

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

Yet Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.

—BYRON.

GONE TO GOD.

STANLEY, the African traveller, is a man of piety. He seems to be on pretty familiar terms with the "one above." During his last expedition to relieve Emin—a sceptical gentleman, who gets along with less bloodshed than Stanley—he was troubled with "traitors"; that is, black fellows who thought they had a better right in Africa than the intrusive whites, and acted upon that opinion. This put Stanley in a towering rage. He resolved to teach the "traitors" a lesson. One of them was solemnly tried—by his executioners, and sentenced to be hung. A rope was noosed round his neck, and he was taken under a tree, which was to be his gallows. The poor devil screamed for mercy, but Stanley bent his inexorable brows, and cried, "Send him to God!"

"We were troubled with no more traitors," says Stanley. Very likely. But the great man forgot to say what he meant by the exclamation, "Send him to God!" Did he mean "Send him to God for judgment?" If so, it was rather rough to hang the prisoner before his proper trial. Did he mean, "The fellow isn't fit for earth, so send him to heaven?" If so, it was a poor compliment to Paradise. Or did he simply use a pious, impressive form of speech to awe the spectators, and give them the notion that he had as much traffic with God as any African mystery-man or Mohammedan dervish?

The middle one of these three theories fits in best with the general sentiment, or at any rate the working sentiment, of Christian England. Some brutal, drunken, or passionate wretch commits a murder. He is carefully tried, solemnly sentenced, and religiously hanged. He is declared unfit to live on this planet. But he is still a likely candidate for heaven, which apparently yawns to receive all the refuse of earth. He is sedulously taken in hand by the gaol chaplain, or some other spiritual guide to glory, and is generally brought to a better frame of mind. Finally, he expresses sorrow for his position, forgives everybody he has ever injured, delivers himself of a good deal of highly edifying advice, and then swings from the gallows clean into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The grotesque absurdity of all this is enough to wrinkle the face of a cab horse. Society and the murderer are both playing the hypocrite, and of course Society is the worse of the two, for it is acting deliberately and methodically, while the poor devil about to be hung is like a hunted thing in a corner, up to any shift to ease his last moments and make peace with the powers of the life to come. Society says he has killed somebody, and he shall be killed; that he is not fit to live, but fit to die; that it must strangle him, and call him "brother" when the white cap is over his face, and God must save his soul; that he is too bad to dwell on earth, but it hopes to meet him in heaven.

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Religion does not generate sense, logic, or humane-ness in the mind of Society. Its effect on the doomed assassin is simply horrible. He is really a more satisfactory figure when committing the murder than when he is posing, and shuffling and twisting, and talking piously, and exhibiting the intense, unmitigated selfishness which is at the bottom of all religious sentiment. The essence of piety comes out in this tragi-comedy. Personal fear, personal hope, self, self, self, is the be-all and the end-all of this sorry exhibition.

A case in point has just occurred at Leeds. James Stockwell was hung there on Tuesday morning. While under sentence of death, the report says, he slept well and ate heartily, so that remorse does not appear to have injured his digestion or any other part of his physical apparatus. On learning that he would not be reprieved, and must die, he became very attentive to the chaplain's ministrations; in fact, he took to preaching himself, and wrote several letters to his relatives, giving them sound teetotal advice, and warning them against the evils of drink.

But the fellow lied all the time. His crime was particularly atrocious. He outraged a poor servant girl, sixteen years of age, and then cut her throat. He was himself thirty-two years of age, with a wife and one child, so that he had not even the miserable excuse of an unmated animal. A plea of insanity was put forward on his behalf, but it did not avail. When the wretched creature found he was not to be reprieved, and took kindly to the chaplain's religion, he started a fresh theory to cover his crime. He said he was drunk when he committed it. Now this was a lie. The porter's speech in "Macbeth" will explain our meaning. James Stockwell may have had a glass, but if he was really drunk, in the sense of not knowing what he was about, we believe it was simply impossible for him to make outrage the prelude to murder. If he had merely drunk enough to bring out the beast in him, without deranging the motor nerves, he was certainly not *drunk* in the proper sense of the word. He knew what he was doing, and both in the crime in his flight he showed himself a perfect master of his actions.

Religion, therefore, did not "convict him of sin." It did not lay bare before him his awful wickedness. It simply made him hypocritical. It induced or permitted him to save his *amour propre* by a fresh falsehood.

James Stockwell's last letter from gaol was written the day before his execution. It was a comprehensive epistle, addressed to his father and mother and brothers and sisters. "God" and "Christ" appear in it like an eruption. The writer quotes the soothing text, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He was evidently familiar with Scripture, and thought this text especially applicable to himself. "Many a prayer," he says, "have I offered to God both on behalf of you and myself," and he winds up by "hoping to meet you all hereafter."

Not a word about his crime. Not a word about his injury to society. Not a word about the poor girl he outraged and murdered. James Stockwell had no

thought for her or her relatives. He did not trouble about what had become of Kate Dennis. He was careless whether she was in heaven or hell. Not once, apparently, did it cross his mind that he had destroyed her young life after nameless horror; that he had killed her in the bloom of maidenhood; that at one fell swoop he had extinguished all that she might have been—perhaps a happy wife and mother, living to a white old age, with the prattle of grandchildren soothing her last steps to the grave. Such reflections do not occur to gentlemen who are anxious about their salvation, and in a hurry to get to heaven.

"I and mine"—my fate, my mother, my father, my sisters, my brothers—this was the sole concern of James Stockwell under the chaplain's ministrations. In this frame of mind, we presume, he has sailed to glory, and his family hope to meet him there snug in Abraham's bosom. Well, we don't. We hope to give the haunt of James Stockwell a wide berth. If he and others like him are in the upper circles, every decent person would rather be in the pit.

Let not the reader suppose that James Stockwell's case is uncommon. We have made a point of reading the letters of condemned murderers, and they all bear a family likeness. Religion simply stimulates and sanctifies selfishness. In selfishness it began and in selfishness it ends. Extreme cases only show the principle in a glaring light; they do not alter it, and the light is the light of truth.

James Stockwell has gone to God. No doubt the chaplain of Leeds gaol feels sure of it. Probably the fellow's relatives are just as sure. But what of Kate Dennis. Is *she* with God? What an awful farce it would be if she were in hell. Perhaps she is. She had no time to prepare for death. She was cut off "in her sins." But her murderer had three weeks to prepare for his freehold in New Jerusalem. He qualified himself for a place with the sore-legged Lazarus. He dwells in the presence of the Lamb. He drinks of the river of life. He twangs his hallelujah harp and blows his hallelujah trumpet. May be he looks over the battlements and sees Kate Dennis in Hades. The murderer in heaven, and the victim in hell. Nay, more. It has been held that the bliss of the saved will be heightened by witnessing the tortures of the damned. In that case Kate Dennis may burn to make James Stockwell's holiday. He will watch her writhings with more than the relish of a sportsman who has hooked a lusty trout. "Ha, ha," the worthy James may exclaim, "I tortured her before I killed her, and now I shall enjoy her tortures for ever."

G. W. FOOTE.

PRAYER.

THE duty of prayer is repeatedly inculcated in the Bible. Its efficacy not only for spiritual but material benefits is assured in the sacred volume. The Lord's Prayer enjoined on all disciples petitions: "Give us this day our daily bread." Those who offer it know well it is but a mockery. Most are pretty sure of their daily bread, though thousands in Russia or in India may be perishing from starvation. To petition for health is explicitly taught. "Is any sick among you? let him call in the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v., 14). Then follows the instance of Elias shutting up the heavens for three years and a half, and subsequently withdrawing the bonds placed by him over

nature and bringing down the rain, his prayers being the instruments on both occasions. Sickness is represented as sinful. When Jesus healed the palsied man, he coupled the act with the forgiveness of his sins; and when he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda he said, "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John v., 14). Even death, we are told, only came by sin (Rom. v., 12), though geology conclusively proves that death in every form existed long ere the appearance of man. The pains of childbirth were a direct consequence of Eve's transgression (Gen. iii., 16). and when chloroform was first used in midwifery, its employment was denounced as an attempt to thwart the divine will.

But the good old-fashioned Bible doctrine of prayer is, like all the other beliefs of theology, being gradually whittled away. The sky-pilots are chary of using the petitions for rain and fine weather found in the Prayer Book. These prayers too palpably link them with the medicine-men of the savage. It is only the Peculiar People now who rely solely on prayer in case of sickness, and Christian juries have brought in these genuine Christians as guilty of manslaughter for simply following the directions of the New Testament.

Jesus says emphatically "If two of you shall agree upon earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii., 19). "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi., 22). "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John xiv., 13, 14). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John xvi., 23). The promises are sufficiently explicit, and it should be easy to determine if they are fulfilled.

What has been more prayed for than the unity of Christendom? Jesus himself prayed that his followers might be one (John xvii., 21), yet from his time divisions among Christians have gone on increasing, and each sect prays for the conversion of the others. Protestants pray for the conversion of Catholics, and Catholics for the conversion of Protestants. Whitfield and Wesley were each exemplary pious, praying Methodists, but one was a Calvinist and the other an Arminian. Each prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and each remained of his own opinion still.

Mr. F. Galton, in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Development*, gives statistical evidence in refutation of the Christian doctrine of prayer. He points out that while the sick are specially prayed for, no medical man of repute assigns any cases of cure to this agency; nor are the statistics of those who recover found to depend on the employment of this means. Kings, queens, and members of royal families are specially prayed for by their subjects, yet they are not specially long lived, but rather live less than others of the well-to-do classes; nor are they specially distinguished for wisdom, grace, and the other virtues petitioned for. Missionaries are specially prayed for, yet insurance offices always require extra payments for extra risks when they go to preach the gospel in Africa or China.

It may be said the prayers for crowned heads and missionaries are certain to be of a perfunctory character, and that it cannot be expected that the Almighty will pay attention to lip service of that description. Well, then, take the case of little children. No more sincere, fervent, and all-absorbing prayers are offered than those of mothers for their little ones. Yet infant mortality is the largest of all, and Mr. Galton examined the list of deaths in the *Record* and the *Times* of a particular period and found that the proportion of still births to the total number

of deaths was the same in both. These facts, and the general observation of daily life, tend to show that prayer is neither more nor less than a waste of time and energy; an idler's substitute for manfully coping with the difficulties that surround us.

