

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"When a thing gets too idiotic to be presented in the pulpit it is handed down to the Sunday-school superintendent and taught to the children. When it is too absurd for the children it is given to the missionaries."

—INGERSOLL.

GIVING UP HELL.

WE have been favored with a brief report of a sermon by the Rev. H. Elwyn Thomas, pastor of Tolmers-square Congregational Church, London. Our knowledge of the preacher is confined to this report. We never heard of him before, and may never hear of him again. It is the subject rather than the preacher which invites our attention.

Mr. Thomas is delivering a series of discourses on "Burning Questions." Most appropriately he led off with Gehenna. The text was, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" No wonder, therefore, the newspaper report is headed "Hell and Damnation."

This is a subject that is exciting an intense and wide-spread interest in religious circles, not only in England, but in every part of the Protestant world. Colonel Ingersoll's splendid attacks on the doctrine of everlasting torment have literally revolutionised the American churches. They are face to face with a great popular revolt against the old brutalities of faith, and are trimming their ships as far as they can to weather the storm. Much dogmatic cargo is being pitched overboard, and one of the first to disappear is "everlasting fire." The same process is going on in England. Mr. Spurgeon's death is a relief to the churches. They are now more free than ever to carry on that process of adjustment, which is necessary to creeds as well as men if they are to live.

To return to Mr. Thomas. The reverend gentleman seems pretty far gone—we mean on the road of heresy. Thirty years ago, he said, hell was regarded as a huge bonfire, and there are "still a few theologians who both believe and teach a material hell of this kind." But all that is changed. Mr. Thomas declares a material hell to be "absurd," and we presume he has no fear of dismissal from his pulpit.

Certainly this is a great change. But how came it to be made? While parts of the world are unexplored, all sorts of fanciful mistakes are entertained about them, but when the traveller investigates them, imagination gives place to knowledge. Has this been the case with Hell. Has it been explored? Have the churches fitted out expeditions and obtained accurate information? Have they discovered a single new fact? They have not. They know at present as much and as little about Hell as they knew all along. The place still lies in the map of faith, and where nothing is known every opinion is possible. This is the explanation of the change. Under the influence of a growing spirit of humanity, one fancy about the future life is giving way to another, less brutal and revolting.

Though a material hell is absurd, says Mr. Thomas, hell itself, the hell that God prepared for the devil

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and his angels, is an awful fact. What, then, is this hell? Mr. Thomas says he does not know. This is a candid confession. If Mr. Thomas were candid enough, he would confess that he knows absolutely nothing about a future life, good, bad, or indifferent.

Jesus described hell, Mr. Thomas admits, in the strongest words that ever fell from his lips. But it appears that he did not mean what he said. He was using metaphors. He should have wound up by saying "Which things are an allegory." All this, of course, is very interesting, but how did Mr. Thomas find it out? Is it not reasonable to suppose that Jesus *did* mean what he said? Was not the literal sense of his words agreeable to the general belief of his age among the Jews who held the notion of a hereafter? Has not the literal sense been accepted by all the Christian churches for the best part of two thousand years? Why is a metaphorical construction now resorted to? Is it not because the words themselves *must* stand, and because the only way of escape from their shocking brutality is to explain them away by the same method of interpretation which has brought the cosmogony of Genesis into "harmony" with modern science?

Mr. Thomas's metaphorical hell ought to be in a metaphorical part of the universe, and filled with metaphorical punishments for the metaphorical devil and his metaphorical angels. But this is carrying metaphor too far for the churches' convenience. Hell cannot be given up too suddenly. That would be too startling. It must be mended first and ended afterwards. Meanwhile it is the fashion to regard it, like Mr. Thomas does, as "the home of agonising remorse, the habitation of self-loathed souls, the house of detention for the castaways from the All-Father's presence." This is "the damnation that the Bible threatens to the evil-doer and the unbeliever."

