

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XII.—No. 6.]

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1892.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"The entire theory of the Church is antagonistic to any concentrated or consistent scheme for raising the earthly condition of the suffering masses."

—W. R. GREG.

## SPURGEON.

DEATH the reaper has been very busy of late, mowing down lives with sublime impartiality. Princes and peasants, cardinals and sceptics, fools and philosophers, have gone down before his irresistible scythe. He is the one unflinching democrat, to be apostrophised in the language of Sir Walter Raleigh—"O just, subtle, and mighty Death!"

The death rate from the influenza is so high that people are getting alarmed, and the clergy, who have been dumb dogs so long, are now baying the "throne of grace." The Archbishop of Canterbury has issued a special form of prayer against the influenza microbe, and we presume it is being used in thousands of churches. But the Archbishop can hardly be so foolish as to think it will do any good. He must know that those who pray against the influenza microbes are as superstitious as the Christians who used to ring the church bells to drive away comets.

Prayer, in fact, is an exploded doctrine. No one of any importance has any real belief in it. When Mr. Spurgeon's congregation took to praying for him, we told them they were wasting their time and practising self-deception. "Nine-tenths of those who are praying for Mr. Spurgeon," we said, "would probably admit that they do not expect the order of nature to be subverted. The very fact that the best medical skill is employed, and every resource of science, shows that the true belief of Mr. Spurgeon's friends is in the efficacy of material means. Charles Bradlaugh died from kidney disease, though many Christians took to praying for him; and Mr. Spurgeon will die in the same way unless the doctors and nurses can work successfully upon his constitutional remains of vigor" (*Freethinker*, July 19, 1891).

Our prediction has been verified. Mr. Spurgeon has succumbed to the disease, and is there a single man of sense and education who will assert that prayer prolonged his life? The great preacher himself was jubilant during the early days of his last visit to Mentone, while his impoverished blood and drooping spirits were under the renovating and stimulating influence of Mediterranean air and sunshine. He felt sure that the Lord had "raised him up," that the prayers of thousands were answered, and that he would surely be restored to health. Indeed, he looked forward to preaching again in the Tabernacle at no very distant date. But all his hopes were fond delusions. Millions of prayers have been offered up for him in all parts of the world, yet Mr. Spurgeon is dead.

So obstinately self-deceptive, however, were Mr. Spurgeon's congregation, that they actually prayed

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for him on Sunday, although he had been in a comatose condition for three days, and was then *in extremis*. Dr. Pierson still hoped that God would work "a wonderful interposition," although no Life Assurance Company that had granted a policy on Mr. Spurgeon's life would have speculated sixpence on the off chance of his recovery.

After Mr. Spurgeon's death the following telegram was posted up outside the Metropolitan Tabernacle: "Mentone.—Our beloved pastor entered heaven 11.15 Sunday night. Harrald." Yet we read that at 6 30 p.m. they were forcing milk down his throat to keep him out of heaven.

Wonderful are the follies of superstition, and no less wonderful is its assurance. These people pray for Spurgeon when they know he must die; they believe he is going to heaven, yet they keep him out of it as long as they can; and the very moment the breath is out of his body they confidently affirm that he is in heaven. They flout science while he lives, and flout their God's omniscience when he dies.

But all such reflections are incidental, though by no means unimportant. The great fact is that Spurgeon is gone. Whatever be his destination, he is lost to the world, except so far as his deeds live after him. His age was not great, but he was a very busy man, who crowded much work into his forty-three years' career. He preached to the largest congregation in London, his sermons were circulated by the million, and his other voluminous writings were widely read. He superintended a large Orphanage and a large Pastors' Training College. His life therefore was filled with labor, and we all honor a strenuous man, who puts all his energies into his life-task, acting up to his best lights, whether they are ours or not.

There were strange contradictions between Spurgeon's life and his creed, but we believe he was honest. It was remarked by George Eliot that human beings take absurdities like asses take thistles, as an aid to mental digestion; and was it not Dr. Johnson who said, "Sir, two contradictory propositions cannot both be true, but they may both inhere in the same individual"? Many a man keeps two ideas as lodgers in his mind, and never introduces them to each other; ideas which, if they met, would fight it out till one or the other was extinguished. And thus it was that Spurgeon preached hell-fire and smoked a good cigar afterwards; thus it was, in his pre-teetotal days, that he preached Calvinism, whirled the predestinated sin down the gulphs of flame, and afterwards cooled his own throat with a bumper of claret.

Spurgeon stuck honestly to his Calvinism and his Bibliolatry. He would not bend to the modern spirit. Either the old Christianity was true or it was false; if true, it was still to be proclaimed; if false, the whole thing was a sham to be discarded by every honest man. Such was Spurgeon's attitude; and if it did not show much flexibility of mind, it showed at least a strong sincerity. His very withdrawal from

the Liberation Society, when he found himself rubbing against Freethinkers like John Morley, reveals a certain stubbornness which is rather refreshing in an age of weak and dishonorable compromise.

Spurgeon's theology belonged to a previous age. It was the theology of the old Puritan divines, whose genius lies buried under mountains of religious lumber. Spurgeon, however, had dug into their burial-mounds, and brought forth many an idea that passed as his own. His mind was not original. He was essentially a pensioner on the thoughts of previous ages. No new truth ever illuminated his brain, no fresh idea ever leapt from his lips. But he had an original way of putting things; he had a certain quaintness, though nothing like Ingersoll's flashing humor; his command of simple, vigorous English was consummate; and nature had given him a clear, musical, penetrating voice, which was quite incapable of the highest flights of oratory, but exactly suited to the requirements of an orthodox Tabernacle.

Spurgeon's large congregation is apt to induce an exaggerated notion of his greatness. It should be remembered that he had not to make his materials. There are millions of Christians who want to hear a sermon, and myriads who want to hear the "old, old story" without any heterodox dilution. These people were drawn to Spurgeon's tabernacle. Had he been an advanced thinker, a fine scholar, an idealist, he would have found a smaller audience.

We are ready to believe that, as a man, Spurgeon was just, generous, and tender; that he worked sincerely in his own way for the improvement of his fellow men; but his creed was ugly and cruel, and we hope he was its last great representative.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### THE "CHURCH TIMES" ON UNBELIEF.

THE High Church popular organ devotes a leader, in its issue of Jan. 29, to "Materialism and Unbelief." It says: "From time to time despairing complaints reach us about the increase of infidelity in our midst. The number of books that our grandfathers would have decisively stigmatised as Atheistic is yearly growing." Worse, they are popular, and it is no use asking the law to step in for their suppression, as could be done in the good old days. Still worse: "Lecturers are busily engaged every Sunday in all our large towns in proving the falsehood of Christianity. One gentleman has computed that over 350,000 distinct individuals listen each year to one or more 'infidel' addresses; and of course the number of those who come into contact with sceptical writings is indefinitely larger." This is not a very bright outlook for the profession in whose interest the *Church Times* is written. Nor does it say much for the divinity of a faith which, after existing over eighteen hundred years, and with the sword of power at its command for most of the period, has not yet satisfied all the inhabitants even of the countries where it has long been dominant.

But the *Church Times*, while it has "no wish to minimise the evil," points out that "no ages from the days of Simon Magus to our own have been absolutely free from infidelity." Now Simon Magus, if we can believe the account of him in the Acts of the Apostles, sought to establish a new faith, giving out that he was some great one. Indeed, the writer says he "used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria." Then we are, as usual, told of Celsus, who "disturbed the repose of the second century," and of Porphyry, the "Tyrian old man," who sought to set up Neo-Platonism as a rival to Christianity, without informing us that the works of these "infidels" were zealously destroyed.

"But," says our contemporary, "one important difference between the infidelity of bygone days and

that of the present must be borne in mind. Then dissent from Christianity was confined to a small area; now printing spreads it far and wide. Then the various forms of unbelief had to wait their turn and emerge singly; now, under the kindly influence of a cheap press, they have learnt how to co-exist." The church is attacked from many points, Deism, Atheism and Agnosticism, Materialism and modern Spiritualism, uniting in rejecting its exclusive claims and dogmatic revelation.

The *Church Times*, however, knows where is its worst enemy, and congratulates itself that "Atheism, or the blank denial of any God of any kind, which was once popular, is now out of date. A form of it more specious, because of the half-truth it contains, now holds the field. Agnosticism has the caution of physical science. Its microscope and scalpel have not yet uncovered the hiding-place of God, and therefore science cannot affirm his existence. But equally unable, it assures us, is it to affirm his non-existence."

This Agnosticism, however, is only Atheism in a tall hat. No Atheist attempts to disprove the existence of a sea-serpent with wings five hundred yards long; he only questions the adequacy of the evidence. The *Church Times* may fancy Atheism is out of date, but we doubt if there is much real consolation to be gathered from the substitution of the term Agnosticism.

Among the causes of unbelief assigned by the *Church Times* it gives the first place to "the Calvinistic system of theology." Considering that this system is fully embodied in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, this is really a reflection on its own church. These articles expressly declare the doctrines of original sin, predestination, and election; that man "cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength"; that "works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasant to God, but have the nature of sin"; and that those are "accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to the law and the light of nature; for holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved."

Then the *Church Times* mentions "the crude theories of inspiration upheld so strenuously by Bibliolaters," forgetting that these theories have been those of all the great lights of its own church, and are now being slowly relinquished because it is found they cannot be held against the criticisms of "unbelief." Yet the abandonment of the "crude theories of inspiration" is really the abandonment of all claim to certainty—a resignation of infallibility. People are beginning to see that there is no more reason for one part of the Bible being considered God-given than another, and that it is indeed the incredible, miraculous stories which most need the certificate of inspiration. The Rev. J. H. Skewes, vicar of Holy Trinity, Liverpool, argues in the current number of the *English Churchman* that the relinquishment of the old view is among the causes of unbelief, and that could Messrs. Gore, Driver, and Cheyne see the result of their concessions to infidelity, they would hold back from their publication.

But it is "materialism" which, according to the *Church Times*, dwarfs all other causes of unbelief into insignificance. The scientific method has proved so fertile that it is applied to everything. People want to inquire into and reason concerning everything. This, says our contemporary, diminishes insight, reverence and spirituality. We should say it diminished humbug. But, urges our contemporary, "let the Christian have leave to insist that verification is not of one sort only; that for physical processes the scalpel and the blow-pipe may suffice, but that religious questions must be tested by being brought before a religious tribunal." We answer

that religion, like all else, must submit to the tribunal of reason. The clergy themselves are resigning the supposed tribunal of the word of God. If frank they would admit that they knew no more concerning the purposes of God, or any other religious problem, than we do ourselves. But we do know this—that the genesis of their solutions is bad. They have come down to us from barbarous times, and derive their chief support not from any appeal to reason, but from their maintenance and inculcation in early youth by an interested priesthood.

