

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

Not to know at large of things remote  
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know  
That which before us lies in daily life  
Is the prime wisdom.

—MILTON.

## SPURGEON AND HELL.

CHARLES LAMB was one of the best men that ever lived. He had his failings, but he never harmed anyone but himself. He was capable of astonishing generosity, and those acquainted with the inner tragedy of his life know that it was a long act of self-denial. He was also extremely modest, but not utterly devoid of indignation; and if he could not denounce bitterly, he could speed a shaft of satire into the breast of wickedness or cruelty. On one occasion, in the days of his youth, he was justly annoyed by his friend Coleridge, whose character was very inferior to his own, though he always assumed a tone of moral superiority. Lamb was so galled by Coleridge's air of virtue and piety, at a moment when the humorist was suffering terribly in consequence of his sister's calamity, that he sent the transcendental poet a list of stinging questions. One of them asked whether one of the seraphim could fall, and another whether a man might not be damned without knowing it.

This last question suggests itself in the case of Mr. Spurgeon. Mrs. Spurgeon, Dr. Pierson, and other of the great preacher's friends, are all assuring us that he is in glory. Writing seven days after his death, Mrs. Spurgeon said "he has now been a week in heaven." It is natural that she should think so, and we do not wish to rob her of any consolation, nor do we suppose that this article will ever come under her notice. But is it not just possible that Spurgeon has gone to hell? And why should not the question be raised? We mean no personal offence; we speak in the interest of justice and truth. Spurgeon was very glib in preaching about hell, and we do not know that he had a monopoly of that special line of business. He never blenched at the idea of millions of human beings writhing in everlasting torment; and why should it be blasphemy, or even incivility, to wonder if he himself has gone to perdition?

Predestination, as the Church of England article says, is wonderfully comforting to the elect; that is, to those who imagine themselves to be so. But what if they are mistaken? What if a man, yea a fancied saint, may be damned without knowing it? God Almighty has not published lists of the elect. Many a Calvinistic Pharisee is perhaps a self-elected saint after all, and at the finish of his journey may find that he has been walking in the wrong direction.

One of Spurgeon's rooted notions was that unbelievers were sure of hell. They bore the mark of predestinate damnation broad upon their foreheads. Now at the bottom this means that a man may be damned for believing wrongly. But how

can anyone be sure that Spurgeon was absolutely right? The Baptists are only one division of Christians. There are scores of other divisions. All cannot be right, and all may be wrong. Even if one is entirely right, how do we know it is the Baptists? According to the law of probabilities, Spurgeon was very likely in the wrong; and if wrong belief, however sincere, entails damnation, it is quite possible that at 11.5 p.m. on Sunday, January 31, Spurgeon entered Hell instead of Heaven.

Far be it from us to wish a fellow creature in Hell, but there is always a certain pleasure in seeing the engineer hoist with his own petard. All tragedy has a touch of comedy. Fancy Spurgeon in Hades groaning "I sent other people here by the million, and here I am myself."

How would this be worse than the groan of any other lost soul? Few men are devils or angels. Most are neither black nor white, but grey. Between the best and vilest how much difference is there in the eye of infinite wisdom? And if God, the all-knowing and all-powerful, created men as they are, strong and weak, wise and foolish, good, bad, and indifferent; there is no more injustice in Spurgeon's burning in Hell than in the damnation of the worst wretch that ever cursed the world.

Spurgeon used to preach hell with a certain gusto. Here is a hot and strong passage from his sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead:

"When thou diest, thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it; but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin-hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire exactly like that which we have on earth thy body will lie, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the Devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament."

After preaching this awful doctrine a man should be ill for a fortnight. Would it not afflict a kind-hearted man unspeakably to think that millions of his fellow beings, or hundreds, or even one, would suffer such a terrible fate? Would it not impair his sleep, and fill his dreams with terror? But it did not have this effect on Spurgeon. After preaching hell in that way, and rolling damnation over his tongue as a dainty morsel, he went home, dined with a good appetite, drank his wine, and smoked his cigar.

There was not the slightest doubt in Spurgeon's mind as to the endless doom of the damned. Here is an extract from another sermon—

"Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God and it shall be written, 'For ever!' When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment they shall say, 'For ever!' When they howl, echo cries, 'For ever!'"

'For ever' is written on their racks,  
'For ever' on their chains;  
'For ever' burneth in the fire,  
'For ever' ever reigns."

How bodies are to burn without consuming, how a fire will last for ever, or how a good God

could roast his own children in it, are questions that Spurgeon did not stop to answer. He took the damnable doctrine of damnation as he found it. He knew it was relished by myriads of callous, foolish people; and it gave such a pungent flavor to a long sermon! His listeners were not terrified. Oh dear no! Smith, the Newington green-grocer, was not alarmed; he twirled his thumbs, and said to himself, "Spurgeon's in fine form this morning!"

Archdeacon Farrar protests against the notion of a fiery, everlasting hell as the result of fear, superstition, ignorance, hate, and slavish letter-worship. He declares that he would resign all hope of immortality to save a single human soul from the hell of Mr. Spurgeon. But is not the hell of Mr. Spurgeon the hell of the New Testament? Does not Jesus speak of everlasting fire? Why seek to limit the duration of hell by some hocus-pocus of interpretation? It is idle to pretend that "everlasting" means something less than everlasting. If it means that in relation to hell it must also mean it in relation to heaven. Dr. Farrar cannot have two different meanings for the same word in the same verse; and should he ever go to hell (he will pardon us the supposition), how much consolation would he derive from knowing that his doom was not "everlasting" but only "eternal"? There was more honesty and straightforwardness in Mr. Spurgeon. He preached what the Bible taught him. He set forth a hateful creed in its true colors. His presentation of Christianity will continue to satisfy those who belong to the past, but it will drive many others out of the fold of faith into the broad pastures of Freethought.

G. W. FOOTE.

### ROWDY RELIGION.

THE permission accorded to the Salvation Army to march through the principal thoroughfares of London to a review in Hyde Park at the busiest time of Saturday last, again opens up those questions of freedom of procession and social order which have already occasioned many disputes in the metropolis, and which involve many subtle distinctions between what is desirable liberty and what is license to commit a nuisance.

Personally, I hold that no hard and fast line can be drawn in the matter. Social life demands a deal of "give and take." If a man has the fortune to dwell in a villa surrounded by its own grounds, he can fairly say who shall enter those grounds, and avoid all objectionable noises. But when he lives in a thoroughfare he must consider the wants and wishes of others. I should be very unsociable if my predilection for Beethoven made me attempt to stop the piano-organ, which is setting the toes of all the lassies in the neighborhood tripping in the mazy waltz. But when a wheezy, old, asthmatical barrel-organ, of the pre-historic period, jerks out the Old Hundredth, and its owner refuses to move on, even when I've given a copper, I confess my toleration is more put to the proof. Levy with his silver corset may play the "Lost Chord," so as to well nigh move me to tears, but the man at the corner with his incessant repetition of "Ta rar ra boom der ay," on a cracked instrument, nearly drives me to distraction. If I reside in a public thoroughfare it may fairly be presumed I do not object to the roar and rattle of the street. But when I select a quiet street, aside from the madding crowd, for my residence, I feel aggrieved when the Salvation Army periodically make a pitch opposite and howl their loudest, on Sunday morning too, just when I'm writing my article for the *Freethinker*.

Things which must fairly be tolerated when done occasionally become a nuisance when repeated habitually. The Lord Mayor's Show is felt by many in the City to be a day's upset to their business, but it has

the defence of being an old custom that pleases vast crowds of sightseers, and that "it's only once a year." The occasional processions of trade societies or of Foresters or Oddfellows on some *fête* day, or following the funeral of some revered comrade or "Grand Master," call for no objection. But if these orders turned into the streets every day with bands and banners to preach the virtues of fraternity and thrift and to beat up recruits for their respective organizations, they would soon be voted a public nuisance. The right of meeting in Trafalgar-square was lost through the daily and nightly meetings of the unemployed.

An observant foreigner noticed that things could be done in England under pretence of religion which otherwise would not be tolerated. But it is necessary to be of the prevailing religion. Cute Catholics have congratulated themselves that Salvationism is preparing the way for the religious processions of the old faith. But let some enthusiastic priest carry the host in procession, or let Archbishop Eyre celebrate Corpus Christi as that festival is celebrated in Catholic countries, and the bray of Exeter Hall will soon be heard. Some Secularists, too, have rubbed their hands at the thought that the public are being accustomed, through the Army as well as through the National Sunday League, to the performance of secular tunes on the Sunday. But who supposes that Secularists would be allowed to go into the streets to propagate their principles with bands and banners? Even the Mohammedans are not allowed to quietly conduct their religious service at their own mosque in Liverpool. If any wealthy adherents of Hinduism were to set up in London a Hindu temple with its attachment of bayaderes, their religion would not protect them from indictments for offences against morals, even if there were no suspicion of Sacti worship and the bayaderes never appeared outside their own temple.

Now processions, heralded by the big drum, are a part of the daily program of the Salvationists. The army is nothing without its bands, banners, and uniforms. It must have its noise and show. Its volleys of hallelujahs and oft-repeated choruses. It is these which have made it a "screaming success." There is nothing marvellous about it. The routine lives of many are so depressed and dreary, that any excitement is attractive. The Army provides a cheap entertainment. Music has been defined as "an agreeable noise." But the noise that is agreeable to one may be disagreeable to another. Many evidently enjoy what to others is mere din and discord. Our refined *fin de siècle* has large classes still in a stage of comparative barbarism. Granted that the people with sensitive ears are a minority, who should make due allowances for the tastes of the majority, they are surely in turn entitled to some consideration. Only the most callous would continue to dance and sing when they knew some one was ill next door. The people of Eastbourne or Worthing are surely entitled to make their own regulations about bands and processions, for these resorts are mainly supported by invalids and people seeking rest and quiet. This is the real reason there has been more riots at these places in connection with the Army proceedings than elsewhere. The Army moreover does not pretend to regard the wishes of the inhabitants. Under pretence of Divine Command it sets God's law as above human laws. In the "Orders and Regulations" by William Booth, issued for the guidance of officers, is the following passage: "Some of our officers, who have not deeply enough studied the matter ('this Army acts upon God's plan'), have erred in the past, in aiming to satisfy the wishes of a certain set of people, instead of trying to make the whole population submit to the will of God. . . . In future every officer must keep ever before him the fact that

he is sent to conquer a town or district by *Divine power*, and is to carry out his instructions without much regard to the wishes of anybody." Its aim and its method are alike the same as those of the Jesuits, only the Jesuits are far more refined. When the mechanical operation of the Spirit, referred to by Swift, leads to shouting and playing the bombardoon for Jesus, and excites disturbance by a rabble, there is surely reason for the scope of its operations being confined within four walls, even though when we hear of Salvation lassies being molested by roughs, we think that Freethought fists would have rather been employed in Salvationist protection than in assault.