Mr. Thomas does not explain, at least the report does not, why *unbelievers* should loathe themselves or agonise with remorse. Is unbelief a crime? If so, unbelief in what? Mr. Thomas is an unbeliever to the professors of other faiths than his own; nay, he is an unbeliever to millions of Christians. Men have been burnt for less heresy than he preaches, and would still be burnt if bigotry retained its power with its malice. Mr. Thomas may reply that he thinks for himself, that he exercises his reason, that he believes what commends itself to his intelligence, and that he is honest if mistaken. Good. But the very same reply can be given by the "unbelievers" who happen to differ from him.

Even the "evil-doers," although we punish them in this world for the protection of society, cannot justly be punished by God, if he deliberately created them what they are, and foresaw at the moment of their creation the exact line of their moral orbit. Foreknowledge is the perception of necessity. Why should a man be punished for the caprice or the blunders of his maker?

Mr. Thomas will have to go far beyond his present position if he gives free play to his intelligence. He will see that reward and punishment are conceptions

of human morality and jurisprudence. They lose all meaning, or at least all justification, at the bar of Omnipotence and Omniscience.

How long will the evil-doers and unbelievers (in the creed of Mr. Thomas) be damned? The old answer was "for ever!" An old divine, a man of perverted genius, pictured a soul in hell asking "What hour is it?" and the answer was "Eternity!" Jesus himself said that in hell "the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." One of his supposed Apostles said, "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever." But this is too cruel for our more refined age, so "everlasting" is found to refer to the fire of hell, and not to the time sinners will stay in the place. The duration of their punishment, Mr. Thomas guesses, will depend on themselves. Even the dwellers in hell will have a chance of salvation.

Mr. Thomas is almost a Universalist. Perhaps his own heart and mind are above the bad old creed, taught by the churches, and derived from the Bible. Anyhow, he sees that Christian teaching, if it is to live at all, must be brought into line with the intelligence and humanity of to-day. People are growing more independent and self-respecting. They will not be damned at the old rate. They scorn a God worse than themselves. They are reforming their own jurisprudence, and they demand a reform in the jurisprudence of heaven. This demand must be conceded by the clergy lest they should lose the people altogether. So hell is cooling down and shortening, and heaven is to be the final receptacle of all men. But it will not do. The clergy are reshuffling the cards in open daylight. People will see through the priestly game.

G. W. FOOTE.

WAS JEHOVAH A BACHELOR?

SEVEN years ago, in an article entitled "Hunting for the Holy Ghost,"* I remarked that in the earliest known form of the gospels, viz., the Gospel to the Hebrews, Jesus spoke of the Holy Ghost as his mother. Ruach translated Ghost, or Spirit, being in Hebrew, feminine. I further ventured on the surmise that the most mysterious member of a mysterious family was an evolution of the *Bath-Kol*, or "daughter of a voice," to which the Jews attributed their oracles. But we live and learn, and since I have come across another and somewhat different theory of the Holy Ghost I think it well to lay it before my readers.

M. Charles Clermont-Ganneau (who is renowned as a Semitic scholar and Oriental archæologist, who showed that the Egyptian God Horus had been transformed into the Christian Saint George) in an article in the *Revue Critique d'Histoire et de Littérature*,† says many think the third person of the Trinity was a late importation from some Persian or Greek source. He thinks differently. He holds "that the conception of the *rouah*, an autonomous, even corporal being, is more ancient, and that in numerous biblical passages where the *rouah* appears, the texts bore originally a direct mention of the female counterpart (*parèdre femelle*) of Jehovah, of which the name has been systematically suppressed." "Such," says he, "is the solution I will one day propose to put an end to this celibacy, as unlikely as inexplicable, in which, up till now, the God of Israel has rested." In a note, M. Clermont-Ganneau says: "This Jehovite goddess, of whom I reserve the determination of the true name, may be justly known as Qodech [or Kadesh], the Palestinian form of Astarte Anata, revealed by indisputable monuments. This Qodech takes us straight to the Qodech of Jehovah, and to the feminine conception of the Holy Spirit,

to the *rouah qodesh*, that is to say, the spirit of Qodech, the three persons being thus the Father, the Son, and the Woman (or Mother), of whom the Virgin is but a doublet."