In Luke xviii. God is likened, with considerable justice, to an unjust judge, who at first refuses to avenge a widow, yet subsequently says "because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." This divine parable is used to enforce the equally divine moral that God will avenge his own elect who cry to him day and night. Here is an example to rulers and railers. This beautiful story may perhaps illustrate why prayers are unanswered. The petitioners do not pray long enough. The apostle enjoins us to "pray without ceasing," and as the saints in glory continually sing Holy, Holy, Holy, so those on earth should remain on their marrow-bones till Judgment Day. If this explanation does not suffice, we must fall back on the conjecture of Elisha in regard to the god Baal and say "either he is talking, or is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked" (1 Kings xviii., 27).

In truth the Christian theory of prayer is so monstrous and absurd that it merits nothing better than ridicule. That a being of supreme intelligence and wisdom should need to be apprised of the wants of his creatures or should be influenced by the suggestion even of the highest human minds is incredible. But that he should listen to and be influenced by the pitiable twaddle of the ignorant who do pray is nothing less than absurd. For men's prayers are in exact proportion to their ignorance. Millions of petitions have been offered to change the unalterable courses of nature when the petitioners might have been just as usefully occupied in crying for the moon.

J. M. WHEELER.

TO THE RESCUE!

A SOMEWHAT remarkable "Declaration on the Truth of Holy Scriptures," signed by nearly forty deans, canons, rectors, and other clergymen of the Church of England, including the Dean of Norwich, the Dean of St. Paul's, and Archbishops Denison and Clarke, recently appeared in the *London Times* and other journals. In this pious manifesto the signatories profess to be "sorely distressed" by the fact that it is "evident to thoughtful persons that there are now current certain impressions that Holy Scripture has been discovered not to be worthy of unquestioning belief; and the faith of many Christian people is thereby unsettled." The avowed object of this "Declaration" is to endeavor to rescue the Bible from the irrevocable fate to which modern thought has decreed it. In this unique document the would-be saviors announce their position as follows: "We therefore solemnly profess and declare our unfeigned belief in all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as handed down to us by the undivided Church in the original languages. We believe they are inspired by the Holy Ghost; that they are what they profess to be; that they mean what they say; and that they declare incontrovertibly the actual historical truth in all records, both of past events and of the delivery of predictions to be thereafter fulfilled." The signatories then allege that these "certain impressions" of "thoughtful persons" as to the non-fallibility of the "Holy Scriptures" are "derived immediately from the popular literature of the day," and that human reason is incompetent "to deliver judgment on the authority of the Holy Bible." The entire document is a melancholy confession that the thought of the nineteenth century and the study of "popular literature" have placed the Bible in imminent danger, and, therefore, the Churches should

unite to save the "Word of God" from the peril of "learned speculations" and the force of human reason.

We readily admit that ample grounds exist to justify this orthodox apprehension, for it must be manifest to all impartial observers of the trend of the unbiassed intellect of the present day that the Bible has entirely lost its former power over the human mind, and that it is no longer an active factor in the regulations of every-day actions. Of course, the book contains truths, but their usefulness is frequently obscured or counterbalanced by the numerous errors surrounding them, and by the extravagant claims urged on their behalf. Orthodoxy alleges that the Bible "contains all that is necessary for man"; experience, on the other hand, declares that in science, philosophy, ethics, politics, literature, public education, and even in the intellectual domain of theology, "Thus saith the Lord" is superseded by the requirements of individual and general utility. The Bible has become practically but little more than a symbol of orthodox idolatry and traditional credulity, the belief in which covers "a multitude of sins," and serves as a passport into "respectable" society. A book, the history of which is doubtful, while its nature is mystical, its teachings contradictory and, in many instances, positively injurious and utterly impotent as an aid to civilisation, can never harmonise with the genius of material progress and intellectual development. Far be it from us to allege that the Bible has no legitimate place in modern literature. Undoubtedly it has, and that a most important one. It reveals the weaknesses, the imperfections, and the errors which darkened the past by impeding personal improvement, and by retarding general advancement. Moreover, it serves as a beacon warning us of the dangerous paths which were once regarded as being safe to tread. It is a history of superstitions that for ages robbed life of its real value and beauty, and dimmed the mental glory of the human race. When we reflect upon the extraordinary hold that this book once had upon its devotees, and contrast that power with its present non-influence upon the conduct of men, what a striking indication we have of the decadence of theological restriction, and of the marvellous expansion of intellectual freedom. The Bible is now estimated by its contents, and not by its supposed authority. To allow any book to be our master instead of being our servant would be to prostrate reason at the shrine of a humiliating idolatry.

We can quite understand that this rapid decay of implicit belief in the Bible as a record of absolute truth must necessarily disturb the mental equilibrium of the clergy, inasmuch as their professional existence depends upon the perpetuation of the orthodox notion that the "Word of God" must be received without doubt or questioning. Thus in the document published by these "lights of the Church" they say: "We believe these scriptures because they have the authority of divine revelation, and wholly independent of our own or of any human approval of the probability or possibility of their subject matter, and wholly independently of our own or of any human and finite comprehension thereof. . . . So that no opinion of the fact or form of divine revelation, grounded on literary criticism of the scriptures themselves, can be admitted to interfere with the traditional testimony of the Church when that has been once ascertained and verified by appeal to antiquity." They further affirm that human reason has no "jurisdiction and competency to deliver judgment on the authority of the Holy Bible." This is priestly despotism with a vengeance, allied with an audacious attempt to secure the blind allegiance of their victims at the cost of the sacrifice of reason, "the noblest part of man." Let the delusion that the Church is an absolute authority, and that human judgment cannot

be relied upon, be once established, and priestcraft will continue to stultify thought, to limit investigation, and to destroy that intellectual liberty which is the pride and glory of our age.

It may perhaps be as well to remind these defenders of a dying faith, who are crying so mournfully for help to rescue the Bible from its certain doom, that, in denying that reason is a higher authority than the Bible, they are adopting a course the very opposite to that taken by some of the leading men of their own Church. For instance, Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy of Religion*, remarks: "Reason is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." Chillingworth says: "It is by reason alone that we can distinguish truth from falsehood." Dean Prideaux admits that the New Testament should be tried by reason, while Bishop Marsh states that "the Bible must be examined by the same laws of criticism which are applied to other writings of antiquity." Surely these Church authorities should have some weight with the members of a "a united body." If it is contended that reason is not the tribunal of appeal in reference to the claims urged on behalf of the Bible, we ask, What is? Has reason no part in inducing these signatories to prefer the Christian Bible to one or more of the many other "sacred books" extant? And, as regards the English Bible, it has been repeatedly altered and "improved." Have these alterations gone on without the aid of reason? Why does the Church of England reject the Roman Catholic Bible? and why does it interpret the teachings of its own book in a different manner from that adopted by the dissenting sects of the Protestant Church? Probably, through the theological adulteration that has weakened its force, the impress of reason in the process of "improvement" is not very clear; but even in its enfeebled condition its superiority must be admitted if the Bible has really been improved by its application.

The leading positions set forth in this, to the orthodox believer, heartrending document are:—(1) "That the Bible has been handed down to us by the undivided church in the original languages"; (2) "That it is a divinely-inspired book and free from all contradictions"; (3) "That its teachings are historically true, and are of absolute authority." In future articles in this journal we propose to examine these three positions and to expose their shallowness and orthodox pretensions. In the meantime it is well to note the theological alarm at the spread of scepticism both inside and outside of the Church, and the pathetic appeal made for aid to rescue the "Grand Old Book" from further ruin at the hands of "thoughtful persons." The lament, however, is useless and the appeal fortunately comes too late. The days of Bible rule are gone, and, we hope, for ever. Such domination was possible only when people were either unable or unwilling to think for themselves. Slavish submission to any book cannot co-exist with intellectual earnestness and mental activity. If such a work as the Bible suited our forefathers centuries ago, it is clear that it will not satisfy the needs and aspirations of modern times. With the past we have done except to profit by the lessons it has bequeathed to the present generation, and one of those lessons certainly is, that we should not allow the progress that is now apparent in every sphere of life to be hampered and marred by the many absurd and questionable teachings of the Old Testament, or by the fanciful and impracticable injunctions of the New. Orthodox believers content themselves with dwelling on the myths of the past and the imaginations of the future, leaving the ever-present comparatively unheeded. We prefer the more useful course of availing ourselves of the value of what is allied with the serviceable of what was, and thus secure a better what may be. The Bible that would be acceptable to-day

must be the brain-power preserved in ink of the great and noble of every age and of every country; a work clouded by no assumed divinity, mutilated by no ecclesiastical authority, and deteriorated by no theological contamination. The Secularist's Bible is born of human thought, interpreted by cultivated reason, and justified by its adaptability to the requirements of the time in which we live. Being free from the orthodox limit of finality, its value is enhanced by an ever-increasing knowledge, while its usefulness is augmented by the growth of experience; and its authority is, that it has truth for its credentials and utility for its recommendation. CHARLES WATTS.

HERESY.

"For now the war is not between
The brethren and the men of sin;
But saint and saint to spill the blood
Of one another's brotherhood."

—Hudibras.

In all matters except religion, men shape their beliefs to accord with their knowledge. But in the matter of religion, the less one knows, the stronger is his belief. All our churches are founded upon the beliefs of men who have been dead and buried from five hundred to two thousand years. Men who knew nothing of the stores of knowledge that have been opened to the world since their time; whose sources of information were as limited as their range of locomotion; whose ignorance and credulity went hand-in-hand in equal proportions. And yet all pious Christians hold firmly to the belief that wisdom died with these men, and whoever dares to doubt it is a heretic and unbeliever, who should be cut off from the fellowship of the church, and forbidden to teach any truth that he may have learned and demonstrated, that it is in conflict with the wild imaginings of these dead and rotten barbarians, over whose bones the moss of ages has been growing for a thousand years, more or less.