A foreign pessimist friend, one of the editors of *De Dageraad*, witnessing with me a procession of the Salvation Army with flaunting banner and braying bands, exclaimed "Here I find the often talked of Religion of the Future." He proceeded sadly to expatiate on how a faith founded on fanaticism and sustained by excitement would go on conquering and to conquer. Its insanity would become contagious, as in the early days of Christianity, until sobriety succumbed to vulgar sensationalism, and calm reason was overborne by rowdy religion. At length the few philosophers who held aloof would find that they must hold their peace and swim with the stream, under penalty of being completely stifled.

I protested against this view. I sought to point out that the means of spreading information made a distinction between the modern and ancient world which would prevent any reversion to barbarism. I allowed that corybantic Christianity had the elements of success with the residuum, but urged that its pandering to vulgar tastes excited a reaction among the respectable, who are, after all, the majority. Its success was largely dependant on organisation, and it had yet to be seen how it would stand the removal of its General. In time it might become almost as quiet and innocuous as Methodism. My friend was unconvinced, and still regards the Army as a menace to civilisation.

Whatever the ultimate issue of rowdy religion, it is at present a factor to be reckoned with. Booth will not budge in the matter of his bands; he knows too well they are the secret of his success. And his fanatical followers, like the early Christians, are anxious to be martyrs. The Army calls for no unpleasant exercise of the humble virtue of consideration for others, but tends to excite vanity, vulgarity, and to promote a strong *esprit de corps*. Those who are saved necessarily esteem themselves the salt of the earth, above all other secular considerations. They think God is with them, and this justifies everything. It is necessary then for others to step in and declare that religion must not be the excuse for that which otherwise would not be permitted.

The allegation often urged as an excuse for the Army's methods, that it should be encouraged because it does good, seems to me not only inconclusive but immoral. Let the same class of persons who are converted by the Army join the Mahomedans, the Mormons, or the Jesuits, and they will equally be reformed. At bottom the contention is Jesuitism. It must be granted that desirable results often accrue through undesirable means. Are the means, therefore, to be extolled—and especially when there are other ones? A child may be induced to obey its parents out of love, because it is shown this is the best plan for its own welfare, or because it is told lies about some black bogey, who will run away with it if disobedient. The result is apparently and at first the same, but the methods are different. One need not be supposed to countenance filial disobedience because one protests against the lie about the black bogey. Here is the distinction between the morality of the religionist and that of the Freethinker. We say morality must be founded on the facts. We

hold that the religion of the Salvationist is false, and its morality being founded thereon must be unstable.

J. M. WHEELER.

### WHICH IS TRUE?

IN previous articles I have endeavored to demonstrate the utter uselessness of the Bible as a standard of appeal. If additional evidence were required to prove the validity of this demonstration, it is furnished by the conflicting notions entertained by even professed Christians as to the character of the "sacred writings." These believers have always regarded the Bible as being in some form or other a "divinely inspired" book. Formerly inspiration was supposed to consist of seven degrees, but most of these have disappeared before the force of modern criticism until at the present time there are practically but two theories upon this subject entertained by the Church. These are, first, what is called "Verbal Inspiration"—that is, that the whole of the Bible from beginning to end was specially inspired by God; and secondly, "Essential Inspiration," which means that the book contains the "word of God," but that the entire scriptures are not so.

Each of these theories had, and still has, ardent supporters in the establishment. The Rev. T. Overbury, in stating a few years ago "the opinions entertained by the great body of the clergymen of the Church of England," said: "The Bible is none other than the Voice of Him who sitteth upon the Throne! Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God. Not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the Throne—absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme." In Bayley's *Verbal Inspiration*, a text-book for students, we read: "The Bible cannot be less than verbally inspired, every word, every syllable, every letter, is what it would have been had God spoken from heaven without any human intervention." The archbishops and bishops of the National Church, in their protest to Bishop Colenso in 1863, say: "All our hopes for eternity, the very foundation of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations are taken from us if one line of that sacred book be declared unfaithful or untrustworthy." This is a distinct affirmation of the once cherished belief in verbal inspiration, a doctrine which Dr. Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David, said, "has been so long abandoned that it would be a waste of time to attack it." Bishop Watson, in his reply to Thomas Paine, also admits that, "No Intelligent Christian will distinguish" the Bible by the name of "the Word of God without a large restriction of its contents." Such advanced thinkers in the Church as Colenso, Dean Stanley, Tait, Davidson, Maurice, and Browne, have all expressed their agreement that, while the Bible contains "the Word of God," the whole of the holy scriptures are not so. Hence, as Dean Alford, in his *How to Study the New Testament*, observes: "We [Christians] are printing for reading in our churches, we are sending forth into the cottage and the mansion, books containing passages and phrases which pretend to be the Word of God and are not."

Here, then, we have two claims—diametrically opposed to each other—urged on behalf of the Bible, and the interesting question arises, which of the two theories, if either, is the true one? On the one hand we have the believer in "Verbal Inspiration" declaring with the Rev. E. Garbett, "Select Preacher and Boyle Lecturer," "If the belief in the infallibility of the scripture be a falsehood, the Church founded on it must be a living fraud—in all consistent reason, we must accept the whole of the Inspired autographs, or reject the whole, as from end to end unauthori-

tative and worthless." On the other hand, those who accept the "higher criticism" agree with Professor Jowett in considering that: "Any true doctrine of Inspiration must conform to all well ascertained facts of History or of Science. The same fact cannot be true and untrue, any more than the same words can have two opposite meanings. The same fact cannot be true in Religion when seen by the light of faith, and untrue in Science when looked at through the medium of evidence or experiment. It is ridiculous to suppose that the sun goes round the earth in the same sense in which the earth goes round the sun; or that the world appears to have existed, but has not existed, during the vast epochs of which geology speaks to us." Now, it is self-evident that one of these claims is groundless, and probably both will be found indefensible when tested by reason and modern criticism.

To those who contend for "Essential Inspiration" we submit the following questions. By what method is it to be decided what is, and what is not, the "Divine Word?" What are the indications to enable us to distinguish the alleged divine language from that which is human? Is man's reason to decide the question? If so, the fallible is made to decide what is infallible, which is quite impossible. Moreover, such decisions would be both varied and conflicting inasmuch as what would be thought divine or human would depend, not upon the teaching or doctrine *per se*, but upon the opinion of the believer in the one or in the other.

We would also ask those who believe in "Verbal Inspiration," how can a book which is replete with contradictions, errors, vicious teachings, absurd narratives, impossible demands, questionable examples, and obscene references, be the infallible and unerring word of a pure and infinite God? Besides, if ever such a book were given to the world, is it reasonable to suppose that we have such a work to-day? How have such documents been preserved? Through what infallible channels have they come down to the present generation? We have ample evidence to prove that whatever was the original condition of the Bible, the many alterations which have been made in the text, and the numerous interpolations it has received, must necessarily have rendered its infallibility impossible. Even the pious Dr. Tischendorf admits that he has "no doubt that very shortly after the books of the New Testament were written . . . many arbitrary alterations and additions were made in them." Furthermore, inspiration is a question of personal experience, and its original force cannot be transmitted to a second person. For instance, if the Bible writers felt a special inspiration *us* did not share it and cannot therefore participate in its power or influence.

To the impartial mind it appears only reasonable to suppose that if an omnipotent God had inspired men to write a book that was to be of unprecedented value to mankind, he would have seen that the whole human race knew something of its existence; whereas at the present time more than half of the world's inhabitants are in absolute ignorance of such a fact. In the second place, it seems strange that God should have inspired the writing of two books which contradict each other, as the Old and New Testaments undoubtedly do. It might also be fairly asked where was the necessity of inspiring the production of a book that contains but little that is new which is of any practical value to us?

Of course, it is not here contended that the Bible is destitute of excellence and value, for it is frankly admitted that it possesses both of these qualities, and they would be the better appreciated were it not for the halo of a false authority with which the book has been invested. We believe also in inspiration, but it is not from heaven, it is of earth. True inspiration consists of mental grandeur and intellectual

fertility, and this is confined to no one book, or age, or nation. It is found wherever human thought has shed the lustre of its genius. Such an inspiration left its impress upon the writings of Homer, of Horace, of Virgil, of Plato, of Shakespeare, of Shelley, of George Eliot; in fact, upon the brain-power of all men and women in every age and country whose transcendent genius adorned their lines and illuminated the period in which they lived.

CHARLES WATTS.

## FRUITS OF CHRISTIANITY.

(From a Lecture by Henry Frank, at Chickering Hall, New York.)

[CONCLUDED.]

THE dogma of the Church has become the laughing stock of the age's intelligence; its faith is but the ghost of an ancient hope! The Church lives only because it satisfies a want in human nature—that want is the love of home, of friends, of society. The social instinct is its corner stone. We therefore desire to prove to the world that this same social instinct may be developed without associating it with bigotry, dishonesty, and hypocrisy.

We charge that the Church is a living lie—it creates its creeds to conceal them, it manufactures a God for whom it blushes, it builds a heaven whose tyranny damns the good and saves the false, a hell whose flames have consumed more saintly souls than the narrow confines of the Christian heaven could contain. The history of the Church is the history of despotism, of reeking guillotine and gory battle-field—the history of selfish plotting and shameless avarice; the history of unblushing pretence and pharisaical falsehood. There is no crime of which she is not guilty, no shame to which she has not stooped, no mockery with which she has not masqueraded. Yet in spite of this bloody and diabolical past she has the audacity to claim that she has been, not only the sponsor, but the creator of every good which has fallen as a boon to the human race. Thus Gloster boasted his virtue in killing the good king because he "helped him to heaven." The Church has never stepped one pace ahead of popular sentiment in all her boasted history. She has ever been the apologising laggard, not the reckless leader. She has asked: "Will it pay?" "Dare I do it?"; not, "Is it right? If so, how can I help it!" She has opposed liberty in every one of its advancing claims; she has been the boulder of despair thrown against every aspiring hope of the race.

The noblest among the ancients desired to abolish the shame of human sacrifices long before she lifted her voice against it; they possessed charitable and educational institutions far superior to those of Christianity; they cultivated freedom in the arts and freedom in education, whereas Christianity taught that these were the handmaidens of hell; they made their religion and their gods subserve the moral and material interests of the people—whereas Christianity has ever caused the people to suffer for the gratification of its selfish God. They said: "If the skies or the mountains can teach us better things and truer than our Bibles and our gods, we will listen to them and learn"; whereas Christianity has ever said: "Science is but so, falsely called; geology is the Nemesis of Genesis, and astronomy the abrogator of Deity; we will therefore damn sciences and scientists that we may the louder praise God."

Thus, as I have said, has she stood in the face of all social and moral reforms. The Church found woman in the estate of freedom and intellectual development. She reduced her to slavery and mental depravity. The Church saw the plague of slavery, and knowing that her material support came from the oligarchs who thrive on its iniquity, she dared

not lift her voice against it, but paled and fainted in its presence. She found the black man in slavery and was silent. She finds the white laborer in slavery and is silent now. When did she ever lift up her voice in honor of the striking toiler who sought to tear himself from the clutches of the oppressor? Not until all the world was first aroused and thundered into her stolid and indifferent ears did she awake to speak in her papal encyclicals and in feeble pulpit mutterings. Too true, the Church has been the moral coward and the brutal tyrant of all ages. She is not better to-day and will not be—save as we compel her to.