He goes on to show that the *Rouah* was an emanation from Jehovah as the Carthaginian goddess Tanés was from Baal-Hammon; and sprang from his mouth as Athene did from the head of Zeus. Like Athene with her symbol of the owl, Ruach was embodied as a dove, always a feminine symbol. He declares Semitic monuments prove that the Spirit of Jehovah taking Elijah to heaven in his chariot was conceived as a winged female, that corresponds trait by trait to Athene taking Heracles to heaven in his car. M. Clermont-Ganneau continues: "*Ruah Qodesh* is the principal but not the only survival of a goddess companion of Jehovah." He refers to the "angel of god," an ambiguous being of *uncertain sex*.

I am not aware if M. Clermont-Ganneau has developed his promised thesis, though the fact that it is supported by M. Pompeyo Gener in his work on *La Mort et le Diable*, ought to incite him to do so. Much can be said for it. All the early deities had companions. The worship of goddesses has as much foundation in the wants of human nature as the worship of a god. Even in the Christian world the Virgin Mary probably receives more true devotion than Father, Son, and Holy Ghost put together. As type of motherhood, she is the highest, because most human symbol. Even Protestants, with their bachelor deity, have made a sort of feminine type of Christ, which is contemptible as being merely an emasculated man. The most notable Protestant heresies that have grown up of late years have all proclaimed a double-sexed deity. Shakers, Jezreelites, followers of the prophet Harris, like Laurence Oliphant, who defended this doctrine in his *Sympneumata* long after emancipated from the prophet's influence, and Koreshans all unite in appealing to woman on the ground that their deity is of both sexes. The *Flaming World* of Chicago, the Koreshan organ, in a recent number before me, has an article entitled "The Wife of God." It says:

"The heading of this article may seem startling upon first appearance. The entire testimony of biology favors the hypothesis that in the cause of things as they exist there must have resided, or there does reside, the possibility for the projection of the universal manifestation of female life. If we observe the highest phase of creation, where the male and female principles and forms are the most prominently expressed, we are logically justified, reasoning *a posteriori*, in the assumption that the cause of this male and female life is also male and female. In fact, we can reasonably reach no other conclusion."

Of course Scripture can be found for this as for every other opinion. "In the image of Elohim created he him; male and female created he them," is cited as showing Elohim was both male and female. The sacred tetragramaton J.H.V.H. is translated as meaning He-She. The fact that God speaks of Aholah and Abolibah as his sister spouses is cited to show he was not averse to such relationships, and the mysterious description of deity in the Apocalypse as "girt about the paps with a golden girdle" and the marriage of the Lamb and his wife (Rev. i. 13, xix. 7) have been pressed into the service.

I can have no objection to the feminine element being as much represented in the divinity as the masculine, but, if the lady be really the counterpart of Jehovah, would express a hope that they are strict Malthusians. As to the Bible teaching, while I see glimpses of an earlier stage in which a feminine element appeared, it seems to me that the dominant note of Judaism, and that which mainly distinguished it from other faiths, is its masculinity and even rigorous repression of woman's rights. This seems hardly compatible with Jehovah having been married. Let M. Clermont-Ganneau consider this.

J. M. WHEELER.

* *Freethinker*, Feb. 22, 1885

† Jan. 12, 1882.

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

VII.—“IN THE NAME OF THE PROPHET”—BAXTER!
It is so long since I last inflicted myself upon the patient readers of the *Freethinker*, that they may perchance conclude I have been in prison, “doing time,” as Jeremy Taylor quaintly expresses it in one of his sermons. But I can solemnly assure my brethren that this is not the case; and if necessary can produce witnesses to prove the truth of this denial. But although I have been “at large” all the time, nothing of sufficient importance has “transpired” (to use a word much beloved of reporters) to warrant me in appropriating two columns of the *Freethinker*. It may fairly be questioned whether the Prophet Baxter is big enough to justify me now; but, as my genial friend the editor is to lecture at the Hall of Science upon this subject on April 21, I may perhaps claim to be sinning in good company.

