

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood to-morrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilising rain on their fields."

—THOREAU.

DAMNED SINNERS.

"Thou shalt be brought unto the blood of sprinkling, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner."

—JOHN WESLEY, Sermon on "Justification by Faith."

POLITE ears, which are often the longest, will be shocked at the title of this article. This is an age in which it is accounted vulgar to express plain doctrines in plain language. Spurgeon was the last doctor of a good old school. Their theology was hateful; an insult to man and a blasphemy against God—if such a being exists; but they did not beat about the bush, and if they thought you were booked for hell, as was most likely, they took care to let you know it. They called a spade a spade, not a common implement of agricultural industry. They were steeped in Bible English, and did not scruple to use its striking substantives and adjectives. When they pronounced "hell" they aspirated the "h" and gave the full weight of the two "l's." "Damn" and "damnation" shot from their mouths full and round, like a cannon ball sped with a full blast of gunpowder.

But, alas, how are the mighty fallen! No longer do the men of God indulge in thunderous Saxon. They latinise their sermons and diminish the effect of terrible teaching. You shall hear them designate "hell" with twenty roundabout euphemisms, and spin "damnation" into "condemnation" and "damned" into "condemned," until it has not force enough to frighten a cat off a garden wall.

Let us not be blamed, however, if we emulate the plain speech of the honest old theologians, and of the English Bible which is still used in our public schools. We despise the hypocritical cry of "vulgar!" We are going to write, not on "condemned transgressors," but on "damned sinners." Yes, DAMNED SINNERS.

Now, beloved reader, it behoves us to define and distinguish, as well as amplify and expatiate. We must therefore separate the "damned" from the "sinners." Not indeed in fact, for they are inseparable, being in truth one and the same thing; for the adjective is the substantive, and the substantive is the adjective, and the "damned" are "sinners" and "sinners" are the "damned." The separation is merely mental, for reasons of convenience; just as we separate the inseparable, length from breadth, in our definition of a line. This is necessary to clear and coherent thought; man's mind being finite, and incapable of operating in all directions at once.

What then are *sinners*? A simple question, but not so easy to answer. All men are *sinners*. But what is a *man*? A featherless biped? So was the plucked fowl of Diogenes. A man is—well a man;

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and a sinner is—well a sinner. And this is near enough for most people. But it does not satisfy a rational investigator, to say nothing of your born critic, who will go on splitting hairs till his head is as bare as a plate, and then borrow materials from his neighbor's cranium.

In ancient Egypt it was a sin to kill a cat; in England cats are slain in myriads without a tremor of compunction. Among the Jews it is a sin to eat pork, but an English humorist writes you a delicious essay on Roast Pig. Bigamy is a sin in the whole of Europe but the south-eastern corner, and there it is a virtue, sanctioned by the laws of religion. Marrying your deceased wife's sister is a sin in England; four thousand years ago, in another part of the world, it was no sin at all; in fact, a gentleman of remarkable piety, whom God is said to have loved, married his wife's sister without waiting for a funeral. Did not Jacob take Rachel and Leah together, and walk out with them, one on each arm?

Sin as a *fact* changes with time and place. Sin as an *idea* is disobedience to the law of God; that is, to the doctrines of religion; that is, to the teaching of priests. *Crime* is quite another thing. It is far less heinous, and far more easily forgiven. Of course crime and sin may overlap; they may often be the same thing practically; but this is an accident, for there are crimes that are no sins, and sins that are no crimes. It is a crime, but not a sin, to torture a heretic; it is a sin, but not a crime, to eat meat on a Friday.

A sinner is a person on bad terms with his God. But who, it may be asked, is on good terms with him? No one. According to Christianity, at any rate, we have all sinned; nay, we are all full of original sin; we derived it from our parents, who derived it from Adam, who caught it from Old Nick, who picked it up God knows where.

Now every sinner is a damned sinner. He may not know it, but he is so; and the great John Wesley advises him to recognise it, and come as a "damned sinner" to God, to be sprinkled or washed with the blood of Christ.

What is *damned* then? We take it that "damned sinners," that is *all* sinners, are persons to whom God says "Damn you!" To whom does he say it? To all sinners; that is, to all men. And why does he say it? Because he is wroth with them. And why is he wroth with them? Because they are sinners. And why are they sinners? Because they are men. And why are they men? Because they cannot help it. They were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mothers conceive them.

Every Christian admits this—theoretically. He goes to church and confesses himself a "miserable sinner," but if you called him so as he came out of church he would call you something stronger.

A sinner may be damned here, apparently, without being damned hereafter. He is liable to hell until he dies, but after that event he is sometimes reprieved and sent to heaven. But the vast majority of the

human race have no share in the atoning blood of Christ. They were "damned sinners" *in posse* before they were born, they are "damned sinners" *in esse* while they live, and they will be "damned sinners" for ever when they leap from this life into eternity, and

join the immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die.

This is a very comfortable doctrine for the narrow, conceited, selfish elect. For other people—all the rest of us—it is calculated to provoke unparliamentary language. Why should God "damn" men? And how can men be "sinners"? Certainly they can sin against each other, because they can injure each other. But how can they sin against God? Can they injure him? He is unchangeable. Can they rob him? He is infinite. Can they deceive him? He is omniscient. Can they limit his happiness? He is omnipotent. No, they *cannot* sin against him, but he *can* sin against them. And if he exists he *has* sinned against every one of them. Not one human being has ever been as strong, healthy, wise, noble, and happy as God might have made him. Nor is man indebted to God for his creation. There cannot be a debt where there is no contract. It is the creator and not the creature who is responsible, and the theological doctrine of responsibility is the truth turned upside down.

Suppose a man had the power of creating another thinking and feeling being. Suppose he could endow him with any qualities he chose. Suppose he created him sickly, foolish, and vicious. Would he not be responsible for the curse of that being's existence?

Man is what he is because he is. He is practically without choice. The cards are dealt out to him, and he must take them as they come. Is it just to damn him for holding a bad hand? Is it honest to give him hell for not winning the game?

Let us use for a moment the cant language of theology. Let us imagine the *vilest* of "damned sinners" in Gehenna. Does not every scientist, and every philosopher, know that the orb of his fate was predetermined? Would not that "lost soul" have the right to curse his maker? Might he not justly exclaim "I am holier than thou"?

Do not imagine, reader, that this new reading of the book of fate has no practical significance. When we get rid of the idea of "damned sinners," when we abolish the idea of "sin" altogether and its correlative "punishment," and learn to regard man as a complicated effect in a universe of causation, we shall bring wisdom and humanity into the treatment of the "criminal classes," we shall look upon them as moral lunatics and deal with them accordingly. And this spirit will extend itself to all human relations. It will make us less impatient and angry with each other. We shall see that "to know all is to pardon all." Thus will the overthrow of theology be the preparation for a new moral development. Another link of the old serpent of superstition will be uncoiled from the life of humanity, leaving it freer to learn the splendid truth, taught by that divine man Socrates, that wisdom and virtue are one and indivisible.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Porphyrius" writes: "The instances of prayers recently given in your columns are capped by one of an old lady who thus addressed the Almighty—'O Lord, thou knowest what it is I want; five hundred a-year, paid quarterly, in advance.'" If such prayers availed they would be numerous.

Another prayer is reported of a Methodist meeting in Northamptonshire, where a new convert, asked to offer prayer, did so to the following effect: "O Lord, do thou have mercy on my sister Sal. She sits three seats from the bottom of the chapel, with a pink ribbon in her bonnet."

FREETHOUGHT FIFTY YEARS AGO.

[CONCLUDED.]

ON Jan. 15, 1842, the *Oracle* appeared with these words beneath the title: "Edited for Charles Southwell during his imprisonment by G. Jacob Holyoake." It began with "A Few Words from the Second Priest of the *Oracle*." With the foolhardy methods of Southwell Mr. Holyoake had little sympathy, but he shared his chivalrous spirit. Under his conduct the articles in the *Oracle*, though couched more in a spirit of sweet reasonableness, showed no lowering of the Freethought flag. He said: "It is intended strictly to adhere to the principles on which this paper was started. To simply pursue the same course, with singleness of heart, earnestness, and oneness of object." Mr. Holyoake, while at Sheffield soon after Southwell's arrest, delivered, on behalf of the funds for his defence, a lecture on Jan. 9, afterwards published as *The Spirit of Bonner in the Disciples of Jesus*. This, his first pamphlet, is as eloquent, terse and vigorous as any of his numerous publications. It is full of a fine spirit of noble indignation, and urges that persecution must ever be met with a spirit of determined resistance. "Christians," he exclaims, "did your Christ disturb no prejudices, or dress the object of his mission to suit the sickly palate of his hearers?" He declares that the persecution of his friend was "the cradle of my doubts and the grave of my religion." He was soon to share Southwell's fate. In the course of a visit to Bristol Gaol, walking from Birmingham, Mr. Holyoake stayed a night at Cheltenham to deliver a lecture on "Home Colonisation." At the end of the lecture opposition was invited, and a local preacher rose and complained that they had been told of their duty to man, but not of their duty to God. Mr. Holyoake replied that religious institutions cost some twenty millions. "Worship thus being expensive, I appeal to your heads and your pockets whether we are not too poor to have a God? If poor men cost the State as much, they would be put, like officers, on half pay; and while our distress lasts I think it would be wise to do the same thing with deity." For these sentences and another (which he did not remember using), viz., "Morality I regard, but I do not believe there is such a thing as a God," a prosecution was incited by the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, then the organ of Dean Close, upon which Holyoake returned from Bristol to Cheltenham, and was there arrested. The illegality and inhumanity of his treatment before trial were so marked as to elicit special rebuke from Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary. One of the magistrates said: "Any person in the meeting would be justified in taking you up without the authority of a warrant," and upon Mr. Holyoake saying it was customary to serve a regular notice, said: "We refuse to hold an argument with a man professing the abominable principle of denying the existence of a supreme being."

Mr. Holyoake was tried at Gloucester on August 15, 1842. The trial was reported by Mr. Knight Hunt, subsequently editor of the *Daily News*; and Mr. Holyoake's lengthy defence is pretty fully set out in his own interesting *History of the Last Trial by Jury for Atheism*. Mr. Holyoake both defended his right to his opinions and showed how he arrived at them. His address was dignified and temperate throughout. Its tone may be gathered from the concluding words—"I believe that in every honest heart there is a sense of rectitude that rises superior to creeds, that respects all virtue and protects all truth; that asks for no names and seeks no precedent before resolving to do rightly; that fears no man's frowns, and dares to be just without custom's permit. To this feeling, gentlemen, only do I appeal, and by its verdict I am willing to abide." Richard Carlile, who was present, wrote—"I heard Wooler and Hono

defend themselves successfully in 1817; but I would prefer to be declared guilty with Holyoake than to being acquitted on the ground of Wooler and Hone."