### NATIONAL SECULAR HALL SOCIETY.

THE deposit has been paid to Mr. Smith, and the purchase of the Hall of Science is to that extent an accomplished fact. We intend to take possession of the premises at midsummer. By that time we hope to complete the payment of the first £2,000. Applications for shares are flowing in steadily, and there is every prospect of the Society numbering hundreds of members. The more the better. This enterprise is one in which a multitude of Freethinkers should be enlisted.

Further donations have reached me as follows:—E. Littlehales, 10s.; Mr. Wood, 10s.; Mr. Naylor, 10s.; J. Harrison, 2s. Future donations will be acknowledged from time to time. G. W. FOOTE.

### WHY JAPAN DROVE OUT THE CHRISTIANS.

Mr. Yabake Sangin, a Japanese, commenting in the *Chicago Evening Post* on some of Sir Edwin Arnold's observations on his country, concludes by dealing with the causes which led to the exclusion of Christians about two hundred and fifty years ago in Japan. There were underlying causes, he says, which led to this action on the part of Japan, that while they may not in the eyes of the Christian world excuse all that was done, certainly show that the Japanese had been treacherously used by the missionaries, and they were only protecting their own institutions when they closed their tents to the 'Christian's God.' They saw their own institutions undermined, and when a Spaniard told Emperor Hideyoshi that Spain won her conquests by first sending priests to win the people and then troops to join the converts and subdue the country, the fear of the Japanese ruler was aroused. Added to this was the discovery that the people had been tricked and deceived by the Christians, who had performed pretended miracles, and adopted very discreditable means to gain converts. The Christians, not content with reforming the religion of the people, sought to interfere with the affairs of government, and openly and insolently defied the established powers, and rose into rebellion against the rulers of the country. This was too much for the patriotism of our people, in whom the love of country is most deeply planted. In 1640 the Christians became open rebels, rose in arms, and had they not been defeated the government would have been overthrown. English historians speak of the 'massacre' on the island of Amakusa. From our standpoint it was simply a battle against rebels and a defeat for the enemies of Japan. When our country knew Christians as only deceivers, rebels and intriguers, it is little to be wondered at that Christians as a class were banished from Japan and the ports of our country closed so long to the outside world.

Nurse: "Tommy, this is your new sister." Tommy: "Where did she come from?" Nurse: "From heaven." Tommy (in deep disgust): "I don't wonder they wanted to get rid of her."

### ON A WINDY PARSON.

"Preaching is foolishness," he made  
The text of his oration;  
And all confess'd that he display'd  
A perfect demonstration!

### IT WORRIED HIM.

I'm a man that's gittin' old and gray,  
And I worshipped in the good old way.  
I've allus tried to do my best,  
And leave with him, the good lord, the rest,  
And never to question what I can't see,  
But there's something what's a botherin' me.

What is't? Well, never mind, I'm comin' to it;  
I don't want er go runnin' through it—  
Jest give me a chance ter have my say—  
Suthin' like the mortgage—time ter pay.  
Can't give yer jest the right idee,  
But will tell yer what's er botherin' me.

The other night when I come in from work  
Pretty tired, for I'm no shirk,  
If I do say it. I've allus earned my bread  
By the sweat of my face as the good lord said,  
But you may think I ain't what I orter be  
When I tell yer what's er botherin' me.

I come in from work, as I said before,  
An' was met by wife at the kitchen door,  
With a smile on her face as she's allus carried  
Ever since what we've been married—  
You may think I mean haw when I say gee,  
And somehow can't tell yer what's er botherin' me.

The children were playin' at hide and coop  
In the front room an' round to the stoop.  
Say, it makes an old feller like me feel young  
Ter see the grandchildren all back hum,  
With everyone in childish glee,  
But that ain't what's er botherin' me.

You see, William's boy, the oldest one yet  
On them that was playin' out on the front step,  
Comes in and climbs up onter my lap,  
He knows I think him a right smart chap,  
He likes to hear stories about the sea—  
Eh! think there's nothin' botherin' me?

William's boy he goes to school,  
And the marm, says she, "He ain't no fool."  
And he says, "Grandpa, this world's round.  
And from anywhere, pint'n in, that's down."  
And so he talks, and I thinks, and we  
Can't make it out, an' its botherin' me.

Now I allus calkerlate when I git down to pray  
That heaven's up, so I looks that way.  
Now, sposin' I's on the tother side  
A prayin' ter him what for sinners died,  
Would I look up er down ter see?  
Now that's just what's er botherin' me.

Truthseeker.

N. J. SUTHERLAND.

John Wesley, the great preacher, visited Arbroath in the year 1770 on a preaching mission, and he resided with John Gouch, a miller, whose wife had been so much influenced by Wesley's discourses that she offered to work a miracle by walking through the mill-dam without sinking. On arriving at the dam she offered up a prayer before proceeding to the performance of the act. She hastily turned to the onlookers, and demanded of them if they believed she could do it. She was answered with a general shout of "Oh, yes, wife, we believe 't weel enouch, on ye gae." "Weel," coolly replied the miller's wife, "sin' I find ye 'sae weel convinced i' yer ain minds, yer faith maun e'en be as good an' as sound as my ain, sae it wad ser'e nao good end noo for me to daidle a' mysel' workin' a meerikle." This anecdote is taken from a book entitled *Arbroath, Past and Present*.

Mr. J. J. Hissey tells the following story in his book entitled *Across England in a Dog-Cart*. He had entered a church "undergoing a thorough process of restoration," kept his hat off upon leaving it, and loitered in the shade of the building. "Whilst standing quietly there, I overheard one of the workmen ask of another—for they could see me, though possibly they were unaware that I could hear them—'Why do 'e keep 'is 'at off like that out of doors, mate?' The 'mate' replied, 'Cause ho's a Quaker, o' course; Quakers allus do in churchyards.' Here was an opportunity not to be lost. 'No,' I exclaimed aloud, 'I'm not a Quaker; I'm an Episcopalian.' There was a short awkward pause; then the first workman, who was evidently of an inquiring turn of mind, further asked of his fellow mason, who appeared to be considered an authority, 'A-E-piscos-pale one 'e says 'e is; wot's that, Bill?' 'O,' replied the learned Bill, not to be done, 'that's one of them fancy foreign religions, sure!'"

## COL. INGERSOLL AND THE DOG.

About a year ago, on a miserably cold and wet afternoon, a little dog crept through the basement door of 400 Fifth-avenue, New York City, and stretched himself before the kitchen fire. He eluded the servants who tried to eject him, and ran upstairs and jumped into the lap of Mrs. R. G. Ingersoll, who was sitting in the parlor. His utter misery appealed to Mrs. Ingersoll, and she determined to keep him. After breakfast on Sunday Fritz went for a run on the sidewalk in front of the house. He has not returned yet, and Mrs. Ingersoll is inconsolable. Colonel Ingersoll believes that the dog is seeking a happier home. He has not dared to tell his wife his theory, but he talked about it freely at his office in Wall-street. "Fritz left the house," he said, "just about church time. Probably he heard someone talking about going to heaven through the church, and then he went to church to learn the way. Perhaps, poor fellow, he did not understand what was said there, and wandered about from church to church, receiving different directions at each one. Then he became bewildered and lost his way, and though I'm sorry, I'm not surprised at it."—*Truthseeker*.

## A MESSIANIC PLOT.

In the "Antiquities of the Jews," by Flavius Josephus (xvii. ii. 4.) is an account of a Messianic plot which has possibly some bearing upon the legends of the origin of Christianity. The Jews were much enraged at Herod for his polytheism, and equal tolerance of Greeks, Syrians, and Idumeans with themselves. Josephus relates how the Pharisees when the wife of Pheroras, a brother of Herod, paid their fines for refusing to take the oath of allegiance, predicted she should bear a son and the government should rest upon his shoulders. "They said God had decreed that Herod's government should cease, and that the kingdom, instead of descending to his children, should come to her and Pheroras and their posterity." This plot was revealed by the king's sister Salome, and the Pharisees mainly concerned were put to death. Possibly something of this historic conspiracy got mixed up with the legend of the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem, an atrocity unknown to any contemporary writers.

## ACID DROPS.

Elliott F. Sherrard, editor of the *New York Mail and Express*, heads his paper every day with a Bible text and ends it with a sporting tip. His piety is unimpeachable. No wonder, therefore, that he comes out strong on the Sunday opening of the World's Fair at Chicago. "I firmly believe," he says, "that if this fair is not closed on Sundays the Lord will put his curse upon the enterprise and on the nation. He will send plagues and pestilence as he did in the days of Pharaoh. If, on the contrary, the gates are closed on Sundays, the Lord will bless the fair and make it the greatest success possible." This is excellent—in its way. But the Sunday-observing, prophetic Sherrard should be a little more precise. Will the plagues include the one which baffled the magicians of Egypt? If so, there will be a large business in small-tooth combs. Perhaps the worthy Sherrard is keeping that information to himself, with a view to a "corner" in such articles.

Holy Russia is the sky-pilot's paradise. There are 47,000 men of God in that land, besides an army of monks. Some of the monasteries are fabulously wealthy. In all ranks of society, the *Christian World* says, the priests are held in contempt as "ignorant boors and irreclaimable drunkards."

General Booth attracted some attention at Rome, though he did not breakfast with the Pope. Driving about in his Salvation uniform, he was taken for a precursor of the Carnival.

While our only "General" has been having his vanity gratified, the poor servant girls who pose as hallelujah lasses, have to bear the brunt of the battle at Eastbourne. From his mansion at Hadley Wood, where no Salvation Army bands are permitted to approach, the General and his family issue orders to "Let the fight continue," but take good care to keep personally out of the fray.

Mrs. Canney is a faith-healer, who deals in and advertises "Divine Healing and Scriptural Holiness." In 1886, Mr.

T. Atkins, a gentleman with £1,132 in his bank, called on this lady for treatment. He was not healed, but was persuaded to hand over his money in return for "a certificate of adoption," by which he was to be provided with food and clothing. In 1890 Atkins was removed to the workhouse, and thence to a lunatic asylum. The matter has been looked into, and Mrs. Canney is ordered to refund the money with interest at 4 per cent. Now is the time for the Lord to come to her assistance.

Canon Wilberforce, who has recently recovered from an attack of influenza, knows there are devils about. His hearers, he said, might not, some of them, believe in possession. He did most emphatically believe in the actuality of such a state. Of course Canon Wilberforce swallows the story of the devils going into two thousand pigs. Canon Wilberforce went on to speak of the influenza which he appears to regard as the work of devils. He called it a nameless "influence" which gave little chance of death-bed repentance, as he found the mind too occupied by the wants of the body for that customary resource of the Christian sinner.

A belief in devils is not a healthy theory. Thomas Connor, of Kirksville, Mo., believes in devils, and further, imagined that they were after him, so he jumped of out a second-storey window to escape them. Then his Christian friends, who also believe in devils abstractly, put him in an insane asylum, which shows that they don't really believe in devils after all.

