a version of their sacred writings was made into Greek at Alexandria, not long after the canons of these scriptures had been finished at Jerusalem; for many years could not intervene between the death of Simon the Just, by whom this canon was finished (if he died during the reign of Ptolemy Soter), and the beginning of this famous translation under Ptolemy Philadelphus. The Hellenist Jews reported as many marvellous things to authorise, and even to sanctify, this translation as the other Jews had reported about Esdras, who began, and Simon the Just who finished, the canon of their scriptures. These holy romances slid into tradition, and tradition became history; the Fathers of our Christian

Church did not disdain to employ them. St. Jerome, for instance, laughed at the story of the seventy-two elders, whose translations were found to be, upon comparison, word for word the same, though made separately, and by men who had no communication with one another. But the same St. Jerome, in the same place, quotes Aristeas, one of the guard of Ptolemy Philadelphus, as a real personage.

The account pretended to be written by this Aristeas of all that passed relating to the transaction was enough for his purpose. This he retained, and he rejected only the more improbable circumstances which had been added to the tale, and which laid it open to most suspicion. In this he showed great prudence and better judgment than that zealous but weak apologist Justin, who believed the whole story himself, and endeavored to impose it on mankind. . . .

Thus, when we consider these books barely as histories, delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people, among whom the custom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably, we may be allowed to doubt whether greater credit is to be given to what they tell us concerning the original, compiled in their own country, and as it were, out of the sight of the rest of the world, than we know, with such a certainty as no scholar presumes to deny, that we ought to give to what they tell us concerning the copy. . . .

Apion, an Egyptian, a man of much erudition, appeared in the world some centuries afterwards.\* He wrote, among other antiquities, those of his own country; and as he was obliged to speak very often of the Jews, he spoke of them in a manner neither much to their honor nor to that of their histories. . . .

The Jewish history never obtained any credit in the world till Christianity was established. The foundations of this system being laid partly in these histories and in the prophecies joined to them or inserted in them, Christianity has reflected back upon them an authority which they had not before, and this authority has prevailed wherever Christianity has spread. Both Jews and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, while each condemns the other for not understanding or for abusing them. . . .

These scriptures (the Old Testament scriptures) are come down to us broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations and transpositions, made we neither know when nor by whom, and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book on whose authority men have agreed to rely. . . . I will venture to say that I do not assume so much as is assumed in every hypothesis that affixes the divine seal of inspiration to the whole canon; that rests the whole proof on Jewish veracity; and that pretends to account particularly and positively for the descent of these ancient writings in their present state.

It is strange, but it is true; not only the Jews differ from the Christians, but Jews and Christians both differ among themselves, concerning almost every point that is necessary to be certainly known and agreed upon in order to establish the authority of books which both have received already as authentic and sacred. So that whoever takes the pains to read what learned men have writ on this subject, will find they leave the matter as doubtful as they took it up.

#### THE CREATION.

The creation of the first man is described by some as if, pre-Adamites, they had assisted at it. They talk of his beauty as if they had seen him, of his gigantic size as if they had measured him, and of his prodigious knowledge as if they had conversed with him. They point out the very spot where Eve laid her head the first time he enjoyed her. They have minutes of the whole conversation between the mother of mankind, who damned her children before she bore them, and the serpent. Some are positive that Cain quarrelled with Abel about a point of doctrine, and others affirm that the dispute arose about a girl. A great deal of such stuff may be easily collected about Enoch, about Noah, and about the sons of Noah; but I waive any farther mention of such impertinencies as Bonzes or Talapoins would almost blush to relate. . . .

No scholar will dare to deny, that false history, as well as sham miracles, has been employed to propagate Christianity.

Sure I am that experience, from the first promulgation of Christianity to this hour, shows abundantly with how much ease and success the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text and plausibly defended by the same authority.—Lord Bolingbroke "On the Study of History," ch. iii., "Of Sacred History."

\* After the Alexandrian version.

## ACID DROPS.

The *Christian World* rejoices over the Rev. John Hunter's denunciation of the doctrine of "endless evil"—in other words, of everlasting hell. Not too much hell, but just hell enough, seems to be the new idea. But when the Rev. John Hunter expresses his "thankfulness" that the doctrine of endless evil is fast hastening to final and everlasting extinction," and talks about "the larger hope" of the new-fashioned Christianity, he is only saying, after all, that Freethought has made the orthodox faith ashamed of its vilest features. Religion never had any principle of self-reformation; it is reformed by external agencies. It always denounces Freethought as the enemy of God and man, but it always accepts the advanced situation that Freethought drives it into when it sees no way of escape; and, after a while, it swears it was never driven to the place, but was always there.

Let the reader look through Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* once more, and see what was ferociously prosecuted by the Christians in the early part of this century. Let him reflect that Richard Carlile and other heroes spent years of their lives in jail for selling that "infamous" book. Then let him look at last week's *Christian World* and see how much of Thomas Paine's heresy is now accepted by a leading Christian journal. It is there confessed that "It was a great relief to them [poor distressed Christians!] to find that they need not believe that the hare chews the cud, even though the book of Leviticus says that it does; or that five hundred or six hundred years was the ordinary term of life amongst antediluvians; or that the Almighty walked in the garden in the cool of the evening, and failed to discover Adam hidden in the trees until he had called aloud to him to come forth from his concealment." All that is the *letter* of Scripture—that is, what it actually says; but the true Christian must accept the *spirit*—that is, what it doesn't say. And so the Christians go on accepting Thomas Paine's heresy bit and bit, and swearing all the time that they never, never, never could dream of any connection with such an "infidel."

While this sort of thing goes on in "advanced" Christian circles, it is not surprising to learn that at the recent London Ministers' Meeting of the Wesleyan body "attention was drawn to the wave of scepticism passing over the Sunday-schools."

Even the *Methodist Times* is sarcastic at the expense of Archdeacon Denison and the other Evangelicals who signed that precious guarantee of the infallibility of the Bible which appeared one day last week in the *Times*. Ananias Hughes's paper has its own recipe for doubt. "There is only one ultimate foundation," it says, "for all our convictions and all our hopes, and that is neither the Church nor the Bible, but Jesus Christ himself." In other words, as the hymn says, "Lay it all upon Jesus." But, as a matter of fact, we know nothing of Jesus except what the Bible tells us, and the question of the authority of the Bible is the ultimate one after all. Archdeacon Donison and his Evangelical friends are more logical than Ananias Hughes, but they are not half so knowing, nor a tithe so unscrupulous.

As the world becomes more sceptical it grows more honest and humane. Four centuries ago Christianity was triumphant. No one could say it Nay without having his life tortured or burnt out of him. And what was the state of the world then? We will answer this question with an extract from a leading article in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*: "In those not very remote days rack and faggot, axe and fire, and all the apparatus of that vestibule of Gehenna, the Inquisition, were the prime articles of fashion. . . . That time was a carnival of cruelty. Religion was a death's head. The lust for gore was the consuming passion of the priests round the cross, as well as the despots on the throne. The church was a charnel-house over an abysmal dungeon." Behold the good old Christian times!

A man in Vienna with religious mania drove seven three-inch nails in his skull. Strange to say he lived on, perhaps because fanatics are deficient in brains.

At the county hospital at San Francisco, Mrs. White, in the surgical ward with a broken leg, converted several of the ward's occupants to belief in faith-cure. The speedy knitting

of her broken bone, she said, was due not to the processes of the skilled surgeons, but to her believing prayers. She had her converts promise that at a certain hour they would leave bed, kneel in prayer, throw aside crutches and tear off such splints as any might have, and walk home. At the hour attendants rushing in at cries of pain found Mrs. White and another lady writhing on the floor and others with their splints about torn off ready to make the attempt. No one was seriously injured but Mrs. White, whose leg was re-broken and wrist sprained.