Mr. Justice Erskine, in summing up, said that "if the prisoner meant that the incomes of clergy should be reduced one-half, he ought to have made use of other language. If he uttered it with levity for the purpose of treating with contempt the majesty of Almighty God, he is guilty of the offence. If you entertain a reasonable doubt of his intention, you will give him the benefit of it." After a brief consultation the jury returned a verdict of guilty, and Mr. Holyoake was sentenced to be imprisoned in the common gaol for six months.

These severe sentences excited much indignation among Freethinkers, manifested in the bitter tone of some of the communications to the *Oracle of Reason*, some of the most blasphemous verses in that publication being written by a gentleman still living, who enjoys a considerable reputation as a poet, both here and in America. From Manchester was issued a little sheet, with the significant title of *The Blasphemer*. We have been told, but cannot vouch for it, that it was edited by the late Dr. John Watts.

No Freethought organisation then existed. The Socialists' meeting at the John-street Institution, where the veteran Mr. E. Truelove was then acting as secretary, were unanimous against such prosecutions. An Anti-Persecution Union was formed, with James Watson as treasurer, Malthus Questell Ryall as secretary, and Mr. W. J. Birch as its chief financial support. Both the latter contributed to the columns of the *Oracle of Reason*, which was continued by Paterson and Chilton. No. 87 (Sept. 10) was described as edited by Thomas Paterson, and beneath followed a statement of the names and sentences of his predecessors. The third priest of the *Oracle* tempted and received the same fate. For exhibiting "profane placards" he was arrested and sentenced at Bow-street (Jan. 27, 1843) to three months imprisonment in Tothill Prison. His trial was reported and published under the title of *God v. Paterson*. He insisted on considering God as the plaintiff, and in quoting from "the Jew book" to show the plaintiff's bad character. Chilton, who had been connected with the *Oracle* from the first, became fourth priest, and continued the publication till the end of 1843, when it ceased, but was followed successively by *The Movement* and the *Reasoner*. Although its publication made some sensation, the *Oracle of Reason* never became self-supporting. The prosecutions of 1842 resulted in increased literary activity. Mr. Holyoake wrote in gaol, besides numerous letters in the *Oracle* and to scattered Freethinkers, his able pamphlet *Paley Refuted in his Own Words*, written in answer to Paley's *Natural Theology*, given to him by the chaplain of the gaol. J. N. Bailey edited *The Torch* and issued several anti-theological essays. The *Freethinker's Information for the People* was published in Glasgow and London. S. D. Curtis published his *Theology Displayed*, and a new edition of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* was prepared and issued in 1843. Another notable outcome of the prosecutions was the advent to the Freethought platform of Mrs. Emma Martin, a lady of culture and ability, who was incited by the sentences on Southwell and Holyoake to commit the "crime" for which they suffered. Secular societies were as yet far off, but their germs can be traced to the outburst of Christian bigotry in 1842.

J. M. WHEELER.

The other night a little four-year-old added to her usual prayer that God would "bless papa and mamma, sister and brother," a petition for "Mr. and Mrs. Baker," some friends she had been visiting, whereupon her wise six-year-old sister immediately broke in with a severe, "Helen, it is not at all necessary to go outside the family."

THE INCONSISTENCIES OF PROTESTANTISM

PROTESTANTISM claims the right to exercise individual judgment in matters of religion. It recognises no authority but the Bible. Each person consequently bears the responsibility of his opinions upon himself. In contradistinction to Romanism, reason is set against authority, an infallible book takes the place of an infallible Church, and personal responsibility cannot be shifted on to the shoulders of religious teachers.

Undoubtedly this was a tremendous step forward towards Rationalism. But when authority was unseated from her despotic throne and reason was set up in her place, it was futile to set limits to its sway. Reason is not a limited monarchy with the out-of-date trappings of absolutism hung about it, only making it look more ridiculous and a greater anachronism as time rolls on, but a democracy where every person has a vote and every vote counts one. Reason demands that every man shall think for himself and not by proxy, that his thoughts shall be his own and not those of a class set apart to think for him, that he should not put his thinking out to be "done" as he would his washing, and that, though his thoughts be crude and ill-formed, it were better than that they were of the ordinary conventional type, with every vestige of originality pressed out of them, as if his mind were a sheet or a blanket which had gone through a sort of mental mangle that hadn't left a crease behind.

The attempts of Protestants to limit the sphere of reason was of necessity bound to fail. The logical outcome of Protestantism was Rationalism. Protestantism itself, as has been said many times, is but the halfway house from Rome to Atheism. The interpretation of the Bible by different minds could only result in different opinions. This the Church of Rome in its subtle wisdom always knew. Hence the differing and conflicting sects and doctrines in Protestantism—its Calvinism and its Arminianism, etc. An infallible Bible requires an infallible interpreter and the Protestant assertion of the right of private judgment and at the same time the setting up of an infallible book was foredoomed to end in failure. Rationalism was the inevitable outcome. The fallible cannot judge the infallible any more than the finite can comprehend the infinite. Then again, if Protestants might question the infallibility of the Church, why not question the infallibility of the Bible? Even Luther, the founder of Protestantism, called in question or attached a different value to some portion of the Scriptures. Conceding the right of private judgment in matters of doctrine, and at the same time to denounce the exercise of that right when applied to an examination of the grounds and authority on which those doctrines are based, is inconsistent, illogical and absurd. It is like building the walls of a house before we have seen that the foundations are all right.

Protestantism, when it declared the right of private judgment, struck a blow not only at the authority of the Church, but also unconsciously at the authority of the Bible. One claim is as absurd as the other. In both cases the claims are but human. If anything, the claim for the authority and infallibility of the Church carries most weight, being supported by a greater number of witnesses. The witnesses for the Bible are the writers thereof only. (I say nothing of the value of the evidence in either case). Why should we believe *them* any more than the Roman Catholic priesthood? Why should we not exercise our right of private judgment here? Protestants will grant, in theory at any rate, that it is every man's right to cultivate his intellect, to investigate, to use his reason and exercise his judgment. Where there is a right to do something there can be no blame attached for exercising that right, or it would be absurd to

concede it. How inconsistent, then, for them to denounce sceptics because, in the exercise of this right, they have conscientiously arrived at conclusions which they (the Protestants) do not accept—have travelled further along the road of thought than Protestants are able or willing to journey. Protestants speak of belief as if it were an act of will and not a result of evidence—as something which can be put on and off like a coat.

The right of private judgment is very much a thing of theory with Protestants. Put into practice it means that they are willing that we should enjoy it, providing we do not come to any conclusion of a heterodox character and opposed to their own stereotyped opinions. The jury must be packed and the verdict a foregone conclusion. The "right" they grant is equivalent to the right we all have to break the law—and suffer for it; or the right the soldier has to desert—and be shot for it.

H. J.

GOD: CUI BONO?

[CONCLUDED.]

THERE is one plea of justification urged in mitigation of the wickedness of even the best type and specimen of God that may speedily be disposed of, viz., the claim that the Divine Potter (or Potterer), having absolute power over his living clay, may do what he likes with his own. If for "may" we read "can," the argument—assuming the hypothesis that a God exists—becomes a truism which no one need call in question. But if the argument means that the mere possession by "the Creator" of absolute might implies an absolute right to do what he likes, then, on similar grounds, the basest tyranny all the world over may be justified, and remonstrance shown to be sin. The attribute of omnipotence is the flimsiest of all titles that deity could show to man's esteem, especially as—God being God—he only had "Hobson's choice" in being omnipotent, and has no power, despite his omnipotence, to cease being omnipotent so long as he chooses to remain God. We may clearly see from this argument that current theology is simply the apotheosis of power. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and this religious fear paralyses the intellect, blunts the keen edge of conscience, and represses the insurgency of doubt whenever the unsophisticated goodness of man rises in revolt against the monstrous claims to moral irresponsibility—the right divine to govern wrong—made on behalf of deity. The existence of an almighty tyrant may, it is true, make protest impolitic and resistance suicidal; it may make an attitude of hypocritical deference to his resistless might the sole measure by which immunity may be secured from further wrong; but the unredeemed cowardice of a God who, having a giant's strength, uses it as a giant in dispensing blessings and curses, joys and woes, with an arbitrary hand and a callous heart of indifference to the sufferings of his creatures, and who then seeks absolution from his victims on the ground of his omnipotence, will be at once recognised and execrated by every man who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Another plea—the curious argument that it is necessary to retain God as a sort of spiritual policeman—may perhaps deserve a moment's attention. It is alleged that, even if there be no God, the belief that there is one is useful as exercising a restraining influence on many minds who are now under the salutary impression that they are being constantly shadowed by a sort of almighty detective, who jots down every vile act and thought—nay, even the slightest peccadillo—in his infallible little note-book, the tell-tale records of which will cry aloud for vengeance on the day of judgment against the wrongdoer. It is contended that, even as our lives and

property are safe from attack so long as the criminal is harboring the possibly erroneous fear that his footsteps are being dogged by a *bona fide* (earthly) thief-catcher, so the belief that the all-seeing eye of God is looking on, and that nothing can escape either his watchfulness here or his vengeance hereafter will act so as to deter many a would-be criminal from pursuing the path of iniquity. Atheists and Agnostics are therefore enjoined, on grounds of self-interest and social welfare, to cultivate in others so useful and so expedient a belief. Those who employ this strange argument invite us to put the security of life and property upon the rotten foundation of conscious deception, and idly fancy that, by means of a cynical hypocrisy, the cause of honesty will be promoted. They display a cowardly fear of truth, and a self-interested unwillingness to impart it. Those who formulate the policeman theory of God are, however, clinging to the exploded idea of the curative efficacy and educational value of coercion. Govern men socially by the knout, the soldier and the policeman, and you realise the awful condition in which Russia finds herself to-day. In the same way, if you attempt to moralise the community by inaugurating a divine reign of terror, you only succeed in pandering to every vileness of a distorted human nature—you make men's virtue merely mercenary—you give them an ignoble motive of self-interest—you whitewash their reiterated offences, either by priestly absolution, or by the cleansing effects of Lamb's blood applied to the contrite sinner—you teach them the thousand and one pious expedients which theology offers, cheating the Devil of his due by a timely act of repentance, or you teach the holy art and mystery of wheedling God Almighty into a forgiving frame of mind by the passionate outburst of a faith which resolves to show itself by its works. In any case this ignoble, fantastical justification of belief in God can only prove as disastrous in its influence on conduct as it is disgraceful in its conception.

God is the personification of the unknown invested with anthropomorphic attributes, the gross ridiculousness of which becomes gradually attenuated with the progress of liberal thought. Science has driven this shadowy idea from one retrenchment after another; the last position it occupies is in the realm of the moral feelings; but a little robust common sense will, we are certain, finally expel it from the fastness of sentimentalism, and banish for ever the superstition that God and morality are a sort of Siamese twins.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

A MERRY LAUGH.