A religiously insane man at Crawfordsville, Indiana, went tearing through the Methodist Episcopal Church congregation on Jan. 14, shouting, "Clear the track; my name is Faith, and the Lord is guiding me. Clear the track, oh ye generation of vipers!" Arriving at the altar, he said that the people would much prefer hearing him expound the gospel. The minister, completely dazed, stepped down and "faith" held full sway. He spat on his hands, and, brandishing his fists, began a terrible harangue, pacing back and forth like a caged beast, his remarks being abusive and vulgar in the extreme. After a few moments one of the audience recognised him as George Cook, a farmer living several miles distant, and going to the platform and calling him by name, succeeded in quieting him somewhat. The excitement was at its height when several men rushed in with handcuffs, having followed him from home, where he had suddenly gone stark mad over religion.

A Chinese lady of rank is now lecturing around Clontarf with "a view to interest the ladies of this country in the religious welfare of Chinese women." If the above item means anything, it means cash, and more missionaries and Bibles and moral pocket handkerchiefs for China. What seems to be urgently required now is a deputation of Englishwomen to go lecturing in China with a view to interesting the Chinese ladies in the bodily welfare of the women of Staffordshire. This collection business is altogether too one-sided as at present conducted. We live in times when the pious Britisher spends so much money on foreign missions that he has none to spare for the starving white slaves of his own land. The Chinese lady's feet are said to be only three inches long, but they will probably be strong enough to walk away with a reasonable amount of plunder. An earnest and soulful system of eadge should therefore be at once initiated amongst the wealthy Chinese for the benefit of our Black Country population. A Chinese mission to the English brickmakers, well supplied with money and blankets and cheap editions of the writings of Confucius, would be quite an agreeable novelty.—*Manchester Sunday Chronicle*.

It appears from missionary statistics published in the *New York Independent* that the various Protestant missionary societies employ 3,775 male missionaries, 2,533 female missionaries, and 11,979 native preachers, besides clerks and other officers. Altogether their number of communicants amount to 605,807. How much money is spent to arrive at this result, which is infinitesimal compared with the continuous growth of heathen populations, is not stated.

The recent census shows that the entire population of India is now 288,159,672. Of these 207,654,407 are of the Hindu religion, 57,365,204 are Mohammedans, 7,101,057 are Buddhists, 9,302,083 are forest-dwelling animal worshippers,

2,284,191 are Christians, the majority being Catholics: 1,907,836 Sikhs, 1,416,129 Jains, 89,887 Parsees, and 17,180 Jews; 289 put themselves down as Atheists or Agnostics, and 11,021,429 gave no statement of religion. Of these a good number are probably Freethinking.

According to the census, the deistical Hindus of the Brahmo Samaj do not appear to be making much progress, numbering only 3,401. Those of the Arya Samaj number 39,988.

Short crops are reported from most parts of India. The Bombay government officially declare that scarcity prevails, and in Madras a large number have to be employed on relief works to stay off the pangs of famine. Famine also prevails in Montenegro, and still occasions wholesale deaths in Russia. God moves in a mysterious way to show his mercies to his children.

According to the Rev. B. G. Johns, who writes on the growing "Traffic in Sermons" in the *Nineteenth Century*, the price of these articles range from sixpence up to a guinea. But the lowest price is too dear. On any bookstall a whole volume of sermons can be procured for sixpence; only what reveals the humbug of the business is that the sermons are always written so as to be passed off as original ones. Otherwise, there would be little objection to the traffic. With George Eliot, we understand why people want fresh-laid eggs, but not why they insist on fresh-laid sermons.

The bishops of Ireland join in a protest against the model schools, in which ecclesiastical authority is unrecognised. Nothing can be good that does not come under sacred supervision.

It appears from a paper read by Mr. Hands before the Society of Architects that from April to October, 1891, no fewer than 206 buildings had been struck by lightning, 18 persons, 94 cattle, 35 horses, and 153 sheep being killed. Our heavenly Father is still dangerous.

There is a boy preacher in Wales, who calls himself Giraldu. He is a son of the Rev. Gurnos Jones. He is only fifteen, but has been plucked as a brand from the burning. He is great in enlarging on his past sins, and is powerful in prayer. His admirers say he could give Jacob points in wrestling with the Lord.

The missionary societies, according to the *British Weekly*, recently received a letter from a country clergyman asking if there were still any stations where there were cannibals, as he had a proposal to suggest that might be found of utility. The secretaries laid their heads together, and drew up a memorandum detailing all the parts of the earth where the natives were still given over to cannibalism. They received in return the suggestion to only send Eton (eaten) men. The *B. W.* says the parson's excuse for his bad joke and worse manners is that he lives five miles from a railway station and has little to do to amuse himself.

The *Truthseeker* of New York bluntly says that the mission to convert Jews in that city "is a swindle." It bribes with food, clothes and cash a few dishonest Jews who would do anything for a dollar. It publishes no balance sheet.

A little boy was brought before Mr. Curtis Bennett yesterday to be sent to an industrial school. His father, who attended the court, was consulted as to the choice of a faith for the infant prisoner, and he chose the faith of Rome. This showed an extremely tolerant spirit, for both the man and his wife were of the Protestant communion. His chief reason for the selection was, as he candidly explained to the magistrate, that the Roman Catholics were more free with their sixpences and their shillings than the Protestants. He very naturally therefore wished to give his son a religion which offered the best prospect as an investment. The magistrate was so struck by his plea that he at once made out an order for the boy's detention in a Roman Catholic school. The father's proceeding seems a natural result of our present theories of toleration. If almost any religion, faithfully observed, will suffice for the next world, the question of its value in this one must supply the final principle of choice.—*Daily News*.

Ulaha Bausin, a Slav, drove three-quarters of an inch of knife blade into a little girl's skull, in Market-street, San Francisco. When arrested this religious maniac said, "Judas Iscariot put a piece of the cross of Jesus Christ in my breast, and told me I must kill a child."

"Two kisses for twenty-five cents" was the legend inscribed on six pretty girls at the Lutheran Church Bazaar, Michigan. A lot of money was invested for the benefit of the church, but the affair has been followed by many matrimonial and lovers' quarrels, separations and threatenings of divorce.

Some years ago, a zealous Connecticut parson went to catechise a family in his parish, who were not well versed in the rudiments of divinity. He began with Lois, the eldest daughter, about eighteen, and buxom as May, whose charms had smitten the young village swains. "Well, Lois, tell me who died for you?" Lois, with a charming flush in her cheek, replied, "Why, nobody, as I know of." The parson, rather surprised, repeated his question with increasing zeal. Lois, irritated a little, again replied, "Why, nobody, sir; there was Tom Dawson lay bed-rid for me three months, but folks say he has got about again."

Here we are again: "The Vicar of a Country Parish (income £97) with seven children, is positively without funds with which to face the approaching winter. Will some rich, kind friends contribute to help him? Reference to Rural Dean or Archdeacon.—Address D. X., care of Shelley's Advertising Offices, 38 Gracechurch-street, E.C." Heaven have mercy on us. This hard-up vicar says it is difficult without money to face "the approaching winter!" The winter we are now three parts through is bad enough; what the approaching one is likely to be, is just one too many for us. We give it up.

Bishop Browne, who fell asleep in Jesus the other day, left over £36,000 behind him. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven." Never mind, the Bishop thought, he'd risk it; and nine at least out of every ten Christians are willing to do ditto.

The day after Spurgeon's funeral the *Pall Mall Gazette* found the courage to speak the truth about his preaching. His power was in manner; the matter was insignificant. In other words, he was a great man because he had a fine larynx; and as the larynx died with him, the world will wonder what his hearers went mad about.

Even Mr. Spurgeon's "homely wit" the *P. M. G.* finds to have been of "the rough-and-ready kind." His sermons "made no permanent contribution either to theological science or to English literature." The ex-Lord Mayor once preached a sermon of Spurgeon's by mistake. It was a case of unintentional theft, or unconscious cerebration, or whatever else you like to call it. But the sermon wasn't worth a quarrel. "Stripped," says the *P. M. G.*, "of all trace which might recall Mr. Spurgeon's oral delivery, how commonplace and how jejune was the remnant."

Mr. William Rossiter is doing a good work at the South London Art Gallery, where he induces first-rate artists to lend their pictures for free exhibition; and the work is all the better for the Gallery being open on Sunday. Mr. Rossiter also lectures in a room adjoining the Gallery, and issues a penny "Weekly Notes" of the proceedings. The last two numbers of this publication contain a report of his criticism on Mr. Foote's reply to Mr. Gladstone, entitled *The Grand Old Book*.

We cannot say that we admire Mr. Rossiter as a theological critic. We are quite aware that the Bible is an old book written for Asiatics, and if that were all which is claimed for it no sceptic would waste his time in lecturing or writing about it. But, as a matter of fact, the Bible is said to be inspired; it is called the Word of God; it is protected by the law; it is forced into the hands of children in our public schools; it is used—or at least a part of it—as a swearing-block in our courts of law. It must be submitted, therefore, to a different standard of criticism from that applied to other books; and if Mr. Rossiter cannot see this, he is in a hopeless condition.

Mr. Rossiter accuses Mr. Foote of writing as though Maurice and Stanley had never lived, and Farrar and Driver had never written. He also charges Mr. Foote with knowing "but little of their work." Never was there a more baseless charge. Many years ago, in his callow youth, Mr. Foote was attracted by Maurice, and read all he had ever written, including the voluminous *History of Philosophy*. Stanley's works were also read. Both of these good men wrote charmingly, but their intellectual message was simply nil. Matthew Arnold said of Maurice, all too truly, that he spent his life in beating the bush, without ever starting the hare.

Mr. Foote has read pretty well everything of Farrar's except his novels. He considers the Archdeacon's style detestable, and has an extremely poor opinion of his intellect. The *Life of Christ* is little short of an imposition. As for Canon Driver, his chief and latest work was only a few weeks ago reviewed at great length by Mr. Foote in the *Freethinker*. So much for Mr. Rossiter's estimate of the extent of Mr. Foote's reading.

Everybody knows that there are some blue, and some brutal passages in the Bible. Mr. Foote says that no clergyman dares to read them out in church. Mr. Rossiter, however, is quite ready to read the worst texts to a mixed audience. Even the filth of the Bible is respectable in his eyes. He says it must be judged in fairness "by the standard of its own times." True, if the Bible be an ordinary book, a human production. But how does that justify the public reading of its grosser parts? Would not the same excuse cover the public reading of any filth that happened to be found in an ancient classic?

The Rev. George McKensie, described as a clergyman of weak intellect, has been sentenced to eight months imprisonment for an assault on a police constable.

The Rev. C. Poyntz Saunderson, vicar of St. John the Baptist, Kingston Vale, in announcing his resignation through "the unkindness of his parishioners," told them that the religion of blankets and soup demoralised the people, encouraged the designing and hypocritical, and discouraged the honest and sincerely religious. Saunderson has not been allowed to boss the charities in his parish.