Every person who joins a church must profess his belief in these dead and antiquated opinions, and not only that, he must promise that he never will learn or know anything more. If he aspires to the position of a teacher he must swear that he never will know anything that was not known to John Calvin, Martin Luther, Ignatius Loyola, or some other long dead and gone enthusiast upon whom his church pins its faith. He must put on the iron jacket of some old crusader of the dark ages and entrench himself behind a solid wall of ignorance, and swear to stop all loop-holes that might let in light, except the one in the rear. As long as the state was in alliance with the church, to stand guard over these ancient walls and with the strong arm of the civil power keep off all who would let in the light, the church was enabled to ignore all improvement and maintain itself solid in ignorance. But the world would not stand still for either church or state. The tree of knowledge, cursed by the church and forbidden to the pious, was cultivated by the outsiders. The arts and sciences combined, not to attack the church, but to throw light on more than Egyptian darkness that prevailed within its iron-bound walls. Geography, geology, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, anthropology and history, all combined to show up the ignorants of the old creed mongers, and light up even the dense darkness of theology. Around the light of science lie strewn the mists and fables of the past, the gods and all the supernatural paraphernalia of ignorance, like the moths and bugs that gather and die around Edison's electric light. And now the church finds it necessary to do something for her salvation. She can no longer sit like a spider in her web and wait for her prey to come into her net. The trap is too palpable in modern light. No sensible man now joins the church; and if one in his callow youth is inveigled into it, the net

is too old and rotten to hold him after he grows to the age of discretion. The walls of the old castle of ignorance are breached and honeycombed. The light is breaking through, into the Holy of Holies, and even the clergy, such of them as rise above the level of mediocrity, are breaking out into the light of mental freedom. Every church is in the throes of a revolution, with its brightest and best men on trial for heresy. Even that mediæval dead-house, the Roman Catholic church, has its Father McGlynn, who, owing to the loss of the power to use thumb-screws and the stake, it cannot suppress. The Presbyterians yielding to the pressure of advancing civilisation, have voted to open the flood-gates a little and revise their creed; and now the battle becomes all the fiercer between those who wish to save as much as possible of the old, and those who would clear the old mill of all its rotten machinery and place it on a level with modern society.

There seems to be but little choice for those who would save the church. If they hold to the old traditions and beliefs, and thrust out of their communion every man who dares to think, the church must die of inanition, or be smothered in its own ignorance. If it opens its gates to the advancing flood of heresy ever so little, the break must widen, and soon like the Johnstown dam, the whole structure will be washed away. Such men as Drs. Woodrow, Briggs, Parkhurst, and Dixon, will not stop at any bars that the church may put up. The spirit of progress is on the march, and the church must keep step to its music, or fall by the way. The battle now in progress is in the church itself; and it vividly brings to mind the verse I have selected as a text. It is prophetic. There is not in the whole text of the Bible, from Isaiah to St. John, a prophecy so clearly set forth and so literally fulfilled as this one in *Hudibras*.

If the fulfilment of prophecy proves the divine inspiration of the prophet, then must Butler be canonised, and *Hudibras* be admitted into the list of sacred books.

As has been said, this is a war of saint against saint, and we as Liberals have no hand in the fight. But we cannot be indifferent as to the result. Every heresy trial weakens the power of the church. The men who are banishing from her communion are her brightest and best. If the war goes on, soon there will be nobody left in the church who is not below mediocrity in intellect, or lacking in moral principle. There was a time when the church held out the highest inducements to the ambitious man of brains. That time has passed away; but still it sometimes happens that such a man gets into its ranks. But in the light of modern research and mental activity, such a man must think, and if he has common honesty he must speak his thoughts; and then he is eliminated from the church as a heretic. So often does this happen of late, that the title of heretic has lost its terrors. A few years ago to be a heretic was to be an outcast in society; a monster to be pointed at and shunned as a freak of nature. Now the title has become one of honor. Whatever bad names the pious Christian may call the heretic he never now calls him a fool. The term infidel has become a synonym for a man of sense, of moral courage and intellectual capacity. These heresy trials remind one of the amateur farmer, who carefully pulled up all his corn and left the weeds for cultivation. The harvest of the church is likely to turn out much like this.

J. P. RICHARDSON.

—Independent Pulpit.

The *Open Court*, of Chicago, Dec. 24, 1891, gives a photographic reproduction of Theodore Parker's grave at Florence, together with an article by Theodore Stanton. The handsome monument is inscribed "His name is engraved in marble, his virtues in the hearts of those he helped to free from slavery and superstition."

WONDERFUL TALES.

To gull mankind in days of old,
Thousands of pious tales were told
By saints as well as sages;
And what is stranger still to say,
Mankind are as much gulled to-day
As those of former ages.

Read history from end to end,
Was ever there a true one pen'd—
Religious, military, civil;
From Moses to the Wand'ring Jew,
Or until Martin Luther threw
His ink-horn at the Devil?

Look at the tales in holy writ,
Devoid of reason and of wit;
But still they are admired.
As each religious crank supposes,
They were by God revealed to Moses,
Therefore must be inspired.

The first tells how the world was made
In six days without pick or spade,
And tells as well who did it,
And out of nothing, just for fun,
And as by talking it was done,
The maker deserves credit.

Next come the tablets of stone,
With the commandments traced thereon,
Too serious for laughing—
That Moses brought down from the mount,
Which is the very first account
We have of lithographing.

The smitten rock and gushing flood,
The water turned into blood,
With swarms of frogs to croak,
And lice by millions to behold.
Joe Miller never could have told
A better pious joke.

Then comes the calf made out of gold,
Divinely cast without a mould,
And a serpent made of brass,
Which healed the sick who looked thereon,
No greater thing was ever done;
No, not by Balaam's ass.

And David, who led a moral life,
Especially with Uriah's wife,
Of whom he had no need.
But Mrs. Lot, who dared to halt,
Was changed into a pillar of salt—
A miracle indeed.

And Samson, who with jaw-bone fought,
Somehow a thousand foxes caught,
Which tail to tail he bound,
And brands of fire upon them laid,
And midst the standing corn they stray'd,
And burned it the ground,

And as we read of Noah's ark,
With more beasts in than any park.
Our love of truth increases.
Talk not of Barnum, Forepaugh's shows,
And fifty more as big as those;
It knocks them all to pieces.

And then another truthful tale,
Is that of Jonah and the whale,
Though fishy, stale and flat:
But no fish-story of to-day,
Exaggerate it as you may,
Will ever equal that.

Such are the pious stories told
By prophets of the days of old,
As in the Bible stated.
No wonder as a guide for youth,
A book containing so much truth
Should be so venerated.

—Boston Investigator.

PROVS BOLONEO.

A debate is being arranged for between Dr. J. L. York, the Freethought lecturer of California, and the Rev. D. J. Driver, of Oregon. Subject, "The Truth of Christianity."

BOOK CHAT.

England has long been far behind France in the matter of bibliography. We are, however, slowly creeping up to the standard long since attained by their Brunets and Querards. Mr. G. K. Fortescue, for instance, the Assistant-Keeper of Printed Books and Superintendent of the Reading Room of the British Museum, in his just-published *Subject Index of the Modern Works added to the Library of the British Museum* in the years 1885-90, has performed a service not only for readers at the Museum, but for all interested in literature. A work revealing at a glance all that has been published during this period in England, as well as important foreign works, on subjects ranging alphabetically from Aalborg to Zwickau, cannot well be over-estimated. With his previous volume from 1880 to '85 this subject catalogue contains about 77,000 entries. It has a commendatory preface by Dr. Garnett.

Dr. Charles Jean Marie Letourneau, the French translator of Büchner and Haeckel, and the author of important original works on biology and sociology, including the evolution of morals, marriage and the family, politics and jurisprudence, has issued a new and enlarged edition of his *Science et Materialisme*, which first appeared in 1879.

The reprint of George Meredith's *Modern Love*, first issued in 1862, reminds us that Mr. Meredith made his appearance as a poet as far back as 1849. In *Modern Love* the first poem was "Grandfather Bridgeman," founded on an incident in the Crimean War, and the first appearance of Meredith in print, we believe, was in *Chambers' Journal*, July 7, 1849, the battle of Chillianwallah then inspiring his muse.

Modern Love was "Affectionately Inscribed to Captain Maxse, R.N.," who is believed to have been the hero of *Beauchamp's Career*. Mr. Meredith has for a long time occupied the post of reader to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, and for a time, during the absence of John Morley in America, he was editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, in which appeared some of his most characteristic productions both in prose and in verse.

A Last Harvest is the title of the posthumous poems of Philip Bourke Marston, a promising poet of the Swinburnian school, who died at the age of 37. He was blind from the age of three, and lost in succession his mother, wife, sister, and friend, James Thomson; so that death may be said to have come as a release.

James Thomson—not "B.V.," but the author of *The Seasons*—has at last been adequately edited, with a biography by J. Logie Robertson. But his namesake is better worth the trouble.

Mr. Alexander Michie, who has lived some years in the Celestial Empire, has put out a timely book on Missionaries in China (E. Stanford). Mr. Michie points out that Christian missionaries were forced on China by treaties with powers the Chinese could not contend with. They are hence viewed by this otherwise tolerant people as connected with national humiliation. It is not the mandarins alone, but the common people, who hate the missionaries, whose lives are seen to be not in accordance with their professions, and whose anxiety to save the souls of infant Chinese leads them to be regarded as kidnapers.

Mr. Michie gives an instance of Christian rapacity in the minister of a chapel who was offered by a Chinese seven times its value if only he would remove from his vicinity, and who demanded fifteen times its value.

The late Emile de Laveleye was the best known of Belgian authors. His fertile pen did much for the Liberal Protestantism which is little distinguishable from the English Deism of last century. His principal work, as an economist, and his ablest book, was *De la Propriété et ses Formes Primitives*. But he was not distinguished for original research like Fustel de Coulanges and Sir H. S. Maine, and on this topic of the evolution of property there is a better book by the French Freethinker, Dr. Letourneau

ACID DROPS.

Bradford is improving. The police of that town are very carefully supervising its morals and religion. Not only was the Star Music Hall refused for Mr. Foote's lectures in February, though the lessee had no objection, but now the Oddfellows' Hall is refused, and further inquiry shows that every decent hall in the town is under the same terrorism. Of course Mr. Foote has to cancel his Bradford engagement. But he doesn't mean to let Bradford alone. If the police persist in shutting the halls against him he will visit the town in the summer and deliver an open-air lecture.

"General" Booth has had a high old time in Australia. The moneyed and middle classes have thrown themselves under his triumphant chariot wheels, but the working men have held aloof suspiciously, and the comic papers have been merry at his expense. On the way home the "General" has done good business in India. He sent a telegram to the National Congress, wishing it success, etc. It cost him a shilling or two, and gained him a splendid advertisement. Grand Old Showman!

Church and Salvation Army are squabbling over the Leather-lane evictions. The Boothites came upon the scene, bustled about, got at the reporters, and gained a good advertisement. But the Rev. E. Canney, rector of St. Peter's, Holborn, says that they did little, and that not wisely. He also says that they were unknown in Leather-lane until they came looking for the advertisement.

Booth's farm-colony was to be unsectarian. That is what he said in begging cash from all sorts and conditions of men, including Agnostics like Samuel Laing and the Marquis of Queensberry. But what is the fact? Under the head of "Farm Colony Corps, Hadleigh," the *War Cry* publishes a statement from "H. Baker, captain"—"We are booming the *War Cry* very nearly every week; two dozen more this week." So much for Booth's promises.