Once on a time it so befell,
Or at least 'tis so averred,
That in the utmost depths of hell
A merry laugh was heard!

Thereat, for once, the ghostly crew
Forgot their teeth to gnash,
And tremblingly inquired, who
In hell could be so rash?

Up jumped the prince, with darkened brow,
And pointing with his staff,
Bade one step forth and tell him how
In hell he came to laugh!

Then from the silent, ghostly throng,
A voice was heard to break;
It had a British accent strong,
And there was no mistake:

Ah! come, I say, upon my word,
I 'ad to laugh, he cried,
I caught the point of a joke I 'eard,
Ten years before I died.

BOOK CHAT.

Antichrist: A Short Examination of the Spirit of the Age, by F. W. Bain, M.A., Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford (Parker and Co.), is the work of an able and stimulating writer. It is not a theological treatise, as the title might suggest; on the contrary, we infer that Mr. Bain is a Freethinker. He uses the term "Antichrist" metaphorically, and half humorously he quotes the text on his title-page—"Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations." His dedication is in another vein—"To my mother, who could not be tried by her peers, for she has none." Happy mother, and happy son!

Occam's Razor, a previous book of Mr. Bain's, contained a shrewd critical attack on Socialism. The present volume pursues the same subject politically as well as socially. "Socialism," Mr. Bain says, "originates in the moral criticism of society, and the prescription it recommends for the cure of the diseases it denounces is, the application of abstract rational theories, the outcome of that moral criticism to the concrete and practical sphere of politics." This is from his Preface, which ends with a parody from Gambetta's famous *mot*—*Le rationalisme, voilà l'ennemi!*

Mr. Bain is not opposed to Reason. It is to Reason he appeals. By "rationalism" he means putting Society on the Procrustean bed of abstract theories; insisting that everything shall be regulated according to "right reason." He contends that human nature is the basis of politics, and that in the main human nature is irrational. He is opposed to Republicanism, and in favor of Constitutional Monarchy; opposed to Cosmopolitanism, and in favor of Nationalism. He is also in favor of practical reform, strong government, and the leadership of the nation by "responsible" rulers. Finally, he discovers in Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, the oracle of the true philosophy.

Many readers will shrug their shoulders and cry "Bah!" And indeed Mr. Bain's belief in Disraeli is a curious study in psychology. Nevertheless his book is not to be dismissed in this easy-going fashion. Whether or not we agree with his main doctrines, no one who takes the trouble to read him can deny his brilliant dialectic, his sinewy style, his power of apt illustration, his flashes of true insight, his nobility of spirit, and perhaps above all his well-bred, incisive wit. Gifts like these are not to be despised, and from a man who possesses them we must learn something, however we dissent from his political creed.

Renan's *Feuilles Detachées*, a supplement to his delightful *Souvenirs de Jeunesse*, is now published. As soon as possible we shall give our readers an account of its contents. Meanwhile we borrow a little from an early review in the *Speaker*. Here is a pretty story relating to Rothschild—the Paris one. He was insisting in the synagogue on the immortality of the soul, and a learned Israelite of the old school said to Renan, "Just fancy that! . . . Such a rich man, too! . . . to want paradise into the bargain! . . . Let him leave that to us other poor devils."

Every month of his life Renan receives from a pious resident of Nantes a missive containing these words, "There is a hell." This would incense many men, but Renan's urbanity is imperturbable. He politely thanks the Nantes gentleman who is so anxious about his salvation, and on the whole he hopes there is a hell, for he would prefer it to annihilation. So said W. E. Forster to Harriet Martineau, who remarked that, after five minutes' experience of hell, he would probably change his opinion.

"Many theologians," Renan says, "hold that for the damned it is better to be than not to be, and that they are perhaps open to one or two good thoughts. For myself, I fancy that if the Eternal, in his severity, were to send me to that evil place, I should succeed in getting out of it. I should address supplications to my creator which would make him smile. The reasons I should give to him to prove that I was there through his fault would be so subtle that he would be greatly put to it to answer them."

Madame Carnot, the wife of the French President, is an excellent English scholar, but why does a writer in *Hearth and Home* say that her assistance was "of the greatest value

to M. Carnot when he was engaged in translating John Stuart Mill's great work on the revolution of 1848"? What "great work" did John Stuart Mill write on this subject?

The latest volume in Swan Sonnenschien's Social Science Series is on English Social Movements, by Robert Archer Woods, and deals largely with Robert Owen and his followers.

A new sixpenny magazine has made its appearance under the title of *The Library Review*. It is edited by Kington Parkes. The opening number for March has some attractive articles.

Freethought in Holland, as recently explained by our correspondent J. Van der Ende, owes much to "Multatuli," under which name Edward Douwes Dekker is best known to his countrymen. "Multatuli" is mainly known in England by his popular *Max Havelaar*—a masterly indictment of Dutch rule in Java, which was translated into the principal languages of Europe. His *Ideen*, or Ideas, however, is a work that deserves translation, being full of incisive and thorough-going Freethought.

The editors of *De Dageraad* have put out a neat little volume of 160 pages, *To the Memory of Multatuli*. It consists of a number of selections by writers on *De Dageraad*, opening with "A Remembrance and an Encouragement," by Vitus Bruinsma, and contains an account of his conflict with the official press by J. G. ten Bokkel, a number of Dekker's scattered letters; and a bibliography. A portrait of Dekker is given and also an illustration to his fine poem "The Prayer of an Agnostic," a translation of which we hope to place before our readers.

CHRISTIAN NUNNERIES.

In the *Memoirs of Scipio de Ricci*, Bishop of Pistoja and Prato, translated by Thomas Roscoe and published in England in 1829, will be found evidence that in many of the Italian convents at the end of the last century Christianity had degenerated into a base phallic worship. Monks and nuns held that what are called sins of the flesh were no sins, and they gave the authority of Jesus and the virgin as directing them. One nun writes of the monks—"With the exception of three or four, all that I ever knew, alive or dead, are of the same character; they have all the same maxims and the same conduct. They are on more intimate terms with the nuns than if they were married to them. It is a maxim of theirs that God has forbidden hatred, but not love; and that the man is made for the woman and the woman for the man" (p. 116). Of certain of the nuns it is said (p. 127)—"The holiest rites of religion had been subjected by them to the most disgusting obscenities; every doctrine of scripture was interpreted by them so as to authorize some shameful sexual indulgence; and they pretended that for whatever they did or believed, they had the special illumination of the Holy Spirit." According to Bishop Ricci, the entire Order of St. Dominic had fallen into this depravity, into which they initiated the nuns who were to minister to their sensual pleasures. But the Dominicans were not alone. A letter from Signor Foggio to the bishop says—"I know a monastery in which a Jesuit used to make the nuns lift up their clothes, assuring them that they thereby performed an act of virtue, because they overcame a natural repugnance."

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

ACID DROPS.

Ananias Hughes held forth at St. James's Hall last Sunday afternoon on International Arbitration. This smart little spectacled commercial traveller of Methodism crowed and chuckled as though arbitration in quarrels were a Christian invention: As a matter of fact, it is a commonplace among Freethinkers, who are glad in one way to see the "forward" Christians hobbling after them. It is Christian nations that support huge armies and armaments, Christian sovereigns and statesmen that quarrel and get up wars, and Christian priests that bless the battle-flags and implore God for victory. If the Christians only left off fighting, and getting ready for it, there would be a remarkable difference on this planet.

Ananias Hughes has been holding forth at Banbury. Amongst other truths, he declared that Mr. G. J. Holyoake had expressed his gladness that Cleveland Hall, where "Bradlaugh and Besant use to speak," had passed into the hands of the Methodists. The Rev. Ananias is out in his chronology. Cleveland Hall passed out of Freethought hands before Mrs. Besant came into the Secular party. Our party lost the place, we believe, through the villainous state of the law in respect to our rights of property.

Mr. Holyoake's name is made too free with by Ananias Hughes. The Banbury Methodists were told that the Father of Secularism said he should never have been connected with the Secular Society if Methodism had been in his younger days what it is now! For our part, we would rather believe Jack Falstaff, fresh from a fight, than a Christian reporting a conversation with a Freethinker.

Mr. Fullarton, one of Spurgeon's colleagues, is struck by the fact that on the night of the great preacher's death a new star was discovered in the Milky Way. He overlooks the fact that thousands of other people, in various parts of the world, died the very same night, and no doubt some of them were Freethinkers. The star, therefore, had as much relation to them as to Spurgeon; only the worthy Fullarton happened to be thinking of Spurgeon, and Spurgeon only, just then.

If an educated Christian, in the age of Darwin, can talk like Mr. Fullarton about this star, how easy it is to understand how the "star of Bethlehem" story found a place in the Gospels. Perhaps it originated in some hint like Mr. Fullarton's about Spurgeon; and, instead of being strangled in its cradle, it was nursed into a circumstantial narrative.

An old joke in a new form appears in the *Nonconformist Musical Journal*: "Notice.—The person who stole 'Songs of the Sanctuary' from seat No. 32, should improve the opportunity of using them here, as he will have no occasion of singing them hereafter."

This is not so good as the original. A Yankee editor, having missed the office thermometer, advertised thusly: "The thief who stole our thermometer is asked to bring it back slick; it isn't of any use to him where he's going, as it only registers up to 212."

"Our old ally" is Emperor William's description of God Almighty. We should like to see a copy of the treaty. A much greater soldier than Pious Billy said that Providence was on the side of the biggest battalions, and if the Germans are ever outnumbered and beaten in a decisive battle the "old ally" will be on the other side. If the worst comes to the worst, the German Bombastes will find more help from the Triple Alliance than from his "friend above."

A Turkish gentleman of high position got drunk at Liverpool and was run in. He begged that his name might not be divulged, as his family were strict Mohammedans, and if it came to their ears that he had been drinking they would have him beheaded when he returned home. The court fined him and suppressed his name.

Mohammedanism is a teetotal religion. Christianity is very much the opposite. The Rev. W. G. Lawes, the veteran missionary to New Guinea, says that an inventory of the cargoes of European vessels bound for South and West Africa

stopping at Madeira in one week showed that they carried spirits valued at over a million sterling.

The Rev. A. A. Ramsey is preaching a series of sermons in Emmanuel Congregational Church, Dulwich, on "Old Testament Difficulties." One of these sermons, briefly reported in the *Christian World*, is on Jephthah's Daughter. Mr. Ramsey admits that "many scholars and critics emphatically maintain that Jephthah did literally offer up his daughter as a burnt offering to God." But Mr. Ramsey differs from them, and that is to settle the "difficulty," at least at Dulwich. Mr. Ramsey's view is that Jephthah's daughter was simply devoted to a life of celibacy. But this idea is borrowed from other religions than Judaism. There were no dedicated virgins among the Hebrews; on the other hand, we have in the story of Abraham and Isaac a clear relic of the times of human sacrifice, to say nothing of other texts in the Jewish Scriptures.