The clergy appear to be at the bottom of attempts to overthrow the Republic in Brazil. When the official connection between the Church and State was declared abolished, the federal government engaged to provide for the payment of all salaries to the existing functionaries of the hierarchy and to support the chairs in the seminaries for one year, leaving it to the provinces to do as much as they pleased in the interest of religion. Most of the provinces have chosen to do nothing, and where priests have died altars remain vacant for want of a salaried ministry. The Brazillians, unaccustomed to voluntary contribution for clerical support, are learning to neglect religion, and the church sees the people slipping away from it. The clericals are, in consequence, continually plotting to restore monarchy.

The *Wasp*, of San Francisco, publishes a double-page cartoon on Christianity and the Bible in China. It is an exact copy of a Chinese cartoon, taken from a native paper, and illustrative of the feeling in the Celestial Empire towards foreign missionaries and the Bible. It represents Chinese seizing the missionaries and burning their books while they hold their noses. The words literally translated are "Kill the devils and burn the books. The bloody hogs calling themselves foreign missionaries fool both the Heavens and the Earth. They try to destroy the dignity of our ancestry and our ancient religion. The dirty dogs! the wild beasts! the foul books! the hypocrites destroying the religion of the angels for their savage doctrines! Every kind of people in every land and on every sea want to see them punished!" Bigotry is the same in all lands, and the missionaries in China seem to have pulled a hornet's nest about their ears. The cartoon will be on view at Stonecutter-street.

Dr. Charles A. Thomson, of Madison-avenue Church, New York, is going to enlarge his choir, introduce a fine orchestra of twenty-five musicians, advertise freely in all the papers, and place tickets for the best seats on sale in the large hotels. Is this an instance of what Ananias Hughes calls "coming to the cradle in Bethlehem with all the simplicity and enthusiasm of the Judean shepherds."

How sweet to Secular ears are the groans of a despairing priest! Delicious, yea delicious, is it to hear the Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds complaining that even Catholics are "already removing" their children from Catholic schools to "what are termed Higher Grade Board Schools" with the idea of "securing for them a better secular education." The Bishop warns them "in the name of God" against this desertion of Holy Mother Church. He bids them reflect that their good, pious, priest-directed Catholic schools, are "now threatened by an energetic and persevering body of Secularists, who know too well how to use political influence, and to fetter political parties for their unholy ends." Good! May the Bishop go on singing that tune, world without end, Amen.

Mr. Gawyn Cumming "from Ireland" is conducting a mission at Pontymoile, South Wales. He issues "A Through Ticket for Heaven: and No Return." "No Return" is the only part he can guarantee.

"Old Two Seed in the Spirit Predestinarian Baptists" is one of the religious denominations that appear in the United States Census. Probably the Old Two Seeds expect to go to heaven alone. They are the elect. We never heard of them before, but the Lord knows his own, however few they be; and when he separates the wheat from the chaff the Old Two Seeds will have heaven to themselves.

The Rev. James Machardy, parish minister of Latheron, Wick, is another Scotch man of God asked to provide alimony for the illegitimate child of his domestic servant.

Thomas Fuller, a Londonderry Catholic, has got lightly off with a sentence of three years' penal servitude for killing Robert Cochrane. Cochrane was an Orangeman, and his party were attacked for cursing the Pope, the fight resulting in Cochrane's death.

John William Johnson, who last week was dispatched from Durham Jail to join the saints in heaven, for having cruelly murdered Mrs. Addison at Hetton-le-Hole, sent on the day before his execution a characteristic letter to the murdered woman's daughter. He said, "I forgive you all, and I hope the Lord will forgive you as he has forgiven me, so that at last we may meet in heaven." J. W. Johnson was evidently well assured of his own salvation, though a little dubious as to his victim's. He also sent the girl a hymn beginning—

I heard the voice of Jesus say  
Come unto me and rest.

J. W. Johnson evidently appreciated the beautiful Christian teaching about Jesus being the friend of sinners and there being more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance.

George Wood, who is charged with outraging and murdering a little girl at Brighton, is the son of a religious man. In a letter to his father from prison, George Wood uses the name of God eleven times.

Beautiful religion! Patrick Kenny, of Bessbrook, was a Catholic, but he married a Protestant woman and embraced her religion. About three weeks ago he died and was buried at Mullaglass churchyard, but his coffin was dug up a fortnight afterwards and placed on the doorstep of the Protestant clergyman who read the burial service. No clue to the perpetrators of this infamous act has been discovered, but their motive is perfectly obvious.

The Rev. Dr. Lars Oftedal, who recently made a sensation in Norway by confessing in the pulpit that he had debauched a number of young girls who were confided to his spiritual care to prepare for confirmation, has not been punished, but has been requested to minister to another congregation.

Sir Henry Tyler, M.P., is the Christian gentleman who prosecuted Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote for "blasphemy," and didn't get a verdict against either of them, though he did get a terrible snubbing from Lord Coleridge. He also grossly insulted Mr. Bradlaugh's daughters in the House of Commons. This same Sir Henry Tyler has often been dressed down in *Truth*. His business is running companies. One of these is the White Lead Company, which seems to be in a pretty mess. At a recent shareholders' meeting, Sir Henry Tyler's only answer to a shareholder who wanted to get at the bottom of the business was to move that he be not heard. What a glorious champion has Christianity in this noble "guinea pig."

Miss Isabel Cooper Oakley, writing to an English paper, says: "It is sometimes suggested that they [Mahatmas] have not made themselves manifest to the world. But this is not so. In the East they are almost universally known and believed in." This is a mistake. In the East they are as much unknown as in the West. We remember talking some time since to a Hindu gentleman on this subject. "How is it possible," he said, "that Mrs. Besant should believe all these things, when we natives put no faith whatever in them?" —*Modern Thought*.

A joker says that 1891 was a year of small superstitions.

What it brought us quite sufficed,  
A Mahatma letter and the coat of Christ.

At their convention recently held in Chicago, the National Swine Breeders resolved in favor of closing the World's Fair on Sundays, in order that the nation "may be spared the strain of a conspicuous and flagrant act of disobedience to God." In the code from which that bit of theology is taken, the eating of pork is also condemned as "a flagrant act of disobedience to God"; now if the law against eating pork and the law against breaking the Sabbath be enforced with strict impartiality, what will become of the National Swine Breeders' Association? —*Open Court*.

Foundling schools in which the Christian missionaries failing to convert, bring up poor infant Chinese as native

converts, are among the causes of native exasperation. Nor can we wonder if such cases occur in China as is reported in *Modern Thought* as recently happening in Bombay. It appears that the late Mr. John Perira spent many hundreds of rupees in furthering Christianity among the natives, and had the child of a native beggar baptised and paid for its schooling. When he died the mother claimed her child. The missionaries refused to give her up, and asserted that she was an illegitimate daughter of her benefactor. The mother, however, was able to prove that the child was born in another part of India, years before Mr. Perira took her child. Thus the effort to save a soul led to a pious slander on an innocent woman and a pious Christian philanthropist. But religion sanctions all.

The Rev. E. Wainman, of Gorleston, has been delivering a "popular lecture" on "The Devil—his Size, Weight, and Color." Wait till the Devil gets the size, weight, and color of Wainman.