There are other reasons for the decline of theology unnoticed by the *Church Times*, but resulting from the teachings of science and history. The world is being realised as no longer the centre of the universe, demanding a god to interfere on its behalf. The universe is seen to be much larger than it was thought. The world, small as it is, is found to be more extensive than was thought, and Christianity is seen but one of the many faiths that have engaged the attention of men. The world, too, is becoming indifferent to theology because it has so much else to think about. If life seems short and the world smaller, science has, nevertheless, invested it with more interest. There is so much to see, to learn, and to do, in the world, that there is no time for empty prayers and vain worship. The necessary work of the world perforce acts in the direction of Secularism. The parson preaches, lay up your treasure in heaven for where your treasure is your heart will be also. But his own heart if not in his investments is more worthily attracted to the amelioration of this world. Here is sufficient and more than sufficient scope for all our energies. Theology must retire to the background that Humanity may come to the front.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.

In the month of February, 1864, a "Declaration" was issued, signed by Dr. Pusey, Archdeacon Denison and other reverend gentlemen of the Church of England, declaring their belief "without reserve or qualification in the inspiration and divine authority of the whole canonical scriptures, as not only containing, but being the word of God," and as teaching "that the punishment of the cursed equally with the life of the righteous is everlasting." Here not only the infallibility of the Bible is set forth, but the inhuman doctrine of eternal torments is unreservedly endorsed. In the recent manifesto of the thirty-eight dignitaries of the Church of England upon the authority of the Bible, all reference to the Devil and his place of abode is omitted. It is some gratification to find that within a little more than a quarter of a century even orthodoxy has modified its teachings. Nevertheless, these latter biblical idolators have been sufficiently bold to publish the following avowal: "We 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." This is a specimen of assumption, and of presumption, which probably stands unequalled outside the domain of theology. Butler was not far wrong in saying, "An obstinate man does not hold opinions, but they hold him; for when he is once possessed with an error, it is like a devil, only cast out with great difficulty. His understanding is hardened like Pharaoh's heart, and is proof against all sorts of judgments whatever."

For Christians to talk of an "undivided Church" is to indulge in the quintessence of absurdity. They might as well speak of dry water or cold fire. The Christian Church from almost its very inception became a divided body. When and where did an "undivided church" exist? Not in St. Paul's time, when we are told that on more than one occasion he

had to reprove the early Christians for their many dissensions, while he himself quarrelled with, and separated from, his colleague Barnabas; not in the second century, when a large section withdrew from the church and formed themselves into an independent sect in consequence of a dispute whether or not Christ was more than man; not in subsequent centuries, when divisions and heresies in the Church were so numerous that Christian writers have had to deplore the "corruptions" that effaced the primitive faith, and the departures that weakened the "stability of the Church"; not in the ninth century when the Greek Church arose, disowned the authority of the Pope and denied that the Church of Rome was the true Church; not in the sixteenth century when the then established religion was shaken to its very foundation by the Protestant Reformation; not when the great divisions occurred among the Lutherans and the Calvinists, both differing from the Reformed Church; not at the rise of Nonconformity, when two thousand clergymen left the English Church and formed a variety of dissenting sects; not at the present time when disunion pervades the whole of the orthodox community, in spite of pathetic appeals for the "union of the churches," when the Bishop of Chester, being recently asked by a Wesleyan minister to preside at a missionary conference, declined the invitation on the ground that "undenominationalism is the great imposture of our day." Talk of an "undivided Church," why it has been divided again and again, not only upon points of government but also upon questions of faith. The orthodox Gregory, in his *Christian History*, referring to the third century, says: "Let it be remembered that Christianity no longer retained the same form it had assumed in the primitive Church—the substance had been lost in pursuing the shadow." The same Christian author remarks that in the sixteenth century the English Church "changed its faith no less than four times." Lecky observes, "It would be impossible to conceive of a more complete transformation than Christianity has undergone." Even the Rev. Edward White (ex-chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales) admits that "original Christianity" was far more credible than the Christianity of later ages, and he advises Christians "to go back to original Christianity."

Now, inasmuch as there has never existed for any great length of time an "undivided church," it is difficult to see how the Bible could have been "handed down" by such a source. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Bible which was accepted by the Church for over a thousand years was not the Protestant Bible, but that of the Roman Catholic Church; and it cannot be claimed with accuracy that even this book exists in its original form. The most that can be fairly urged upon this point is, that we have an imperfect translation from an equally defective translation of conflicting MSS., not one of which dates beyond the fourth century. The thirty-eight dignitaries of the Church boast of "originals" being "handed down." What originals, and where are such documents to be found? As the Rev. Dr. Irons justly asks, "What are the *oldest existing* authorities to which anyone can trace the Greek Testament? No actual manuscripts, no original versions, no autographs, of course, of the saints or fathers of the *earliest* generation of Christians now exist. We may get *printed* copies of such ancient works as have survived the ravages of time in various transcripts, which rarely reach within hundreds of years of the originals." The rev. gentleman might have added with equal truth that sections of the Church in the second and subsequent centuries rejected portions of both the Old and New Testaments upon the ground that these books were not faithful copies of the originals. Gregory says that in the year 1541, an edition of the Bible was issued which Bishop Bonner and other

prelates condemned in consequence of its alleged inaccuracies. Besides, most of the "printed copies" since that time have been carelessly, and in some instances dishonestly produced, while others are "crowded with errors." The Rev. J. Scott Porter, tells us that Erasmus, the author of the original Greek edition from which our present "authorised version" was made, acknowledges that his first edition was "tumbled out headlong rather than edited," that "his text abounds in oversights," and that he "put into it things which he thought wrong." In referring to the "canonical scriptures as handed down to us," Dr. Macknight admits that they are by no means just representations of the "inspired originals," and the Christian Blackwell, in his preface to *Sacred Classics*, states that "Innumerable instances might be given of faulty translations of the divine original." Thus it will be seen that the Bible now in circulation is not even a reliable translation of the earliest MSS., for, in the words of the Rev. Dr. Giles, "it is well known that the text of our books [the New Testament] have been tampered with in certain passages, and interpolations have been made for sinister purposes." Of what value, then, has this boasted guardianship of the Bible by the Church been? It might also be asked, Which of the many Bibles has received this care? Not that of the Jews, for it was lost for 800 years, then found and lost again, and ultimately it had to be practically rewritten; not that of the Roman Catholic Church, for the thirty-eight Protestant clergymen will have nothing to do with such a work; not that of the Greek Church, for its "sacred records" differ from those of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches; and certainly not King James's version, which is a doubtful compilation from varied and contradictory sources.

It is said that the Bible has been "handed down" in the "original language." Now this statement is sadly misleading. The Hebrew language in the time when the Old Testament is supposed to have been written was very different from what it is to-day. Then the language had no division of words, no capital letters, no periods, and no vowels; thus, as Le Clerc says: "Its meaning could only be guessed at." Simon, too, in his *Critical History*, also states that "its meaning was uncertain. . . . Learned Jews were unable to decipher it." The Hebrew Bible, as we have it, is written with certain Masoretic points without which it could not be read with certainty, and those cannot be traced back beyond the seventh century of our era; before which time it was read in accordance with a merely traditional sense, termed the "Massorah." And, as Professor Stuart, a learned Christian apologist, avows: "In the Hebrew manuscripts that have been examined, some eight hundred thousand various readings occur, as to the Hebrew consonants. How many as to the vowel-points and accents no man knows." It is now generally conceded by biblical critics that the original gospel ascribed to Matthew was written in Hebrew, whereas the one we have is of Greek origin. The Rev. Dr. Irons says: "The very language in which our blessed Lord uttered his divine discourses no criticism has found out."

Such is the book which these thirty-eight dignitaries of the Church of England would have us accept as the infallible word of the very God. We find that it is composed of a large number of distinct and incongruous pamphlets, quite unauthenticated, written by various persons, nobody really knows by whom, at far distant periods, nobody exactly knows when; which have been floated down to us as circumstances determined, by oral traditions and written copies, subject to all the blunders and perversions of ignorant and fanatical men in ages perfectly uncritical and unscrupulous; whose originals have irretrievably perished; which frequently refer to prior authorities that have utterly perished also, and whose various readings are counted by tens of thousands.

CHARLES WATTS.

## A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

### V.—AN HOUR WITH THE PROPHETIC CRANKS

MY memory retains a dim and confused impression of certain huge posters, which I have seen at sundry times and in divers places, announcing the delivery of lectures or sermons on the coming end of all sublunary things. Many times I have formed a weak-kneed resolution to attend one of those festive functions, but, under Providence, something has always prevented me from doing so. On the 26th of Jan. I saw a notice in a morning paper to the effect that a lecture (the second of three) on this momentous subject would be given on that evening in Holborn Town Hall. Once more the mild desire to hear an address reared its head; and this time, owing to a chance encounter, the yearning was gratified.

It was in this way. I happen to know a small tradesman who is, after the manner of his kind, very conservative and equally pious. He is a member of the Church of England, and has in his time had the distinguished honor of being churchwarden of an obscure and bankrupt place of worship. Now this man—whom I always regard with interest as a fair type of the average conforming "believer"—seems to be breaking away from the fossilised church of his forefathers and is seeking peace elsewhere. He told me that he had been present at Holborn Town Hall on the previous Tuesday, and spoke in glowing terms of the lecturer's eloquence and ability. I expressed an opinion that prophecies as to the end of the world had had their day: the thing had been done too often and had in all cases failed egregiously. "But you don't understand it," he blandly remarked; "the end of the world will come when all the saved are called away from the earth. Those whom the Lord desires to save will be 'caught away to himself' in a mysterious fashion, and then the end of the world will come; but those who are left will go on, knowing nothing about it, and just as if nothing had happened." I pointed out to him that, if this were the case, the world may *already* have come to an end and nobody be a penny the worse or a bit the wiser. He did not quite know what to make of this view of the matter, but asked me to go and hear for myself. So I went.

I reached the Holborn Town Hall a few minutes before eight, and it was well that I did so, for the seats were nearly all occupied. The room holds about eight or nine hundred people, and as I entered the stewards were busily engaged in packing the late comers into vacant places. It was a matter of surprise to me that a bald notice of three apocalyptic addresses should attract so many people. The bills bore no speaker's name, but merely announced the time, place and subjects; therefore no element of personal interest accounted for the (to me) surprising result. The audience was thoroughly representative of English middle-class life; it consisted of men and women in about equal proportions; and the lecture was listened to with the closest attention.