Mr. Ramsey says that Jephthah's vow was that *whatsoever* came out to meet him should be offered up to the Lord. But the learned Calmet was of a different opinion. "Observe," he writes, "he does not say the first *thing*, or the first *animal*, but the first *person*." Canon Cook also, in the *Speaker's Commentary*, says that the original Hebrew means *whosoever*, and the words "prove conclusively that Jephthah intended his vow to apply to human beings, not animals." Martin Luther, who was no humbug, like so many Christian apologists, said that the text "stands there clear." No one doubted it until seven hundred years ago, when the idea of human sacrifice had grown too revolting, and Rabbi Kimchi began to twist the text of Judges to suit a more humane interpretation. But such interpretations are, and ever will be, failures. "Solutions like these," as Warburton wrote, "only expose sacred scripture to the scorn and derision of unbelievers."

Mr. Ramsey will probably look down on a work like Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes*, but if he condescends to read the tenth number he will find the subject treated exhaustively, and the actual sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter established beyond reasonable dispute.

A familiar object just now in newsagent's windows is a rather pretty picture of a girl in Eastern costume and careless pose, and wearing a sad, far-away look on her face. The picture bears the title "The Dawn of Christianity," which might mean anything. A correspondent (Mr. Guest) sends us a copy of some lines which he has forwarded to the publishers of the picture, with the suggestion that in any future edition they should add them to the title in order to make things more clear. They are as follows:—

The Pagan maiden heaves a deep-drawn sigh—
A strange foreboding o'er her bosom steals;
The Pantheon's gods by ruthless hands will die;
The Galilean's looming power she feels.

As in prophetic dream she sees the cross
And reeking sword in evil concert mate;
The strife of creeds; of social ties the loss—
And family love o'erwhelmed in pious hate.

The Rev. Sandy Lobban, of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hebburn, has been lecturing against the sin of dancing. He declares, "The first time they danced they set their feet upon a road that led to fornication and adultery"—the "greatest sins of which a man or woman can be guilty." In the eyes of this man of God, cruelty, bigotry, theft, and murder are venial in comparison.

"Dancing," says this pure-minded minister, "is not only an immodest exercise leading to profligacy, but the very immodesty itself was the charm in the soul-destroying pleasure." The dance spoken of in the Bible was an expression of holy joy, not an immodest exhibition. If we only dance as David did before the ark, to the disgust of his wife, clad only in a linen ephod, all would be well. We believe David's form of religious dance would be admirably suited to the Rev. Mr. Lobban.

Who is Mr. C. R. Parsons, of Bristol? There is a long report in the *Clevedon Mercury* of a pious speech of his, in which he said that "all sorts of young men" came to him, and one of them asked him "what he thought of Foote's

The worthy Parsons replied that he thought "Foote was neither an Englishman nor a gentleman." Good for Parsons! It is easy to see that "Foote is not a gentleman," for doth he not (yea he doth, says the noble Parsons) speak "indecently fo Jesus Christ," who has the honor to be the great Parsons' "best friend"? But how on earth was "Foote's" foreign origin detected? "Foote" always understood that he was born at Plymouth on January 11, 1850, and if he wasn't the parish register lies. He always understood, too, that his family were pure English, at least as pure as they make them. But he is probably mistaken, or how could "Parsons" conclude that he is not an Englishman? Far be it from "Foote" to set up his authority against "Parsons"; for of "Parsons" it may be said, as of the deity in Omar Khayyam, "he knows, he knows."

The *P.S.A. Magazine*, the organ of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Classes, inserts some verses addressed "To the Unbeliever." They begin:

After the joys of earth,
After its songs of mirth,
After its hours of light,
After its dreams so bright,
What then?

And gives the proper answer for a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon:

Oh! then—the judgment throne!
Oh! then—the last hope—gone!
Then, all the woes that dwell
In an eternal hell!

This is followed by the verse "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). The contemplation of this heavenly doctrine should give the true believer many a pleasant Sunday afternoon.

The very name of the P.S.A. is, however, found highly objectionable by the *Church Times*, which, in an article on "Hedonism," says it seems to be forgotten by P.S.A. men that the Gospel of Redemption begins with discipline, not with pleasure. The *C. T.* need not be alarmed. While the P.S.A. people hold to the orthodox doctrines they will continue to take their pleasures sadly.

"General Booth's courage," the *Speaker* says, "becomes audacity. He announces openly that he trades upon the ignorance, the simplicity, and the foolishness of men: people must be treated like children or sheep." This is in reference to his *Contemporary* article.

The Rev. J. Duthie, missionary of the London Missionary Society in Southern India, says the Salvation Army issue most misleading reports as to their successes in those parts. A leading officer at Madras reported that a whole village near Cape Comorin of sixty or seventy people had embraced Christianity through the labors of the Salvationists. Mr. Duthie made strict inquiries, and found that no such occurrence had taken place. He adds, "Nagercoil is their headquarters in these parts, and I know of no results from their labors here except that they have gained over to their side some of our Christian young men."

Mrs. Hubbard is a distinguished member of the Salvation Army at Grays; yet she let her step-child die from want and bruises, possibly derived from ill-treatment. When asked to attend the child she went down on her knees and prayed to the Lord. The coroner very severely censured her, and she may yet be the subject of criminal proceedings.

To the Kaffirs of South Africa Christianity only introduces new vices, with the blessed assurance that Jesus paid for all. Its teachings put a premium on wickedness. The *Johannesburg Star*, Feb. 9, reports the testimony of a large manager there that "the heathen Kaffir is a much more reliable, steady and honest boy to deal with than the Christianised Kaffir. He would not think of giving credit to the Christian, whilst he would trust, and always readily trusts, the heathen, knowing that he would be sure of his money; for the latter, who has his own quaint way of putting it, says: 'I could not eat the boss's money.'" Orthodox religion only makes these heathens worse.

Little bits of profanity seem to be highly relished in our Christian law courts. During the course of a recent divorce suit, *M'Dowdall v. Jacob*, the plaintiff testified that he found

his wife locked up with the defendant, whom he recognised by his voice. Whereupon there ensued (in court, that is) this forensic episode:—

Mr. Lockwood—It was indeed the "voice of Jacob."

Sir Charles Butt—So it was on the other occasion. You are right in your scripture history.

Mr. Lockwood—It is so long ago that one cannot always remember.

The report says there was "laughter" and "renewed laughter" at Mr. Lockwood's sallies. Yet this Jacob (the original one, not the co-respondent) was the only man God ever "loved," and there is a law to punish those who make fun of the Bible.

The Oxford Ghost is played out. It was only an undergraduates' joke. Yet it caused a commotion, as the Cock Lane Ghost did in the days of Dr. Johnson. Both "ghosts" were exposed. Other "ghosts," including the great Jerusalem Ghost, were unfortunately not investigated so thoroughly.

One of the late [Madame Blavatsky's alleged post mortem letters to her successor, Mr. H. B. Foulke, given in the *Progressive Thinker* (Feb. 20), says, "Whatever happens I will sustain you before God and Man, as I always did." This bears marks of inauthenticity, as the late gifted lady did not use the name of God, except for oburgatory purposes.

The Kilburn Sisters are supposed to be Anglican, but there is a Roman flavor about some of the hymns of their *Manual*, as in the following—

When I confess with contrite heart
My sins unto the priest,
I do believe from all their guilt
That moment I'm released.

A very nice, easy, comfortable doctrine, to be sure

The great "woman question" is rapidly coming to the front. On the whole it is far more important than nine-tenths of the questions that agitate the public mind and set partisans in a fury. It makes itself heard in the press and in parliament, in literature and on the stage. The latest novels of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy deal with it, and it is one of the chief inspirations of Ibsen's dramas. Yes, this great "woman question" will have to be faced and settled. Playing the ostrich with it is as useless as undignified. The Austrian government, for instance, with the Emperor behind it, is only making itself a laughing-stock by prohibiting the performance of Fulda's "The Slave"—a play in which a young wife, after the death of her child, reads John Stuart Mill's book on "The Subjection of Woman" and refuses to live any longer with a husband who treats her as an inferior. No doubt running away from husband and home is a cheap solution, a cutting instead of an untying of the Gordian knot. Nevertheless a crude solution is better than a hypocritical blinking of the problem.

Jehovah does not look after his houses properly. The parish church of St. Nicholas, Rochester, was partially burnt down on Sunday morning. Sunday too! The very day when Jehovah is supposed to be wide awake in the churches, listening to prayers, hymns, sermons, and occasional snores.

The Rev. Father Adams, of Brooklyn, is creating a sensation in America by alleged cures through relics. The method of these faith cures is always the same. Excitement and earnest faith produce a change in nervous disorders, too often followed by a relapse.

"Have you tried faith?" the missionary cried.

"If not, oh, try that cure at once, I beg."

"Twill heal your sickness, whatsoever it be."

The patient answered, "I've a broken leg."

The Rev. Dr. Lee, the well-known ritualistic vicar, All Saints, Lambeth, and author, we believe, of a work on the Sinlessness of the Virgin Mary, is charged upon a summons with indecency with Thomas George Clifton. The offence is denied.

An offshoot of the Chatham Jezreelites has appeared at Richmond, Indiana. The sect calls itself "The Disciples of the Flying Roll." Their leader, one Michael Xavier Mills, a native of Elgin, Ontario, proclaims that the world will soon be visited by some dread calamity, and those only will be saved from the wrath to come who have their names recorded on the flying roll. This transaction can be effected on pay-

ment of certain dollars. Mr. Michael Mills declares himself Michael the Prince, the one born to fulfil Dan. xii. 1. He combines with his religion a subtle system of philology, telling his followers to go to Detroit, the spiritual meaning of Detroit being "Do it right," while Michigan means "where Michael began."

The *English Churchman* rages because the restoration of the church at Stratford-on-Avon has turned it into a ritualistic edifice with high stone altar, etc. It says it shows "a refinement of cruelty and blasphemy to make Shakespeare, who was a good Protestant, the medium of proclaiming our national apostasy to the dwellers in all parts of the world."

Was Shakespeare "a good Protestant"? This position has been disputed by more than one Catholic writer, and Mr. Wheeler and others have given reasons for considering him a Freethinker.

Professor Drummond is almost the Oscar Wilde of theology. A collection of his deliverances would make good reading for a cynical sceptic. At Edinburgh recently, in the course of a Sunday discourse to students, he said he had been asked if a man could lead a Christian life when he was not quite sure of Christ's divinity. Now to any honest, straightforward mind this question admits of only one answer. No man can lead a Christian life without being a Christian, and a Christian is one who believes in the divinity of Christ. Of course, he may lead a good and even heroic life, but that is a very different thing.