Booth's "Self-Denial Week" is being imitated by the London Missionary Society. A hundred thousand envelopes are sent out, and a great many of them are expected to come back with remittances. The Society recommends people to abstain for a week from tobacco, alcoholic drinks, unnecessary books, papers, and magazines, drives, concerts, visits, etc., and to send the amounts saved in aid of the Forward Movement. If this advice is acted upon, the real victims will be booksellers, newspaper proprietors, cab and bus proprietors or drivers, and concert managers. Probably the publicans and tobacconists will suffer least of all.

What we should like to know is this. How much will accrue from the self-denial of the gentlemen who do the cadging? That would be a very interesting feature in the report. We shall look out for it.

The pious Presbyterian fisherman of the sacred isle of Iona, where the legendary St. Columba first preached Christianity in the West, are up in arms because the Duke of Argyll has given leave to Bishop Haldane to erect a chapel there. They will no more cry, "God bless the Duke of Argyll."

Spurgeon seems to have been fond of profane jokes. According to the Rev. Dr. Hiles Hitchens, in the *Christian Commonwealth*, with whom he took tea one Sunday in 1862, he and Mrs. Spurgeon were looking over proof copies of John Martin's pictures on "The Last Judgment." Mrs. Spurgeon pointed to what she thought looked like "females weeping" on the "plains of heaven." "Quite right, my dear," said her husband, "they are the Cherubim and Seraphim, for they continually do cry." Dr. Hitchens calls this "ready wit and humor." Had he read it in the *Freethinker* he would probably have cried, "Shocking! Blasphemous!"

A correspondent of *Modern Society* calls attention to the physical harm done by the gratuitous visits of tract distributors at our hospitals, and tells how, when down with the

influenza, a district visitor and parson intruded on him and fired off a perfect volley of prayers. He says, "my temperature rose abnormally high, and for several days my favorite bull-dog has guarded my chamber door."

Butcher Varley is apparently tired of denouncing Atheism, and he can no longer gain a little cheap notoriety by barking at Bradlaugh. He is now turning his attention to heretics within the Churches. A letter of his appears in the *Christian World*, directed against the Rev. Dr. Clifford, who "has the temerity to speak of the book of Ecclesiastes as 'a cowardly moan.'" If the men of God in the Baptist Union, says Butcher Varley, will put up with this, "then have we fallen upon evil days indeed." Poor Varley!

The colony of Victoria includes religious profession in its census. Here are some of the figures. Freethinkers 5,028, Atheists 306, Agnostics 300, Pagans 6,745, Theosophists 11, Positivists 4, Humanitarians 9, Heathens 3, "Go as you Please" 1. No less than 13,608 people object to state their religion or whether they have any.

The man who goes to church with squeaky shoes goes to the right place; his sole needs attention.

Mr. Frank Podmore, secretary of the Psychical Research Society, states, in the current number of *Good Words*, the evidence upon which the late Madame Blavatsky must be held guilty of fraud and forgery in the matter of the alleged Mahatma letters of Koot Hoomi.

A conference of Christian ministers on the subject of Christian Reunion to be held at Grindenwald in the Bernese Alps in the summer, is being got up by a number of men of God who wish a trip to Switzerland on philanthropic principles. The conference is likely to be a great success. It may not do much for Christian re-union, but it will give the Lord's servants a nice little trip.

The Rev. James Stewart, vicar of St. Ann's, Sutton, Surrey, has to pay £250 damages to a young lady named Dawson, as a solatium for breach of promise of marriage.

The Rev. J. C. Archer, Baptist minister, died at Blackburn on Sunday night. He was conducting a religious service, and just towards the close of a fervent prayer he staggered from his knees, saying "There's something strange come over me." He expired almost immediately. The cause of death is supposed to be apoplexy, but a pious mind will trace the hand of God.

By the way, a clergyman writes to the *London Daily Chronicle*, telling it that if plagues and disasters are not divine inflictions we must give up the Bible, which distinctly says that they are. The *Chronicle* crawls out of the difficulty by saying that the principle must not be held to apply in individual cases.

The inhabitants of the village of St. Briavels, near Coleford, are much incensed against their vicar, the Rev. W. T. Allen, for refusing to bury the late Mr. O. L. Denton, who was a great benefactor to the village, building and providing a reading-room and library, and who has left money for almshouses and recreation. Mr. Allen defends his action on the ground that the deceased was "an unbeliever." The dissatisfied villagers have burnt an effigy of the vicar.

The Christian Evidence Society's negro champion still holds forth occasionally in the Shoreditch Town Hall, but discussion is avoided. Mr. Rowney wanted to reply to his last lecture and was howled off the platform. It hardly seems worth while, however, to pay so much attention to a fellow whose discourses are larded with remarks as "I have never found an honest doubter," "Secular teaching is hog's wash," "An Atheist only tells the truth by accident." Still, we thank Mr. Rowney for distributing a quantity of our tracts as the audience streamed out.

Sir Andrew Clark is often cited by Christian Evidence lecturers as one who sees nothing in the Immaculate Conception inconsistent with physiology. Mr. Rowney asked him for a little information on this subject, and Sir Andrew replied that he was too busy. Of course!



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 21, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C., at 7.15, "Is Christianity a Friend of the People?"  
Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 22 and 23, St. James's Hall, Cumberland-street, Bristol, debate with the Rev. J. M. Logan on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Feb. 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 21, Edinburgh; 28, Birmingham. March 6, Birmingham; 13 and 20 (morning and evening) Hall of Science; 27, Birmingham. April 3, Manchester; 10 and 17, Birmingham; 24, Sheffield. May 1 and 8 (morning and evening) Hall of Science; 15 and 22, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

G. T. ELDRIDGE.—"Who was Cain's wife?" is an insoluble conundrum. There is no light upon it in the Bible or outside, but if Adam and Eve were the first two human beings, Cain must have married one of his sisters. Your Christian friend must pray for fuller information, bearing in mind the text, "Whatsoever ye ask believing that ye shall receive."

S. B. S.—You have no remedy, the association being a voluntary one. If the Mutual Improvement Society expels you for holding "infidel" views, what is your loss? Are you not well rid of such company? Still, it was mean and cowardly to give you no notice and to expel you in your absence.

G. O. W.—The tracts should be useful. Buchner's *Force and Matter* is published at 7s. 6d.; Lange's *History of Materialism* in 3 vols. at £2.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer of the London Secular Federation, acknowledges:—E. Robins, 5s.

SYRUS.—We prefer "a sea of troubles," but some editors give "siege," and Mr. Moss followed that reading. We share your wish that Mr. G. Standing would write more frequently, but he is a very busy man.

SCPTIC.—We do not think the book is very valuable. Inquire of B. Dobell, bookseller, Charing Cross-road, London, W.

H. J. B. P. C.—Thanks. Inserted.

R. D. TURNER.—Why shouldn't a Wesleyan Bazaar, at Retford or elsewhere, have a shooting-gallery? As for the refreshment-stall, we fancy it would have been patronised by J. O., who turned water into wine.

A. WOLFGEMUTH.—Letters for the editor of the *Freethinker* should not be sent to Mr. Forder. We cannot tell you of any continental Freethought journal like this one. They are usually small, and edited in the interest of a particular section. Freethought articles appear in so many leading newspapers that there is no need of a special literary organ for Freethinkers. Thanks for copy of M. Dumas' letter.

T. CRISFIELD.—Many thanks.

D. FRANKS, 104 London-road, Brighton, supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

JOSEPH BROWN (Newcastle) reminds us that Mr. John Morley did vote with the minority against the clause in the Oaths Bill.

J. G. G.—We always understood that Tom Mann was not "a believer." Of course we have noticed his coquetting with the Churches, though he is not such a sinner in this respect as Ben Tillott. We believe he was never a member of any Freethought Society, but he certainly expressed heretical views in conversation.

D. BARTER.—The last line is needlessly coarse. Your friend should study a little more before printing.

C. HENDRICK.—You did well to question Mr. F. F. Begg on the Blasphemy Laws. His profession of ignorance may be real. Candidates are often ignorant of many things. We intend to draw up a terse statement, that can be sent to such gentlemen.

A. STRONG.—We are obliged for the information. Wait until the debate.

H. T.—You are mistaken. There are a good many Freethinkers in Devonshire, especially in Plymouth and Devonport. Glad to hear you and three others at Barnstaple are going to join the N. S. S.

SAM STANDING advises us that he has opposed the negro champion at Manchester and challenged him to a public debate, which will probably be arranged.

HENRY.—A cheap pamphlet (about 10 cents) was published by Dr. Westbrook on the Girard Trust. Apply to the *Truth-seeker* office, 28 Lafayette-place, New York.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arne Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Better Way—Echo—Ironclad Ago—Lucifer—Crossbearer—

Carrier Dove—Religio-Philosophical Journal—Freethinkers' Magazine—Burton Chronicle—South London Observer—North-ender—Toronto Christian Guardian—Hants Observer and Chronicle—Twentieth Century—Open Court—Reading Observer—Watts's Literary Guide—Uitenhage Chronicle.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

The week before last the *Freethinker* ran out of print. Last week we printed five hundred extra copies, and that issue was also exhausted. We are doing our best to provide the Freethought world with a matchless pennyworth, and we hope our friends will continue to promote its circulation. The great thing, as we have said so often, is to get the newsagents to expose the *Freethinker* for sale, and if possible to display a contents-sheet.

"Is Christianity a Friend of the People?" This is the subject of Mr. Foote's lecture this evening (Feb. 21) at the London Hall of Science. Prior to the lecture there will be some good music, and Mr. Foote will give a poetical reading.

Mr. Foote had a fine reception at Leeds on Sunday. Freethinkers came in from all parts of the district. One walked in twelve miles over the muddy roads, there being no train service. The morning audience in the Gladstone Hall, out of the way as it is, was the largest seen in Leeds for many a day. In the afternoon the hall was full, and there would have been a crush in the evening if the rain had not fallen so spitefully. As it was the hall was only just full. On the whole, however, as Freethought audiences have been but small in Leeds during the past year, the Branch was delighted with the day's proceedings. There was some discussion after each lecture, and this was a welcome feature.

About eighty persons sat down to tea before the evening lecture. Mr. Foote afterwards had a chat with the Branch committee, and it was decided to have Mr. Sam Standing over from Manchester early in April to deliver two Sunday lectures.

The great want at present in Leeds is a central hall for Freethought meetings. The Gladstone Hall, the only one now available, is a long way from the centre of the town, and very difficult of access to an audience which comes from all parts of Leeds, to say nothing of the neighboring places. There are halls in the centre of the town, but unfortunately the bigotry against Freethought prevents the Branch from obtaining them. Let us hope for better things before long.

There are some good men on the Leeds Branch committee. All they want is better opportunities and increased support from the rank and file. Mr. Greeves Fisher is president, and the Branch has a most valuable secretary in Mr. John Judge. We regret to learn that Mr. Judge cannot be present at the N. S. S. Conference. He has to attend his own Trade Conference at Stafford.