At eight o'clock, about a dozen gentlemen entered and seated themselves upon the platform. The chairman, in a few well-chosen words, introduced the speaker (whose name I could not catch), and then repeated the "Lord's Prayer," the congregation standing and joining in the familiar exercise. Then the lecturer—a tall, thin man, whom, for convenience, I will call Mr. Smith—advanced to the front of the platform, holding an open Bible in his hand, and proceeded to deliver his address. For one hour I listened to him, and, so far as the *manner* of his speech was concerned, I listened with delight. His voice was clear, powerful, and managed with admirable skill. Every sentence was luminous and complete; the speaker was never at a loss for the right word; and he was evidently a thorough master of his wretched subject. Now and again, when he made excited appeals to his audience, a long-drawn "Ah!" or "Oh!" would tremble for one frightful moment on the very verge of the ridiculous; but Mr. Smith always recovered his balance in time. So much for the manner. But what, O my brothers, shall I say as to the *matter*? The address delivered on the previous Tuesday had been concerned with the coming Great Tribulation

which is to usher in the end of all things. On the evening of my visit the way of escape from these dreadful things was to be pointed out. Now as I had not heard No. 1, I anticipated some difficulty in understanding No. 2; but Mr. Smith was good enough to recapitulate the principal points in his first lecture. He had, he said, dwelt upon the transitory course of human affairs, alike in the case of individuals and of nations. All are advancing towards one common goal, hastening, as saith the Scripture, to the Day of the Lord, the day of tribulation, sorrow and judgment, the day of darkness and gloom. The reason of this is, that all the nations have broken God's covenant, and he will visit his wrath upon them. [In my notebook I have the words "will give them beans," but I do not think that was the phrase used by Mr. Smith.] We and our forefathers have broken the covenant, and Christian nations are incapable of receiving the blessings of God unless they repent them of the evil they have done. He (the speaker) had quoted from the works of statesmen of sixty and of ten years ago, and from the newspapers of our own day, for the purpose of showing that men were agreed in declaring that the judgment of God was about to descend upon this, the last generation under the Christian dispensation. Christ was to come, not as he came before, in poverty and humility, but to rule with a rod of iron and to break his enemies into exceedingly small pieces if they resisted his authority.

Then, leaving the retrospective vein, Mr. Smith went on to assure us that the great feature of all the prophecies foreshadowing the Day of the Lord is *Duality*. Every proverbial cloud has its proverbial silver lining; every prophecy of the Lord's fearful judgment points out a way of escape therefrom. To prove this he quoted sundry passages from Jonah, Isaiah, Malachi and other authorities of admitted respectability upon the prophetic plane; but probably the *Freethinker* will prefer to take these as read. Scripture was full of wonderful stories of hairbreadth escapes, showing how the Lord had saved his chosen ones in their direst extremity. Then Mr. Smith re-told in detail the old biblical yarns of the Jews crossing the Red Sea, and of the ill-advised attempt of Pharaoh's host to go and do likewise. Next we had the fable of Daniel in the lions' den, the speaker telling us how God had sent his angels and shut the lions' mouths so that they could not harm Daniel. (He apparently overlooked the fact that the lions could have made the place very warm for Daniel without biting him.) Then there was the wonderful escape of Peter from prison. Could any romance furnish more startling incidents than these, derived from the Holy Scriptures which are all truth? Again, Noah had built his ark upon dry land, knowing that the judgment of the Lord was at hand. His neighbors probably jeered at him; but, when the flood came, "he soon had the laugh on his side." (These were Mr. Smith's words.)

The illustrations just mentioned were given by the speaker to prepare the minds of his hearers for this profound truth, that there was no way of escape from the impending Great Tribulation unless the people stood firm to the faith as delivered to the saints. In the day of trouble and terror there shall be no place of refuge for any save those who believe. Antichrist will appear upon earth; then will be the last great battle between the powers of good and evil. God will defeat his arch-enemy, and will "catch away" those who believe in him. As for the others, let them look out for themselves in the Great Tribulation and Day of Judgment!

So far I had been able to follow Mr. Smith's address with comparatively satisfactory clearness; but when he started on the book of Revelation I felt the ground—such as it was—slipping from under me. Summoning all my fortitude, I tried to keep company with the speaker in his wild excursions into the apocalyptic region. But 'twas all of no avail. After a short time the words of the discourse became a mere drowsy buzzing in mine ears, and I beheld a succession of visions in which Antichrist was dancing frenzied cans with the 144,000, while vials of wrath were exploding in all directions. Suddenly a deep-voiced bell announced the hour, and its welcome sound recalled me to consciousness. Gathering my papers, full

of incoherent notes, I girded up my loins and fled. And I shall "never go back no more."

My hour with the prophetic cranks, however, was not absolutely wasted. It showed me that there are gentlemen of presumable sanity and of undeniably respectable appearance who will sit upon a platform gravely and solemnly while a speaker quotes the Old Testament fables as matters of solid, granite fact. The crossing of the Red Sea; the wonderful preservation of Daniel in the lions' den; the story of Noah and his ark and the world-deluge—all these are things that those stupendous miracles of credulity can believe with one arm tied behind them. The vision of John at Patmos has no terrors for them; they can swallow it without winking, and, furthermore, they know precisely what it means. All this was to me very wonderful and awe-inspiring.

But still more wonderful and still more impressive was the fact that hundreds of my brothers and sisters, working men and women, could be found to flock in and listen eagerly and attentively to a farrago of nonsense such as the discourse which Mr. Smith gave on that evening. Is there one amongst us who holds that the "destructive" work of Freethought is accomplished, that "Bible-banging" is obsolete and useless? If such there be, he may cure his disease once and for all by attending an apocalyptic meeting.

GEORGE STANDRING.

#### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

MONTHLY meeting of Executive at Hall of Science, London, January 27; Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Moss, Truelove, Wheeler, Brumage, Hunt, Warren, Bater, Heaford, Wehrle, Roger, Hartmann, Larkin, and Jones (sec.)

Mr. Foote explained the absence of a few members. The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Also minutes of the Organisation Committee. The latter included a grant of £2 to the West Ham Branch, the affiliation of the Chatham Secular Society as a Branch of the N. S. S., and a subscription of £1 towards the movement now on foot to present Mr. J. D. Grout with a testimonial in recognition of the valuable services he has rendered to the cause of progress.

The Organisation Committee, having considered the confidential report of the interview committee, recommended the immediate issue of special lecturing diplomas to Messrs. E. Forder, A. B. Moss, H. Snell, W. Heaford, and Sam Standring. The Executive accepted the recommendations.

A number of questions were asked concerning the Liberty of Bequest movement, and the President made an encouraging statement on the subject.

Letters were read by the Secretary from Ebchester, Arbroath, and Malta, asking permission to form Branches of the N. S. S. in those places. The subject was remitted to the Organisation Committee.

Some minor correspondence was dealt with, and the meeting adjourned till Feb. 24.

STANLEY JONES, Sec.

#### G O D.

I would not be an angel and with the angels stand,  
To laud a silly God, Sir, who fools with either hand;  
I'd rather be a pumpkin, an oyster or a slug,  
I'd rather be a tape-worm, a trichina or a bug;  
I'd rather be the parasite of monkey, man or cod,  
Than be a praying parasite of anything called "God."  
That name denotes all folly, all vice and every crime,  
That man has e'er exhibited in all the course of time!  
Ay, choose from human language, from every babbling tongue,  
From every speech e'er spoken, or clicked or growled or sung—

Select the word most pregnant with every evil sense,  
Most full of downright wickedness, of folly and pretence—  
You'll find, I'm very certain, when the round of tongues  
you've trod,

The word most direly hateful is the tiny nomen, *God!*

JOSEPH SYMES.

A little boy, after a patient attempt to make a picture of a horse on his slate, asked his mother, "Do the angels see everything?" "Yes," she replied. "Well," said the youngster, "when they see this horse I bet they will sniggle."

## NATIONAL SECULAR HALL SOCIETY.

MR. R. O. SMITH having kindly postponed the date for paying the deposit of £300 and clinching the bargain, and the Directors not meeting to complete this part of the business until after the *Freethinker* goes to press, I am unable to give the detailed information I half promised. I shall be able, however, without fail to give it next week; and I believe it will be highly gratifying to the overwhelming majority of the Free-thought party. At present I can only say that nearly a thousand shares are already applied for, and that fresh applications are pouring in daily.

Donations for this scheme can still be received. I have to acknowledge £2 2s. from a friend, per Mr. George Anderson. One or two other sums, which I am advised of, will probably be acknowledged next week. The first £50 of the subscriptions will be invested in shares in my own name. Subscriptions beyond that amount will be invested in the names of other trusty Freethinkers, whom I shall select for the purpose.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SECULARISM IN SHEFFIELD.

WE have lately had in Sheffield an "anti-infidel crusade," consisting of about thirty lectures given by Mr. Celestine Edwards, a negro lecturer of the Christian Evidence Society. The fact of Mr. Edwards being a colored gentleman, and therefore a novelty as a lecturer, and his challenge to discussion, attracted the attention of the curious; and though his modern ideas, or as some would say his heresy, have met with the disapprobation of many of the orthodox, he has succeeded in gaining a large following. One result of his mission is the inauguration of a branch of the Christian Evidence Society, which is soon to do very mischievous work, for it has been publicly predicted that Mr. Edwards and the C.E.S. mean a dark look-out for Secularism in Sheffield.

The challenge to oppose was pretty freely accepted by local Freethinkers, and they in turn publicly challenged him to debate with Mr. Foote or Mr. Watts. This, however, he would not accept. It was then resolved that Mr. Watts be invited to come down and reply to some of the arguments, statements, and impeachments made by Edwards. That invitation Mr. Watts accepted.

The hall in which Mr. Edwards generally lectured is capable of holding about a thousand people. This hall the Secularists engaged for four consecutive nights. The subjects on which Mr. Watts spoke were—"Secularism, and What It Is," "Christianity Tested by Reason and Experience," "Atheism and Theism: Which?" and "The Bible from a Secular Standpoint." The first lecture was given on Tuesday night to a well-filled house, the success as to numbers being so complete that the promoters hardly dared to hope for a repetition. But on the following nights, instead of diminishing, the audiences so increased that many had great difficulty in finding even standing room, and on the last night crowds were unable to get in. Altogether the meetings have proved a splendid success.

The cause of the success may be attributed first to Mr. Edwards himself. His arguments against Secularism and Atheism, his erroneous conclusions as to the results of their beliefs, his unjust charges and innuendoes as to the moral, social, and intellectual characters of Freethinkers, roused in his hearers the spirit of curiosity, and their desire for more knowledge and their love of fair play made them determine to hear the other side. The second reason for success is, of course, due to Mr. Watts. That need scarcely be said to those who know him. The Freethinkers here knew that their cause was perfectly safe in his hands; they knew that for extent of knowledge, for precision in logic and eloquence of speech, there were few men in the ranks of any creed or society to equal him; but it must be confessed that on this occasion he seemed to beat all previous record of himself. His audience was from the first captivated by his valor in challenging opposition, his expression of goodwill, his absence of dogmatism, his earnestness, and his evident uprightness. These qualities at once won for him respect and close attention. Even the Christians were spellbound, and seemed to

realise the fact that there was something after all to be said on the other side.

Mr. Watts has set people thinking, and has won for himself respect and popularity from friend and foe.