How did Dr. Drummond answer the question? Much after the style of his Master when he was cornered. "The first Christians," he said, "knew nothing of the divinity of Christ." Quite true; and we are glad to see Dr. Drummond, however inadvertently and clumsily, letting this cat out of the bag. As a matter of fact, the divinity of Christ was gradually manufactured by the Church.

Logic and religion, in Dr. Drummond's opinion, will never mix. Such at least we judge to be his belief. At the conclusion of his address he told a story—Ah yes, that's it, the good old story that never happened, only you tell it as though it did, and it serves the turn; and what is a "walker" if it abounds to the glory of God? Well the story was about "an old man [perhaps the one with the ass] who was ignorant of Christ." And this is how it is supposed to have happened, according to the *Scotsman* report: "Looking out of a window one winter's day and seeing a tree, the old man began to think how in three months branches would be sprouting and leaves budding on this apparently dead tree, and came to the conclusion that God must be there, and so he fell on his knees and prayed. The old man lived for several years, and was a Christian to the end of his life."

Such is the childish stuff a Scottish professor will talk to students on Sunday! If Dr. Drummond believes it he is foolish to go on preaching. The best way to convert an unbeliever is to take him to a third-floor window in the winter and make him look at a tree. Five minutes' steady gazing should settle him; and if that doesn't, what will?

A meeting of sky-pilots and others interested in their business has been held at Kingswood, Gloucester, to consider "the comparatively small attendance at divine worship under the increased population." Football and various other sins were complained of as hindering the work of the Almighty, but the ministers showed no suspicion that themselves or their doctrines were at fault.

Anyone who reads the Gospels can see that there is no satisfactory proof that Jesus died upon the cross. It has indeed been held that he recovered from a swoon, and passed the rest of his life in a safe obscurity, perhaps in some Essenean retreat or Therapeutic hermitage. Of course this is only a speculation, though not a wildly improbable one. Yet the question remains—Did Jesus actually die under crucifixion? There is no sufficient evidence that he did. Appearances are apt to be deceitful. Professor Huxley points out, in his little book on Hume, that all the ordinary signs of death may be present, so as to deceive even a medical practitioner, and yet the man may be still alive. People have actually been put into their coffins without being really dead, and in some cases perhaps buried. Two cases were recently

reported in the newspapers. At Lyons the friends of an old man had arrived for the funeral, when the daughter grasped his hand in a last farewell and felt a return of the pressure. Soon afterwards he regained consciousness. At St. Petersburg a lady was certified as dead by the doctor, but another medical man, finding she had suffered from hysteria, used the microphone and heard a faint beating of the heart. This patient also recovered.

Paul did not suffer women to teach, but the Bishop of Rochester has just admitted five ladies to the new office of deaconess. But what deaconesses have to do may be a disputed question. Probably they perform diaconal functions.

"In Cellar Cool," a fine "drinking" song from the German, was sung by Mr. Harry Ward at Kendal concert, and it mightily offended Vicar Crewdson who was present. When the man of God got home he wrote to say that he was "heartily ashamed" of his name being among the patrons of the concert, and added "You must never ask me again to be a patron of any concert at which Mr. Harry Ward is to sing." Splendid! Magnificent! Especially on the part of a minister of Jesus Christ, who turned seventy-five gallons of water into wine to keep up the spree at a wedding.

Dr. W. B. Richardson, in his recent article in *Longman's Magazine* on the mastery of pain by anaesthetics, tells over again the story of Dr. Simpson whose use of chloroform was denounced as an interference with the curse pronounced on mankind in the Garden of Eden. It appears that the pawky Doctor turned the tables on the theologians by remarking that when Adam was to be deprived of a rib the Lord cast him into a deep sleep before performing the operation.

Henry Varley, ex-butcher and revivalist, made himself notorious at one time by sending circulars to members of parliament, calling upon them to keep that infamous Atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, out of the House of Commons. He also called upon them to suppress that infamous paper, the *Freethinker*. This Varley has a son in the Gospel line of business, who preached a sermon at Cheltenham last Sunday on Freethinkers and Freethinker. One of our friends there took down the discourse verbatim and sent us a copy. We have read it through, and it strikes us as a very poor performance. Most of it is extremely small talk about Christians being the only true Freethinkers and the only true sceptics; although the preacher admits that if he were openly to give himself out as "a sceptic" he would have to say good-bye to his pulpit. There are two portions of the sermon, however, that may occupy a little of our attention.

Varley senior covered Charles Bradlaugh with venom. Varley junior covers him with sickly slaver. He patronises the great "infidel," and ventures to think "he might never have become an Atheist if only he had been treated kindly and wisely in his early days"—that is if the Christians about him had shown a little less Christianity. Varley junior doesn't understand Charles Bradlaugh. He isn't built to understand him. It was *thinking* that made him an Atheist. All the "charity" of Christians did was to make him think to some purpose a few years earlier than he might have done if they had left him alone or shown him common humanity.

In his own estimation, Varley junior is a great authority on "thinking," and when he denies that there is any "thought" in the *Freethinker* we must cry "A Daniel come to judgment, yea we say a Daniel!" This is "a trashy production." We have left—just as Charles Bradlaugh did, by the way—the "cautious position of scientific Agnosticism" for the "dreary wastes of blank Atheism." Our readers—poor misguided people!—have "left the stage where argument can do any good," and "all that remains" for Varley junior and his Christian friends is "to pray for them in their blind wandering from God."

This is a lucid interval in Varley junior's intellect. It is the one flash of common sense in the whole of his sermon. Let him go on praying for our readers. If a miracle happens in reply he may effect their conversion. But never otherwise. They have certainly left the stage where *his* arguments can do them any good.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 13, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester; at 11, "Secularism and its Enemies: Black and White"; at 3, "Professor Stokes on God"; at 6.30, "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh."

Thursday, March 17, Hall of Science, Old-street, London: at 8, "The Mythical Christ."

March 20, Wolverhampton; 21, Warrington; 27, Hall of Science; 29, Bethnal Green; 31, Hall of Science.

April 3 and 10, Hall of Science; 17, Sheffield; 24, Hall of Science.

May 1, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—March 13 (morning and evening), Hall of Science; 20, Hall of Science; 22 and 23, public debate at Sheffield; 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.

W. PERRY AND E. PANKHURST.—Delighted to hear from two old members of the West Ham Branch now settled in Colorado. We thank you for circulating this journal out there, and note your approval of Mr. Foote's "efforts as President."

J. HUGHES.—An old joke. It appeared in the famous prosecuted Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* (1882), and was pointed out to the jury by Judge North.

VEGETARIAN.—The proxy arrived too late to be of legal use. Thanks for your good wishes.

SCHOOL BOY.—Job iii., the whole chapter.

W. MOSLEY.—Jokes are always welcome, but two of the three you send have appeared in our columns already. Our jokes come back to us "after many days."

G. H. H.—Glad to hear that the reverend gentleman's folly has convinced you that you ought to join the N. S. S. Mr. Jones will send you card and your certificate will follow.

D. HUGHES.—Thanks for your interesting letter. Sorry we cannot avail ourselves of your kind offer at present. Freethought will need to be better organised in the Welsh towns before anything of importance can be done in the way of circulating Freethought pamphlets and leaflets among the Welsh-speaking population.

JARVIS, newsagent, Bold-lane, Derby, supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

W. B. THOMPSON.—We congratulate the Chatham friends on the approaching crown to their years of labor, patience, and self-sacrifice.

MR. SHORT, 40 Queen's-road, Notting-hill, sells this journal all Secular publications.

A. HOLLAND, of Bilston, will be glad to meet the Walsall Freethinkers at the large hotel opposite the front entrance of the L. & N. W. station this evening (March 13) at 7, for the purpose of forming an N. S. S. Branch.

H. HANSFORD.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. MAGNESS.—No doubt an active Freethought propaganda would do a great deal of good in South Wales. We appreciate your approval.

W. MANN.—Under consideration.

W. H. MAKERS, 18 Acacia-road, Markhouse-road, Walthamstow, is now secretary of the Leyton Branch in place of Mr. Jenkinson resigned.

I. G. RUSSELL.—Notices of meetings should be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green. You do not state where the lecture is to be delivered.

R. F.—We do not answer legal questions, except as affecting Freethought.

J. J. GILES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

H. ALLEN.—Cuttings are always welcome.

P. KAVANAGH.—We have no ill-will towards the Ethical Culturists at Dublin. Probably they do good in their way, though intellectual trenchancy is not among their virtues. That they do not particularly relish the *Freethinker* is not surprising; it is edited for a different class of readers. Mr. Foote hopes to lecture in Dublin some day, and has no doubt of finding an audience there.

C. QUINTON AND C. TAPPIN.—The unanimous vote of confidence of a special meeting of the Bethnal Green Branch is gratifying; all the more so as the Branch is a poor one, in a poor neighborhood, yet has done a great deal of work, and is able to appreciate the difficulty of organising a not too wealthy party. We believe the Hall of Science scheme will succeed, though we know it will need all the pushing we can give it. Financially, it is the biggest thing the Secular party has yet attempted.

K. KNUT.—Thanks for the *Mercury* cutting. Mr. Keast had already sent a report of the meeting. We hope you will do your best for the Bristol Branch. Your support will be very

valuable. Freethought propaganda must be difficult in such a bigoted city as Bristol, where the boycott is used so unscrupulously against heretics; but courage, energy and perseverance work wonders.

W. MCSICCAR.—(1) Our acquaintance with Professor Symes is limited. He bravely and generously took the chair at our lecture in Nottingham after our imprisonment. (2) Pleased to hear you intend to help the Branch. (3) Applicants for a special lecturer's diploma must have been two years on the members' list. Beyond that each case is decided on its merits after proper investigation. (4) Logic and psychology are well enough in their way, but you had better study Christian Evidences and the literature of Evolution. Master *Supernatural Religion*, and such works as Tylor's and Lubbock's.

G. G. C.—We have already commented on the diminishing incomes of Missionary Societies. Always pleased to hear from you.

G. F. P.—Your name will be entered in the N. S. S. books. It is best to join, though you can only afford the minimum subscription.

F. J. STRATFORD.—We think the writer is ironical.

J. SCULLAR.—Pleased to learn that Mr. Domoney is returned to the Southampton School Board, but sorry that the Church candidates were so successful.

HALL OF SCIENCE SCHEME.—Mr. Foote has received the following fresh donations:—J. B., £5; W. T. Leekey, 2s.

W. GOODBOURN.—There are three ways of avoiding vaccination. One is, not registering the child's birth—which is an extreme remedy; the next, shifting before the child is three months old; the last, to stand your ground and defy prosecution.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Better Way—Echo—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Crossbearer—Clevedon Mercury—Johannesburg Star—Glasgow Herald—Church Reformer—P. S. A. Magazine—Grays and Tilbury Gazette—Newcastle Daily Leader—Wolverhampton Express and Star—Catholic Times—Echo—Stratford Express—Opon Court—Perthshire Constitutional—Modern Thought—North Eastern Daily Gazette—Western Daily Press.