Down at Leeds they say, instead of "Go to Hades," "Go to Pudsey." Mr. Foote went there on Monday evening, and found the place worthy of its reputation. About sixty people assembled in the Victoria Hall to hear his discourse on Charles Bradlaugh. Mr. Judge took the

chair in the absence of Mr. Parkinson. The weather was bitterly cold, and after talking for fifty minutes to the sixty people and five hundred empty seats the unhappy orator sat down. Mr. Smith, of Farsley, proposed a vote of thanks to the chair, and the meeting broke up, or rather disappeared. Next time Mr. Foote is invited to Pudsey he will prefer Hades, especially if it is snowing.

Mr. Charles Watts had three capital audiences last Sunday at Glasgow. They were unusually enthusiastic. He will be in Glasgow all the present week, where he discusses four nights with Mr. H. A. Long. We hope to publish in these columns next week an account of the debate from the pen of Mr. J. P. Gilmour. Mr. Watts lectures twice to-day (Feb. 21) in Edinburgh.

Mr. Watts is evidently to be kept busy at debate. Arrangements are being made for him to discuss at Newcastle-on-Tyne with Mr. J. Morse on "Is Spiritualism a Fact?" The Sheffield branch of "the Christian Evidence Society" has also selected the Rev. James McCann as its representative to meet Mr. Watts in four nights' discussion in that town on "Secularism and Christianity." We shall publish full particulars in due time.

This Sunday evening (Feb. 21) Mr. George Jacob Holyoake lectures at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. We trust that Mr. Holyoake's many friends in the Midland districts will attend and give the veteran a hearty reception.

Baskerville Hall Fund.—Mr. G. J. Holyoake has received the following further subscriptions:—Lord Queensberry (further donation), £5; G. Ellis (Sussex), £1 1s.; P. Black (Manchester), £1 1s.; A Very Old Friend, £2 2s.

Mr. Gimson, of Leicester, reports that the entertainment of poetic and dramatic recitations delivered there by Mrs. C. Watts was eminently successful. He says: "Our audience found out, what old friends have long known, that Mrs. Watts has a very true dramatic instinct, and can charm her hearers both to tears and laughter. Societies that are able to secure her services will ensure for themselves a real treat." We are pleased to hear that the prospects of the Leicester Secular Society are flourishing.

Mrs. Watts will be very happy to visit any of the N. S. S. Branches. When a really good lecture cannot be arranged for, an entertainment of this kind would be a pleasant variation. Mrs. Watts knows what is worth reading, and she is a skilful elocutionist.

We are pleased to hear that Mr. G. J. Holyoake and the Liberty of Bequest Committee see their way to amending the draft Bill which has been printed, so as to include the results of inquiry as well as inquiry itself. This is certainly a great step in the right direction. Whether the Bill, in its amended form, is drafted in a way to secure its object, is a question we cannot decide until we have seen the printed revision and taken legal advice from the gentleman whom Mr. Bradlaugh recommended us to consult.

The Cremation Society sends us No. 5 of its "Transactions," the price to non-subscribers being sixpence. The brochure is full of useful information, and should be obtained by all who are interested in the substitution of a wholesome method of disposing of the dead for the pernicious method now in vogue. The Society's office is at 8 New Cavendish-street, Portland-place, W.

Rowland Hill is generally credited with being the inventor of the adhesive postage-stamp, but Patrick Chalmers put in a claim and tried to make out that the "other gent" stole the idea from him. Rowland Hill's daughter, Eleanor O. Fellows, has just published through Mr. R. Forder a pamphlet on the subject, in which she replies to the Chalmers "libel." Those who are interested in the controversy will be glad to hear Mrs. Fellows' side of the case.

"Mr. Morley is a grave and thoughtful leader of men. He is one of the master minds of the time." So says the *Christian Commonwealth*. Yet it admits that he is "often talked of as an Atheist," and is not able to deny the imputation.

The Battersea Branch being entirely without funds through extra expenditure in Freethought propaganda, the committee has decided to give a Musical and Dramatic Entertainment on Monday evening, Feb. 22, at the Battersea Secular Hall, for the purpose of replenishing the exchequer. Tickets (3d. and 6d.) can be obtained at 54 Landseer-street, Battersea, and at the hall. Friends should buy as many tickets as they can afford, and thus help the Branch out of difficulties.

The Rev. O. Fleming Williams, L.C.O., has written an exceedingly friendly letter to George Standing with regard to the projected discussion with Mr. G. W. Foote on "The Relation of Christianity to the Working Classes." The Rev. gentleman says, that for the time being he considers the County Council elections, as affecting the best interests of London, to be of paramount importance, and he is devoting all his energy to assist the return of a Progressive majority. But as soon as the elections are over he will be glad to see Mr. Standing for a friendly chat and to make arrangements for the discussion. He does not care for controversial triumphs, but, he adds, "I do care very much for the dear fellows around you, and shall be delighted if I can be of the smallest service to them."

The Bethnal Green Branch reports a successful tea, concert and dance. Over ninety sat down to tea and 140 attended the concert afterwards.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures at Reading to-day (Feb. 21) and we hope the local "saints" will give him a good reception. Mr. W. Heaford occupies the Deptford platform, and should have a large audience.

Camden Hall has been abandoned by the Liverpool Branch. In future its ordinary meetings will be held at the Oddfellows' Hall, in one of the large rooms on the ground floor. Special lectures will be given in the hall upstairs. The directors of the Hall of Science Company are anxious to obtain further support, as the securing of good accommodation for the Branch is more than ever necessary in Liverpool.

Polling for the West Ham School Board takes place on Saturday, March 5. The two candidates on the "secular" ticket are Charles Ivatts and Maurice Russell. Freethinkers should give all their votes to these two gentlemen, and obtain as many other votes for them as possible.

Next Sunday week (March 6) a social party will be held at the Secular Hall, Camberwell. Tea on the table at 6; a first-class entertainment at 7; and friendly conversation afterwards. The tickets are one shilling, and the profits will go to the London Secular Federation. There should be a large gathering.

Mr. W. H. Whitney, of Derby, writes: "Last Sunday the riotous proceedings which characterised the previous Sunday meetings were renewed. The shafts of the dray which served as a platform were smashed, the lecturer had to seek refuge in a tramcar, and a member had his overcoat cut across with a knife. Threats, accompanied by filthy expressions were freely indulged in by the crowd. I must again ask the local Secularists for their presence and support, as, unless this is given, we shall be forced to give up our open-air meetings. As we experience great difficulty in securing a hall owing to local bigotry, this will be a misfortune for the Branch. I may mention that the Sunday morning lecture was delivered all right, the afternoon meeting being the scene of the riot, which was, I hear, the work of organised roughs. At present we mean to assert our right of free speech and free meeting."

The *Reading Observer* reports a successful *soiree dansante* in connection with the Reading Secular Society, carried out under the arrangement of Mr. Fraser, the secretary.

The 155th anniversary of Paine's birth was celebrated with great *éclat* this year by the Manhattan Liberal Club at Chickering Hall, New York. Mr. M. D. Conway, the biographer of Paine, gave a recital of the facts of the hero's life, and Col. Ingersoll paid a most eloquent tribute to his memory.

M. Pierre Lafitte, who was one of the executors of Auguste Comte, and the head of the Positivist movement in France, has been appointed to a new scientific chair established in

the College de France. M. Lafitte is now in his sixty-ninth year.

W. F. Jamieson, the veteran Freethought lecturer, has issued a circular describing the method which, in his opinion, is the best in inducing Christians to tolerate the Liberal vein of ideas. The method is to pamphleteer the Church, the pamphlets being such as by their reasonableness must win the approval even of the bigoted. Mr. Jamieson believes if the Christian will but agree to argue with the non-Christian that half the victory for the latter is won. So he has written three small pamphlets, *Is Controversy Dangerous?*, *The Bible in Favor of Debate*, and *Truth Demands Debate*, and asks Liberals to help him publish and circulate them. His permanent address is Box 35, Mosca, Costilla County, Colorado.

The Indianapolis *Layman*, Catholic, laments that of the 100,000 population of Indianapolis "not over 35,000 are church-goers, or members of any of the numerous sects which have honeycombed Christianity," and the *Ironclad Age* says that of the 35,000 only one-seventh are male adults.

### SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

By H. O. PENTECOST.

(From the "Twentieth Century.")

CERTAIN facts are apparent to every one who thinks, namely:

1. In all countries the many are ruled by the few.
2. The few who rule are more intelligent than the many who are ruled.
3. The few who rule command more power than the many who are ruled.
4. The many who are ruled are willing, with few exceptions, to be ruled by the few.
5. Under these circumstances it is natural that the few who rule should make laws to benefit themselves, and enforce them as far as possible.
6. This is what the few who rule do.
7. Such laws are: that it is right for the few to take property from the many under the form of a tax, for the purpose of perpetuating the system by which the few rule, but wrong for an individual to take property for his own benefit; that it is right for the few who rule to imprison or kill those who do not obey them, but wrong for an individual to do the same; that it is right for a few to own the earth, whether they use it or not, in order that the many may be kept in a state of helpless dependence, but that it is wrong for the many to use the earth whether they own it or not; that it is right for the few to control the manufacture of money in order to make it as scarce as possible, so that the few can get a premium for its use; that it is right for the few to control the manufacture of other things than money for the same reason, namely, that they can sell them for more than they would otherwise bring.
8. These laws create taxes, rent, interest, and profits, each of which is a form of income for the few, obtained not by labor, but by appropriation of the things which laborers produce.
9. Great fortunes are built up by taxes, rent, interest, and profits; they are produced by law; they are appropriated from laborers; because they exist in the hands of the few the many are poor; if there were no taxes, rent, interest, or profits no one would be much richer than his neighbors, no one need be much poorer than his neighbors, and every one could be rich enough to gratify every rational desire and many extravagant desires.
10. The sum total of taxes, rent, interest, and profits represents exactly what is taken from laborers by law.
11. The many are not poor because they are indolent, shiftless, or drunken, but because they cannot use vacant land, manufacture money, and buy and sell where they please. These things being so, it is evident that certain efforts to cure the evils of poverty, as a giant social curse, must for ever be futile. For example:
  1. Revolution for the mere purpose of overthrowing one set of rulers and setting up another with different ideas of government, or one form of government in favor of another, can accomplish nothing. If every throne in the world were overturned and a republic established where a monarchy now exists, poverty would remain, as it does in all present republics. If republics were overthrown and some new form of government established, under which there should be rent, interest, profits, and taxes, nothing would be gained. A mere political resolution could not possibly relieve the world of poverty,

from which it must be relieved before it can be quite fit to live in. What is the use, then, of talking or thinking of revolution? The changes that must come to really improve the world cannot be had by revolution.

2. Trades-unionism, with its present objects, the increase of wages and the decrease of working hours, may go on till the moon is old and the sun is cold without accomplishing the desired end. The vast majority of trades union members are heartily in favor of continuing the system of monopolies which now impoverish the many, and would fight for their maintenance. They are struggling for what under the present system they cannot get, and for what if they should get it would be of inappreciable good to them. How long will it take trades unionism to reduce the hours of labor to five a day and increase wages to an average of five dollars a day? And if they should accomplish so much, what would that be compared with what might be? Is five dollars a day enough for a family to live comfortably on? Is ten dollars enough? How long will it take trades unionism, under the present system of monopolies, to raise wages to ten dollars a day? It never can be done. With the avenues for increasing population all open, and the avenues for earning a living all closed, it never can be done.