They manage these things better in Japan. The minister of Home Affairs in that interesting island has issued a proclamation to the Buddhist priests, warning them to desist from "disgraceful struggles for worldly honors and profits," and bidding them cultivate peace and virtue. If the priests do not obey "more stringent measures" are threatened. Good! But why not deal with English priests in the same fashion? Why not (say) cut their salaries down to a hundred a year all round, and cut them off from "the world," ay, and the "flesh" too, by enforcing celibacy, and keeping a Board of Surgeons to make it effectual?

A controversy has been going on in *The Times* between the Rev. Newman Hall and the vicar of Barking as to Nonconformists being politically members of the Church of England. There is little doubt this is their legal status. Every member of the commonwealth is *ipso facto* a member of the Church of England, and, though he be an Atheist, has the same right to a seat in the parish church and to the election of churchwardens at vestry meetings as any other parishioner. Lord Coleridge indeed said about twenty years ago, in reference to the Ritualistic movement, that there were occasions when it was not only the right but the duty of Nonconformists to step in and help to regulate a State institution that was always under Parliamentary control.

There is one point on which the established clergy always seek to reserve to themselves rights to which they have no title, and that is the common use of parish churchyards. They have thrown every possible obstacle in the way of those Dissenters who wish to avail themselves of the Act of 1880, which asserts this right. The other week the vicar of Bristre, Flintshire, refused to take the funeral of a young woman on Sunday, although it was pointed out that the corpse ought not to be kept longer, that there was a large family, and that in consequence of their poverty they were forced to do everything in the room where the body was laid out. It is not long since the Bishop of St. Asaph boasted that in his diocese the Burials Act was a dead letter.

An amusing incident occurred at Wincolmllee, near Hull. A newsagent who sold Freethought literature retired and sold his business to a Baptist. On him a reverend gentleman called, and expressed a hope that he would not sell the "pernicious stuff." The good Baptist said that when the stock was sold out he would not replace it, whereupon the man of God bought the lot and tore up the *Bible Handbook*, *Bible Romances*, and other pamphlets with great satisfaction. If the reverend gentleman enjoys this treat, we shall be happy to supply him with any quantity at trade price. He makes work for our printers.

Mr. John Clarke, who for a short time lectured on the Secular platform, has found Jesus, and apparently something else, for a situation is given him by the Congregational Union of London. The first time Mr. Clarke called at our office he asked us if we knew of any job suitable for a man who did not care about hard work. From that moment we suspected he would never be a success as a Freethought propagandist. Had the conditions been easier, and the pay better, we believe Mr. Clarke would not have reverted to Christianity. Since his reversion, as we see by the *Independent*, he has written a pamphlet on *Why I Left Atheism*. It appears to be circulated exclusively in Christian circles; a fact which does not

speaking highly of Mr. Clarke's goodness and sincerity. A man who had left error for truth would surely deem it his first duty to apprise, warn, and enlighten those he had helped to mislead.

One lesson of Mr. Clarke's reversion to his old faith is obvious enough. The Freethought party must be always on its guard against new-comers, who should always serve a fit probation before they are allowed to take any prominent or responsible position. So far as the N. S. S. is concerned, this policy will be pursued while Mr. Foote is president.

*Modern Thought* of Bombay mentions a story in the *Bombay Guardian*, stating that at camp meetings in Dum Dum a number of Atheist soldiers were converted, or as we should rather say, perverted. Now there is a Secular Society at Dum Dum, and the editor of *Modern Thought* at once communicated with it, inquiries were made, and another Christian lie was nailed to the counter.

James Thomson and Rebecca, his wife, were convicted at Hamilton of grossly ill-treating their children, allowing them to be half-starved and in a filthy state. It was pleaded in defence of the woman with whom the children were left in charge that she was a religious member. The Sheriff remarked that he was not favorably impressed with her professions of religion.

Dr. John Hunter, of Trinity Congregational Church, Glasgow, is another minister who has deserted the good old Christian doctrine of eternal hell, and thereby undermined the foundations of everlasting bliss.

The Rev. Charles Dodson, Wesleyan minister at Copthorne, is one of the many who unite service of God with disregard for animals. Paul thought that God cared not for oxen, and he sees this applies to other animals; he kept his pony harnessed to a trap inscribed with religious mottoes and texts, with its neck arched in an unnatural manner by a "dumb jock" employed in the training of young horses. The poor animal's mouth and jaw were found to be bleeding and discolored. Its tongue was hanging out, being perfectly black and hard and swollen. The bench at Godstone Petty Sessions found that a gross act of cruelty had been committed, and fined the man of God five guineas.

The Very Rev. the Dean of St. Paul's argues in the *North American Review* that corporal punishment is not degrading. We undertake to convert the man of God if allowed to experiment on his own person.

Our Father has been visiting his children again. A church destroyed, a death in a chapel at Accrington, a clergyman injured by a trap, and a blizzard destroyed several lives in Italy, are among the items in one paper.

The Eastbourne Salvationists attempted no infringement of the Act last Sunday, and stated they abstained out of respect to the memory of the late Duke of Devonshire, who was a liberal patron of the Army. But if they think their drum-beating a religious duty, why should they not carry it out in honor of the Duke's memory. Perhaps the incident shows that they do, on some occasions, recognise their performance as a nuisance.

The Ritualistic lions have laid down with the Evangelical lambs on the question of upholding the truth and authority of the Holy Bible, and the signature of the Rev. Webb Peplow the denouncer of Romanism, closely follows that of Canon Carter, the head of the Romanising Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. But there is one thing upon which the parsons are even more agreed than on the truth of the Bible, for here the Archbishop of Manchester and others laugh at them as old fogies; the real point of common faith is the desirability of keeping up their own position and good salaries.

Mr. Griffith John, another missionary, writes from Hankow that if things don't mend, a war is inevitable. Evidently he thinks the European nations should not only send missionaries but fight to keep them where they are not wanted.

One thing should be remembered in regard to the "awful massacre of Christians," it is apparently natives alone who

have been killed. The missionaries have been able to escape in their pony carriages and then come down on the Chinese government for heavy damages.

Pious Hindus are much scandalised at a handbill issued by the Bible Tract Society, in which their god Krishna is charged with immorality. They denounce this as a gross libel, and are petitioning the Government for redress against the missionaries.

The Newcastle police seem to find time hanging heavy on their heads. It is to be presumed that they have settled all the crime in the city, and are sighing like Alexander for fresh conquests. Otherwise it is not easy to understand their raid upon the premises of Henry and Caroline Loader. These two persons dabbled in phrenology, and they appear to be a couple of Christian cranks, who mix up bumpology with prayer meetings. They also sell Malthusian literature, and several detectives visited the Loaders for the purpose of purchasing what they could have bought openly at other places in Newcastle. Loader sold one detective a copy of Dr. Allbutt's *Wife's Handbook* for sevenpence, and as it is published at sixpence he did not make a gigantic profit on the transaction. He also declined to supply the detective unless he declared himself to be a married man. By and bye, however, the Loaders were brought before the Newcastle magistrates, and charged with selling "certain lewd, wicked, scandalous, and obscene books." The magistrates remanded them until Thursday, December 31, bail being allowed, the wife in her own recognisances, Loader himself in £20 and two sureties of £10 each.

Now if the police found nothing worse on the premises than Dr. Allbutt's *Wife's Handbook* they are just fooling the Newcastle public and making a mountain of a molehill. That book is sold openly by hundreds of newsagents. It is purely medical, and to call it "lewd" is to play tricks with the English dictionary. On the whole, we advise the Newcastle police to leave Malthusian literature alone. They should not suppress it if they could, and they could not suppress it if they would. Let them devote their attention to drunkards, brawlers and thieves. Perhaps this occupation is less interesting than rooting out wicked opinions, but after all it is what the police are paid for, and they should fulfil the contract.