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.

NATIONAL SECULAR HALL SOCIETY.

As the Directors must take possession of the Hall of Science at Midsummer it is necessary to appeal to all Freethinkers desirous of securing suitable headquarters in London for the National Secular Society to lose no time in applying for shares. A special and earnest appeal is made to the rank and file of the Freethought party. We desire the Society to rest upon a broad suffrage. The present opportunity is one to be seized: if it be not taken advantage of, a serious blow will be struck at Freethought organisation. Up to the present a very encouraging measure of support has been received, and applications for shares are coming in steadily. But the directors, having paid a substantial deposit, are anxious to take possession with as little encumbrance as possible in the shape of mortgage; and as there is only an interval of three months to Midsummer, they venture to impress upon the Secular public the necessity of acting promptly as well as generously.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Last week's *Freethinker* ran out of print on Monday morning. We have provided a larger supply of the current issue. No doubt the Freethought party is "going to pot." Ananias Hughes says so. Still, the increasing circulation of the *Freethinker* is a curious fact.

Once more we call attention to this journal as a first-rate advertising medium. Men of business amongst our readers should try an advertisement, and see if it does not answer their purpose.

This year's Conference of the National Secular Society will be held at Newcastle on Whit-Sunday (June 5). Newcastle was nominated by 24 Branches. The only other nomination was Portsmouth, which cannot undertake the necessary arrangements. No further voting is therefore required, and the Conference is fixed for "canny Newcastle."

We earnestly appeal to the N. S. S. Branches all over the country to begin their preparations for the Conference as early as possible. Certainly the Midlands and the North should be well represented. Scotland also should send delegates. Very important business will have to be transacted at this Conference.

New members are being enrolled in the N. S. S. with unusual rapidity. This year's list of fresh accessions will considerably exceed last year's. It is not quite unreasonable to hope that 1891-92 will double the record of 1890-91.

Mr. Foote is very much improved in health, and unless something unexpected happens he will be able to deliver the first of his Thursday evening course of lectures at the London Hall of Science. His recovery has been retarded by the cold weather, which was very unfavorable to bronchitis. The lecture at Walthamstow last Thursday (March 3) had to be abandoned, Mr. Foote's place being taken by Mr. Stanley Jones. Mr. Foote was a good deal better on the Saturday, but acting on medical advice he did not go to Merthyr. It was feared that six hours' travelling, and three lectures on the following day, might bring on a dangerous relapse. Mr. Stanley Jones took Mr. Foote's place again.

This mishap is much to be regretted. It was Mr. Foote's first engagement at Merthyr, and no trivial reason would have prevented him from fulfilling it. He has promised to make another engagement at an early date.

Mr. Stanley Jones made a good impression at Merthyr, but the telegram announcing that Mr. Foote was ill had been printed and posted, and the audiences were of course diminished. The result is that Mr. Foote is nearly £3 in hard cash out of pocket. Such are his perquisites, especially during an illness.

Mr. Foote was to have lectured at Wolverhampton to-day (March 13), but there was a misunderstanding as to the date with the proprietor of the hall, and the Wolverhampton lectures are now to be delivered next Sunday (March 20). This Sunday (instead of next) Mr. Foote is to lecture at Manchester. The notice is very short, and scarcely leaves time for the usual advertisements. We hope, therefore, the readers of the *Freethinker* will make a special effort to give publicity to Mr. Foote's visit to Cottonopolis, and not only attend the lectures themselves, but bring as many as possible of their orthodox friends. The morning lecture will have reference to the "negro" champion of Christianity who has recently caused a stir in Manchester. The afternoon lecture will deal with the Gifford Lectures on "Natural Theology" by Sir G. G. Stokes, M.P., and President of the Royal Society—a great authority with the Christians. The evening lecture will be upon "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh."

Mr. Charles Watts lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (March 13) and also next Sunday. He has been absent from London some time, and his many friends and admirers will be glad of another opportunity to see and hear him. His morning discourse will be on "Shams and Realities," the evening's on "What Christians have to Defend."

We are just informed that the proposed debate on Spiritualism, which was to have taken place in Newcastle

this month between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. J. Morse, has fallen through. The Spiritualists decline to support their representative in the discussion

Mr. Touzeau Parris nearly succeeded in winning one of the Hammersmith seats on the London County Council. The two "Moderates" who headed the poll stood as follows—S. Arter, 2,562; W. Bull, 2,391. The two "Progressives" polled thus—J. Johnson, 2,372; T. Parris, 2,366. Mr. Parris was thus only 25 below the second successful candidate. He and his colleague would have both been returned had not a third "Progressive"—to say nothing of an "Independent"—drawn away 411 votes. How often is the Progressive movement "sold" in this way!

Mr. Parris will probably fight again at the next County Council elections. People in the division will then know his strength, Progressive votes will probably not be wasted on hopeless candidates, and our friend and colleague will then win a seat in the London Parliament.

Dr. T. R. Allinson is again summoned for refusal to pay Church Rates. The bailiffs were put in, but Mrs. Allinson claimed the goods, and the stiff-necked doctor is now waiting for the officers to take him to prison. This extremity was threatened once before, but it was not inflicted. Probably it is thought that Church Rates stink enough already, without stirring up the mess with a too conscionable and well-known protestant.

Birmingham Freethinkers will have an opportunity of seeing and hearing this opposer of Church Rates to-day (March 13). Dr. Allinson lectures twice, morning and evening, at Baskerville Hall. In the afternoon he lectures for the Wolverhampton Branch on "Health"—not of soul, but of body.

The soirée of the West London Branch, at the Hammersmith Club, was a distinct success. The severe weather and the election kept a few away, but that was counterbalanced by the excellence of the program. Songs were contributed by Messrs. Emanuel Hopes, C. J. Hunt, R. Fox, and Chris-Sale; recitations by Mr. P. H. Snelling and Mr. Binge; while Miss Nellie Hunt agreeably surprised everyone by her talent, both vocal and instrumental. Mr. Stanley Jones opens the course of lectures in the same hall on the 10th inst., and Mr. Rowney follows on the 17th. All local Freethinkers should assist in the work being carried out in the West of London by making the lectures widely known.

Last Sunday the Bethnal Green Branch made 3 new members. This makes 60 new members in five months. The Branch is now 100 strong.

Mr. B. Hyatt was to have lectured at Battersea Secular Hall last Sunday evening, but just as a good audience had assembled, a messenger arrived to say that he was too ill to attend. Fortunately Miss Hammond Hills was present, and she kindly consented to give a series of dramatic recitals, which she delivered in a very impressive manner. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded her for helping the Branch out of a difficulty.

The Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company held a special meeting, convened on the initiative of the directors, on Monday evening. The object of the meeting was to rescind the resolution passed on February 1. For this purpose there had been a special private whip-up of fresh shareholders, including relatives of the directors; and the forty-five fresh members of the Company were just sufficient. The voting was, for the directors 100 (with proxies), against 60 (with proxies). The minority of 60 represented a majority of the old members, who took shares simply to raise a memorial to Charles Bradlaugh, before there was any thought of "opposing the policy of Mr. Foote."

The resolution carried by the directors was of the nature of a pious opinion. It asserted their "right" to the whole of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund. But the N. S. S. Executive has already dealt with the Fund, and the Company is simply out of court. Mr. Foote attended the meeting on Monday out of regard to the old shareholders who sent him proxies. He had no other reason for attending, and after the resolution of the Executive he has no intention of troubling himself

about the Company, or of noticing anything the directors may say. It is not his policy to waste words when his object is served.

The Rev. Fleming Williams is a liberal minister who has recently had a good call to Brisbane, but does not mean to leave the East of London. Evidently he is an exceptional man. Most ministers always hear a call that announces a larger salary. When they go from £300 a year to £1,000, they may be said to have been "born with a caul."

The Chatham Branch is greatly encouraged by the success of its recent appeal. The builder's estimate has been accepted, and the hall is to be opened on Good Friday. Mr. Foote has promised to officiate as President of the National Secular Society. Mr. G. J. Holyoake has also been invited to attend, and we hope the veteran will be able to accept the invitation.

Mr. Sam Standing's experience at Hanley was lively. On Sunday evening he addressed an open-air meeting in the Market Square. At first he was hissed and hooted, but he kept on with his work and finally got a hearing. A number of people followed him to the hall, were allowed free admission, and formed a most attentive audience.

Mr. Philip Wright, whose candidature was referred to in our last issue, has been returned as County Councillor for the Sibley division, despite the *odium theologicum* that was raised against him. His pious Tory opponent denounced Mr. Wright's "Atheism" at meetings and on placards, but the constituency would not be bamboozled.

Bristol Freethinkers are earnestly desired to meet at St. James's Hall, Cumberland-street, this evening (March 13), at 7, for the purpose of forming a Branch of the National Secular Society, and transacting other important business.

The Bristol *Mercury* reports the meeting in Mr. Logan's chapel, and testifies to the "great interest excited by the theological debate" between that gentleman and Mr. Foote.

The Leicester Society send us their annual report, which chronicles a year of steady work and constant progress. The Society has a sick club, cricket club, and bicycle club. It holds an annual flower show, and gives a dinner and entertainment to 140 poor and infirm old people at Christmas. The fund of £500, so handsomely inaugurated by Mr. T. Allsop, has been completed, and altogether our Leicester friends may be congratulated upon making a very good show indeed.

The Newcastle Branch holds its third annual conversazione and dance in the Royal Arcade Assembly Rooms, Pilgrim-street, on Easter Monday. Tea will be on the tables at 6. The tickets (1s. 6d. for adults and 1s. for children) can be obtained of the secretary, or Mr. Joseph Brown, or at Peter Weston's, Newgate-street.

Mr. John Morley has written a letter from London to Mr. Joseph Brown, hon. sec. of the Newcastle Malthusian Defence Committee. Mr. Morley ends by saying, "I do not well see what further steps I can take or advise to be taken." This is not very comforting. Evidently the Loader case will come up for trial, and the friends of freedom must place their hope in another disagreement of the jury.

A special meeting of the Committee of the North Eastern Secular Federation will take place this afternoon (March 13) at 3, in the Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street, Newcastle, to make arrangements for the N. S. S. Conference and future lecturing engagements.

Ella E. Gibson, of the *Moralist*, writes us a cordial letter from Barre, Massachusetts. We deeply regret to hear that she has been ill and obliged to hand the paper over to E. S. Elliott, of whom she speaks as a worthy young Liberal. "I prize the London *Freethinker*," she says, "above all Liberal journals within my knowledge. Its editor, in my opinion, equals our Ingersoll." On the strength of this we have sent to the other side of Jordan and ordered two harps in advance.