The peculiar *courage* of the English Liberal press is just being displayed. With very few exceptions, they are silent about the prosecution of Mr. H. S. Young for sending an "inoffensively worded" Malthusian leaflet in sealed letters through the post. Apparently they see no particular infraction of liberty in the breaking open of a man's letters. But how they scream over the "outrage on liberty" at Eastbourne, where the Salvationists claim to do as they like in the public streets.

An instance of the high hand with which priests seek to carry their way in Ireland is given in the *Irish Daily Independent*. It appears that at a public meeting held in Mullingar in reference to a new rate, Father Drum went to the reporter of the *Westmeath Examiner* and ordered him to leave, which the reporter was foolish enough to do. Father Drum explained that "he took it upon himself to exclude the *Examiner* reporter, as it was a paper to which the bishop was opposed. It was a condemned paper, and could not be read without sin." The worst feature to us is that the proprietor of the paper, who was present, as well as the rest of the meeting, seem to have tamely submitted to this insolence.

How kind of our heavenly father to make sickness contagious. Since the beginning of the year influenza has spread largely in all parts of England, even invading the royal precincts of Windsor Castle. In Belgium and Austria it is still more virulent and has completely closed many schools. At Antwerp there were over sixty deaths per day. The disease has been carried to the port towns of the far East. The yellow fever, too, is raging furiously in South America, and at Santos the situation caused by the disease is rendered more acute by crowds of destitute emigrants who are flocking to the port and imploring to be sent home.

Great loss of life is reported from the Gilbert Islands through the visit of some terrible tidal waves which almost devastated the place. On one island alone 80 persons were swept away, and it is feared very many islands have suffered. Yet some think the world was specially made for man, and that all things are ordered for his benefit.

Thomas Love broke into St. Mary's Church, Botesshanger, and left a note there complaining of the small amount of

money in the box and the villainous character of the communion port. It was dreadfully inhospitable to make such poor provision for visitors. But, alas, Thomas Love's love for the blood of Christ, to say nothing of the contents of the poor-box, has brought him into trouble. The Sandwich magistrates refused to take a Christian view of the case, and he is now spending three months in a place where the blood of Christ is scarce.

Samuel Claridge Finney and Mary Ethel Shovelton, both of Manchester, were engaged to be married, but the engagement being broken off, the worthy Samuel invested in a bottle of vitriol and flung it in the lady's face as she was returning from chapel. Probably he was as pious as she was, and thought the better the day the better the deed. Oh, what a beautiful restraint is religion on the passions of the human heart!

Edgar Fawcett, the poet, in a paper on "The Woes of the New York Working Girl," in the *Arena*, says: "If the working girl of New York has any arch foe, it is that sad fraud which to-day is termed Christianity. If to-day there is any class of men who entirely desert the requirements of their avowed profession, it is the class of the clergy."

The *London Chronicle* reports a nice little dipping scene among the Dunkards (not Drunkards, mind) of Vinton, Iowa. When the thermometer was registering ten degrees below zero, 200 Dunkards met at the river bank to witness the baptism of a new member of their church. It was a young woman of twenty-two, with a baby only three weeks old. She was dressed in white and brought by the high priest to the water's edge. Half paralysed with fear, she shrank back, and cried for mercy. But the Dunkards drowned her cries with a hymn, and she was plunged three times in the icy water. Ever since her mind has been a blank, and she is lying at the point of death.

The *Leicester Daily Post* of Dec. 29 calls attention to the progress of the confessional in the Leicester churches. There, as elsewhere, the High Church party are doing their best to promote sacerdotal power by inculcating the duty of confession, especially upon girls. The *Post* says, "Young women are in largely preponderating numbers at the classes and the subsequent confession to the clergy." It prints a "list of sins for self-examination" before confession supplied at these classes, with the preface that the church absolves from all sins through the priests.

Among the list is found the following: "Lust—Impure thoughts or desires, indecent curiosity, delight in reading or writing of unclean things, improper conversation, jokes, songs, pictures, dangerous dances, improper liberties, immodest touch of yourself or another." One cannot help being reminded of the old story of the priest who asked the ostler if he ever greased the horses' teeth to spoil their eating. "Never," he replied. At next confession, however, this was numbered among his sins. The rhyme ends—

"When I last saw you, you denied all this."

"True," said the ostler, "very true it is;

And also true that till that blessed time

I never, father, heard of such a crime."

Those who know the private manuals used by priests for the confessional are aware that the printed list given to young females are but the beginning of a catechism the end of which would affront a courtesan.

One of the latest religious frauds was founded in 1884 by the Abbé Buguet, of Montligeon, France. It is an association to "aid the forsaken souls in purgatory—those for whom no one else was praying and who had no hope of coming to the end of their sufferings until they had themselves satisfied the justice of God." Every month the association has three thousand masses said for its object. Its members contribute one halfpenny yearly to its funds, and they share in all its merits and may gain special indulgences with which it has been endowed.

Satan seems to have laid his wiles to entrap the Rev. W. V. Jenkins, of Page-green, South Tottenham, with the stale old device of a female servant—his housekeeper, Elizabeth Henry—who now alleges that the man of God threw the broom at her and pushed her roughly because she would not tolerate his advances. Happily Satan did not completely

triumph over the man of God, though in his neighborhood the row is felt to be little to his credit.

"We once commenced the distasteful task of making a collection of instances of the crimes and vices of preachers, most of them reports of police court proceedings, and in a very short time had gathered a motley pile of upwards of 200 instances, the majority of them being offences of a sexual character, many of them cases of seduction, nameless offences, and outrages upon children."—*Two Worlds*.

The Spiritists have a new song called "Rap, rap, rap, here come our spirit friends." It goes to the tune of "Hush, hush, hush, here comes the bogie man."

John W. Mack, a madman, was ignorantly released from Bethany Home, a "Divine Healing" institution, and went to Bolivar, Pa., on the night of Dec. 9, and murdered a married couple, and was beating in a door to kill the three children and grandmother when overpowered.

Henry Requa hanged himself on Dec. 16. He, like his mother, had religious mania. He was active in Sunday-school work. On the morning of Dec. 16 he visited Rev. Dr. Bourne and said, "There is no redemption for me." He could not be re-assured, but left despondent.—*Truthseeker*.

The instruments of torture now on view in Maddox-street galleries show the devices of faith in dealing with its opponents, and reminds one of Southey's lines on a cell in Cold-bath Fields Prison—

The Devil smiled, for it gave him a hint
To improve his prisons in hell.

The Christian notions of hell have been illustrated and suggested by scenes in Christian torture chambers.

Formerly when men had a narrow escape from some threatened calamity, they displayed their gratitude by making a pilgrimage or handing over a sum to the church. Times have changed, for a person now advertises that "in honor of his miraculous escape" he will give a dance.

A writer in the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, Nov. 26, says there cannot be any doubt that the majority of the missionaries have an easy time of it, and go out for that purpose; "that they are engaged in trying to accomplish in China what they have themselves admitted on more than one occasion to be utterly impossible; that they are the chief cause of riots; that their overt acts have directly led to wars, and that many of them are actuated by sordid motives of gain."

This writer reminds them of the bitter cry of the outcast poor at home, and adds: "They leave these horrors, they turn their backs on their unfortunate countrymen to follow that fleeting phantom yclept evangelisation of the heathen Chinese, live in fine houses, marry and give in marriage, and furnish secret societies here with an excuse for embroiling the Chinese Government with Foreign Powers. But that is not the worst, for they cry out for revenge! They shout for the merciless persecution of the rioters by barbarous officials; they shriek for the decapitation of the 'terrible leaders' and bawl for huge indemnities."

These men, who declared themselves inspired of the Holy Ghost to save others, and who went out relying, according to their professions, solely on the merits of Christ and his gospel, are now clamoring for the protection of gun-boats, demanding life for life, living on the fat of the land, and even going so far as to bring us on the verge of deadly strife with China.

According to the Report of the China Inland Mission, it took 671 persons to secure 424 converts at a cost of £37,799 10s. 1d., or nearly £90 a head, and it is not stated how many of these are virtually kidnapped children.

Mr. W. G. Willard, of Liverpool, who has been for ten years in the service of the Chinese customs, says: "But from a religious standpoint the work of the Chinese missionary is a failure. The Chinese convert is what we call 'a rice Christian,' and he changes his religion for what there is in it. It is a strictly commercial transaction. The coolie temperament is not impressionable, and many missionaries have confessed

to me that their religious work had been time and energy wasted."

A West Indian Voodoo, on being reproached for human sacrifices to the serpent, and for eating the bodies slain, replied: "Do you believe that the Son of God was sacrificed to save man, and do you not eat what your priests say is His very body?" If Christianity is not founded on savage beliefs it looks remarkably like it.

The Bishop of Worcester is said to be preparing a book on the unhackneyed question of the Attributes of Deity. This should prove a capital subject for the exercise of the episcopal intellect—if only there were any deity to whom attributes could be attributed.

Unthinking speakers and writers are known by their misuse of words. The terms "Atheist" and "Atheism" have revealed many a sloven. They are often bandied about indiscriminately as marks of opprobrium. Here is the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam—a gentleman in many ways superior to his cloth—writing in the January number of the *Church Reformer* "On Mr. Balfour's Atheism and the Religion of the English Peasantry." Mr. Balfour's thoughtful, though somewhat pessimistic, address on Progress, delivered at his installation as Rector of Glasgow University, brings on him from the optimistic Broad Churchman a charge of "cynical Atheism." Says Mr. Headlam, "He is without hope, and therefore an Atheist in the world." And so for a pessimistic tinge the critic of Positivism before the Manchester Church Congress is accused of "Atheism." Mr. Headlam would do well to read that chapter on *The World as Will and Idea*, in which Schopenhauer—a writer always clear and definite in the use of his terms—argues that to be without hope in this world is the outcome of Christianity.

"Good bye to Unitarianism," says the Rev. H. H. Snell, of Norwich. He has preached his farewell sermon. Unitarianism doesn't make enough of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the *Inquirer*, which complains that Secularism does not satisfy "aspirations," will tell us why Unitarianism does not satisfy the aspirations of Mr. Snell.

Camierwell Secularists know something of Mr. J. W. Morden. This gentleman has written a book on "Agnosticism Found Wanting." It is said by a religious journal to be "a work of great value." Perhaps it is; we haven't seen it; but in that case Mr. Morden does himself great injustice when he opposes Freethought lecturers.

The following curious paragraph appears in the *Methodist Times* under the head of Nottingham News:—"A while ago we had Mrs. Besant lecturing on Theosophy. On Sunday week her guardian friend and fellow-helper, Mr. Foote, of the Secularist Society, gave a scathing lecture on 'The Follies of Theosophy.'"