"Is Old Double dead?" asks Justice Shallow. Certainly not; Mr. W. T. Stead has resurrected him in the Christmas number of the *Review of Reviews*. This old theory of a double body, which may project or precipitate itself to a distance during life and continue spooking around after the body is dead, may account for the celebrated Jerusalem ghost, which came through the keyhole into the midst of the disciples, and appeared in another form and vanished on the road to Emmaus. One double ascended from the Mount of Olives, while the other was away in Galilee.

The *Eastern Star* has a lively skit on Stoad's Ghost Stories and the Linga Sharira of the late H. P. B., under the title of "Genuine Creepers, or Christmas with the Bounding Brothers of Thibet." But the Mahatmas have now come down to providing a name for penny boxes of magic toys.

The Pope has brought to the Lateran the remains of his predecessor Innocent III., who sanctioned the Inquisition and the crusade against the Waldenses and ordered the clearing away of heretics from all Christian lands. No wonder the Italians look on the Vatican as a standing menace to their new liberties.

Celestine Edwards, the negro champion of Christian Evidences, has been gasing at Sheffield. One of his little tricks is to give out that no infidel will debate with him. When he is challenged to meet any Freethought speaker he replies, "Oh no, he is not good enough." He even refused to meet Mr. Charles Watts on this ground. The President of the N. S. S. was the man he ought to meet. Well, the Sheffield friends asked Mr. Foote his view of the matter, and Mr. Foote replied that he hardly thought the negro champion a fit antagonist, but if the negro champion were put forward by a Christian body as their representative the responsibility for his fitness would rest upon them, and a debate could be arranged. This was conveyed to the negro champion, who then discovered that debates were not "beneficial."



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 3, Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham: at "Who Wrote the Bible?"; at 3, "The Eye of Faith, and What it Sees"; at 7, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

January 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.—January 3 and 10 (morning and evening), Hall of Science, London; 14 and 15, Portsmouth; 17, Milton Hall, London; 24, Birmingham; 26, 27, 28 and 29, Sheffield; 31, Birmingham. Feb. 7, Hull; 14, Glasgow; 15, Hamilton; 16, 17, 18 and 19, public debate in Glasgow; 21, Edinburgh; 28, Birmingham. March 7, Birmingham; 14 and 21 (morning and evening) Hall of Science, London; 28, Birmingham. April 4, Manchester; 11 and 17, Birmingham; 25, Sheffield. May 1 and 8 (morning and evening), Hall of Science, London; 15 and 22, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

A. BEYNON.—Particulars of Mr. Foote's lectures at Merthyr will appear in due course. Pleased to hear you have interest enough in the lectures to travel twenty-five miles to hear them. We do not know of any agent who sells the *Freethinker* at Newport. Mr. Forder is sending you prospectuses of the National Secular Hall Society.

ADMIRER.—Received. We reciprocate the sentiment.

W. A.—Thanks. See paragraph.

WINWOOD READE.—Many thanks for the list and your good wishes for our success.

R. ABRAHAM.—Cyrrenius and Quirinius were one and the same person, who was not appointed governor until A.D. 7, when the Emperor Augustus united Judæa and Samaria to Syria. No tax or enrolment was or could be made in the time of Herod the Great, king of Judæa, who died B.C. 4. The Herod referred to in Luke was a son of Herod the Great, who became tetrarch of Galilee. The whole matter was gone into by Mr. Wheeler, in his article "When was Christ Born?", *Freethinker*, June 29, 1890.

W. NELSON.—Sorry to hear you did not get last week's *Freethinker* at Sheffield. Probably the fog and Christmas are jointly responsible. We have copies left if they are required.

J. HEADLEY.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Glad to hear the Newcastle Branch is watching the case. Of course, if there is anything behind, the man should be left to his fate. We must always have a clean case to fight over. Nothing ulterior, however, appears in the newspaper report. Mr. Young's case is not yet decided. We have attended several public meetings on his behalf.

W. SIMON.—Thanks for the fifth annual balance-sheet of the Balls Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society. It seems a healthy document.

R. ROSETTI appeals to the local Freethinkers to support the Leytonstone Branch of the N. S. S. A special meeting will be held this evening (Jan. 3) at 7.30, at 21 Harrow-road, Harrow-green.

J. WITTERING.—Mr. Arthur Hunt, of Nottingham, terminated his connexion with the N. S. S. a few years ago, for what were understood to be private reasons. If the Branches choose to engage him to lecture on their platforms, we do not know any reason why we should interfere.

J. SAMSON.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Thanks. See reply to J. Brown. Also "Sugar Plum."

W. B. NICHOLS.—*Bible Romances* will be completed shortly, and afterwards bound in a volume. Read Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism* and Mirabaud's (D'Holbach's) *System of Nature*. Also, if you can get them, Holyoake's *Trial of Theism*, and *A Candid Examination of Theism* by "Physicus." Clifford's *Essays*, in two volumes, are expensive.

S. MOSS.—We cannot pay for such things.

REX REGES.—Thanks for your interesting letter.

W. NELSON.—Mr. Foote will try to offer you a date shortly.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfround—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—St. Leot's Advertiser—Evening Standard—Glasgow Evening News—Bath Argus—Eastern Star—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Oxford Chronicle—Sydney Truth—Open Court—Pitman's Shorthand Weekly—Independent Pulpit—Darwen News—San Francisco Morning Call—Modern Thought—*Freethinker's Magazine*—Ironclad Age—Twentieth Century.

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.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Freethinkers in business who advertise their goods only stand in their own light by not advertising in this journal. Those who do try our columns find it to their advantage. Dr. T. R. Allinson, for instance, who advertises his publications extensively, writes to us as follows:—"I beg to give result of my advertising in the columns of the *Freethinker*. I have kept a record for about two months, and I find the *Freethinker* comes out best of all the papers in which I advertise. In fact, yours is the only paper that it is worth my while to advertise in. The *Freethinker* gives three times the return of any other Freethought paper, and as much as twenty times more return than papers with a hundred times its circulation. I send you this to encourage other advertisers to use your columns."

Mr. Gott, of Bradford, who also advertises extensively, finds the *Freethinker* the very best of all his mediums. Surely this should induce other advertisers to give us a trial. It will be long before the general prejudice against Freethought papers dies out, but meanwhile it is not too much to expect Freethinkers to support their own organ, especially when supporting it will put money in their own pockets.

This is the last announcement of the London Secular Federation's annual Dinner. It takes place next Thursday evening (Jan. 7) at the Hall of Science, Mr. Foote presiding. Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. G. J. Holyoake have promised to attend. Other prominent workers will also be present. A most enjoyable evening may be expected. We hope to see hundreds of happy faces round the festive boards. After the dinner, the toasts, and the music, the company will break up for general conversation.

Last Sunday was so near Christmas Day that it was unreasonable to expect a big audience in a Secular Hall. Nevertheless a larger audience than usual on "Christmas Sunday" assembled at the London Hall of Science to hear Mr. Foote's "Christmas Sermon on the Son of God." Prior to the lecture there was the usual "service." Two ladies sang charmingly, and Mr. Foote read a selection from Shakespeare's "Richard II." The lecture dealt largely with the Rev. Charles Gore's new volume of Bampton Lectures, and was followed with keen interest. There was no real opposition, but one amiable Christian took the opportunity to preach a ten-minutes' sermon.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (January 3) morning and evening. By that time the Christmas festivities will be over, and Mr. Watts will no doubt have excellent meetings.