The *Truthseeker* of New York, Feb. 27, gives as cartoon "A Long-felt Want," being a picture of a "drop a penny in

the slot" automatic praying machine, with a workable figure with hands and mouth and eyes, in attitude of supplication. A sample prayer is given. It begins as follows: "O Lord, our Heavenly Father: We know thou art not partial to new inventions, and that thou hast an old grudge against graven images, but in this age of progress and labor-saving devices, we beseech thee to throw aside thy prejudices, and not be jealous of thy servant, the machine, because it is fashioned somewhat after thy image, for we assure thee that the inventor meant no reflection on thy majesty or disregard for thy personal appearance, but it was his intention to furnish a mouthpiece as a substitute for the parson and do away with middlemen in transacting business between this world and the next."

Sir C. Gavan Duffy is bringing his interesting "Reminiscences and Letters of Thomas Carlyle," in the *Contemporary Review*, to a conclusion. The March instalment gives some particulars of J. S. Mill and the lady who became his wife, and suggests that Mill's separation from Carlyle was through something disparaging having been said of the lady. Carlyle at the time when the Roman Catholic dignitaries were established, sneered at the "pasteboard Cardinals with Bull thunder," and wrote: "The Pope may depend upon it, we will by no means come back to him; never through all eternity to him."

On the opposition of *The Nation* and the Catholics to secular colleges Carlyle wrote to Duffy: "I have some difficulty to defend you, to myself and others, for voting against the 'godless colleges.' Beware of that; look on both sides of that. What if this, that poor, dark, angry mortals now call 'godless colleges,' were actually the beginning of the real religion of the future for Ireland and for us all."

We see from *Modern Thought* that the Freethinkers of Bombay kept up the anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death by holding a memorial meeting, at which there was a good gathering.

Mr. W. W. Collins has had a four nights' debate at Christchurch, New Zealand, with the Rev. John Hosking, United Methodist minister. The questions discussed included the belief in God and the inspiration of the Bible.

It was Volney who, over a hundred years ago, wrote, "It is not God who hath made man, but man who hath made God after his own image," but Xenophanes, over two thousand years ago, anticipated the thought, and remarked that the god of the Greeks was a Greek, while the god of the Ethiopians had woolly hair and thick lips.

The *Greenville Sun* prints the following characteristic letter from Pagan Bob: "New York, Feb. 2, 1892. Rev. Thomas Hynes, Greenville, Ill.—Dear Sir:—My attention was called to-day to a report of a sermon delivered by you in which you are reported as saying: 'It is known that Colonel Ingersoll is especially hostile to the Calvinistic creed and church. I have often read his explanation of this—that his father was so intensely orthodox that it drove his son clear over to his intense hatred of all Calvinists,' etc. I write simply to say that I have never made any such explanation, or anything like it. Nothing of this kind has ever been spoken or written by me. It is not true. My father was not a Calvinist. As a matter of fact he held Calvinism in great contempt. I do not write this letter on account of what you are pleased to say about me personally, but simply to contradict the statement that I ever used any such expression concerning my father.—Yours truly, R. G. INGERSOLL."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Huddersfield Branch, 11s.; West Ham, 10s. 3½d.; Brighton, 10s.; Blackburn, 7s.; West Auckland, 5s.; Arbroath, 2s. 3d.; Belfast, 13s. 6d.; Manchester, £2 5s. 3d.; Farsley, 5s.; S. Hartmann (London), 10s.; Alpha (Kettering), 9s. 6d. STANLEY JONES, Sec.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE MALTHUSIAN DEFENCE FUND.—J. English, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Jones, 1s.; Mr. Purvis, 1s.; Mr. Porter, 2d.; collection at meeting, 10½d.; A Spiritualist, 1s.; Staley-bridge Branch N. S. S., 10s.; W. H. Bowman, 1s.; W. Robson, 1s.; Mrs. A. Shiel, 1s.; J. S. Charlton, 1s.; T. Robson, 1s.; L. Harkin, 1s.; M. Christopher, 2s.—JOSEPH BROWN, Hon. Sec. Newcastle Neo-Malthusian Defence Committee, 86 Durham-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED?

BY A MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO BAR.

(From the "Truthseeker," New York.)

(CONTINUED.)

IF we look, in the next place, at the part which the Romans are alleged by the Gospels to have played in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, we find an equally unlawful and improbable procedure. We have said that the Romans could not have crucified Jesus for the offence charged. They would not have crucified him for any offence against the Jewish religion, or have delivered him over to the Jews for crucifixion if he had been found guilty of a crime against the Roman laws. It is commonly claimed that he was first condemned to death by the Jews for an alleged crime against Jewish law, and then taken by them to the Roman authorities and charged with a violation of Roman law—treason, or disloyalty to Cæsar, in setting himself up as a king, and stirring up the people. But this position is not tenable, since Pilate, the Roman ruler of the country, found him innocent of any such Roman offence, and so declared. "I find no fault in him," he says, or according to another Gospel, "I have found no cause of death in him." It is difficult to believe that the highest Roman official of the land, the pro-consul, standing in Cæsar's place, and having the Roman traditional pride in justice, or at least regard for its form, would outrage all appearance of justice by condemning a man to death whom in the same breath he declared to be innocent. In all history there is not such an infamous or illegal sentence as that ascribed to Pilate by John, "Take ye him and crucify him; for I find no fault in him."

It is obvious, moreover, that Pilate did not deliver Jesus to the Jews to be crucified, since the crucifixion was, according to John, conducted wholly by Roman officials. Pilate scourged him, the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his head, Pilate wrote the inscription for the cross, the soldiers crucified him and cast lots for his garment, one of the soldiers thrust a spear in his side, and Pilate disposed of the body. The account is therefore plainly contradictory which says that the Roman authorities gave him up to the Jews to crucify him, and then proceeds to relate his crucifixion at the hands of the Romans.

A crucifixion by the Romans, however, is as improbable under the circumstances as one by the Jews. Not only was Jesus found innocent by the authorities, but he was not even charged with an offence for which he could have been crucified if he had been found guilty. Under the Romans no accusation of heresy, blasphemy, or false assumption of a prophetic or divine character was a capital offence (see Neander, "Life of Christ," § 284). Much less would he have been condemned or handed over to others to be crucified if these offences had been committed against a different religion from that of the Romans and in violation of a different law from theirs. And yet Christ is represented in the Gospels as having been handed over by Pilate to the Jews to be crucified under their laws for an offence trivial to the Romans, and which, as we have seen, was not punishable with death even under the Jewish laws.

In the next place, crucifixion was not the appropriate punishment for Christ even if he had been condemned to death. This punishment was reserved for slaves and the very lowest criminals. No Roman citizen could be crucified, or even a freeborn person, except one of very low condition. By the *jus civitatis* exemption from crucifixion was declared to be the privilege of every Roman. Only for the greatest crimes, moreover, could one be crucified at all, as robbery, piracy, and assassination. It was illegal and unprecedented to deliver such a man as Jesus to the cross, or to deliver anyone to it for such an offence as that charged against him.

Nor, let us here remark, could Jesus have been legally crucified under Jewish law for the offence charged, even if he had been found guilty and condemned to death. Crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment. It was, according to many writers, unknown among the ancient Jews. The author of Rabbi Jeshua says that only four capital punishments were recognised by Jewish law—stoning, burning, beheading, and strangling. The latter was not a crucifixion, and, besides, it was very

rarely employed. By this method the victim was seized by the throat by two men, who sometimes put a lighted taper in his mouth. There was, indeed, occasionally what they called a crucifixion of the dead body, but it was inflicted only after death, and consisted in tying the body to a stake. This was done when one had been stoned to death. The same writer says: "As a rebellious elder or a false prophet Jesus might have been put to death by strangling; as a blasphemer he should have been stoned" (Rabbi Jeshua, p. 146).

Many incidental circumstances connected with the trial and crucifixion are related by the Evangelists which could not have occurred unless the proceedings were grossly illegal, so palpably illegal that it is hardly credible that any court, or high officer, would permit or sanction them.

The first of these was the scourging of Christ. This could not have been legally done before he was condemned. He should, according to law, have been first sentenced, then scourged, and then executed. And yet John says that he was first scourged, and afterward questioned and condemned.

The placing of a scarlet robe and crown of thorns on him was also illegal, as were the physical indignities offered, such as beating and spitting upon him, especially before his conviction, as related by John. The Romans protected their prisoners from popular insults at trial, and even after conviction. That so many proprieties, as well as laws, should be totally disregarded in Christ's case seems highly incredible.

It was also illegal to compel Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of Jesus. Simon was a chance-comer (according to the three first gospels) whom they accidentally met as they led out Jesus; and to take a man wholly unconnected with the case and, without process of law, make him undergo this indignity was contrary to all precedent. The custom was to make the condemned carry the cross, or a part of it, as John says Jesus did: for John's account differs from the others, saying: "He went out bearing the cross for himself."

The inscription written by Pilate and placed on the cross was hardly according to law. The inscription on most crosses declared the crime for which the prisoner died. Pilate, however, wrote simply: "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," which does not give any intimation of his offence, unless indeed by remote implication.

The early removal of Jesus from the cross was also contrary to law, or at least to general custom. The body was usually allowed to hang on the cross until it decomposed, or was devoured by birds. A guard was commonly placed over it to prevent its removal. In this case, however, according to the Gospels, it was taken down and buried immediately after death.

It will thus be seen that the trial and crucifixion of Christ, as related by the Evangelists (leaving out the contradictions, or apparent contradictions, in the different Gospels), were, in many respects, grossly contrary to law, and against the customs of the people, whether Jews or Romans, who are alleged to have conducted them. The whole story is an anomaly and, to legal minds, almost incredible.

(To be concluded).

A PRINTER'S DEVIL.

A printer's devil was pierced to the heart
With the charms of a dear little miss;
Quoth he to the lass, "My dear, ere we part,
Let us seal our love with a kiss."
But the maiden replied, as the imp she eyed,
"Dost think I'd let you revel
Where others before you have vainly tried?
Nay, nay; I'll not kiss the devil."

Years passed away, and the sweet little lass
Became an old, sorrowful maid;
Riches she had, but then, alas!
Her beauty had all decayed.
Once again they met, and fain the old maid
Would recall the former issue;
But the devil replied as the old maid he eyed,
"No; the devil now wouldn't kiss you!"

AMONG THE SPIRITS.

A FRIEND of mine is a Spiritualist, and he has been in the habit of inviting me to séances during a number of years past, with the result that my supply of evasive fiction got exhausted, and I had to submit myself to the ordeal. I left my watch and loose cash at home, so that I might feel freer if I got among strange spirits who possibly held foolish and unconventional ideas which they would be anxious to exchange for anything valuable I might have about me. Discretion, I thought, is the better part of Spiritualism. We walked to the séance, and on our way talked of psychic force, the development of mediumship, the best way to remove warts, and the magnetic influence of the conservation of energy on cosmic bodies outside of the radius of occult suggestiveness. Before we had fully exhausted these simple and pleasant topics we stopped at the door of a lofty building, and I gently pressed the button of an electric bell. I had scarcely done so ere the door opened suddenly, and an athletic spirit struck me forcibly over the head with a broom, and ejaculated in a split mezzo-soprano tone of squeal, "Oi caught ye that toime, ye young blaggards."