Moody is going through Scotland with a good budget of yarns. When he was returning to America in 1872 (note the recent date!) a man said there were too many parsons on board; but the captain rounded on him, and said that if he could show him a town in America or England that had got 20,000 people, and had not a Bible in it or a parson, he would show him a place nearer hell than he had ever been in. The date is safe, and so was the captain's reply. You cannot find a town of 20,000 people anywhere without fools enough to keep parsons and read Bibles.

Another of Moody's yarns is this. He always finds that sceptics don't read the Bible; once, however, he met a sceptic who said he did, but he didn't know a single verse.

God forbid that we should contradict Mr. Moody. Of course he couldn't tell a lie, not even a white one. But the Yankee preacher has got mixed. If he will only come South, and hold a public debate on the Bible, we will show him a sceptic who has read it. If the debate cannot come off, we may direct Mr. Moody's attention to our *Bible Handbook*, and to *Bible Heroes* and *Bible Romances*.

Unless the Bishop of Exeter romances (and he has just returned from Japan), the Japanese sent a minister to Europe to report on Christianity as a possible creed for national adoption; and the minister returned, saying that Christianity did not seem more efficacious in repressing drunkenness and

vice than Buddhism. By their fruits ye shall know them, said Jesus. The Japanese minister acted on the advice, and made an adverse report on the Christian tree.

Reviewing a book by G. H. Pember, the *Methodist Times* hints its belief that Old Nick is at the bottom of "some of the most mysterious and most repulsive phenomena of spiritualism." Clearly the philosophy of John Wesley survives amongst his followers.

Archdeacon Farrar has been discoursing on Manliness. Jack Falstaff on sobriety would be just as pertinent.

The Rev. C. E. Darwent, preaching at Fish-street Chapel, East London, stated that "aggressive Atheism had received its death-blow in the decease of Charles Bradlaugh." Aggressive Atheism has received lots of death-blows in our time. It also received lots of death-blows before Charles Bradlaugh was born, and it will no doubt receive lots of death-blows after everybody now living is dead.

Sky-Pilot Darwent is evidently of a different opinion from the Rev. E. B. Bagot, secretary of the Manchester Branch of the Christian Evidence Society, who deplores the "dangers to which our faith is exposed from the restless and ubiquitous propaganda of infidelity under the name of Secularism, such as our country has never seen till now."

The late Bishop of Carlisle, to whom Mr. Foote addressed one of his "Letters to the Clergy," has left this miserable vale of tears and gone home. He died worth £19,361. All this he saved. The rest he spent. Blessed be ye poor!

The *Glasgow Observer*, a Roman Catholic paper, has, in its issue for Jan. 2, an article on Mrs. Besant, whom it looks forward to as a possible convert. It says: "A curious fact is that she keeps, and has kept for years, a crucifix in her room, an act which shows no perverseness of heart to the Christian faith."

The U. S. Catholics hold this month, at New York, a "Convention of the Apostolate of the Press." The object is to take counsel how the press can best be used to further the interests of Catholicism. Cannot Freethinkers take a leaf out of the enemy's book?

Out of 72 churches applied to by the Newcastle Auxiliary of the United Kingdom Alliance, 60 replied that they use non-alcoholic wine in the Communion. If so it is certain they are departing from the custom of the church in accordance with the growth of temperance conviction.

The Rev. A. Douglas of Arbroath, writes to a Chief Good Templar in that town, "many of the contemporaries of Jesus favored the principle of your Order, but he neither favored nor practised them." Teetotalism as a remedy for the evils of society he branded as pure Pharisaism. Mr. Douglas has been challenged to a discussion on the subject.

A religious fanatic, a Sayeed or descendant of Mohammed, has been making trouble in Persia, where he has been attempting to reform religion. He assumes the title of "The Last Vicegerent of the Prophet," and like his ancestor does not stick at carrying on his work with the sword.

The article on "The Tsar Persecutor" by "E. B. Lanin," in the current *Contemporary Review*, is a strong indictment of Russian government intolerance, raised by the pretences of the clergy that Stundism is a mere cloak for revolutionary designs. Men and women are flogged and fined for joining this body, whose history is "a sickening martyrology." They are prevented from earning their living save under most onerous conditions, and are deported to Siberia without trial for reading the Bible or engaging in prayer. The number of arrests, floggings, and condemnations to penal servitude in Siberia that are never recorded in the daily press seems incredible until we reflect that there are, roughly speaking, about two hundred thousand Stundists to be spirited away or converted. And all this is done to Christians in the name of Christ and his holy church.

Mr. Scott Moncrieff, mentions from Jerusalem that on Christmas there was a snowstorm six inches deep. Evidently shepherds don't keep their flocks by night at that time now-a-days.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 10, Spinners Hall, St. George's-road, Bolton: at 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; at 3, "Oration on Charles Bradlaugh"; at 6.30, "The Way to Heaven."

January 17, Newcastle Sunday Lecture Society; 21 and 31, Hall of Science.

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

March 6, Merthyr.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—January 10 (morning and evening), Hall of Science, London; 14 and 15, Portsmouth; 17, Milton Hall; 24 (afternoon), Wolverhampton; evening, 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.

R. DOWDING, 11 Daisy-villas, Manor-road, Leyton, thanks the friends who sent him parcels of literature for distribution, and would be glad to receive more.

F. PERRINS.—*Modern Society* should be above printing such silly stuff. If the Dying Prophet "knows so much about the next world," it is wonderful he knows so little about this.

CORNISHMAN.—Thanks for the clipping from the *Cornish Times*. There is plenty more of the same sort in Buckle's chapter on Scotland. Milton was doubly right in saying that "new presbyter is but old priest writ large."

J. F. RAYNER.—Your Lecture Notice reached us on Thursday morning, two days too late.

A. STRONG.—Father Lambert's *Notes on Ingersoll* is not a new publication. It was dealt with some years ago in our columns by W. P. Ball.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Always glad to hear from you.

T. J. ROSCOLLAR.—Mr. Hampton is the only tailor who has advertised in our columns. His advertisement appears on our back page. You must have overlooked it.

F. H. H. AND W. J. B.—Your letter is not very explicit. You reside near Milton Hall; why not try to get what you desire through the N.W. London Branch?

ANNYED.—Others have made the same complaint; but the N. S. S. lecture notices do appear in the *Weekly Dispatch*; they occupy a separate place, and must not be looked for in the general list. Our own view is that this is a mistake, and we shall see if it cannot be altered.

JOSEPH BROWN.—See "Sugar Plums" Mr. Foote will write privately at length, as it is impossible for him to come to Newcastle before the end of next week.

W. HOLLIDAY.—We cannot carry on a correspondence on the subject through the post. Secularism is not Atheism, though most Secularists are Atheists. Belief in the existence of an intelligent supreme power—that is, a God—is not theology. Theology is systematic teaching about God and about our duties to him. Whoever accepts that is not a Secularist. See Mr. Foote's *Philosophy of Secularism*. Thomas Paine could join the N. S. S. if he were alive now, and probably would.

R. F. F.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. GOTT.—Your telegram to hand. See "Acid Drops." Mr. Foote doesn't mean to let the Bradford police win their victory too easily.

J. G. BARTRAM.—(1) We note your statement that Mr. J. Clarke never called himself an Atheist, and was indignant at being called so at an open-air lecture in Newcastle. (2) Of course we meant that you hold no public meeting on the 17th.

REX REGES.—Dealt with in last week's "Acid Drops."

H. M. RIDGWAY.—We regret that your name and Mr. O'Feely's were misspelt by Mr. Larkin in acknowledging. Such mistakes are very awkward, but very common.

BERTRAM DOBELL, the friend and publisher of James Thomson (B.V.), sends a donation to the Hall of Science scheme and says, "Later on I shall perhaps take some shares."

R. BAKER.—Those who invest in the Hall of Science scheme will have good marketable property as security, and a good prospect of a fair commercial dividend.

W. D. ALLEN.—We fear that the Brighton Branch is inactive at present. Indoor meetings seem difficult to organise there.

J. MCKAY.—Pleased to hear that you are sure the enlarged *Freethinker* will command a good sale in South Africa; also that Mr. Foote's policy as President is heartily approved out there.

J. H. WATERS.—Under consideration.

A. WHEELER.—The Finsbury Branch's balance-sheet is very creditable. It is a poor Branch that does good work.

ST. LUKE'S.—(1) The N. S. S. was first founded by Charles Bradlaugh in 1866. (2) We are proprietor as well as editor of this journal, and when we say it yields us no profit we speak in the double capacity.

D. CRAIGIE.—Pleased to hear there is a prospect of an N. S. S. Branch being formed at Arbroath.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) Paul is probably an historical character. The twelve apostles may be mythical. We don't know. No historian mentions them. (2) Fish, reptiles, fowl, and mammalia preceded man. Read Darwin's *Descent of Man*, or Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy*. (3) We will send the newsagent a contents-sheet if you forward his address.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Church Reformer—Sunday Chronicle—Cross Bearer—Chat—Christian Herald—Sunderland Echo—Arbroath Guide—Ironclad Age—Open Court—Echo—Better Way—Independent Pulpit—Natal Advertiser—Hong Kong Telegraph—Secular Thought—Irish Daily Independent—Dublin Evening Herald—Glasgow Observer—Nottingham Daily Express—Discovery—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.

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SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectured at Birmingham on Sunday. There was a good morning audience, and had the weather kept fine there would have been a bumping house at night. But a beastly snowstorm made the streets almost impassable, and the hall was only comfortably filled. Baskerville Hall has been redecorated, and has a greatly improved appearance. Mr. Watts and his genial family are residing in the front part of the premises. We earnestly hope he will succeed in gathering round him a numerous body of supporters.

Thomas Slater lectures at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, to-day (Jan. 10). He is a veteran Freethinker and social reformer, and we hope the local "saints" will give him a hearty greeting.

Mr. Watts had very good audiences at the Hall of Science last Sunday. His evening lecture, on "Atheism and the French Revolution" was remarkably effective, and at its close the applause was most enthusiastic. The Milton Hall Band provided a stirring prelude in the shape of orchestral selections, which gave great satisfaction to the audience. Next Sunday Mr. Watts will criticise General Booth's scheme in the morning, and the despairing manifesto of thirty-eight parsons in the evening.

January 30, 1892, is the first anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death. The next day is Sunday, and Mr. Foote is to lecture at the London Hall of Science. He will take for his subject "Charles Bradlaugh: 1891—1892: an Anniversary Address."