We are glad to learn that the sale of the *Freethinker* at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, has of late largely increased. Last Sunday evening, at Mr. Watts's lecture, every copy of an extra supply was sold and over two dozen applications for additional copies had to be refused. The bookstall is now under the management of Mr. Watts, who will be pleased to supply all Freethought literature.

Fund for settling Mr. Watts in Birmingham.—G. Coulton, 7s.; O. Steploe, 2s. 6d.; J. Terry, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes, 1s. Per W. R. Pierson: W. R. Pierson, 10s. 6d.;

J. Glover, 6d.; North Mason, 2s. 6d.; E. Smith, 6d.; N. Cole, 6d.; J. Jones, 6d.; C. Hoff, 1s.; D. Cull, 6d.; J. Gukes, 6d.; W. Smith, 6d.; E. Elton, 2s. W. H. Wood (second donation), 5s.; Collected at Hall (Nov. 29), 4s. 4½d.; S. G. M., 1s.

Tyneside Freethinkers should note that on Sunday evening, January 17, Mr. Foote lectures for the Sunday Society in the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle. His subject will be "Law and Liberty: their Claims and Conflicts." The Newcastle N. S. S. Branch holds no meeting that day, the members being desirous to swell the audience at the Tyne Theatre.

The Battersea Branch has again taken Chatham Hall at considerable expense. Mr. H. Snell will lecture there this Sunday evening (January 3), his subject being, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?" Mr. Snell will give a dramatic recital before the lecture. Admission 3d. and 6d. If the Branch is well supported, this large hall will be taken the first Sunday in each month for special lecturers.

Canon Shuttleworth spoke a sensible word at Westminster Abbey about the goody-goody folk who look down so upon the recreative side of human nature. He objected to young men being called coarse creatures because they sometimes preferred the billiard and smoke-rooms to religious services. Honest amusement was better than the pavement or the public-house, and in his own club, which was open to both sexes, he had got over the difficulty arising from male selfishness and lack of refinement. Canon Shuttleworth's words should be considered by Freethinkers as well as Christians. As human nature is constituted—and it isn't likely to alter just yet—it is impossible to go on without making reasonable provision for the social element.

The death of Mr. Peter Taylor is not a subject for tears. He retired from public life some years ago, and spent his closing days at Brighton, where he died at a fair old age. Peter Taylor was one of the sturdy school of Radicals. He was a man of conviction and courage, and a generous friend of advanced causes. When we were in prison it was Peter Taylor who undertook to raise the matter in the House of Commons. We shall always feel grateful to him for doing so. Other Radical members funk, but Peter Taylor did what his conscience told him was right.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* for December gives as frontispiece a portrait of that veteran Freethinker and woman advocate, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and also a portrait of Judge Waite, president of the American Secular Union. Among the contents are, "Reminiscences of the late James Parton," by Lucy Colman, and good articles by Dr. E. Montgomery, Parker Pillsbury, and others.

George Francis Train is an erratic American of talent, and the original inventor of tramways. He keeps a stock of shrewd sense under a surface of "spreadeagleism." We see from the *Truthseeker* that he turned up at the meeting of the Manhattan Liberal Club and made a good Freethought pessimistic speech.

Judge C. B. Waite, the new president of the American Secular Union, whose portrait appears in the December number of the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, has a fine intellectual face, with high forehead and firm mouth, as becomes a judge. His letter accepting the presidency has a manly ring. Judge Waite is author of a good *History of the Christian Religion to the Year 200*, which ably embodies the results of rational criticism. We look forward to good work from the Union during the presidency of Judge Waite.

Mr. B. F. Underwood, writing in the *Twentieth Century* on "Agnosticism," gives a confession of his faith, from which we extract the concluding portion. "I believe the Bible is a product and outgrowth of the human mind. I believe the Christian theology is the natural product of ages of speculation concerning the ultimate cause of phenomena. I believe the word God is the letter *x* in an indeterminate equation, and that we have no means of ascertaining what the symbol stands for. I believe science is the providence of man. I believe that Agnostics know as much as theologians, and have as much right to have a creed and to express it. I believe that the mistake regarding creeds is in requiring men

to conform to them on penalty of punishment here or hereafter."

Captain Robert C. Adams, a very able, high-spirited gentleman, and leader of the Canadian Secularists, attended the Philadelphia Congress of the American Secular Union and uttered some seasonable sentiments. While not complaining of the "unsectarian" policy of the Union under Dr. Westbrook's presidency, he nevertheless held that it was insufficient. Captain Adams spoke as follows:—"I believe that the best way to overthrow the evils complained of is to directly attack the principles upon which they rest. The maintenance of laws sustaining national religious observances, chaplains, feasts, fasts, church tax exemptions, Sabbath restrictions, Bible reading in schools, and the whole chain of religious tyranny, depends upon the belief in a Universal and National God, who has ordained such usages; and until this belief is destroyed there can be no complete emancipation from these oppressive edicts. It seems to me that the Freethinkers of the United States should form a new national organisation, or else see that one is formed in every State, for the purpose of employing lecturers and spreading literature showing the falsity of theological belief and attacking the obnoxious laws and customs by exposing the absurdity of their claim to divine sanction."

With the new year, we would impress on all Freethinkers the necessity of organisation. Surrounded as we still are with a powerful organised and endowed enemy, isolation means defeat, and combination alone can ensure victory. Freethought has long been in the air, the seed has been sown, and it only needs united workers to ensure a bounteous harvest.

Our Swedish contemporary *Fritankaren* gives a portrait and biographical sketch of Hjalmar Strömer, a Swedish astronomer and Freethinker, who died in 1887.

The movement appears to be making progress in Sweden. A new paper, under the same management as *Fritankaren*, is to appear with the new year. Its title will be *Tänk Sjelf*, or Think for Yourself.

We are pleased to note that the *Ironclad Age* keeps upon the old lines despite the loss of its founder and conductor, Dr. J. R. Monroe. His daughters, Luna, Lillian, and Baby, have written touching tributes to his memory. His son, Mr. H. C. Monroe, continues the paper in a fashion which should suit its old admirers. Miss Baby Monroe is secretary of the North American Federation of Atheists.

A large Freethought Hall is to be erected at Seattle, King's County, in the State of Washington, U.S., for which 10,000 dols. have already been subscribed.

Mr. R. Skipton has put out his address to the electors of the School Board for Portsmouth. It has the right ring, and if every Freethinker will work and plump for Skipton, the seat vacated by Mr. Brumage should be secured by another good Freethinker.

A mystery play entitled *The Infant Jesus* was produced in Paris as a Noel and New Year attraction. Herod is represented as checked in his cruel courses, and compelled to fall on his knees by a sort of hypnotiser.

Protest is made by the *New York World* against the "sixteenth-century statutes" that forbid the opening of theatres on Sunday, although, it adds, disreputable variety houses and the like are open. It also speaks a word in defence of human rights, and says: "It is not the business of the State, at any rate, to enforce religious observance or to restrain liberty in any of its innocent manifestations. When the State attempts anything of the kind it makes itself the effective minister of vice and demoralisation."

"Nunquam's" new paper, *The Clarion*, for Dec. 26, has an appreciative paper on James Thomson (B.V.), entitled "A Sad Singer."

The Manchester Branch holds its annual tea to-day (Jan. 3), to be followed by a good entertainment. Tickets one shilling. Mr. Sam Standing will be present, and will explain his pro-

gram of district organisation. We hope the local Freethinkers will give him a cordial welcome.