W. A. LILL.

## ACID DROPS.

South Shields is a good deal behind Tynemouth, where Mr. Leslie Johnson, a pronounced Freethinker, has been elected vice-chairman of the School Board. At South Shields the poll was headed by Mr. S. M. Peacock, a vice-president of the National Secular Society. But the Christians on the Board will not have such a sturdy Atheist as vice-chairman. Mr. Peacock was nominated for the office by Mr. Scott, secretary of the Trades Council, but there was no seconder. Such is the spirit of bigotry in South Shields. But it will not prevent Mr. Peacock from carrying on as effectively as ever his splendid liberalising work in the town.

Someone has been sending Col. Ingersoll the *National Baptist*. The colonel wrote to the editor as follows:

"Dear Sir,—I wish you would stop sending me your paper. I have no use for it. I am a practical Baptist myself; I take a bath every morning. My form of baptism is superior to yours, because I use soap.

"Yours truly, "R. G. INGERSOLL."

Dr. Wayland, the editor, denies sending the paper, and says someone has subscribed to the paper for the colonel without his knowledge.

Some of the Scottish sky-pilots don't like the Moody and Sankey revival. The Rev. James Rankin is down upon these "peripatetics," and is especially severe on "the solo singing and travelling organ branch of the business."

The *Weekly Scotsman* draws attention to Moody's profits. He doesn't take a fixed fee. He is like the canny cabbie who "leaves it to you, sir." At one place he got £30, and at another £16, for three days' service, besides having his hotel bill paid by the local "friends." The *Scotsman* reckons he is getting £1,500 a year, and wants to know if he is paid a fixed salary in addition to these "considerable pickings."

Lakhim Dass is an Indian student who will return to India with new views of British justice. He was robbed, and the prisoners were convicted, but the conviction has been quashed by five Judges because the prosecutor had been allowed to affirm without declaring that he had no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath was, according to his religious belief, unlawful. "In cross-examination he admitted he had a religion, and could swear by any religious book in the world." So it seems a man may still be robbed with impunity unless he is careful to state the ground upon which he desires to affirm. The jury were satisfied with the truth of Lakhim Dass's story, but he is left without redress, and thieves escape scot free because Christians have accorded such scanty justice to Freethinkers that they even yet cannot give their testimony in a court of justice without laying themselves open to the prejudices and stigma attending those who declare they have no religion.

The Church people of Richmond are anxious not to have their aristocratic town desecrated with a Board school. The Bishop of Rochester wrote to them to maintain religious education "at whatever cost," and Canon Gregory declared at a meeting on the subject that "one of the greatest possible calamities that could fall upon a parish was to have a School Board." These gentry know their own interest well. Once let children grow up without having Church dogmas and absurdities drilled into them and they will never pay to support parsons and sky-pilots.

The Hindoos are so excitable at their own religious festivals that they regard the wild hallelujah dances and devil-killing processions of the Salvationists as pretty tame; but though tame they are continuous, whereas the Hindu *pujas* only occur at certain periods. And in the city they are a nuisance. Some Salvationists at Madras have been fined for frightening a horse and causing mischief by their bands and banners.

The early missionaries to India gave terrible pictures of Juggernaut, and the immolations said to have taken

place under the god car. Dr. W. W. Hunter, who investigated the matter on the spot, found that during the 700 years the car has been rolling, there has not been recorded a single case of sacrificial immolation, that no such sacrifice would be tolerated, and that even accidental death within a temple renders the place unclean. The car of Juggernaut has been a missionary lie and bogey. Any deaths at the festival have been purely accidental, arising from the great throng of pilgrims to see the car.

Sky-pilots of all persuasions are agreed that they should have the monopoly of Sunday trade; there was therefore a full meeting at the conference of clergy and ministers of Middlesborough to consider the question of Sunday trading. As the chairman said they were all agreed that their congregation would be larger were there no rival attractions; but on the question of putting the law in force against the sweetstuff sellers and others who desecrate the day they were not quite agreed. Attempts made to put down Sunday trading in West Hartlepool had failed to obtain convictions.

Speaking of the religious standing of convicts the *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, says: "Reports from State prisons, where the subject has been canvassed, show that at least nine-tenths of the criminals were reared in the churches and had a Christian education. They show that the Catholics very largely lead all other denominations in furnishing the criminal class; that non-orthodox churches, Spiritualists, Jews, and infidels, furnish much the smallest number in proportion to their population. They also show that preachers are far more liable to pay penal servitude to the State than are lawyers or almost any other class of learned men, as doctors, teachers, etc. Comments are unnecessary with these figures before us."

The Rev. John Vallancy, vicar of Roslinton, Swadlingcote, is a rather touchy person. He had a girl of seventeen summoned for disturbing divine services by walking out. As witnesses proved that the girl left quietly, the magistrates had to dismiss the summons. These petty parish God-Almighty parsons should be taught they are no longer monarchs of all they survey.

The Rev. Wm. Thos. Wilson Lang, rector of Naseby, is rather weak-kneed. At least he says so, as an excuse for being on two specified occasions incapable of conducting the service. Other people say his trouble is drunkenness, and a commission of inquiry was unanimously of opinion that there was a sufficient *prima facie* case for further proceedings.

The Rev. E. N. Eldred, curate in charge of St. Ethelbara, Bishopgate, was committed to Holloway Prison for ten days in default for non-payment for glass ewers supplied for use on the Communion table. The Lord ought to provide for the utensils for his own supper—not where he eats, but where he is eaten.

"You seem a no'er-do-well, Mrs. Ford," said Magistrate Thomson to an old offender at Alloa Burgh Police-court. "No," she replied, "I am a Christian." Result—six pounds or sixty days' imprisonment.

Grace Alice Hinton, who murdered her three children at Titchfield, said "My dear children will be better off now. God told me to do it." Another instance of the beneficent results of religion.

Franz and Rosalie Schneider, the terrible pair of murderers, whose trial at Vienna is one of the sensations of Europe, seem to have mingled piety with their infamies. They took the poor girls before murdering them to a chapel. The female fiend went in with the victims, while the male fiend waited outside. "What did you go in for?" asked the President of the Court. "To pray," answered the awful woman. "Such blasphemy was never heard of before," rejoined the President. This is untrue, however, for criminal records abound with such instances; and, as Lombroso points out, the criminal character is apt to be marked by a strong flavor of superstition.

Richard Faux, a local preacher in charge of the Slow-lane Mission Chapel, Foundry-road, Soho, has made a *faux pas*. He took Harriet Griffiths, one of the congregation, a girl of sixteen, into the chapel, locked the door, and seduced her,

giving her some of the sacramental wine. Richard knows the value of religion.

"For stealing ten colored tablecloths, a piece of flannel, two rugs, and other goods, the property of Messrs. Bunting and Co., of Norwich, Edward Moyses," says the *Draper's Record*, "a retired missionary, was, at the Norwich Guildhall, on Monday, sentenced to two months' hard labor."

Pious Billy, of Prussia, is determined that all his subjects shall be orthodox, and the new Elementary School Bill introduced in the Prussian Reichstag imposes religious education even in the case of children of Freethinking parents. It is come to this, that king-deluded Germany—the country of Goethe, Strauss and Schopenhauer—is seeking to put back the clock of time. Germany is an illustration of Herbert Spencer's view that militarism is incompatible with progress.

"There is a spirit abroad," says the German Chancellor Caprivi, "which is making itself daily more and more felt, and which is peculiarly visible in the schools—the spirit of Atheism. Against this increasing danger we desire to erect a barrier." Accordingly the Government is striving to pass its Primary Education Bill with the religious clauses, which is being hotly debated. Chancellor Caprivi was hissed by the Liberals, who are standing up for religious freedom. Whether he carries the Bill or not, he will never succeed in arresting the spirit of Atheism. To all his blows it is as invulnerable as the air.

Dr. J. Rodes Buchanan says: "The assumption of the name of Theosophy as the peculiar trademark of that incongruous mixture of effete Hindoo superstitions and incredible Munchausenisms, what has been properly called Blavatskyism, is one of the most daring literary impostures of the age. To sell oleomargarine under the label of 'best dairy butter' is a mild fraud, because the things resemble; but to introduce Blavatskyism as Theosophy is an inexcusable deception, because it has no resemblance; it has neither divinity nor wisdom."

A spiritist mejum, named Winans, produces an alleged communication from the late editor of the *Ironclad Age*, saying "the dead do come to life after death," signed J. R. Monroe. Dr. Monroe was not the man to leave information of this character uncommunicated to his own friends while telling it very needlessly to spiritists. While Christians pretend to convert us on our death-beds, these gentry convert us after we are dead.

The Rev. J. Adam, of Edinburgh, warns his congregation to "beware of those who said a man could worship alone in the field as well as with his fellow-men in a church." Such characters must be dangerous—to the black business.

The editor of the *Dublin Review* thinks that with free education local control is as certain as death and taxes, and as the only alternative is "parental control," he urges Catholics to go in for the latter as soon and as strongly as possible. It is amusing to see priests, who hitherto wished the sole control of education to be in their own hands, now urging the claims of parents lest a worse evil should befall them.

Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, in the *Contemporary Review*, gives some interesting reminiscences of Cardinal Manning. When his flock did not rise to some great occasion, the Cardinal would say, "I never forget they are my sheep." Another time he paid them a worse compliment. "Ever since I became a Catholic," he said, "I have found it necessary to cultivate a great devotion to Balaam's ass."

When Father Curci was expelled by the Jesuits, and out of Papal favor, he was sheltered and assisted by Cardinal Manning. "They would burn him in Rome," the Cardinal said, "if they could, and they would burn me too." Evidently the Cardinal understood the *spirit* of his Church.

The Rev. Watkin Powell, Calvinistic Methodist pastor of Maes-y-Cwmmer, Monmouthshire, has been suspended from preaching, the allegation against him being that he applied to the Bishop of Landaff for admission into the Church of England. Mr. Powell signed a solemn declaration that he never applied to any bishop for ordination, but it was shown that he did apply by proxy.

Penally Church, near Tenby, South Pembrokeshire, has been partially destroyed by fire. God has no partiality for his own houses.

The vicar of East Preston, Sussex, went through the farce of baptising a headless child, a grotesque specimen of divine handiwork which retained vitality for sixteen hours.

The Pawnee Indians of the Cherokee Strip, Arkansas River, have recommenced the ghost dance, and say they will not stop the ceremonies till their Savior appears. Here is a hint for the Baxterites. If they cannot dance they might at least obey the injunction to "pray without ceasing."

The *Church Times* says of the Salvationist disturbances at Eastbourne: "It surely cannot be the law of the land that any set of people should be able, at their pleasure, to make other people's lives a burden. The Salvationists might reasonably be asked to moderate their din, and if they decline to do so, they deserve to be compelled."

The newspapers report the curious death of a Salvationist, Jacob Clee, a laborer, who was offering prayer at the "Army" Barracks, at Clee Hill, Ludlow. He had just uttered the words, "Prepare you, for you know not the hour when the Son of Man cometh," when he fell down, and blood rushed from his mouth. Poor Jacob Clee found the Son of Man come a little sooner than he expected.