Mr. Foote's lecture at Nottingham on the Follies of Theosophy has provoked a correspondence in the *Daily Express*. One of the writers is a Fellow of the Theosophical Society. He pretends that Mr. Foote does not understand Theosophy. Perhaps not. Who does? But will the Theosophical Society have the courage to put forward a representative to debate with Mr. Foote? That would be better, and really more honest, than all this talk about "misrepresentation."

A good meeting was held on Sunday evening under the auspices of the Newcastle Branch. Mr. A. T. Dipper lectured on Malthusianism, after which a committee was formed to defend Mr. Loader, who is being prosecuted for selling Malthusian literature. Several Spiritualists took part in the proceedings, and they are represented on the committee, of which indefatigable Joseph Brown is the secretary. A letter read from Mr. Foote produced a good impression, and was much applauded. There was a good report in the next day's *Chronicle*.

Mr. Brown informs us that the Branch has made inquiries, and can find nothing against Mr. Loader's moral character. He is not even an "infidel," but a fervid Christian. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the Newcastle Branch is acting purely on principle. It is doing its best to defend liberty, though the victim through whom it is attacked belongs to the opposite religious camp.

The committee consists of nine gentlemen and three ladies. A subscription list was opened on the spot, and the following sums were received: Mr. W. H. Robinson, 5s.; Professor Wells, £1; Mr. A. Sheil, 2s.; Mr. Thwaites, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Jobling, 1s.; Mr. Dobson, 6d.; Mr. Martin Weatherburn, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Sawyer, sen., 2s. 6d.; Mr. Sawyer, jun., 2s. 6d.; Mr. Peter Weston, 5s.; Mr. Selkirk, 2s.; Mr. Bueutes, 2s.; Mr. Waters, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Martin Bell, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Bertram, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Kapper, 2s.; Mr. Purvis, 2s.

Further subscriptions will no doubt be forthcoming. They should be sent to Joseph Brown, 86 Durham-street, Bentinck Newcastle-on-Tyne. Mr. Edward Clark has been engaged to defend Mr. Loader, and the estimated cost is £20.

On Friday, January 8, a meeting will be held at the Eleusis Club, King's-road, Chelsea (8 p.m.), to protest against the prosecution of Mr. H. S. Young. Among the speakers are Dr. C. Drysdale, Mr. H. S. Young, and Mr. G. W. Foote.

Mr. George Anderson sends us a New Year's gift for the National Secular Society in the form of a cheque for £20, to be divided at our discretion among the different funds. Reader, if thou hast a cheque book, and anything at the bank, go thou and do likewise, or as near as thou canst.

A few further subscriptions have arrived for the Hall of Science scheme. They will be acknowledged, with others up to date, in our next issue. Many persons would probably rather help in this way than take shares. What Mr. Foote proposes to do is this. It is highly necessary that he should have a good hold on the concern, and he is a poor man with many obligations. He will therefore devote (say) the first £50 to shares to be held by himself—of course as a moral trust for the N. S. S., and whatever dividend they yield will be paid over to the N. S. S. treasurer. Subscriptions above that sum will be invested in further shares, to be held in the same way by persons of Mr. Foote's selection.

A new prospectus of the National Secular Hall Society (Limited) is now substituted for the old one, and will be circulated as widely as possible. Friends who do not receive a copy should kindly apply to Mr. Forder for one, or as many as they can use. The prospectus is accompanied by a form of application for shares. The directors are anxious to make good progress by the last day of January, when the next step should if possible be taken.

A special letter of appeal to the Freethought party will appear in our next issue from the pen of Mr. George Anderson.

Last Sunday evening the Chatham Secular Society held its annual members' meeting, and a resolution to rejoin the National Secular Society was carried unanimously. We congratulate both sides on the happy settlement of this difficulty. Good friends should never be separated by a misunderstanding. Mr. Foote has helped to bring about this reconciliation, and though some people affect to think him an "arbitrary" president, the opinion does not seem to prevail very extensively at Chatham—where, by the way, there is as gallant a body of Freethinkers as can be found in the kingdom.

Mr. Robert Forder returns sincere thanks to all who have subscribed towards his expenses at the School Board elections.

The following sums are hereby acknowledged:—A. Marsh, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Harriman, 2s. 6d.; A. W. Marks, 5s.; Mrs. Marks, 5s.; E. and F. Goodwin, 4s.; W. C. Johnson, 2s. 6d.; G. Heller, 5s.; T. Bullock, 5s.; Mrs. Lawrence, £1.

Mr. C. Cohen, a young lecturer who is well spoken of by the London Branches, is to debate with Mr. James Marchant on "Is Secularism Sound?" at Harvey Smith's Chapel, Bethnal Green-road, on Tuesday next. The Rev. W. Harvey Smith takes the chair at 8.30. Local Freethinkers will doubtless help to make a good audience.

Mr. J. D. Grout was until recently a well-known open-air advocate of Secularism. He has also been a very active Trade Unionist and political reformer. Mr. Grout is just recovering from a severe illness, and his Radical friends are going to present him with a testimonial. An influential committee has been formed, including Professor Stuart, M.P., and Messrs. J. Field and G. Leach are acting as secretary and treasurer. Subscriptions should be sent to them at the Shoreditch Liberal and Radical Club, New North-road, Hoxton.

The Leeds Branch holds its general meeting on Sunday, January 17, not to-day (Jan. 10) as previously announced. Mr. Judge will recite selections from various poets. A good attendance is earnestly requested. Crampton's Hotel, Briggate, at 7 o'clock.

The annual social gathering of the North-Eastern Secular Federation was held at the Arcade Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, and eclipsed all its predecessors in point of numbers as well as in the excellence of the concert and catering. The country Branches were well represented. Evidently the "decay of Secularism" hasn't reached the Tyneside.

"The House of Commons," says the *Christian World*, "lost a useful member and English public life a very striking figure by the death of Charles Bradlaugh. Both he and society had a good deal to forgive each other, and before his death the process of reconciliation had gone a long way. People had discovered there was good stuff in the once-dreaded Iconoclast, while the Secularist lecturer, on his side, found out that Christianity meant a deal more than a collection of indigestible dogmas."

This is good in its way. But how did the *Christian World* discover that Charles Bradlaugh changed his view of Christianity? It seems to have access to occult sources of information.

The Indian National Congress did not separate without passing a resolution of deep regret at the loss of so great a friend to India as Charles Bradlaugh.

The *Natal Advertiser* inserts a long well-written letter on "Missionary Influence and Progress," signed "Secularist," which gives some evidence that our views are commanding attention in that part of South Africa.

Jan. 29 is the 155th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine, whose fame in the land of his adoption, America, is rising higher year by year. The new *Life of Paine* by Mr. M. D. Conway may be expected to add to his renown and to clear away many of the aspersions of Christian calumny. The Ingersoll Secular Society this year celebrates the occasion by their annual ball and by a Conference of American Freethinkers in the Paine Memorial Hall, Boston.

Our good friend, Captain Otto Thomson, who has sacrificed much for the cause of Freethought in Sweden, informs us that the movement is making undoubted progress in that country. Mr. Lennstrand has done much to stir up the working population, and he is now ably assisted by Dr. Knut Wicksell and Fru Anna Wicksell. An open discussion on the question, "Is the Christian Religion a Hindrance to Science and Culture?" has been carried on by some professors of Upsala University, in which Dr. Anton Nystrom took the affirmative, and was ably supported by the Socialist leader, Hjalmar Branting, and supported by a member of the *Academical Observatory* at Upsala.

The *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis, Dec. 26, reprints Mr. Wheeler's article entitled "Will Morality Survive Religion,"

and also our obituary on its late editor, Dr. J. R. Monroe. It also gives the last lines of verse written by Dr. Monroe being the conclusion of the second part of his *Origin of Man*. Although there are, in the final lines, indications of failing health, some of his stanzas have the old vigor. Witness the following:—

Why get twelve children when you hold that eleven
Out of the twelve will likely go to hell?
Yourself and one may haply mount to heaven.
But were the whole unborn were it not well?
Why propagate even *one* that may be given
To such a fate?—Your kind why make and sell
To the arch fiend we hear so much concerning?
Why go on breeding in the face of burning!

Worse than your Devil are your priests that prate
About soul saving—snatching brands from fire,
And yet go on soul-making at a rate
That Solomon might envy or admire:
Prolific as the pigs, did not the state
Prescribe the fields where they may sate desire:
No conscience saying, "It is crime to make
Immortal souls for Satan's burning lake!"

Captain Robert Adams, president of the Canadian Secular Union, orders the *Freethinker* for twelve months on behalf of the Montreal Pioneer Freethought Club. "You are making a very bright and instructive paper," he writes, "and we want it on our table."

The *Nineteenth Century* contains the complete paper by Dr. Ernest Hart on Hypnotism and Humbug, to which we recently called attention. He classes public hypnotism and alleged clairvoyance with the Mahatmas and ghost seers as "stunted remnants in the later stages of ages of development in which we have outgrown the period when such follies and fancies were the almost universal heritage of mankind."

Temple Bar for January has an interesting article on that Titan Mirabeau, and a one-page poem on Richard Jefferies.

The *Fortnightly Review* is notable for a paper—appreciative of course—on Victor Hugo's *Dieu*, by A. C. Swinburne. Coulson Kernahan also has a somewhat gushing "God grant" article on Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet. There is also a paper on "P. B. Marston's Last Poem" in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, by the author of *A Dead Man's Diary*, who we believe is one and the same person with Mr. Coulson Kernahan.

The death of Peter Taylor has called attention to the society of "Friends of Italy" to which he belonged, and which rendered so much assistance to Mazzini, Garibaldi, and the cause of Italian Liberation. Among the Friends of Italy were many distinguished Freethinkers, including F. W. Newman, G. H. Lewes, W. S. Landor, W. J. Birch, T. Allsop, W. H. Ashurst, C. Bray, R. Moore, and G. J. Holyoake, of whom the first and last-named are now the sole survivors.

Mr. John Salt is the Secularist candidate for the Sunderland School Board, and is energetically prosecuting his candidature. He should be supported and plumped for by all our friends. Mr. Skipton has had good meetings at Portsmouth and has been well supported by Mr. Brumage. We hope next week to chronicle his return to the School Board.

The Finsbury Park Branch held last Sunday its first Members' Quarterly General Meeting since the opening of the Hall in Rock-street. Over £32 having been spent in the fitting up of the hall, there remains a balance to be cleared off. Mr. Clifton was reappointed secretary, and the business adjourned till next Sunday at 4.30 p.m., when a large attendance is desired.