Mr. George Anderson, a most generous friend of the Free-thought movement, has lately been sending parcels of our literature to some twenty stations abroad, where soldiers and sailors are serving under England's flag. "By letters I have had from the recipients," Mr. Anderson writes us, "some on board men-of-war, some in garrison towns, I find that Free-thought literature is widely relished. I am sure many of us could spare a few pamphlets for our isolated heroes."

A report is being spread in England that Joseph Symes has been "dismissed" by the Melbourne Secularists and is now lecturing in a small hall where he cannot obtain an audience. This is perfectly false. Joseph Symes has been legally tricked out of the Hall of Science, which was mainly erected by his efforts; but he lectures at another hall, where the Secularists gather around him. They gave him an enthusiastic welcome in the middle of November on his return from a lecture tour.

Moncure D. Conway, in an article on "Professor Briggs and the Heretics' Sheol," in *Open Court*, of Chicago, shows that all the heresies made fashionable in New York by Dr. Briggs were anticipated a hundred years ago by Thomas Paine.

A new pamphlet by Colonel Ingersoll is just published at our office. It is entitled *The Three Philanthropists*, and is a very trenchant and telling social study, displaying a new vein of the Colonel's genius. It should have an extensive circulation. We intend to send copies to a large number of the Liberal and Radical newspapers.

#### THE LITERARY WORKS OF JESUS CHRIST.

THESE have been those who have denied that their blessed Savior could write, vainly relying on the passage, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John vii., 15). If these persons read on to the next chapter they would find that "he stooped down and wrote on the ground" (viii., 8). What it was he wrote is not said, though some have thought it was the sentence, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Jesus, however, may be vindicated from the charge of condoning adultery, since the whole passage (John vii., 53, to viii., 12) is an interpolation.

Some have complained that Jesus did not write an account of himself, or even order one to be written; while others have shown how inadequate all writings must be to record a revelation. Various petty writings, however, have been attributed to Jesus, and down to modern times were commonly ascribed to him. Most famous of these is the Epistle to Abgarus, or perhaps Agbarus, from the Arabic *Akbar* "greater," which was appealed to by Addison in his *Evidences of Christianity*. This epistle, which used to be hung up in country houses as a charm to keep away evil spirits, is short, and accordingly copied for readers curious to know the evidences of Christianity as they presented themselves to our ancestors. It is an answer to a letter said to be from "Abgarus, Prince of Edessa, to Jesus, the merciful Savior, who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greeting." Abgarus said he has heard of his miracles, "which persuade me that you are some god descended from heaven, or that you are the Son of God." He asks him for some cure for his indisposition, and invites him to Edessa. Jesus Christ answered in the following terms: "You are happy, Abgarus, thus to have believed in me without having seen me; for it is written of me, that they who see me will not believe in me, and that they who have never seen me shall believe and be saved. As to the desire you express to receive a visit from me, I must tell you that all things for which I am come must be fulfilled in the country where I am; when this is done I must return to him who sent me. And when I am departed hence, I will send to you one of my disciples, who will cure you of the disease of which you complain, and give life to you and to those who are with you."

This letter is quite as genuine as the gospel of John, which Jesus, with prophetic eye, cites as already written of him (see John xx., 29), though not written until a century afterwards. The epistle is defended by the learned writers, Tillamont, Wette, and Renck; and, if spurious, is in the same category with other early Christian works. It is preserved to us by Eusebius, of pious memory (Ec. Hist. i., 12), who also first gives us the

first reference to the testimony of Josephus, and upon whom, in short, we are entirely dependent for early Christian history.

Another literary production of Jesus was the dictation of a biography of the gentleman who consented to act as father and instruct him in carpentry. This work was published from an ancient Arabic MSS. by George Wallin, Bishop of Gottenburg, in 1722, and afterwards by Thilo and Tischendorf. This History of Joseph the Carpenter, dictated by his son, bears all the orthodox marks of being a genuine production. It begins:—"In the name of God, one in his essence and three in his person. The history of the death of our father, the holy senior, Joseph the Carpenter. May his benediction and prayers serve us all, O brethren, Amen! His life was altogether one hundred and eleven years. His migration from this world happened on the 26th of the month Abib, which corresponds with the month Ab. May his prayers serve us. And it was the Lord Jesus Christ, he himself, who related it to his disciples in this world on Mount Olivet, and all the works of Joseph and the consummation of his days, and his holy apostle, preserved these words, and put them in writing, and put them in the Jerusalem Library. May their prayers serve us, Amen!" It tells how Jesus ordered that the dead body of his supposed father should remain untainted "till the banquet of a thousand years," and many other particulars showing its early origin.

Jesus is also said to have dropped into poetry. The Priscillianists, an early Christian sect, much persecuted by the orthodox, claimed possession of the hymn he chanted before going to the Mount of Olives. St. Augustine has preserved three lines:

I am a light to him who sees me,  
I am a door to whoever enters by me:

Who sees what I do, let him avoid speaking of my works.

It will be seen they are quite in the character of the Logos.

Simon Magus, Cleobulus, and the Manicheans are said to have published letters in Christ's name. But many Popes and other men of God have done this since. That learned eccentric, William Taylor, of Norwich, author of *Who was the Father of Jesus Christ?* in which he sought to show the said parent was Zacharias, the high priest, is also said to have been the author of articles in the *Monthly Magazine* attempting to prove that Jesus wrote the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, which last is attributed to Jesus son of Sirach, though who he was nobody knows. The name of Jesus was common enough. But Ecclesiasticus seems to have been quoted in the second century B.C., and this would place Jesus earlier than the days of Ben Pandera.

LUCIANUS.

#### TO THE NEW YEAR.

MANY, oftentimes, sigh in sadness;  
Make the number small!  
Some do, sometimes, smile in gladness;  
Make the number—all!

If, O teeming year that's coming!  
Ev'ry one will go  
Through his heart's recesses "slumming,"  
Brotherhood would grow.

Turn the parson's praying labor—  
Wasted on the skies—  
Into working for his neighbor;  
Into truth, his lies!

May our joy to life be equal,  
Throbbing through the year;  
Dreading no death-curtained sequel,  
Ghost of priest-born fear.

Coming year! O may the People  
Rise, nor longer bow,  
Making heav'n, despite the steeple,  
Here, on earth, and now!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

A little girl had been absent with her parents at a camp-meeting for two weeks. On her return, her little playmate, Ella Day, entertained her by showing her her new playthings. At night, little Mary, in saying her prayers, said, "Oh Lord, bless Ella Day, and make her a good girl, so as I can take all her playthings away from her and she won't want them back again."

## BOOK CHAT.

*The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, by G. Bernard Shaw (London: Walter Scott) has been lying on our table for several weeks, mutely petitioning to be reviewed. Time after time, in the press of other engagements, we have said, "Wait there, little book, your turn will come when we are less busy; you are not a book to be scamped." But now that 1892 has come, and we are still without the leisure to pen such a review as the book merits, we must just give it a few paragraphs in "Book Chat."

Mr. Shaw is the most brilliant swordsman in the Socialist camp. He has a love for paradox, he is apt to be whimsical, and he is often provoking. He is a humorist and a remorseless logician, and when these qualities go together in the writer the reader is frequently obliged to rub his eyes and ask, "Are things what they seem, or are visions about?" Yet who can be angry with such a writer? Anything is better than commonplace. The one utterly detestable creature on this planet is the dullard, the pedant, the bore; and these three are not three separate persons, but one indivisible devil.