Just imagine such an incident occurring in a Secular hall! A Freethought speaker falling dead in the midst of a "blasphemous" sentence. Would it not be regarded as a "judgment"? Would not the religious press print scores of articles on the awful "warning to infidels"? But when such a thing happens in a religious meeting it counts for nothing.

"It is evident," the *Christian World* says, "that before long, the final struggle must take place, and unless the Church can overthrow the (French) Republic, which is not likely, the Republic will destroy the political Church, which has ever been intriguing with its enemies." We welcome this sign of sanity on the part of our able contemporary. Nothing is idler than the cry of the ordinary religious journal that the French Republic is "persecuting" the Catholic Church.

One of the charities belonging to St. Bride's Church, Fleetstreet, is said to be derived from money left by some good pious Christian for the purchase of wood to burn heretics at Smithfield. Our publishing office is in this parish.

The Bishop of Rochester has incurred the wrath of the *Church Times* by having declined to prohibit the Rev. H. B. Chapman, vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, from delivering a religious address in a Dissenting chapel. How they love one another!

Talmage says the Bible is the charter of woman's freedom. Just fancy the old barbarous records of a polygamous people, who ascribed the fall of man to woman, the charter of her freedom. Talmage will say anything.

A woman writes to the *Progressive Thinker* as follows: "At Springfield, Ill., a priest announced his desire to give a confidential talk, on a certain day, to women. A Protestant woman, who had drifted to the service through curiosity, hearing his request, went again to learn what he would say to women. The gist of his eloquent appeal was to admonish all Catholic women to bear as many children as they could, thus to eventually be able to get the power in their own (Catholic) hands. This is a fact."

"Yes friends I'm happy" roared an excited Salvationist off the Seven Sisters Road, and he looked up at the clouds with a beatific expression. A minute before he had been shouting that the wicked would sink into hell with all the nations that forget God. Rochefoucauld was evidently not so far out when he said there was a pleasure in the misfortunes of our neighbors.

Some of the poor starving Russian peasants are so superstitious that, knowing the philanthropic Count Tolstoi to be not orthodox, they look on him as Antichrist, and believe

they will endanger their souls by accepting his bounty. Some of these poor people further believe that by receiving an alms at the hands of the Count, or Antichrist, they will be marked with the mark of the beast, not as in the Apocalypse, on the forehead or the right hand, but on the left hand. The correspondent of the *Viedomosti* was, he says, credibly assured that in one instance a wretched and hungry peasant, imbued with this belief, and in desperate need, resolved upon selling his left hand to the Count to be infernally stamped in exchange for the sum of eight roubles.

The Rev. C. H. Wainwright is a man of God, deep in the counsels of the Almighty. He knows that the influenza is a scourge sent by our merciful father, and is unsatisfied with the prayer put forward by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He says that nothing less than setting apart a day for national humiliation will suffice to appease the wrathful deity. "Unless the nation did it in its national character God would not be supplicated, and the judgment would not be removed." It will be noticed that the man of God speaks with authority, and not as the scribes. He is evidently in telephonic communication with the occupant of the throne of heaven.

Ha, ha, ha! It is so funny! While Christian missionaries are sent out from England to convert "the heathen"—a compendious term for all who don't swear by Christ, or don't swear at all—the said heathen are actually waking up to the necessity of sending *their* missionaries to convert *us*. The *Times* reports a crowded and enthusiastic meeting at Rangoon "to consider the adoption of measures for promoting the Mohammedan religion in England." A committee was appointed to raise funds, and large subscriptions were promised.

A story is being circulated about a scavenger who took four £5 Bank of England notes to the Missionary Society's office, and giving a text of Scripture instead of his name, said, "Please put that to the centenary fund." Good old scavenger! Real or imaginary, he will be capital bait for flatfish.

The Civil Engineers' Association issues a cadging pamphlet on behalf of the London City Mission. It contains the usual little anonymous stories about dying people saved by the missionaries. We can only wonder that such an Association condescends to circulate this puerile trash. Surely if its members have money to spare they could easily spend it more effectively on the welfare of their fellow men.

Two hundred and forty-two years ago Oliver Cromwell cut off Charles Stuart's head, and taught kings that they are anatomically constructed like the meanest of their subjects. After the Restoration a service was foisted into the Church Prayer Book in memory of Charles the Martyr. Thirty years ago, however, it had become intolerably silly, and was removed from the gilt-edged volume that the ladies hold in their gloved hands so gingerly on Sunday mornings. Nevertheless there is one honest old fossil sky-pilot left in the City of London, who celebrated this year "the martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles I.," who was about the most incorrigible liar that ever sat upon a throne.

The London correspondent of the *Cornish Post* tells an apocryphal story of an incident in a debate between Mr. Bradlaugh and Brewin Grant "at the Finsbury Chapel." One evening Mr. Bradlaugh made a long and eloquent speech. When he had finished, Mr. Grant got up and said, "Yes, that's very fine; but every word of it is taken from Spinoza." And, says the correspondent, Mr. Bradlaugh at first dissented, but ultimately admitted that he had in his younger days got up that speech from a translation of Spinoza. The London correspondent must be very ignorant of Spinoza if he fancies a long and eloquent speech, interesting any ordinary audience, could be got up, every word of it taken from the writings of Spinoza, to whom Mr. Bradlaugh always expressed his indebtedness, though he clothed the philosopher's ideas in his own language.

Doctors of theology deal, or rather they think they deal, with the future, and that is where they have an immensity of advantage. Their patients can never return to tell whether their practice was legitimate or quack.—*Joe Howard*.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Thursday, Feb. 4, Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road, Islington, at 8, "Why I Cannot be a Christian." Admission free.

Sunday, February 7, Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town, at 7.30, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Feb. 14, Leeds; 15, Pudsey; 21, Hall of Science; 22 and 23 Debate at Bristol with Rev. J. M. Logan; 28, Hall of Science.

March 6, Merthyr; 13, Wolverhampton; 20, Manchester; 21, Warrington; 27, Hall of Science.

April 3, Hall of Science.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—February 7, Birmingham; 14, Glasgow; 15, Hamilton; 16, 17, 18 and 19, public debate in Glasgow; 21, Edinburgh; 28, Birmingham. March 6, Birmingham; 13 and 20 (morning and evening) Hall of Science, London; 27, Birmingham. April 3, Manchester; 10 and 17, Birmingham; 24, 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.

G. RENN, vice-president, Finsbury Branch N. S. S., sends 1 7s collected for the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, and adds—"We hope the Fund will some day be used to make the Hall of Science a Bradlaugh Memorial Hall."

W. GREGORY.—Glad to hear from you as one of our own converts. Your wife is misinformed. Mr. Bradlaugh did nothing of the kind.

J. H. STEPHENS.—We are not surprised. Mr. Forder will execute your order.

H. R. WRIGHT.—When you parody Tennyson you challenge a terrible comparison. Try something else.

R. G. LEES.—We cannot insert long announcements in the Lecture Notices.

ODD BIRD.—The suggestion shall be considered. We have your article by us, waiting for space. By the way, your theory of life is not a novelty. It is propounded by Wiessmann and others.

R. J. D.—Meritorious, but not quite up to the mark.

LAUREL.—We repeat our advice. Send your complaint to the N. S. S. Executive, through the general secretary, Mr. Stanley Jones.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Thanks for the letter and cutting. We have not received the writ yet.

J. S.—Read Darwin's *Descent of Man* for yourself, and form your own judgment. The rudimentary mammae in man are probably due to intersexual transmission. You will find other instances in Darwin's book. They are quite irreconcilable with the theory of special creation.

MR. GEORGE ANDERSON complains that our editorial pen has "murdered the measure" of the verses we printed over his name last week, and he objects to be considered their father. We regret the mishap.

W. JENKINSON (Leyton Branch) writes—"We have discussed the question of the Hall of Science scheme. The committee amongst them will take twelve shares. In a fortnight's time the question will be discussed at a general meeting of members."

C. SYMONS.—Sorry we cannot do what you propose. We find one paper quite enough to look after.

H. G. S.—Mr. Stanley Jones's address is 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer of the London Secular Federation, acknowledges the following:—Mrs. Santon, 2s.; and A. Hemming, 10s. 6d.

A. W. PORRITT.—James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* is a very powerful pessimistic poem. His pen initials "B.V." had no reference to the Blessed Virgin. They stood for Bysshe Vanolis—the first one of Shelley's name, the second an anagram on Novalis.

G. CAMERON.—We used the words in the ordinary theological sense. The passage you cite, read with the context, does not show that Paine had any positive belief as to a hereafter.

W. A. LILL.—Delighted to hear of Mr. Watts' success at Sheffield.

DON JUAN II.—Not at all bad for a beginning. Practise often if you wish to succeed in writing verse. Reams of paper may have to be spoiled before you produce a satisfactory piece. Thanks for your good wishes. It is pleasant to hear that the copy of the *Freethinker* you lay on the Liberal Club table is no longer destroyed, but read with avidity.

W. V. MOSS.—We are as friendly to temperance as you or any man, but the drink question is more complicated than you appear to think. We incline to the opinion that there would be less drinking if licences were abolished altogether, and the liquor trade were as free as any other.

MALLARD, newsagent, 235 Junction-road, nearly opposite the "Boston," N., supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

F. PEARCE.—The testimony of your Christian friend at Melbourne to Joseph Symes's courage and ability is interesting and valuable.

J. G. BARTRAM.—It is gratifying to know that the Newcastle Branch has such an active and capable secretary.

OVER THE WATER.—We have written on Mr. Spurgeon. Pleased to hear from you as a convert from his Calvinistic creed of a little heaven and a big hell—both predestined.

W. D.—(1) The debate at Bristol is to take place, we believe, in the St. James's Hall. (2) The *Bible Handbook* has a section on the Unfulfilled Prophecies. (3) Thanks for your good wishes, which take the practical form of shares in the Hall of Science scheme.

E. YOUNG.—Your gift is well meant, but Bacon's "Essays" is not a recondite book to the editor of the *Freethinker*. Your manuscript displays the same good intentions, and the same ignorance of Freethought.

A. B. MOSS.—Very pleased to hear of your excellent audience on Sunday at Camberwell.

S. H. ALISON.—Much obliged.

A. READER.—Cuttings are always welcome.

SOUTH SHIELDS FRIENDS.—We regret having unwittingly done Mr. White an injustice. We note your statement that, although he was not your Branch representative, he is a member of the Bradford Branch and a Freethinker of ten years' standing. Mr. White will probably accept our apology for any pain our paragraph gave him.

G. F. PELLIAM.—Thanks. Always glad to receive jokes and cuttings.

R. W. G.—We cannot undertake to answer such inquiries through the post. The genealogy of Jesus has frequently been dealt with in Freethought journals and books. Of course he was no blood relation to Joseph, and consequently not of the house of David.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Better Way—Echo—Ironclad Age—Liberty—Crossbearer—Modern Thought—Independent Pulpit—Newcastle Daily Journal—Yorkshire Post—Natural Food—New York Evening Telegram—Cornish Post—North Eastern Daily Gazette—Shields Free Press—Pelican—Lincolnshire Chronicle—Bournemouth Guardian—Boscombe Times—Western Mail—Burton Chronicle—Huddersfield Daily Examiner—Brother of India—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Lancashire Evening Post—Sheffield Independent.