Scientific adventure has given rise to many noteworthy feats, but to none perhaps more curious than that of Prof. Garner, to whose articles on the Simian Tongue we have before called attention. Prof. Garner intends to go into the heart of Africa and dwell in the forests in a heavy iron cage, provided with phonographs, etc., in order to make further acquaintance with the language of gorillas and others of the ape kind.

WHACKY, WHACKY, WHACK!

DR. GREGORY, the Dean of St. Paul's, contributes to the December number of the *North American Review* an article entitled "Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?" He upholds the use of the rod, but, he is careful to add, not its abuse. He would give a child not too much of a tanning, but just tanning enough; and he holds that there is nothing degrading in the use of the birch. We have already expressed a wish to convert the man of God on this point by a personal application; but since this method is likely to prove objectionable, let us attend to his arguments. In the face of the calumny circulated by the Rev. B. Waugh, that infidels were cruel to children, it is noteworthy that the dean's defence of the rod is primarily drawn from the Bible. He says:

"It is thus that Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, lays down a general principle on the subject. 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.' And then in another portion of the same book he gives the reason for this advice: 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.' And then, extending his view to the effect of such punishment on a child's future, he says: 'Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.' And, 'The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.'"

Dean Gregory might have added that the infliction of pain is the only motive appealed to in his fetish book for the bringing up of children. He notes that Deuteronomy xxv., 2, 3, allows forty stripes to be given to a wicked man, that Paul five times received forty stripes save one, and that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed; and he concludes this part of his article by saying he "cannot neglect to remind those who are inclined to forget it that in the epistle to the Hebrews we read, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,' and 'What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?'" We wonder he did not bring in the story of Elisha and the she-bears.

He supports his contention by reference to the practice of early, and we add, brutal ages; and thinks children are so corrupt that severity is less dangerous than kindness. In illustration, the dean tells the following instructive and moral story:

"I knew a woman whose widowed mother had brought her up in a manner that seemed to me most harsh and unjust. They were in very poor circumstances, and at times the girl was sent out to gather sticks to light the fire; if the child brought too large a stick, the mother would beat her for having stolen it out of a hedge, without examining into the truth of what she asserted. I give this as a sample of the home discipline. Of all the affectionate children I ever knew that daughter was one of the most remarkable. Her wages were freely given to her mother; there was nothing that she would not do to help her; I believe she would willingly have laid down her life for her. It is only right to say that both mother and daughter were excellent Christian women."

The dean does not endorse the action of this Christian mother, but contents himself with saying, "I have found there have been more reverence and affection, more willingness to make sacrifices for parents, more pleasure in contributing to their pleasure and happiness in after life, where the tendency has been to a severe method of treatment, than in cases where the tendency has been towards excessive tenderness and kindness."

Dean Gregory's experience is unfortunate; he evidently believes in the doctrine of original sin, and his method of dealing with it is modelled on that employed by Jehovah.

J. M. W.

OBITUARY.

Mr. John Hall, of Barking-road, died last week at the ripe age of 72, and was buried at East London Cemetery on Saturday. Mr. Ivatts (president of the West Ham Branch) read the Secular Burial Service, and spoke of the deceased's steadfast adherence to Freethought and his long membership to the N. S. S. A number of Freethinkers were present.—E. ANDERSON, sec.

A CLERICAL INDICTMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

SOME years ago General Booth declared that "It is no use bothering about schemes for solving the labor question and finding work for the unemployed. What we have got to do is to save men's souls." The man who made that declaration wrote, or caused to be written, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*, and in it propounded, and has since established, a huge "scheme for solving the labor question and finding work for the unemployed."

In recent years Christians have displayed a laudable zeal in trying to improve the social and material, or secular, condition of the people, in addition to promoting their spiritual welfare. In other words, they have imbibed the spirit of Secularism, which long since declared in its "Principles and Objects" "That in order to promote effectually the improvement and happiness of mankind, every individual of the human family ought to be well placed and well instructed," and "that the promotion of human improvement and happiness is the highest duty."

According to one Christian authority (Rev. Frank Ballard), from whom I shall presently have a good deal to quote, "the churches in general have not had time, or means, or energy, to tackle difficulties or dangers that worried and threatened men in the physical, social, civil sphere. . . . Hence they have drawn a smaller circle, called it the Spiritual, shut themselves up to it, and left all beyond to 'civilisation,' haphazard, or the Devil."

Secularists are only too pleased to see Christian ministers bestirring themselves in good secular work for the amelioration of the condition of the masses to inquire too closely into the reason or reasons for this secular awakening. If we were ill-disposed we might suggest that probably they found that the masses were gradually lapsing out of their spiritual clutches, and that the people recognised the fact that it profited them very little, that they saved their souls and lost the good things of this world. As a rule the parson not only manages to save his own soul, but a good deal of this world's goods as well. He does not find the two things so diametrically opposed to each other, as the text would lead us to suppose.

Well, churches and chapels were becoming like so many balloons, that, in spite of the vast quantity of gas employed to fill them, refuse to expand on account of a leakage. As a failure they were such a brilliant success that the masses patronised them in an inverse ratio to the growth of population. Something had to be done. The mountain would not go to Mahomet, so Mahomet went to the mountain. Hence the various social movements of our time—the sisterhoods, the brotherhoods, the social "wings" and guilds, etc. From a "soul-saving" machine Christianity is rapidly changing into a body-saving concern. Secularists will not remain satisfied till this "consummation devoutly to be wished for" arrives in its entirety and completeness.

The Rev. Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc., F.G.S., etc., Wesleyan minister, some little time back issued a little book* dealing with all the pressing social questions of the day and the position of the churches in relation to them. The result of his labor is anything but favorable to Christianity. As a reviewer in the *Methodist Times* said: "It will shock the pride of all patriots and partisans, and should provoke the churches to clear themselves from the allegations set down against them. It is impossible to deny the leading facts that make the staple of Mr. Ballard's indictment of modern Christianity. . . . Imperial and soul-destroying crimes against which present-day Christianity has raised the feeblest whine by way of protest. . . . In presence of these questions the

admission seems all but inevitable that traditional Christianity has failed."

The population question, the drink traffic, war, scepticism, the opium trade, pauperism, sweating and many other questions are dealt with in a striking manner, and the failure of the church to grapple with them in each instance is touched upon in a trenchant style. As it is the fashion nowadays to represent Christ and Christianity as friends of the working man, it is well to see what a Christian minister says on the subject, and I should advise the Freethinker to invest a modest sixpence in Mr. Ballard's booklet, in which he will find many admissions damaging to our historic enemy.

A few quotations from this brief but pointed indictment of the churches on some of the more important questions is all I can pretend to give in a *Freethinker* article.

Regarding the population question he says: "The constant increase of population in England is a matter whose import is marvellously ignored and underrated. That a vast amount of deplorable suffering is caused by the ever-growing over supply of labor, skilled and unskilled, no anti-Malthusian can deny. The direful error has been, and still is, to hand over to passion or haphazard, matters which of all else ought to be governed by prudence. . . . The church does no more to educate the feelings than the state does to mould the law in these respects. So soon as ever the price of bread goes down or an advance of wages is secured or 'any particular branch of industry becomes prosperous there is immediately an increase in the number of marriages,' with the result that, to quote General Booth, 'under some of the conditions of modern industry children are not so much born into a home as they are spawned into the world like fish.' It is easy to pronounce Malthus a blasphemer and point to the production of the earth. It would be about as relevant to discover abundant corn in Massachusetts and fruit in Venus." Mr. Ballard positively asks, in a way all Secularists will not fail to appreciate, "Has Christianity nothing to do but to hound down the unbeliever who bravely dares to face facts which believers know and hide?"

Christianity is equally at fault in relation to the great social evil of prostitution. "English girls," says he, "of all ages may be betrayed and ruined wholesale, but a respectable church must not notice it. Society may be manifestly rotten to the core, but the preacher must not speak of it, or the influential Mr. X and his family will leave the church. They want comforting sermons. The comfortless, meanwhile may go to the Devil. Indeed, anything may happen so long as 'Gospel Sermons'—gaudy with tinselled rhetoric and pointless through the 'soundness' of their platitudes—are conventionally doled out to those who pay their pew rents. Whilst social life is being honeycombed with lustful deeds and habits, lives blighted and souls overwhelmed with rum, clergymen of highest rank are spending thousands of pounds to settle whether men require lighted candles in the daytime to see God with, or whether they shall mix water with wine. . . . Meanwhile male sensuality is being inflamed by fast life and luxurious habits, and female temptation is being urged on by the struggle for existence and the crowding out of the unfit." Says Mr. Ballard in this connection, "The churches have protested somewhat as one might whisper to Niagara to stop." "Christianity," says the Rev. Mr. Ballard, "is suffering from spinal disease." "What can be a greater failure," he asks, referring to the condition of the employees on a Scotch railway, "than the Christianity which permits church members to ignore this, and the church which treats such ignoring with indifference?"

Again, referring to the working men of this country, he quotes Dr. Fairburn approvingly, who

* *Christ's Utopia*, by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc., F.G.S., F.R.M.S., Wesleyan minister. Elliot Stock.

says that "he (the working man) seldom attends church or chapel; does not admire, but often cordially despises the parson; thinks religion helps him but little in the struggle for life; thinks it hinders him rather, being mostly on the side of the privilege and capital"; and that the battle for his rights and liberties have been mainly his own, while many of the men who have helped him have been loudly anti-Christian. "And this," remarks Mr. Ballard, "in a land swarming with churches, chapels and cathedrals, and echoing with the perpetual preaching of a divine religion, backed up with the patronage of the State! What is it but a failure?"

Referring to the increase of scepticism, he says: "To assert that Secularism is dying out and point triumphantly to the closing of a Freethought depot in Fleet-street avails nothing to the contrary . . . its propaganda continues, its influence is wide extended, and very few of its adherents are won back to the churches."

Secularists are often asked what Secularism has done for the world. If, after nearly twenty centuries of existence, with wealth, rank and influence on its side, with the machinery of governments at its disposal and the support of States at its back, with practically unlimited political and religious power in its hands—if, with all these immense advantages in its favor, it had to be confessed by its own members that it was a failure, that it was "suffering from spinal disease," that it was dumb when it should be eloquent, that it was deaf when it should be vigilant, that it was asleep when it should be wide awake, and that it was on the side of the oppressor when it should have been succoring the oppressed, then Secularism and Secularists would deserve to be severally and separately damned here and hereafter. H. J.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

MONTHLY meeting of Executive at Hall of Science, London, Wednesday, December 30. Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Messrs. Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Wheeler, Brumage, Ellis, Ivatts, Warren, Bater, Wehrle, Roger, Hartmann, and Jones (secretary).