"Quintessence of Ibsenism" is Mr. Shaw's title. What he has to say about Ibsen's purpose as a dramatist is hardly convincing. It reminds us of the tons of criticism on Shakespeare's plays, in which able men have wasted their time in proving that Shakespeare meant to convey this, that, and the other lesson. Such criticisms are often good reading, but they come to nothing in the end. Shakespeare is Shakespeare, and Ibsen is Ibsen. Read them, and you will get out of them what you can; what you cannot get out of them will never be got out of them for you. The "tendency" the critic sees in a great creative genius is generally the predisposition of his own mind.

"Quintessence of Shawism" is the proper title of the most interesting portion of this book. The three introductory chapters give us Mr. Shaw's opinions and criticisms on human life, individual and social. Here he is fascinating. You differ from him, but you smile at the fine play of his rapier. Occasionally you smile for another reason, as when Mr. Shaw, the bachelor, proposes to take children from their mothers and place them in social incubators.

Chapter I. is a long dazzling paradox. Mr. Shaw argues that man, having given up duty to God, must also give up duty to Reason, duty to Society, and every other species of Moloch-worship, and henceforth live to himself. In short, he must dismiss the idea of Duty altogether. But as Mr. Shaw tells us afterwards that actions are to be judged by their effect on happiness, he is evidently not destroying Duty, but putting it on a new basis—the basis of social utility. Mr. Shaw stands up for egotism, yet *his* form of egotism is spending himself in the service of his ideas, and that is only Duty in disguise.

Similarly, in waging war against Idealism, Mr. Shaw narrows it down to a mask on the face of Truth—Realism being the naked features. But we seldom see so clearly, and imagination always outstrips our present knowledge. Mr. Shaw cherishes a generous enthusiasm about the future, and in that sense (the best sense) he is an Idealist himself. Indeed, he sees as much, and then his paradox explodes. Nevertheless his protest against social shams and false sentiment has its value, for Idealism is a sordid thing when it is a mask instead of a prophecy.

Mr. Shaw is most Shawean in the chapter on "Womanly Woman"—the creature that man cultivates to minister to his appetites, and sacrifice herself to his comfort and his views generally. Here and there, we think, he ignores indestructible sexual differences; but in the main this chapter is provocative in a double sense; provocative of dissatisfaction and thoughtfulness as well as of Philistian ill-temper. We agree with Mr. Shaw that Woman must repudiate Duty to Man; but how is she to "repudiate Duty altogether" (for instance, in the case of her children) without repudiating the responsibility of her own freedom?

Mr. Shaw writes as a pronounced Atheist, though he is severe on Reason as a false God. His boldness will com-

mend him to our readers, many of whom will be tempted to read the "Quintessence of Shawism" for themselves.

*The Imitation of Buddha*, consisting of quotations from Buddhist literature for each day in the year, compiled by Ernest M. Bowden (Methuen and Co., 18 Bury-street, W.C.), is a handsome little volume which would form a suitable New Year present to any who can see truth and beauty outside Christianity. To the most orthodox it might serve as an eye-opener to the fact that all virtue is not confined to one exclusive sect.

We do not scruple to say that Mr. Bowden's compilation comprises as choice maxims and as exalted texts as can be found in any similar Christian birthday book derived solely from the New Testament. Take the three first texts given. "All beings desire happiness; therefore to all extend your benevolence." "Because he has pity upon every living creature, therefore is a man called 'holy'." "Like as a mother at the risk of her life watches over her only child, so also let every one cultivate towards all beings a boundless friendly mind."

Such texts, and others equal and superior follow throughout the book, should make Christians ashamed of claiming a moral monopoly and asserting, as they do, that they are accursed who say that those who reject Christ shall be saved, since Scripture lays it down there is no other name under heaven whereby men shall be saved.

Mr. Bowden disclaims any hostile rivalry between the *Imitation of Buddha* and the *Imitation of Christ*; yet the very title of his work suggests comparison with the famous treatise attributed to Thomas à Kempis, and the comparison is hardly favorable to the latter. Beautiful as is the devotional spirit of the Christian manual, it is at bottom irclaimably selfish. Its ideal is leaving the world to secure self-salvation; country, friends, family, and human duties and social welfare, are all omitted—Christ is all-in-all. Buddhism, on the contrary, teaches that, according to one text in this book, the true spiritual teacher is he "who, having grasped the essence of things, ever seeks to be of use to other beings," and the Buddhist says with Asoka, in the rock inscription which remains since the third century B.C., "I consider the welfare of all people as something for which I must work."

Mr. Bowden is himself constrained to remark on "the entire absence from so many Christian treatises of all sympathetic or moral allusion to the lower orders of life; an absence the more unfortunate when a reasoned attempt has even been made on the strength of Christian teaching to explode the notion that we owe duties to animals" (*et seq.* "Moral Philosophy," by Father Joseph Rickaby). Mr. Bowden seems unaware that the last Pope, Pio Nono, distinctly laid it down as a theological error to suppose that Christians had duties towards the lower animals. How different is the teaching of Buddhism, which is full of compassion to all animals, and inculcates mercy even to the meanest things.

*The Imitation of Buddha* gives references to the original authorities for all texts cited. It is handsomely got up as a volume suitable to the pocket. It is well printed and bound. Sir Edwin Arnold, in a preface which he contributes, recommends it without hesitation or reserve.

A Roman Catholic book on *Principles of Political Economy*, by Father Mateo Liberatore, has been translated into English. Its standpoint may perhaps be judged by the position that wages ought to be just enough to maintain a man, his wife, and two or three children. Father Liberatore is not very liberal.

THE GOD OF THE JEWS AND OF CHRISTIANS.—While, however, there is an enormous improvement if we compare the administration of human affairs by Jehovah and by God there is nevertheless a blot upon the character of God which suffices, if rigorously balanced against the failings of Jehovah, to outweigh them all. It is the eternity of the punishment which he inflicts as a future life. No amount of sophistry can ever justify the creation of beings whose lives are to terminate in endless suffering.—Viscount Amberley.

## WITCHCRAFT IN AMERICA.

The venerated John Wesley passes among us for the last example of an educated Englishman who clung to the belief in witchcraft. There is some reason, however, to think that this ancient superstition is not so completely extinct among us as is generally believed. As to America, Mr. J. M. Buckley makes the astounding statement that witchcraft is at the present time believed in by a majority of the people of the United States. It is but two or three years since a suit was brought by a man against his mother, in one of the counties of Pennsylvania, to recover damages for a dog which he charged her with having killed by witchcraft; and he not only brought a suit, but obtained judgment from a justice of the peace. Various witnesses testified as to their experiences in witchcraft, and only one said that he had never had a friend or relative who was bewitched. It is stated that in divers villages in Pennsylvania, some of them in the Dunkard Settlement, there are women who are supposed to be witches. Some are shrewd enough not to ply their arts for strangers, but to those whom they know, as stated in an article in the *New York Sun* some years ago, they will sell charms to ward off lightning from buildings, dry up the wells of the enemies of applicants, force cows to give bloody milk, cause sickness in the family, destroy beauty, separate man and wife, and reunite estranged lovers.—*Daily News*, Dec. 25.

## HEAVEN DIDN'T SUIT HER.

A little girl was talking to her mother one day about heaven. She said:

"Ma, is there a nursery there?"

"No," replied the parent.

"No picture books?"

"No."

"No Noah's ark?"

"No."

The little girl dropped her eyes. She was evidently reflecting. She thought heaven was no desirable place. She closed her meditations with a long-drawn sigh and said: "Well, then, I believe I'll take dolly and go to hell."