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.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's anniversary oration on Charles Bradlaugh drew a crowded audience to the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. There was a very noticeable attendance of ladies. At times the audience was deeply moved, and there was a scene of unbounded enthusiasm at the end of the oration, when Mr. Foote spoke of his own position as Charles Bradlaugh's successor in the leadership of the Freethought party. Very hearty, too, was the applause that greeted his remarks on a Memorial to the dead leader. The first and best memorial, he said, was to carry on the Freethought movement. That was a memorial in the hearts and minds of living men and women, more splendid than temples or pyramids. After that it was well to do what was possible in a more tangible way; and the only thing possible, for the present, was to secure the Hall where Charles Bradlaugh had taught for twenty-three years. Amidst the ruins of the Forum, Byron exclaimed "And still the eloquent air breathes—burns with Cicero." And a similar sentiment arose in Mr. Foote's mind as he stood on the very spot where Charles Bradlaugh had stood so often. The walls seemed still to echo his mighty voice.

When the meeting broke up there was a rush for the table where Messrs. Forder and Cooper sat to receive applications for shares in the National Secular Hall Society. The rush was so great, indeed, that it defeated its object. A large number of applications were taken, but many had to go away; their applications, however, will probably be sent through the post during the week. Mr. Standing had to go off for a fresh supply of prospectuses, which were taken with avidity by scores of intending helpers.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (Feb. 7) at Milton Hall on "Who Wrote the Bible?" He has not lectured in this neighborhood for a good while, and North London friends might take the opportunity of bringing their orthodox acquaintances to hear him. Before the lecture some good musical selections will be given by the Milton Orchestral Society.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake occupies the London Hall of Science platform this evening (Feb. 7), his subject being "Where Freethought Ends and Secularism Begins." No doubt the veteran will have a hearty reception.

Mr. Stanley Jones lectures at the London Hall of Science this morning (Feb. 7), his subject being "Man and His Relations."

Mr. Charles Watts writes us most encouragingly as to his recent course of lectures in Sheffield, in reply to Mr. Celestine Edwards. The audiences were large, attentive and enthusiastic. The first night there were quite eight hundred persons present, and the gatherings increased in number each evening, so that at the fourth lecture twelve hundred people were packed in the hall, the platform being filled and every spot of standing room occupied. The Christian Evidence Society was represented every night, and a lively debate was carried on after each lecture until nearly eleven o'clock.

The Secretary of the Sheffield Christian Evidence Society publicly announced at Mr. Watts' lectures that he (the Secretary) was negotiating with a gentleman to meet Mr. Watts in debate in Sheffield. The gentleman, however, will not be Mr. Edwards, as the Society positively refuses to accept him as its representative. "Le Flaneur," a regular contributor to the *Sheffield Independent*, says in its issue of January 28: "The visit of Mr. Celestine Edwards to Sheffield seems to me not an unmixed good. It has brought Mr. Charles Watts, the well-known Secularist lecturer, on the scene; and I am afraid the harm which will be done by his eloquent lectures will outweigh the good Mr. Edwards has accomplished. There will be plenty of work for the Christian Evidence Society after Mr. Watts has gone."

Despite the many counter-attractions, Mr. Watts had a good audience at Baskerville Hall on Sunday evening, several strangers being present. Questions were asked at the conclusion of the lecture, and although extra copies of the *Freethinker* had been secured, the demand was again greater than the supply. By special request Mr. Watts will lecture at the same hall this evening (Feb. 7), on "The Death of C. H. Spurgeon, and the Lessons of his Life."

The Chatham Secular Society, which has just rejoined the N. S. S., has long been saving up to obtain a hall of its own. During six years of patient efforts the sum of £182 has been accumulated. A piece of freehold ground has been purchased, with a thirty-foot frontage in Queen's-road, New Brompton, and on this it is proposed to erect an iron hall at an estimated cost of £280. The freehold is paid for, and there is £182 in hand, so that £98 is still wanted. In these circumstances we have no hesitation in saying that any friends of the Freethought movement, in any part of the country, who can send a subscription to the Chatham folk will be helping those who have helped themselves, and putting fresh heart into a gallant little band of poor men and women, who, as the Christians would say, have "shown a devotion worthy of a better cause." Contributions should be sent to W. B. Thompson, Nelson-road, New Brompton, Kent.

Not finding it answer at Deptford to charge for admission, Mr. Moss has reverted to the "free admission" system. The platform of the Lecture Hall will be occupied to-night (Feb. 7) by Mr. W. Heaford, who discourses on "Christian Miracles: or Fairy Tales of Faith." We hope he will have a good meeting.

The Children's Party at the Battersea Branch was very successful. A substantial tea was provided at six o'clock, after which there were competitions in singing, reciting, skipping and jumping—sweets and fruit being distributed meanwhile. One or two amusing ditties were given by members of the Branch, also a laughable negro sketch. Distribution of prizes concluded the program. Every child went home laden with toys, sweets and fruit, and all seemed to have enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

The West Ham Branch's third Annual Children's party (in commemoration of Thomas Paine's birthday) was given in the Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, on Friday evening, Jan. 29. There were about 120 children present, who thoroughly appreciated the treat provided for them under the kindly auspices of Miss Ellen Colville, Mr. Parker, and the brothers Dudley. A magic lantern entertainment concluded the evening's enjoyment.

The Wolverhampton Branch has decided to hold meetings every alternate Sunday until further notice at The People's Coffee Tavern, Bilston-street. Mr. Holland lectures to-day, Feb. 7, on "The History of Freethought."

The Leyton Branch will hold an important meeting on Tuesday next (Feb. 9) at 8.30 at Mr. Beadle's, 10 Daisy-villas, Manor-road. All members and Freethinkers in the neighborhood are earnestly invited to attend.

The Newcastle Branch is making headway. The balance sheet from June to December shows £9 8s. 5d. on the right side. During the six months 22 indoor and 20 outdoor lectures have been delivered, and 43 new members have been enrolled, including Elijah Copland, who presided at Mr. Foote's lecture in the Tyne Theatre. Mr. Kepper has started a logic class, Mr. Kaper a French class, and Mr. Dipper a class for elocution. The Branch is now arranging for a public debate between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. J. J. Morse the Spiritualist.

Five shares in the National Secular Hall Society are to be taken by the Newcastle Branch and held in trust by the president, secretary, and treasurer.

The Newcastle folk are very anxious to have the next N. S. S. Conference held in their city. Mr. Brown says they have the offer of the Lovaine Hall, belonging to the Geographical Society, which is large, commodious, and handsome.

Mr. Joseph Brown, honorary secretary of the Committee for defending Mr. Loader at Newcastle, is working hard "in this business," as he always does in whatever he takes in hand. Copies of the resolution passed at the indignation meeting have been sent to the Watch Committee and to the two members for the borough. The Watch Committee's clerk says the matter will be discussed at its next sitting. Mr. James Craig, M.P., allows that there is "a great deal to be said for the resolution," and promises on his return to London to see "if anything can be done effectually in the House of Commons." Mr. John Morley, M.P., says that if the circumstances are correctly stated in the report, the prosecution is "extremely ill-advised in every respect."

Newcastle Neo-Malthusian Defence Fund.—J. G. Fisher (Leeds), 4s.; C. Fisher, 3s. 6d.; J. D. Story, 1s.; J. Judge, 2s.; Mr. Youngmann, 1s.; Mr. Winter, 1s.; Mr. Lyon, 1s.; Dr. Arthur Allbutt, £1; Robert Forder, 5s.; R. Waller Alfred, 1s.; Mr. Couleon, 6d.; Mrs. Coulson, 3d.; Mr. Christopher, 1s.; A. R., 6d.; David Munroe, 1s.; Mr. Evers, 1s.; Mr. Sankey, 1s.; C. Kelf, 2s. 6d.; G. W. Gott, parcel of goods, value 10s.—JOSEPH BROWN, Hon. Sec., 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The *Kettering Daily Reporter* of January 30 contained an "In Memoriam" article on Charles Bradlaugh, which concludes as follows: "Men may differ about his opinions, but they must agree in their admiration of the thoroughness of his nature, his dauntless courage, his fearless fidelity to conviction, his devotion to duty, his indomitable perseverance in the presence of the fiercest hostility and against the greatest odds. His memory will be kept green in many a heart for long years to come; but the best memorial to the man himself will be built by those who strive to bring into play in the work of the world the same spirit of fearlessness, of hatred

of injustice and oppression, of sincerity of conviction, of single-minded work for the public weal, and of devotion to the cause of the people."

A chess incident will be included among the many little stories of a personal kind with which Mr. Bradlaugh's life is to be lightened. On Mr. Bradlaugh's last voyage to India he was much pressed to join in the fraternal chess. He declined at first on the ground that he would be sure to win. Eventually, however, he consented to play on the understanding that he should give his winnings to some philanthropic object. Being an admirable player, Mr. Bradlaugh did win right from the beginning to the end of the voyage. At least one other Member of the House of Commons was among the losers.—*Daily Chronicle* (Jan. 29).

The second annual meeting of the Bombay Secular Society was very successful, and was graced by the presence of many ladies. The report showed that the membership had nearly doubled during the past year. The journal started by the secretary, *Modern Thought*, is increasing in circulation, and there is a regular demand for Freethought literature from all parts of India and Burmah.

The *Woman's Herald*, a penny paper edited by H. B. Temple, gives in its number for Jan. 30 a little-known portrait of George Eliot, together with an account of the life and works of that gifted woman.

The "unsectarian" party have now the balance of power on the Plymouth School Board.

Our friends did splendidly at the Huddersfield School Board election, placing Mr. Ramsden Balmforth at the head of the poll, and Mr. Owen Balmforth third on the list of successful candidates. The church party has one member less than formerly.

There are in Barnsley and district a large number of Freethinkers. Mr. Jonathan Wadmore and a few other active spirits in the neighborhood will be pleased to meet all the local friends at the "Blackmoor Head," Sheffield-road, Barnsley, on Sunday next at 6.30, with a view to the formation of a Branch of the N. S. S.

Ananias Hughes is holding forth in the Tyneside. The South Shields Branch has taken one pound's worth, and the Newcastle Branch ten shillings' worth, of Mr. Foote's exposure of the Atheist Shoemaker story, for distribution at Ananias Hughes's meetings. We guess he will be sorry he wrote that Lie in Five Chapters. By "he," of course, we mean the Rev. Ananias.

The Northampton Branch celebrated Thomas Paine's birthday (three days after date) on Monday evening. Over a hundred members and friends sat down to tea in the Odd Fellows' Hall, after which an address was delivered by Mr. Stanley Jones, the N. S. S. secretary. Dancing went on afterwards till twelve o'clock.