3. Socialism—well, what is Socialism? Will some one tell? Is it not an impossible dream of monster governmentalism, designed to substitute a tyrannical bureaucracy for a thieving plutocracy? Is it not a vast phantom machine, meant to stand on a base which never did, does not, and never will exist—the brotherhood of man? If it could be realised—and we may be thankful it cannot—would it not drive liberty from the world the day it banished poverty? The only clearly defined system of Socialism I know of is Nationalism, and Nationalism is as undesirable as it is impossible.

If there is no hope for the world in revolution, trades unionism, Nationalism, in what is our hope? In no "ism" whatever, but in the effort of each person to better himself, the sum of which we call evolution.

From the appearance of the first man till now the world has steadily grown pleasanter to live in, and the improvement has not been along the lines laid down by ismists.

Rulers have put yokes on the people's necks, and when they have become unbearable the people have thrown them off, one by one, as rapidly as they could discover which particular yoke was chafing most painfully; and this rejection of yokes has been by individuals. One man refuses to wear a given yoke, and then another, and then another, until the number of rebels become so great that they cannot be controlled.

These yokes have been in the form of laws which, as time wore on, have been repealed, or become dead letters, or in the form of customs which cease. The process is as slow as geologic changes, imperceptible while going on, and which can only be marked by periods after a long backward look.

All the while the same process goes on. Isms appear and disappear, never one getting itself realised. Reform will not take the track the isms mark out for it. It goes on in its own way by one individual after another slipping out from under one yoke after another.

Social evils are all in the form of restrictive laws and customs. Restriction is the evil out of which all evils flow. Men hate restriction when they feel it, and when they feel it sharply enough they throw it off. They throw it off, as a rule, one by one. Revolutions are infrequent. Evolution—each man bettering himself, making himself more comfortable—is incessant.

What is needed, then, is not to organise men into isms, but to point out to them one by one which yoke it is that galls.

Most men know they are galled. Few know what galls them. Point that out to them and they will get rid of it, not by a system, but each in his own way, and when enough are determined not to be galled any longer by a given yoke the rulers are powerless to impose that yoke any longer.

The rulers cannot compel men to attend church or pay tithes in this country as they once could. That is one yoke that has been thrown off.

They cannot compel men to observe the puritanic Sunday as they once could. That is another yoke that has been thrown off.

They cannot compel them to observe certain sumptuary laws, though they are on the statute books as large as life, and strenuous efforts are made to enforce them.

These are illustrations of laws that have become inoperative, not through defined movements for their abrogation

but through the refusal of individuals to submit to them. And in these instances the very police, hired to enforce the laws, are in league with the ignorers or violators of the law.

The tariff law is another illustration in point. Almost every person is a free trader in so far as the tariff law bears upon him, as an individual; consequently the government is powerless to prevent the vast amount of smuggling that constantly goes on under the very noses of and with the collusion of the customs officials.

Divorce laws furnish another illustration of the subject in hand. Time was when a divorced person was shunned as immoral, but now divorces are obtained in the very "best" circles of society without the divorced persons losing the slightest social caste. Each year divorce is becoming easier, for the reason that many unhappily married persons simply will not live together, and legislators must accommodate themselves to the wishes of the people in order to retain their occupations as law makers.

Thus the process of social evolution goes on, for the most part silently and without special apparent regard for "reformers," and in unexpected ways.

Witness the woman's rights movement. What has it ever amounted to as a movement? Very little directly; but the typewriter came upon the scene, and in a few short years has done more to emancipate women from dependence upon men than all the direct "movements" for woman's emancipation that have ever been. Individual women desire to make a living by their own efforts, and they have pushed themselves into positions that were once occupied only by men, and are achieving a measure of industrial independence without ever knowing anything of a distinct woman's rights "movement."

In such facts as have been mentioned is the hope of the race. Waves of reform sweep over the world, spend themselves and disappear; and at their subsidence some persons are disposed to repine. But the intelligent observer understands that all is going well all the time; that individuals are always seeking to better themselves, and that the sum of individual efforts at betterment is what we call evolution, and that evolution is as ceaseless as the beating of the billows on the beach.

Foolish persons pin their faith to and become infatuated with a "cause," and when the "cause" wanes and dies they give up hope. But "causes" always fail, or, at least, are very apt to. Evolution, however, the aggregate of individual efforts, never fails. In that is our hope. That is our solace and cheer. He who understands what evolution is and how it works never despairs of the ultimate happiness of the race.

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### WHAT IS EVIDENCE?

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LAST autumn, while the Theosophic fever was at its height, I went one evening to the United Democratic Club to hear a lecture on "Theosophy and Occultism." In the discussion which followed, one speaker pointed out that of course all the lecturer's statements as to "supernormal" phenomena were second-hand, in some cases even third or fourth-hand, to the audience. To this Mrs. Besant, who was the lecturer, replied by inviting those who wished to pursue the subject to do so, and they would obtain first-hand evidence for themselves. But she also urged that most of her opponents' ordinary knowledge was based on second-hand evidence. In short, her argument amounted to this—"You believe Australia exists, though you have never been there; you believe the earth's circumference is in or about 25,000 miles, though you have never tested it; ergo you have no right to disbelieve that Mrs. Blavatsky supernormally made a ring when I tell you she did." Of course the lecturer did not put it in that shape, but that was the substance of her answer. The same kind of argument, however, is sometimes used by the smarter kind of Christian, and it is just worth considering.

Now, it is true that I believe Australia to exist; it is also true that, at the present moment, I don't believe Madame Blavatsky or anyone else produced a ring by an act of will. Wherein lies the difference? Well, just here—that the one is vastly more improbable than the other. It is in the last analysis solely a question of probability.

Let us take a common-place example. I believe, for instance, that last year there was a war in Chili, though I have never seen Chili. Why do I so believe? Because, firstly, the fact of a war taking place is not inconceivable. I have seen men fight; I can understand masses of men fighting. I have seen weapons used in fighting. Therefore the statement does not clash with my reason or my experience.

Secondly, if there had not been a war in Chili, great numbers of people—newspaper correspondents, telegraphists, admirals, ambassadors, etc.—were conspiring to deceive the world—a most improbable supposition. Thirdly, if there had not been a war, it is very likely the truth would have leaked out long ere this. No such contrary report has been circulated. Therefore I say the vast probability—so great that practically it amounts to a certainty—is that there has been a war in Chili.

But as I have selected this example, it may be pointed out that frequently during the Chilian struggle, second-hand evidence misled people. Everyone remembers the false and conflicting telegrams which appeared while Balmaceda controlled the cables, and which, being disseminated by great newspapers, imposed on large numbers of people. So we see that second-hand evidence—even when it is published in a newspaper—is not always perfectly reliable.

But now look at the other case—the Blavatsky miracle, and let us test it by the same standards. Firstly, the phenomenon of making a ring out of air, is contrary to my experience—nay, it is inconceivable to me. Secondly, it is not attested by great numbers of people as the Chilian war was, and it is not impossible that the few people who do give evidence of it, are interested parties. Thirdly, contrary reports have appeared, viz., several people have exposed Madame Blavatsky. Therefore I say that in this case the probability is against the alleged phenomenon having happened. In other words, it is extremely more likely that the witnesses are mistaken, or are else deliberately lying, than that the thing happened. Of course in this case too, one cannot do more, philosophically, than judge between probabilities. I do not know nature or its capabilities thoroughly, nor am I called upon to deny the possibility of Madame Blavatsky's performance.

To turn now, however, from Blavatsky to Christ, it is obvious of course that we know nothing of the fundamentals of Christianity but by second-hand—ay, millionth-hand evidence. Now in the case I took, it matters little or nothing to me whether I believe there has been a war in Chili or not. But if I am told that my belief on the subject, in some extraordinary manner, seriously affects my interests—nay, infinitely affects my future—then I say I am entitled to clearer evidence. Of course, it must be plain to anyone who really impartially reflects that Christianity, coming to us as it does, stands self-condemned; for if it were necessary for us to know it, the just father it alleges to exist would have given it to all his children first-hand.

Indeed, it seems to me we have no evidence whatever of the existence of this "just father" at all. "Paleyism" breaks down completely in the face of modern criticism. Even Cardinal Newman admitted that, were it not for the voice speaking in his conscience and heart, he should be an Atheist, or a Pantheist, or a Polytheist when he looked into the world. Nor, in fact, have we any knowledge of any of the supernatural commodities so familiarly bandied about by Christians. A Christian writer like Macaulay, in his essay on Von Ranke, says, "In truth, all the philosophers, ancient and modern, who have attempted, without the aid of revelation, to prove the immortality of man, from Plato down to Franklin, appear to us to have failed deplorably." Macaulay is right. "Natural theology" has failed, revelation is discredited. What, then, is the natural inference? Evidently either that there is no personality ruling and controlling the universe, or else that he, she, or it does not think it necessary for man to have any knowledge thereof. F. RYAN.

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### OBITUARY.

Walter Silby died at Cowes, Isle of Wight, on February 13, in his eightieth year. He was a highly respected tradesman, a sturdy Radical, and an open Atheist. He made a satirical remark to a fussy clergyman who obtruded upon him, and died as he had lived.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Per Miss Robins: A. Angel, 6d.; H. Clifton, 6d.; E. Robins, 1s.; R. Greening, 6d.; J. Mortlock, 6d.; E. Larkin, 6d.; M. Hancock, 6d.; J. Rowney, 1s.; H. W., 1s.; Two Friends, 9d.; E. Medcalf, 6d.; H. Rowe, 6d.; H. Price, 1s.; A Friend, 2d.; G. A. Henning, 1s.; J. Samson, 1s.; D. Hughes, 6d.; J. Clapperton, 6d.; P. Emary, 6d.; C. H., 6d.; H. B., 6d.; Newman, 3d.; L. B., 6d.; A. B., 6d.; G. Heineman, 1s.; Mrs. Ward, 4d. Per Mrs. Santen, 7s. 1d. Per Mrs. Sleigh, 4s. 6d. J. Burns, 1s.; B. Dundas, 1s.; E. C. R., 6d.

## BOOK CHAT.

A large literature is gathering round the name of Giordano Bruno. We notice that even in Malta, and in the Maltese dialect, a little book on the martyr is published by C. A. Levanjin.

We have compared the third revised edition of Dr. E. B. Tylor's great work on *Primitive Culture* with the second edition of 1873. Although a few further details of evidence are occasionally inserted, the increase of bulk is mainly owing to there being one less line of type than in the former edition. The important concluding chapter is in no way modified.

*The Open Court*, of Chicago, opens its number for Jan. 28 with an article by Moncure D. Conway on Col. Ethan Allen's book on *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*. Allen was the pioneer of Freethinking Deism in America, his work being published in 1784. It was the first work published in the United States openly directed against the Christian religion. Paine's *Age of Reason* followed in 1795, Palmer's *Principles of Nature* in 1802, and English's *Grounds of Christianity Examined* in 1813. Allen served with great distinction in the War of Independence, and a statue is erected to him at Montpelier, Vermont.