A philanthropic friend, who has no god of his own, doesn't care for the blessing of the one beggars always have so handy for use. "God bless you, sir," fervently exclaimed one to whom he had shown his generosity. "Not at all; much rather not," was the reply which fell on the beggar's astonished ears.

The Austrian government has suppressed the books of the Methodists because in their 20th article they describe the mass as a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit. The very words are taken from the 31st article of the Church of England, whose prayer-book is allowed throughout the Austrian empire.

The Roman Catholics claim as having in the present year in Great Britain 23 bishops and archbishops, 2929 priests, and 1700 churches.

A Glasgow sky-pilot recently announced that he would dis-course on "The Destruction of the World." Immediately below this on the bill was printed "Collection for Repairs."

Following an ancient usage, the Maharajah of Benares weighed himself in the scale against gold pieces. He devotes thirty thousand rupees of the counterbalancing precious metal to raising the middle school at Kourh, in the family domains, to a high school for the benefit of Brahmin students. Formerly the money would have been distributed outright among the priests and mendicants on the spot. The chief duty of religion is always looking after the priest, and this duty has been sedulously inculcated in India as well as nearer home.

A gentleman in New York gave a letter of introduction to a student of music about to visit Leipzig, who wished to put himself under the instruction of Professor Stein, a famous teacher of music in the latter city. Upon the student's return home the gentleman asked, "How do you like Professor Stein?" "Oh, wonderfully. He gave me fine lessons; but he is a very singular man. He kept praying all the time he was teaching me." "Praying? Why, how do you mean?" "Well, while I was playing he clasped his hands, lifted his eyes to the ceiling, and kept saying, 'Good Lord, what sin have I committed to deserve this punishment!'"

## PROFANE JOKES.

A boy in Derbyshire was asked who made the beautiful hills around. He replied he didn't know, as his parents had only recently moved into those parts.

When a Salvationist becomes an angel, if his wings are proportionately as wide as his earthly smile, he'll topple over the battlements of heaven unless his feet are adequately ballasted.

Pope's oath was, "God mend me." A linkboy, to whom he had refused a penny, looking at his diminutive, crooked stature, cried out, "God mend you, indeed. It would be less trouble to make a new one."

Insurance Agent: "Can I insure your life this morning, sir?" Mr. Pious: "Ah, my friend, but can you insure my life in the next world?" Insurance Agent: "No, sir; mine is strictly life insurance. I have nothing to do with the fire office."

A certain minister, whose absent-mindedness is often a source of quiet amusement to his parishioners, recently electrified the congregation by announcing that "all children having parents to be baptised" should present them the following Sunday at the close of the morning service.

City missionary: "Don't you often hear a still small voice in the depths of your being telling you that something is wrong?" Unregenerate sailor: "C'ose I does, parson; how'd you know?" Missionary: "Never mind. Do you know what that voice is?" Sailor: "Not edzactly." Missionary: "It's conscience!" Sailor: "If I ketch hold of that Liverpool fakir that charged me eleven shillin's fer tellin' me it wor indigestions, I'll massacre him!"

## 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: 7.15, Harry Courtney, "Ring out the Old, Ring in the New." Admission free.

Battersea.—Chatham Hall (adjoining Battersea Park Station, L.C.D.): 7.45, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?" (preceded by dramatic recital). Admission, 3d. and 6d.

Bethnal Green — Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7, musical entertainment; 7.30, a lecture.

Camberwell.—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, Mr. Martin, "Liberty of Bequest"; 7.30, B. Hyatt, "An Oration on the Heavenly Bodies" (preceded by dramatic studies).

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, James Rowney, "The Teachings of Jesus"; 4.30, members' first quarterly meeting; 7, C. J. Steinberg, "Religion in Relation to Evolution." Wednesday, at 8, Touzeau Parris, "Christian Symbols: their Origin and Meaning." Admission free. Saturday, at 8, free social concert.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "The Throne and the Church" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Charles Watts, "Atheism and the French Revolution" (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7.30, musical evening.

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters-road): 3.30, Lucretius Keen, "The Origin of Life."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Gospel Tales." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

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

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, G. S. Ross, "The Hours of Labor."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, R. Rosetti, "The Bible and Science."

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: G. W. Foote, 11, "Who Wrote the Bible"; 3, "The Eye of Faith, and What it Sees"; 7, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

Bradford—Laycock's Temperance Hotel: 3, members' quarterly meeting; tea provided, 6d. each.

Grimsby—Hall of Science, Freeman-street: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Sunday in the Light of Reason"; 7, "Good and Evil."

Hanley — Secular Hall, John-street: 7, annual meeting of members.

Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's Bottoms: 2.30, members' quarterly meeting.

Liverpool — Camden Hall, Camden-street: 11.30, committee meeting; 3, philology class, "Seeing and Thinking"; 7, Mr. Smith, "This Man's Religion is Vain."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 5.30, annual tea and soiree.

Newcastle-on-Tyne — Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, Mr. Keppell's logic class, first meeting; 7, T. Pearson, "Mutual Help, a Law of Nature."

Plymouth — 100 Union-street: lecture by private friend adjourned for Sunday next at 7.

Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 2.45, reading circle; 7, meeting in favor of Mr. Skipton's School Board candidature.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, Mr. Eadon, Readings from original compositions.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 8, mutual improvement class, "Vegetarianism"; 7, business meeting.

### LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Jan. 6, Finsbury Park; 17, Hall of Science; 20, Autonomic Club; 24, Leicester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—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.—Jan. 3, Lambeth; 10, Bethnal Green; 17, morning and evening, Battersea; 24, Lambeth; 31, morning and evening, Finsbury Park. Feb. 7, Lambeth; 21, Westminster. March 6, Southampton; 20, Westminster.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Jan. 3, evening, Battersea; 10, evening, Finsbury Park; 14, Hall of Science; 17, Ball's Pond; 24, evening, Camberwell; 31, evening, Lambeth. Feb. 7, evening, Westminster; 21, evening, Camberwell. March 6, evening, Westminster; 20, evening, Camberwell. April 3, Southampton.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Jan. 3, Edmonton; 10, Southampton; 17, Libra Hall; 21, Finsbury Park; 24, Libra Hall. Feb. 14, Battersea; 21 and 28, Libra Hall. March 6 and 13, Libra Hall. April 3, afternoon, Victoria Park; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; afternoon, Victoria Park; 17, morning, Mile End Waste; 24, afternoon, Victoria Park.

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#### GENERAL OBJECT.

The Society, according to its Rules, has full powers for the most extensive operations that may be possible in the future for the erection and maintenance of Secular Halls in London and in the Provinces.

One of the Society's rules secures that no member shall be eligible as a Director unless he is a member of the National Secular Society.

#### IMMEDIATE OBJECT.

The purchase of the Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C., and the conversion of the same into a first-class Secular Hall and Institute.

The lease is for eighty-six years, and the ground rent £230 per annum.

The front part of the premises must be re-built, at a cost of £2,500, within ten years. It is proposed to do this as soon as possible.

The existing Hall at the rear will seat 1,000 people, and has held 1,700.

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At present the National Secular Society is paying £250 per year for the use of the large Hall on Sunday morning and evening, and on Thursday evening, with certain other uses of the minor Hall and Committee-room.

From an investigation of the past ten years' working of the Hall of Science the Directors feel confident that, with careful, efficient management, a nett income of £800 per annum would be realised. This would leave a good balance of profit after deducting the rent and five per cent. interest on the purchase money.

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