*Secular Thought* is losing nothing under the direction of Mr. J. Spencer Ellis. The number for Jan. 16 gives a well-engraved portrait of the manly, intelligent face of Captain Robert C. Adams, a leading Canadian Freethinker, and author of *Pioneer Pith* and other Freethought works, and commences a reprint of the Socratic discussion between Mr. Bradlaugh and Dr. Bayle on God, Man, and the Bible.

Replying to a critic, who attacked him in the *Times*, Prof. Huxley says: "It was agreed on both sides that, according to Gen. i. 20-25, 'creeping things and beasts of the earth,' and 'everything that creepeth on the ground,' appeared on the sixth day, while 'winged fowl' had come into existence on the fifth day, and it was not disputed that 'winged fowl' included birds and 'creeping things' reptiles. Consequently, if my assertion that, according to natural science, birds appeared on the earth after reptiles is correct (and it has not been challenged), it follows that the teachings of natural science, so far from affirming the order given in Genesis, diametrically contradicts it."

The Arya Samaj, a society for retaining all that is valuable in old Aryan religion and custom, founded by Swami Dyanand Saraswati in 1877, and which regards the

Vedas as the foundation of true knowledge, has spread throughout India, dissociated itself from Olcottism, and has a fund for spreading its doctrines through the world.

Ingersoll's latest attack on Christianity has stirred up the Yankee ministers. The Rev. G. R. Van de Water, D.D., replies on behalf of the Dutch Christians; Rabbi Kohler replies on behalf of the Jews, who don't like his poking fun at the Old Testament; and Talmage replies at length in the *New York Evening Telegram*. This is as it should be. Ingersoll cannot be ignored, and the churches find that ostrich tactics don't pay.

Colonel Ingersoll attended the annual dinner of the Unitarian Club, New York, and responded to the toast of "The Ideal." He delivered a long, racy, characteristic speech, which is reported verbatim in the *Evening Telegram*. We are reprinting it as a pamphlet under the title of "True Religion." It will be on sale on Sunday (Feb. 7).

#### BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL HALL COMPANY.

THE first annual meeting of this company was held on Monday evening at the Champion Hotel, Aldersgate-street, London, E.C. Forty-six shareholders were present. The secretary read a letter from Mr. George Anderson, one of the retiring directors, containing the following passages:

"(1) From the first to the present time, I have never seen that a freehold site can be found for a hall in a locality within our probable means, not even if we wait, and in my opinion the longer we wait the worse our chance.

"(2) My joining the Board was for the purpose of raising something in memory of Mr. Bradlaugh, not necessarily on a freehold site, but in the best manner we could.

"(3) With this view I have joined a syndicate to purchase the Hall of Science for a term of 86 years certain. This I think we can accomplish, but of course we will do it all the easier if our whole force be united, and much needed work can be continued and undertaken at once, which I also consider most important, for I consider it would be very unfortunate if the Hall of Science were to slip into other hands and an undefined interregnum were to occur in our affairs.

"(4) Whatever view the meeting may adopt, I expect the purchase of the Hall of Science will be proceeded with, for we consider it the most practical way to do honor to the memory of Mr. Bradlaugh at present."

The Chairman then read the Report. Altogether 780 shares had been allotted. The cash received was £293 10s. 6d., and the amount in hand £233 2s. The directors had been looking for a site, but had not been able to obtain a suitable one. When one was found the directors had no doubt that the unallotted shares would be rapidly taken up. £385 stood to the credit of the Company, being banked in the names of George Anderson, G. W. Foote, and W. H. Reynolds, and would "therefore be available for the purposes of the Company when a site was agreed upon."

The adoption of the report being moved and seconded, the present writer moved as an amendment that all the sentences referring to the Memorial Fund be deleted, as untrue in fact, and misleading to the shareholders and the public. The money did not stand to the credit of the Company, and the Company had no right, legal or moral to a penny of it, until it was invested in shares; and that would not depend on the Company's shareholders, but on those who controlled the money, and on the wishes of the subscribers, many of whom had already expressed a strong desire to have their donations appropriated to the Hall of Science scheme. One of the Company's directors, Mr. J. Umpleby, who held 25 fully paid up shares, and had another £25 in the Memorial Fund, had written to that effect, as he saw no chance of the Company succeeding. (Letter read). Another gentleman, who had 100 fully paid up shares, and £105 in the Memorial Fund, had also written as follows:—

"As the possibility of obtaining subscriptions of sufficient amount to enable land to be purchased in a suitable locality on which to erect a hall which should perpetuate the memory of Mr. Bradlaugh is now very remote indeed, and seeing that after the lapse of nearly twelve months such scheme is found to be impracticable, I, for one, think it the duty of all concerned to direct their attention at once to what I believe to be a thoroughly practical scheme, which, although perhaps not quite so imposing a memorial as we should have wished to see

is still the only one which the present financial condition of the Freethought party will allow of: I allude to the Hall of Science scheme.

"In my opinion the full strength of the party should be concentrated upon this without a moment's loss of time, so that it may become a centre for the advocacy and dissemination of Freethought principles, in addition to being the best possible 'Memorial of Charles Bradlaugh.'"

These were important samples of a large list of similar cases. Evidently, therefore, the Company could not reckon upon the entire Memorial Fund, and the statement that it could was idle and misleading.

After a long speech in reply by the chairman, who contended that the Company had a moral claim to all the money in any case, the question was put to the vote. Fifty-three (including proxies) voted for the amendment, and thirty-six (including proxies) voted against it. The amendment would therefore have been carried, but the directors demanded a poll of the Company, and there the matter stands for the present.

In support of the amendment I was able to use 36 proxy votes entrusted to me, nearly half of them by persons living in London, who could not attend, the rest by persons in the provinces. I had ten more proxy votes that arrived too late to be used.

The tone of the speeches against the amendment satisfies me that I am bound to act in the interest of a very large number of shareholders in the Company, and of subscribers to the Memorial Fund, who do not wish to see their money locked up indefinitely, or wasted in the purchase of a site that may never be built upon. I am therefore taking steps to have a special meeting of the shareholders called, at which I shall submit the plain issue—Will you, or will you not amalgamate with the Hall of Science scheme? Having done that my duty in the matter will be at an end. There will then remain the matter of the subscriptions (about £410) to be dealt with. My intention is to get the whole matter settled, if possible, before the next N. S. S. Conference.

Examining the Company's ledger, I found 81 shares allotted since Mr. Forder handed over the books to the new Board. Of these 75 stand in the names of three gentlemen in South Africa, and I remember that Mr. Angus Thomas had the application and allotment money for them several weeks before the first Board met the shareholders on August 25. The actual number of shares, therefore, gained by the present Board since August 25 is six, divided among four shareholders. This striking fact shows how much is to be gained by delay, and justifies my moving, without any bitterness or unnecessary friction, in the interest of the shareholders and subscribers who naturally look to me for help and guidance.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### BOOK CHAT.

The Rev. Dr. Boyd (known to the *Good Words* literary world as "A. K. H. B."), in his recently published *Reminiscences*, tells several good stories. One is of a divinity professor who, being asked why he never went to church, replied, "Butchers don't like collops"—the Scotch name for minced meat. Another story is that the late Sir Moses Montefiore was thanked by the Archbishop of Canterbury for contributing to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. "Don't misunderstand me," replied Sir Moses, "your mission rids us of a pack of scoundrels."

Dr. Boyd has some interesting references to John Stuart Mill. Principal Shairp would not attend Mill's inaugural address as Lord Rector of the University "because he was a democrat and an *Atheist*." He did go, however, but having to catch a train, he walked out just as Mill was telling the young men that they should never go out of the church, if they became more liberal, until they were put out. Principal Shairp's exit provoked a storm of hisses from the students.

Mill's conversation, Dr. Boyd says, was frank and delightful, but "one could see his violent anti-Church prejudices." His hatred of bishops was extreme. "I don't say," he remarked, "that these men are hypocrites. But I do say that no man can go about dressed as they are without looking like a hypocrite."

In the February number of the *Contemporary*, Canon Driver fairly pulverises Principal Cave for his criticism on the heterodox Canon's vicar of the Pentateuch. We wish Canon Driver had further exposed the absurdity of Moses jotting down his laws in a journal kept in the wilderness, the theory adopted by Principal Cave.

In the *Contemporary*, Sir C. Gavan Duffy continues his interesting reminiscences of conversation with Thomas Carlyle. He tells how upon one occasion Carlyle was confounded by a commercial man with "Carlisle" [sic] because he had seen his shop in Fleet-street with a picture of the Devil beside a bishop. Sir C. G. Duffy ought to know enough of the struggle for a free press to be able to spell correctly the name of one of its bravest heroes, Richard Carlile.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine*, which enters on its tenth volume this year, is enlarged, and gives as frontispiece a capital portrait of Colonel Ingersoll. It now bears on its cover the following lines:

The hour is coming when men's holy Church  
Shall melt away in ever-widening walls,  
And be for all mankind; and in its place  
A mightier Church shall come, whose covenant word  
Shall be the deeds of love. Not *Credo* then;  
*Amo* shall be the password through its gates;  
Man shall not ask his brother any more,  
"Believest thou?" but, "Lovest thou?"

Among the contents of the *Freethinkers' Magazine* are "One World at a Time," by the Hon. C. B. Waite, president of the American Secular Union; "The Church of the Future," by Col. Ingersoll; "Reminiscences of James Parton," by T. B. Wakeman; and B. F. Underwood's address at the funeral of Dr. Monroe, of the *Ironclad Age*.

*Principes de Morale et d'Education Laiques* (G. Verone, 75 Saint Sauveur, Paris; price 2f. 50c.) is a catechism of secular morality and education, compiled at the suggestion of the International Congress of Freethinkers which met at Paris in September, 1889. A "Comité d'études morales" was founded under the presidency of Jean Paul Cee, and this volume is the result of their labors. There is no mistake about the Freethought character of the work. Its purpose is to lay down the principles of morality and education apart from any religious dogma or supernatural conception whatever. It sets forth as a primary necessity for society the emancipation of men from intellectual slavery.

The first part deals with the rights and duties of Freethought, embodying the conclusions of various Freethought correspondents and organisations. The hypotheses of God, of a divine providence, and of the immortality of the soul are dispensed with, and conduct based solely on the facts of existence. Yet these, according to the "Comité d'études morales," lead to the adoption as a motto of "la grande trilogie de la Revolution francaise, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité."

The second part of the book treats of morality. "*Morale* comprises the knowledge, love, and practice of the good." It is the science of duties based on justice. This section announces the reciprocal nature of the terms right, duty, and liberty, and defines and illustrates the various virtues and vices of humanity.

The third and major portion of the volume is taken up with the problem of education, developing in detail the principles of physical, intellectual, and moral culture. The composition of the work by a committee has naturally resulted in a somewhat loose amalgamation of various thoughts, but the work is one which is extremely suggestive, and shows that our French friends are fully alive both to the importance of clearing away the old and building up the new.