Dr. Voelkel, now of Zurich, has issued from that city *Bibelstunden für denkende Leser*—Bible Lessons for Thinking Readers. The work is coming out in parts.

Mr. Wm. Emmette Coleman continues his historical sketch of "Spiritualism and the Wisdom Religion," in the *Carrier Dove* of San Francisco. Those who wish to learn about the early history of the Theosophical Society should secure these articles.

Colonel Ingersoll's lecture on the Gods has been translated into German by Mr. W. Schaumburg, and is published by Schaumburg, and Fleisher, of Leipsic, under the telling title of "Moderne Götterdämmerung" ("Modern Twilight of the Gods"). It makes a volume of 68 pages.

Dr. Berendt and Friedlander have issued, through Mayer and Müller, of Berlin, an important German work on *Spinoza's System: its Relation to Modern Science and Philosophy*. The authors consider that Spinoza forms the intellectual centre of philosophic thought, both before and after his era.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* for February gives as frontispiece a photograph of Theodore Parker's grave at Florence. Mr. G. J. Holyoake contributes the opening paper on Philosophical Secularism, giving a code of principles mainly drawn up by Mr. Joseph Ellis ("Philip Dawson"), to whom Mr. Holyoake pays a high tribute. "Hudor Genone" contributes a smart article on "Freedom of Thought," and J. C. F. Gruebine writes on "The Origin and Destruction of the Devil." Mr. T. B. Wakeman ably states the argument against the use of alcohol from the purely scientific standpoint, and argues in favor of Freethought total abstinence societies.

The veteran Elizabeth Cady Stanton has a sensible article on Sunday and the World's Fair in the February number of the *North American Review*.

Messrs. E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats are about to issue, through Quaritch, a Commentary on Blake's Poetical Works. While some of Blake's poems are of the utmost simplicity, his prophetic works are as abstruse as the oracles of Nostradamus, and, we should fancy, almost beyond the elucidation of commentators.

M. Renan's new book containing his own personal memoirs will soon be out. In the preface he tells a story of a learned Israelite who, hearing one of the Rothschilds warmly defend the immortality of the soul, said to M. Renan, "Would you believe it, a wealthy man like that wants heaven as well as riches. He might have left it to us *pauvres misérables*."

Mr. Moncure D. Conway's *Life of Paine* will soon be ready. The publication has been delayed by the discovery of new material, including an unpublished sketch of Paine by Cobbett.

## PROFANE JOKES.

An anecdote is related of a certain Methodist parson who was loudly inveighing, before a ministerial assembly, against schools of theology, and finished by thanking God that he had never "rubbed his back up against one." "Do I understand the brother to say that he thanks God for his ignorance?" asked the bishop. "Well, yes, if you want to put it that way," he replied. "Then all I have to add," said the bishop, unctuously, "is, that the brother has a great deal to be thankful for."

"Well, Laura, give me a short sketch on the sermon. Where was the text?"—"Oh, I don't know: I have forgotten it. But (would you believe it?) Mrs. A. wore that horrid bonnet of hers. I couldn't keep my eyes off it all the morning. Miss P. had on a lovely little pink one. Miss T. wore a shawl that must have cost a dozen golden sovereigns. I wonder her folks don't see the folly of extravagance. And there was Mrs. H. with her pelisse. It's astonishing what want of taste some folks exhibit."—"Well, if you have forgotten the sermon, you have not the audience. But which preacher do you prefer, this one or Mr. A.?"—"Oh! Mr. A.: he's so handsome and so graceful! What an eye, and what a set of teeth he has!"

An Irish peasant brought a litter of kittens to a Protestant vicar in a certain town in County Wicklow, requesting him to purchase them. The vicar declined. "Your rivrence, they are good Protestant kittens," urged Paddy, but his reverence remained obdurate. A few days after, the Roman Catholic priest (who had meanwhile been informed of the offer to his brother-clergyman) was approached, and on his refusing to make a purchase, the would-be seller urged a sale, "Sure, father dear, they are good Catholic kittens." "But how is this, my man?" replied the priest; "you said a day or two ago they were good Protestant kittens." "And so they were," said the peasant, "but their eyes weren't opened."

## CHRISTIAN AND SECLAR CHARITY.

A gentleman of my acquaintance, of Catholic family, had a little sister sick with the diphtheria. He was able to pay for medical attendance, but desired to place her in a hospital. He took her to a Catholic hospital, and, to his surprise, admittance was refused on the ground that the disease was contagious and could not be guarded against. My friend, uncertain what to do, applied to the French hospital, which is not under any religious auspices whatsoever. It is simply a scientific medical institution. The little girl was admitted at once. "But the disease is contagious," said my friend; "my sister has just been refused admission to the Catholic hospital." "Oh, we will take care of that," said the doctor in attendance.

Think of it, the Catholic hospital had God on its side, and the Holy Ghost, and all the angels, and the multitude of saints, and prayers innumerable, and yet it didn't dare to take charge of a little sick girl. What an infernal lie that religious hospital is—a miserable, cowardly institution. A secular hospital, with only human skill and care to depend upon, is not afraid to take charge of any sick person, as it is in duty bound to do. That's the difference between religious humbug and scientific humanity.—SAMUEL P. PUTNAM, *Truthseeker*.

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## THE DYING HARLOT'S PRAYER.

God! art thou there?  
 Death lays his lips to mine—and buys  
 The last kiss I may sell. God! art thou there?  
 I have not often prayed, nor asked of thee  
 The favors thou might'st give—for I have learnt  
 That every gift, O Lord,  
 Comes only at a price—and I  
 Had never offering for such as thou.  
 God! art thou there?  
 I loved thee not, O Lord! For thou  
 Wert cold and pure; and I—was all men's bride.  
 I did not know thee Lord—for in Life's hour  
 Thy face came never to mine eyes  
 And I had scarcely thought that thou  
 Couldst even be. But Death is cold,  
 And in the shadows one doth tread  
 With fear and doubting. God! art thou there?  
 Hear me this once! this only once!  
 I asked not thus before, nor shall again.  
 Let not my sin blot out this prayer,  
 For thou has made me all I am.  
 I was a harlot. Lord! my mother too  
 Denied no favors unto man; for she  
 Had life to live—and no man gave  
 Except she offered in return.  
 But thou hast judged her, Lord, these many years,  
 And I—her child—have sinned as she did sin  
 For bread. But Lord! I leave no child!  
 Thou knowest Lord! the night may babe and I  
 Crept hungered by the riverside?  
 Lord! wast thou there?  
 And did thou hear the infant cry for food?  
 And I—had none to give! God!  
 Didst thou hear that cry? and didst thou watch  
 When I returned ——— alone?  
 God! grant my prayer. The night  
 Steals closer round me, and I hear  
 The rustling shadows gather to my bed!  
 God, art thou there? God! God!  
 Death hath his hold upon me, and I pass  
 Where knowledge hath no light—where only Fear  
 And Doubt and Faith have passed before.  
 God! if thou be? Thy servant calls!  
 Thy child—this child of Thine, sends forth her prayer,  
 Lead me before thy throne, that I  
 May curse thee! God!—one curse, O God! one curse  
 As deep, and vile, and hateful as the pains  
 That Life and thou did weave for me.  
 But Lord, I die!—the night is come!  
 Hear me, O Lord! and when I pass  
 Unseal my lips before thy judgment throne  
 That I may curse—remember Lord! God! God! I die!  
 Remember!—Lord! O Lord, remember me!

ARTHUR O. GASK.

## SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

## LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 38 Newington Green-road: 7, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Conversion of the English." Thursday, at 8, Touzeau Parris, "Theism, Pantheism, Atheism." Admission free.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, G. A. Gaskell (Fabian), "Mastership and Servitude" (free). Monday, at 8, entertainment for benefit of Branch (3d. and 6d.). Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Friday, at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7, musical entertainment; 7.30, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches"; 9.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, Messrs. Hartmann and Vogel, debate on "The Abolition of Capital Punishment"; 7.30, H. Snell, "Physical Righteousness" (preceded by dramatic study).

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, W. Heaford, "A Freethinker's View of Christ."

Finsbury Park—Rock-street Hall, 1 Rock-street, Blackstock-road: 11.30, a lecture; 7, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Book." Admission free.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, E. R. Pease, "London County Council and Municipal Monopolies" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, G. W. Foote, "Is Christianity a Friend of the People?" (3d., 6d., and 1s.). Thursday, at 6, children's party.

Lambeth—New Nelson Hall, 24 Lower Marsh: 7.30, Mr. Horsman, "The Weather and Theology."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Body and Mind: what is their Relation?"

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, debate between Job Williams and Lucretius Keen on "Is there a God." Admission free.

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Prophecy and Prophets." Thursday, at 8, open debate and committee meeting.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, "A Swedenborgian View of the Tower of Babel."

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Spiritualism."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Forty Days Fast."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, a lecture

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street. G. J. Holyoake, "Public Interest in Freethought."

Crook—35 Gladstone-terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law: 6.30, business meeting.

Darby—41 Copeland-street, Traffic-street: 7, G. Harper, "Dawn of Life upon the Earth."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 13, debating class, J. M. Wright, "Love: a Materialistic Study"; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "The Homes and Haunts of Burns" (with limelight and musical illustrations).

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street; 7, Thomas Adams, "Ethical Movement."

Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's Bottoms: 2.30, important business meeting.

Hull—Cobden Hall, 6 Story-street, Albion-street: 6.30, W. Anyan, "The Devil."

Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden-street: 11, Tontine Society; 3, discussion class; 7, Harry Smith, "For this Cause have I raised thee up."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Sam Standing, 11, "Christ on the Labor Question"; 3, "Some Christian Gods"; 6.30, "A Burning, Fiery Furnace."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, H. Keppel's logic class; 7, T. Pearson, "Christian and Secular Morality."

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: Stanley Jones, 3, "The Creation"; 7, "Man and his Relations."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West-street: A. B. Moss, 3, "Delusions of Theosophy"; 7, "God's Favorites."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, George Weston, "Talk on Astronomy."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 3, mutual improvement class, W. Cooper, "Anomalous Laws"; 7, readings, recitations, etc.

Wolverhampton—The People's Coffee Tavern (next to Nock and Joseland's), Bilston-street: 7, discussion.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Quayside (near big crane): 11, a meeting re the Lander case.

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Feb. 25, Ball's Pond.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 21, Reading; 28, Manchester. March 6, 13, 20, 27, Deptford. April 24, Hornsey. May 1, Camberwell; 8, Clerkenwell. June 5, Camberwell; 12, Clerkenwell; 19, Hornsey.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Feb. 21, Westminster. March 6, Southampton; 13, Woolwich; 20, Westminster; 27, Camberwell. April 3, Hyde Park; 10, Kilburn; April 17 to May 1, Annual Tour. May to Sept., all mornings booked.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Feb. 21, Camberwell. March 6, Westminster; 20, Camberwell; 27, evening, Newington Reform Club. April 3, Southampton; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; evening, Battersea; 24, morning, Victoria Park; evening, Camberwell. May 1, morning, Victoria Park; evening, Battersea.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Feb. 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.

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

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