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Also minutes of Organisation Committee. The latter included a grant of £5 to the London Secular Federation, and action with respect to the candidates for diplomas, who had been interviewed by the sub-committee (Ellis, Wheeler, and Roger) appointed for the purpose, a confidential report thereon being sent to the Organisation Committee.

Mr. G. Standing, on behalf of Hall of Science Committee, presented a general report of three months' working. Income and expenditure just balanced. Mr. Foote thought the next three months would show an improvement. Suggestions as to future working were made by Messrs. Hartmann, Bater, and Ivatts.

At the President's suggestion it was decided that the circular to the Branches inviting nominations of places for the next Conference should be sent out forthwith, so as to give plenty of time for the necessary arrangements.

The President then brought before the Executive the Bill drafted by Mr. G. J. Holyoake and printed in the *Liberty Annual*, stating his own view as to the existing Blasphemy Laws, and the extent to which the Bill would affect them. After a brief discussion the following resolution was proposed by J. M. Wheeler and seconded by J. H. Ellis:—"That in the opinion of this Executive the Bill drafted and printed by Mr. Holyoake for the legalisation of Bequests does not in any way provide for the requirements of the National Secular Society, and this Executive hopes that Mr. Holyoake will see his way to provide for those requirements before taking any further action"; carried unanimously.

STANLEY JONES (Sec.)

St. Peter (to musician just arrived): "Come right in. You came at the nick of time, for they are just about to sing 'Comrades.'" Musician (taken aback, but equal to the occasion): "Er—excuse me, but I merely called to ask you to have the kindness to direct me to the other place."

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE VACCINATION FIEND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I herewith enclose you a copy of a letter I received on Christmas Day from the Council of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Your readers will thus see with what forces I have to contend for daring to advise on health matters, and to speak my mind from my convictions. The College threatens to take my name off the register—a gross insult to a professional man, but which, of course, does not offer any obstacle to my practising—because I have spoken so freely against vaccination, and because I advise all to avoid the filthy rite. It is foretold, even by medical men themselves, that in twenty years time to vaccinate will be an offence punishable by fine or imprisonment, just as the former medical practice of inoculation is now punishable. Yet these sapient men threaten me for exposing and ridiculing it. Hardly a week passes but some fresh instance of the evils attendant on vaccination is brought before my eyes. I call attention to these scandals, but I gain nothing in so doing except the consciousness of acting as I honestly believe to be right. Every week I turn away between £2 and £3 I might take in vaccination fees. The sooner this disease-producing, life-wasting, and death-dealing operation is done away with the better for the health of the people, though the doctors' pockets may suffer, first from the loss of hundreds of thousands of pounds in direct fees, and then of millions now dragged from the pockets of the people for the "cure" of diseases which this vile practice itself sets up. Medical men arrogate to themselves the position of high priests, and would excommunicate and ruin all who dare to differ from their dogmas, and refuse to aid in the worship of the golden calf which they have set up. The spirit of the Inquisition of Spain was never more intolerant than that of this Inquisition of medical men, who do not dare to inquire whether my patients are benefited and cured, but only whether they are cured in the "orthodox" way. Gladly, if they will make cure or no cure the test of right or wrong treatment, will I place my case-books at their disposal. Right willingly will I welcome any investigation on these lines; and again I hold out my challenge that £1,000 be staked on either side, a certain number of voluntary patients selected in a ward of any London hospital, and if the drug-givers can cure diseases better and quicker with poisonous drugs than I without, then I will lose the £1,000 to the funds of any hospital they choose; but if I can cure the quicker and more successfully, then they shall pay £100 only to the support of the Hygienic Hospital at Harlesden, N.W. As for advertising myself, I advertise my sanitary and hygienic works and nothing else; and no doubt the bakers, who find my testimonial for good wholemeal bread advantageous, make use of my name—just as the proprietors of whiskies, etc., spread broadcast the names of the medical fraternity who recommend their intoxicants. As for "vilifying" individual members of my profession, it is false that I have ever done so. But they do vilify me. Are not your readers witnesses? The drug class I attack, not the man who only carries out the treatment in which he has been brought up. Frankly, we know that the whole people are beginning to distrust doctors, and I shall not cease to agitate till Parliament steps in and, abolishing college degrees, compels all doctors to be licensed by a board of examiners appointed by the State.—Faithfully yours,

T. R. ALLINSON, L.R.C.P. Ed.

4 Spanish-place, Manchester-square, W.

[COPY.]

Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.
Dec. 24, 1891.

Mr. Thomas R. Allinson,

4 Spanish-place, Manchester-square, London, W.

SIR,—As clerk to the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, I beg to intimate to you that the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, at their meeting held here on Dec. 23, 1891 (yesterday), resolved that it was expedient that the following motion should be entertained:—"That Thomas Richard Allinson, a licentiate of the College, having in respect of his continuing to issue, through indirect means, a leaflet entitled *How to Avoid Vaccination*, which he had previously undertaken not to allow to be circulated, and of his persistence, notwithstanding the earnest remonstrance of the College, in advertising himself, and vilifying other medical men in public newspapers, being guilty thereby of INFAMOUS CONDUCT in a professional respect, be deprived of

his license and of all privileges which, as a licentiate, he does or may enjoy." I beg also to intimate that by the bye laws of the College, that motion falls to be determined at another meeting of the Fellows of the College, to be summoned at an interval of not less than three months after the first, viz. Dec. 23, current; that you may appeal and plead, either personally or by your representative, at the meeting at which that motion is to be considered; and that it shall be in the power of the Council of the College to shorten the period of three months between the tabling and determining of the motion, should you petition to that effect.—I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

CHRIST. DOUGLAS,

Clerk of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.

[In reply to this, I have demanded the names of my anonymous accusers.—T. R. A.]

WHAT COL. INGERSOLL THINKS OF MISSIONARIES.

(From the "Cleveland Press.")

COL. ROBERT INGERSOLL is staying at the Forest City House. Also at the hotel are Bishops Foster, Fowler, Hurst, and a host of other distinguished Methodists on the general missionary committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which began business on Wednesday morning. It is a part of the work of this committee to distribute the funds gathered to missions all over the world, and a large part goes annually to Asia, Africa, and other heathen climes. It was regarding foreign missions that Col. Ingersoll had a word to say. He spoke as follows:

"In the first place, there seems to be a pretty good opening in this country for missionary work. We have a good many Indians who are not Methodists. I have never known one to be converted. A good many have been killed by Christians, but their souls have not been saved. Maybe the Methodists had better turn their attention to the heathen of our own country. Then we have a good many Mormons who rely on the truth of the Old Testament, and follow the example of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It seems to me that the Methodists had better convert the Mormons before attacking the tribes of Central Africa. There is plenty of work to be done right here. A few good bishops might be employed for a while in converting Dr. Briggs and Professor Swing, to say nothing of other heretical Presbyterians.

"There is no need of going to China to convert the Chinese. There are thousands of them here. In China our missionaries tell the followers of Confucius about the love and forgiveness of Christians, and when the Chinese come here they are robbed, assaulted, and often murdered. Would it not be a good thing for the Methodists to civilise our own Christians to such a degree that they would not murder a man simply because he belongs to another race and worships other gods?

"So, too, I think it would be a good thing for the Methodists to go south and persuade their brethren in that country to treat the colored people with kindness. A few efforts might be made to convert the 'White Cap' in Ohio, Indiana, and some other states.

"My advice to the Methodists is to do what little good they can right here and now.

"It seems cruel to preach to the heathen a gospel that is dying out even here and fill their poor minds with the absurd dogmas and cruel creeds that intelligent men have outgrown and thrown away.

"Honest commerce will do a thousand times more good than all the missionaries on earth. I do not believe that an intelligent Chinaman or an intelligent Hindoo has ever been or ever will be converted into a Methodist. If Methodism is good we need it here, and if it is not good do not fool the heathen with it."

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, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "A Trip to Other Worlds" (illustrated by dissolving views); members' quarterly meeting after the lecture.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Stanley Jones, "The Origin of Life and Mrs. Besant's Theosophy" (admission 2d. and 4d.). Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Romney-road: 3, members' quarterly meeting; 7, musical entertainment; 7.30 C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death."

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, "Impromptu Speaking"; 7.30, F. Millar, "Truth: its Martyrs and its Triumphs."

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, Messrs. T. Overton and A. B. Moss, "An Evening with Shakespeare."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, F. Haslam, "Atheism and the French Revolution."

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, E. W. Osborn, "Religions"; 4.30 adjourned members' quarterly meeting; 7, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe." Thursday, at 8, George Standring, "A Vindication of Secularism." Admission free. Saturday, at 8, free social concert.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watt, "General Booth's Scheme, a Social Delusion" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Charles Watts, "Is the Bible in Danger?—a Reply to the Thirty-eight Parsons" (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Lambeth—New Nelson Hall, 24 Lower Marsh: 7.30, Toleman-Garner, "The Lord's Prayer."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band and dramatic recital; 7.30, B. Hyatt, "Twelve Sons of Jacob."

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

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, W. H. Smith will lecture Thursday, at 8, open debate.

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

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, half-yearly general meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, Stanley Jones, "Man and his Relations."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: T. Slater, 11, "Some of the Conditions of Progress"; 7, "The Formation of Character."

Bolton—Spinners' Hall, St. George's-road: G. W. Foote, 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; 3, "Oration on Charles Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "The Way to Heaven."

Derby—41 Copeland-street: 7, important business meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, debating class, Mr. Robertson, a Reading from Darwin's *Origin of Species*; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "Quacks and Quacking."

Hetton-le-Hole—Committee Room, Miner's Hall: 6, important business meeting.

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 11, Mr. Bergmann, "What is Truth?"; Tontine Society; 3, discussion class; 7, Mr. Booth, "Causes of the French Revolution."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Mrs. Thornton Smith lectures at 11, 3, and 6.30; see local news for subjects.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, A. T. Dipper, "Modern Moralists."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 2.45, reading circle; 7, a reading from Col. Ingersoll's *Liberty*. Thursday, at 8, Charles Watts, "Christianity, its Origin and Influence." Friday, at 8, Charles Watts, "The Difficulties of Theism."

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: 2.30, quarterly meeting of members; 6.30, concert.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: W. Heaford, 11, "Confucianism and Christianity"; 3, "Buddhism and Christianity"; 7, "Secularism, or Agnosticism, and Christianity."

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

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Jan. 10, 17, 24, Deptford; 31, Camberwell. Feb. 7, Southampton; 14, Manchester; 21, Reading; 28, Deptford. March 6, 13, 20, 27, Deptford.

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

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