I turned to flee, but before starting on my wild career my friend interposed and explained that a mistake had occurred. The spirituelle broom-wielder apologised gracefully, and hoped I would overlook it, "an' the saints'll presarve ye." I stood on my toes and overlooked it, but I thought if the saints had instituted their preservation ten minutes sooner it would have been a clear gain to me of half a sovereign for a new hat.

We passed upstairs for three stories, and finally emerged, semi-exhausted, in a large room supplied with chairs and tables. The latter were three in number, and varied in size from a large and heavy square to a small and light circular. The spirits, I was told, differed in their tastes; some spirits are strong, and can raise Cain or anything else, and others are diluted—I mean weak—and can only wrestle with fly-leaf circulars.

A number of comparatively innocuous-looking people were seated round the tables, in three groups. Most of the sitters had very long hair, and the rest had very short hair—so very short as to be invisible—with the result that the polished surface of their heads scintillated in the mellow light supplied by a paraffin spirit.

I joined the circle round the largest table, and placed my hands upon it, this being necessary for the proper development of the psychic force that influences the unseen bodies involved in the circumambient atmosphere. Those are the words used by a thin explanatory young man with a sallow appearance and a cadaverous tone in his voice, which he valued above price—I think rightly too.

The appearance of the table raised a wish within me that its cleanliness had also been necessary for the proper—etc. The spirits evidently do not patronise any brand of soap, and psychic force does not care a hang whether the table it tilts is clean or otherwise.

A silence settled down on the little company around the table, which was rudely dispelled by one of the short-haired gentlemen, who was sitting beside me, commencing to slap himself on the head, shaking it violently about, blushing and talking gibberish. A mellow individual on the other side told me a spirit was taking possession of him. I believed it because I could smell the spirit easily when he breathed in my direction. By-and-bye he calmed down, and told us the table would answer any questions we liked to put to it. I was about to ask it to what geologic period it belonged, when it suddenly gave five very decided tilts at the side I sat at. It was generally agreed that this showed anxiety on the part of the table to conciliate myself. I am an anxious inquirer on the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy, so I determined to take advantage of this ready means of getting information at first hand. After a most laborious effort on the table's part I was informed that Bacon was not present, but that a famous son of Noah was, and would be only too glad to assist me if he could. I suppose Ham was the gentleman referred to, and the subject was dropped.

One of the sitters inquired if any of his relatives were present; the table thought so; the name was asked, and the answer was like this—"Snohtrus ctalibthfrence." This was satisfying, but scarcely satisfactory. The vigorous manner in which the table answered queries convinced me, and I was very glad that it stopped occasionally, otherwise it might have gone on tilting indefinitely.

A low, nasty, mean, vindictive spirit—I was told on

reliable feminine authority that there are such—can annoy one sometimes by tilting the breakfast table in a highly inconvenient manner. Taking your breakfast is rather a pleasant recreation, but getting it indiscriminately in your lap is too emphatic a variety of Spiritualism to be entertaining.

It was judged that the conditions were not favorable for good manifestations, and some general and insipid conversation was indulged in. Then my spasmodic neighbor commenced again to wildly gesticulate. The table was asked if he was a suitable medium. It replied in the affirmative. Was his condition active, passive or neuter? I concentrated my thoughts in one direction very emphatically, and the table, to my surprise, confirmed my opinion by rapping out "Drunk!"

The medium immediately—I mean at once—expostulated. He said "if anyone thought they could inshult himsh, they were mishtaken." This was accompanied by wild brandishing of his arms, and its expression was considerably retarded by violent hiccups, that testified most eloquently to the verity of the table's dictum.

The meeting broke up in a rather irregular manner, and I came away, convinced that Spiritualism had a great future before it—like everything else—but that its chance of doing much in the future is very, very thin. W. M. KNOX.

AFTER THE DEBATE AT BRISTOL.

MR. LOGAN lost no time in calling his flock together after the debate with Mr. G. W. Foote. It was announced to the public that Sunday afternoon, the 28th ult., would be taken up for the purpose of questions and answers on the recent debate, the gallery to be opened to ladies. Needless to say, the fair sex filled it to overflowing. The body of the chapel was simply packed. Mr. Logan opened the great meeting in his usual way. After the singing and prayer, he explained the reason of that gathering. He said he had chosen to meet his friends to hear what they had to say on the question of the recent debate between Mr. Foote and himself. There might have been some doubt on some of the points that perhaps he did not make quite clear. He should be sorry to hear of any seeds of doubt being sown, as he had tried to dispel doubt rather than create it in the debate. He put himself as a target before them to-day; each person would be allowed one question, and he would answer as they were put to him; after the questions he would read the report of the debate from the *Freethinker*. (Cheers.) Here Mr. Logan asked for questions. There was no time lost. Such a great number of questions gave Mr. Logan much hard work, but the questions were all met in his own way. Mr. Logan was pleasant and obliging to everyone. It was soon discovered that seeds of doubt had been sown either by Mr. Logan or by Mr. Foote. I had to correct a few remarks made by good Christians in reference to Mr. Foote, and was well applauded, this showing that a good number of Freethinkers were there. At last I thought I would get on my feet and put a question. It caused dead silence for a few minutes; it was in reference to Dr. Giles. Mr. Foote quoted him in the debate to show there was no evidence for the four gospels until a hundred years after the crucifixion. Mr. Logan wanted to say, or rather did say, it was not to the question of the debate. I pointed out that it was essential to the question of the debate, and I wanted to know from Mr. Logan whether Dr. Giles was right or wrong. Mr. Logan at once saw a difficulty, but he replied by saying that Dr. Giles was quite right in a sense, but Mr. Foote had put the four gospels out of court by quoting Dr. Giles. Quite so. But Mr. Logan did not or would not see that Dr. Giles put Mr. Logan and his friend Paul out of court also, and upset Mr. Logan's whole argument.

"Let us have the *Freethinker's* report," says someone. "Right," says Mr. Logan. "No, no, no," says some good Christian; "it won't do to read that paper in the pulpit." "I am sorry for anyone who thinks so," says Mr. Logan. He then read from the *Freethinker*, and every paragraph was applauded; in fact, Mr. Foote will have to wear stand-up collars after this. It was quite a treat even to the Christians. I saw the very ladies smiling over "Sugar Plums." With rather a sad look, Mr. Logan said he should not accept Mr. Foote's challenge to a written debate. The reason was, he did not want to float the *Freethinker* because it had coarse jokes in it. I could have told Mr. Logan that was not the real reason—he would not have such a crowd at the end of

his pen as he had at St. James's Hall to howl and shout down Mr. Foote.

After the meeting I was surrounded by many friends, and I took the names of some very intelligent-looking young men, who wish to form a strong working Branch of the N. S. S., and let Mr. Logan see what he has done—of course unintentionally—to help on the Freethought cause.

J. KEAST, Sec.

PROFANE JOKES.

Sunday School Teacher—"Who loves everybody, Johnnie?"
Johnnie—"My pa does, cos he is trying to get into the Town Council."

Teacher—"Can you explain what is meant by vicarious punishment?"
Johnny—"Yes, sir. When mother gets angry at father, she whips me."

It was a tall story, and the minister's little ten-year-old girl was listening to it very intently. When he finished she fastened her eyes upon her father's face and said very gravely, "Is that true, or are you preaching now, papa?"

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Evolution of Conscience" (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, W. Heaford, "The Political Duties of Freethinkers." Monday at 8, at Chatham Hall, debate between Rev. T. Sunderland and W. Heaford on "Is Secularism a Better Guide than Christianity?" (3d. and 6d.).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 8, tea; 7, musical entertainment; 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Exodus"; 9.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, Essays by various members, 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt, Readings, etc.

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, A. B. Moss, "Bible Saints and Sinners."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Age of the Earth."

Forest Gate—The Hall Liberal and Radical Association, Broadway, E.: Thursday, at 8, a free lecture.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "Shams and Realities" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Charles Watts, "What Christians have to Defend" (3d., 6d., and 1s.). Thursday, at 8, G. W. Foote, "The Mythical Christ" (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday, at 8, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7.30, ballad concert (3d., 4d., and 1s.).

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, Lucretius Keen, "The Bible Defence Society and their God."

Walthamstow—Working Men's Club and Institute, High-street: Thursday, at 8, a free lecture.

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

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, open discussion, "The Land and the People."

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, S. M. Peartree (Fabian), "Poor Law Reform."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Spiritism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. Heaford, "Does Man Need Religion?"

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. Osborne will lecture; 3.30, H. Courtney will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Haslam, "Why I am a Secularist."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Dr. T. R. Allinson, 11, "Food and Feeding"; 7, "Our Health, and how to keep it."

Chatham—Old George Inn: 6.30, J. Taylor, "Remember Lot's Wife."

Derby—Mr. Harper's, 44 Howard-street: 7, Mr. Whitney, "The God Idea."

Edinburgh: Andrew Paul, "Who is the Devil?"

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, an Essay; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "Italy" (with limelight and musical illustrations).

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 3, philosophy class, L. Small, B.Sc., "Bain's Mind and Body"; 7, Mr. Gowland, "The Spirit of Modern Literature."

Manchester N. 8. 8, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: G. W. Foote, 11, "Secularism and its Enemies: Black and White"; 3, "Professor Stokes on God"; 6.30, "Manning, Spurgeon, and Brillaugh."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, fortnightly financial meeting; 7, H. Keppel, "Social Science: an Explanation."

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

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rookingham-street: Mrs. Charles Watts, 3, "An Hour with Colonel Ingersoll"; 7, Dramatic Recitals; tea at 5.

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

Wolverhampton—Exchange Assembly Room: 3.30, Dr. T. R. Allinson, "Our Health and how to keep it"; 7.30, R. S. Bransby, "Miracles—a Reply to Dr. A. J. Harison."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—March 24, West Ham. April 3, Merthyr; 17, Hall of Science; 24, Milton Hall.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—March 13, 20, 27, Deptford. April 10, Mile End; 17, Westminster; 24, Hornsey. May 1, Camberwell; 8, Clerkenwell; 15, Westminster; 22, Mile End. June 5, Camberwell; 12, Clerkenwell; 19, Hornsey. July 3, Camberwell; 10, Clerkenwell; 17, Westminster.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—March 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, 8 Monk-street, Woolwich.—March 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.—March 13, Libra Hall; 20, morning, Battersea. 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.—March 13 Nottingham; 17, Walthamstow; 20, Woolwich; 27, West Ham April 3, morning, Finsbury Park; 17, morning, Battersea. May 1 morning, Clerkenwell Green; 8, Newcastle.

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