#### OBITUARY.

Died at Liverpool on Wednesday, Jan. 27, Mr. H. G. Lien, of Thronthjem, Norway, aged 82. Deceased was a retired merchant, a man of great learning, and a Freethinker. He had been for more than thirty years a resident in Liverpool. His remains were interred at Anfield Cemetery on Tuesday last.

## COLONEL INGERSOLL QUASHES DR. BUCKLEY.

(From the New York "Evening Telegram").

In the issue of Saturday, December 19th the *Evening Telegram* published as a contribution to the literature of the time a Christmas Sermon contributed to its columns by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll. The remarks of the great unbeliever did not please Dr. Buckley, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the official organ of the Methodist church. The *Christian Advocate* of the date of December 24th, under the head of "Lies That Are Monstrous," attacks Colonel Ingersoll and the *Evening Telegram* with abuse, putting some of the statements of the "Christmas Sermon" and certain passages of Scripture in parallel columns by way of reply.

In the course of its article the *Christian Advocate* calls upon people of all religious faiths of this land, Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Christian, to boycott the *Evening Telegram* for exercising its right of printing news and the sentiments of people of all shades of belief and disbelief—which, in the widest sense of the term, are comprehended under the head of news."

## THE CHRISTMAS SERMON.

The publication to which Dr. Buckley objected is as follows:

The good part of Christmas is not always Christian—it is generally pagan; that is to say, human, natural.

Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy, but with a message of eternal grief. It came with the threat of everlasting torture on its lips. It meant war on earth and perdition hereafter.

It taught some good things—the beauty of love and kindness in man. But as a torch-bearer, as a bringer of joy, it has been a failure. It has given infinite consequences to the acts of finite beings, crushing the soul with a responsibility too great for mortals to bear. It has filled the future with fear and flame, and made God the keeper of an eternal penitentiary, destined to be the home of nearly all the sons of men. Not satisfied with that, it has deprived God of the pardoning power.

And yet it may have done some good by borrowing from the pagan world the old festival called Christmas.

Long before Christ was born the Sun-god triumphed over the powers of darkness. About the time that we call Christmas the days begin perceptibly to lengthen. Our barbarian ancestors were worshippers of the sun, and they celebrated his victory over the hosts of Night. Such a festival was natural and beautiful. The most natural of all religions is the worship of the sun. Christianity adopted this festival. It borrowed from the pagans the best it has.

I believe in Christmas and in every day that has been set apart for joy. We, in America, have too much work and not enough play. We are too much like the English.

I think it was Heinrich Heine who said that he thought a blaspheming Frenchman was a more pleasing object to God than a praying Englishman. We take our joys too sadly. I am in favor of all the good free days—the more the better.

Christmas is a good day to forgive and forget, a good day to throw away prejudices and hatreds, a good day to fill your heart and your house, and the hearts and houses of others, with sunshine.

The passages to which exception is taken were the second paragraph, the last two sentences of the third paragraph, and the last paragraph but one.

In reply to Dr. Buckley, Colonel Ingersoll has furnished the *Evening Telegram* with the following interview:

## COLONEL INGERSOLL'S REJOINDER.

"What have you to say to the charges made by Dr. Buckley, of the *Christian Advocate*? He says that there are 'mountainous lies' in your Christmas sermon published in the *Telegram*."

"I am much obliged to you for showing me the paper. There is in the article the true Christian spirit. Whenever an orthodox editor attacks an unbeliever, look out for kindness, charity, and love.

"The gentle editor of the *Christian Advocate* charges me with having written three 'gigantic falsehoods,' and he points them out as follows:

"First—'Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy, but with a message of eternal grief.'

"Second—'It (Christianity) has filled the future with fear and flame, and made God the keeper of an eternal penitentiary, destined to be the home of nearly all the sons of men.'

"Third—'Not satisfied with that, it (Christianity) has deprived God of the pardoning power.'

"Now let us take up these 'gigantic falsehoods' in their order and see whether they are in accord with the New Testament or not—whether they are supported by the creed of the Methodist church.

"I insist that Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy, but with a message of eternal grief.

"According to the orthodox creeds, Christianity came with the tidings that the human race was totally depraved, and that all men were in a lost condition—and that all who rejected or failed to believe the new religion would be tormented in eternal fire.

## AN APT COMPARISON.

"These were not tidings of great joy.

"If the passengers on some great ship were told that the ship was to be wrecked—that a few would be saved, and that nearly all would go to the bottom—would they talk about 'tidings of great joy?' It is to be presumed that Christ knew what his mission was, and what he came for. He says: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.' In my judgment, these are not tidings of great joy.

"Now, as to the message of eternal grief?—

"Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous [meaning the Methodists] into life eternal.'

"He that believeth not shall be damned.'

"He that believeth not the son, shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.'

"Knowing, as we do, that but few people have been believers, that during the last eighteen hundred years not one in a hundred has died in the faith, and that consequently nearly all the dead are in hell, it can truly be said that Christianity came with a message of eternal grief.

## AN ETERNAL PENITENTIARY.

"Now, as to the second 'gigantic falsehood' to the effect that Christianity filled the future with fear and flame, and made God the keeper of an eternal penitentiary, destined to be the home of nearly all the sons of men.

"In the Old Testament there is nothing about punishment in some other world, nothing about the flames and torments of hell. When Jehovah killed one of his enemies he was satisfied. His revenge was glutted when the victim was dead. The Old Testament gave the future to sleep and oblivion. But in the New Testament we are told that the punishment in another world is everlasting and that the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

(To be concluded).

## THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

DEDICATED TO THE LATE CARDINAL MANNING.

"Rome, can man forgive thee?"

COULD Hell consume the record of thy sins?  
 Could Heaven hide? or earth receive within her  
 The bloody raiment of thy harlot spouse?  
 "Light of the world," art thou?—the faggot flings  
 Its embers far and wide to prove thee true.  
 Thy voice "the voice of God"? The clank of chains,  
 The fallen scourge's hiss, the dying sighs  
 Of tortured souls proclaim 'tis even so.

SATAN.

## HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
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## PROFANE JOKES.

We were speaking of preachers having fine voices, and one minister said, "They tell a good story on Brother S——, whom you all know. He was detailed to do a little missionary work among the negroes. When the time was up he was re-appointed. One of the class leaders of the darkey church came to him and said, 'Brother S——, we's gled dey done sent you back to preach to us.' 'Why so?' queried the minister. 'Kase de cullud folks all lack you. Dey say you got de mo'nfulles' voice.'"

A little boy going on his holidays ended his prayer as follows: "Good-bye, God; I'm off to Ramsgate to-morrow to stay all summer." Alas, dear friends, how many miserable sinners say good-bye to God when they go off on their holidays. Is God, then, a synonym for misery?

The Rev. O. P. Ate: "Brother Snorer, don't you think your influence would be greater if you were to remain awake during the sermon?" Deacon Snorer: "No, can't say I do, parson. The good book says, 'He giveth his beloved sleep,' you know."

### EPIGRAMS..

No dentist will extract a tooth,  
No lawyer exercise his trade,  
No parson preach eternal truth,  
Without their labor's amply paid.

Moses was great. That marvellous narrator  
Made one ass talk, since which they never cease.  
But in these days we need one even greater  
To make inspired donkeys hold their peace.

They have small need of church or creed  
Whose noble faith shines through each deed.

If man's descent you should dispute,  
I beg observe how far he'll sink  
Beneath the level of the brutes  
If but submerged 'neath copious drink.

Jews, Turks and Christians differ but in creed;  
In ways of wickedness they're all agreed.

### SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

#### LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, C. Cohen, "Ethics and Theology." Preceded by dramatic recital.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, T. Evans Jacob, M.A., "Jonah and his Whale" (3d. and 6d.). Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class (a few members wanted). Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green — Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7, musical entertainment; 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Gospel of Freethought"; 9.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, impromptu speaking; 2.30 to 6.30, children's party; 7.30, B. Hyatt, "Advice to Young Men"; recitations.

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, W. Heaford, "Christian Miracles; or Fairy Tales of Faith."

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, E. W. Osborn, "Christian Martyrs"; 7, C. J. Steinberg, "The Existence of God." Admission free.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Stanley Jones, "Man and his Relations" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, G. J. Holyoake, "Where Freethought Ends and Secularism Begins" (3d., 6d., and 1s.). Thursday, at 8, free lecture.

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, Thomas May, "The Miracles of the Loaves and Fishes."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Stanley Jones, "Man and his Relations." Thursday, at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, open discussion, "Edison's Materialism."

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?"

#### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, F. Haslam, "Why I am a Secularist."

#### COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, adjourned members' meeting; 7, Charles Watts, "The Death of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon: Lessons of his Life."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, debating class, a Member, "Warren Hastings"; 8.30, J. P. Gilmour, "Spain" (lantern illustrations).

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 11, Tontine Society; 11.30, committee meeting; 3, discussion class; 7, Mr. Small, B.Sc., "Science and Faith."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Sam Standing, 11, "Christianity a Failure"; 3, "Jesu's Gentle Lambs"; 6.30, "The Triumph of Secularism."

Newcastle-on-Tyne — Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, H. Keppel's logic class; 7, H. Keppel, "The Unattached Christian, and how to treat him."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, J. Hooper, "Concessions of Theology to Science."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.

Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Meaning of Atheism"; 3, "Recent Attacks on Neo-Malthusianism"; 7, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

Sheffield — Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, George Brinsmead, a series of humorous, musical and other sketches.

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

Wolverhampton—The People's Coffee Tavern (next to Nock and Joseland's), Bilston-street: 7, Arthur Holland, "The History of Freethought."

#### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Derby: Lectures by Secular Friend (of Leicester), at 11, 3, and 7.  
Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, a meeting re the Loader case, various speakers.

#### NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

Newcastle—2 Clayton-street: 3, important meeting of Council.

### LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Feb. 7, Kelmscote House, Hammersmith; 14, Hall of Science; 25, Ball's Pond.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 7, Southampton; 14, Deptford; 21, Reading; 28, Manchester. March 6, 13, 20, 27, Deptford.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Feb. 7, Lambeth; 13, Luton; 14, morning, Luton; 14, Leicester; 21, Westminster. March 6, Southampton; 20, Westminster; 27, Camberwell. April 3, Hyde Park; April 17 to May 1, Annual Tour. May to Sept., all mornings booked.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Feb. 7, evening, Westminster; 21, evening, Camberwell. March 6, evening, Westminster; 20, evening, Camberwell. April 3, Southampton.

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

C. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—Feb. 7, Finsbury Park.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Feb. 7, Enterprise Hall, Stratford; 14, East London; 21, Portsmouth; 28, Lambeth. March 6, morning, Battersea. May 1, morning, Clerkenwell Green.

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**GENERAL OBJECT.**

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

**IMMEDIATE OBJECT.**

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

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

From an investigation of the past ten years' working of the Hall of Science the Directors feel confident that, with careful, efficient management, a nett income of £600 per annum would be realised. This would leave a good balance of profit after deducting the rent and five per cent. interest on the purchase money.

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