But to Baxter and business. The prophetic cranks have lately revived their apocalyptic activity in London by three or four series of lectures in various districts, and I was tempted to attend a meeting in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, on the evening of Monday, April 11. Outside the building two men were distributing back numbers of the *Christian Herald*, Baxter's own particular organ. I entered into conversation with one of these good fellows, who advised me “to go upstairs and look at the pictures.” I found him to be a fluent, earnest Irishman, overflowing with talk and profoundly convinced of the truth of Prophet Baxter's wonderful notions. He pumped religion into me at the rate of 360 words per minute. He told me that he had the peace of God and the love of the Blessed Savior in his heart, and that those who did not believe in God and Christ would be damned in fire for ever. During a momentary lull I told him I was an Atheist. “Ah! me boy,” he replied, “you have been led away by bad company, but you will live to be one of the best young men in London!” I blushed so furiously at this extraordinary prophetic compliment that my cheeks actually frizzled. Having had enough Irishman for one night, I ascended interminable flights of stairs and reached the temporary abiding-place of the fiery untamed Baxter.

The hall was less than half-filled when I entered, three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of the meeting. Around the galleries and at the back of the platform were suspended huge “pictures,” coarsely executed in glaring colors, portraying the horrible things that are to happen in or before the year 1901. They reminded one of the flaming lying sheets with which country showmen bedeck the exterior of their booths. Prophet Baxter's “pictures” are indeed fearful and wonderful things. They are crude representations of the ravings attributed to John of Patmos in the Book of Revelation. There was a huge goat, which doubtless means something interesting and valuable; and a red leopard with flaming whiskers and spring onions growing out of the top of his head. The Scarlet Woman rode on a scarlet wild-beast (typifying ten kingdoms); and the woman (who is the Roman Church) held a cup of wine in her hand, and seemed to be pleasantly saying, “Well, here's good health to us all.” Again, we had the burning mountain cast into the sea (refer for this to Revelation, somewhere); the lamb lying down with the wolf, and the leopard with the kid (for this, see any work on natural history). On another sheet we had the general tumbling-in of things on April 11 (or is it April 1?) 1901. Mountains were cracking and falling into a fiery gulph wherein human beings were already disappearing.

But the most striking of these works of art was one depicting “the Worship of Napoleon's Image for 1260 days, from August 14-15, 1897, to Jan. 26, 1901, and imprinting ‘666,’ the number of his name,

on people's foreheads and right hands and beheading of those who refuse” (Rev. xiii. and xi., Dan. vii. 25). That “picture” represents a crowd of fashionably-dressed men and women prostrating themselves before a statue of Napoleon I., and a few of the worshippers obligingly turn their faces and elevate their hands so that you may see the mystic “666” on their foreheads and in their palms. A panel in the right-hand top corner shows the guillotine at work upon the resolute men who refuse to worship Nap. The head of one victim is tumbling into the basket, and behind him another saint (who looks very much like a prize-fighter) calmly awaits his doom. There are soldiers in red trousers and gentlemen in the tall hat of civilisation surrounding the scaffold.

I have dealt at some length with these alleged “pictures,” because they absorbed my attention as soon as I entered the room. After a time I gave heed to the speaker who was addressing the audience. He was a young parson, and spoke through his nose. He didn't appear to have anything particular to say, and he said it in the worst possible style. When he had finished his tedious address a Freethinker rose to put a question. The chairman, however, put him off on the plea that the Rev. George Brown was about to speak and could not remain long. Mr. Brown was a pleasant-faced, elderly clergyman from whom I expected something of interest; but, alas! he seemed to have nothing particular to say. One passage in his speech struck me as being noteworthy, illustrating as it did the mental bankruptcy of these people. With a fine air of impressive indignation he exclaimed, “I have known men, claiming to be ministers of the gospel, openly deny the existence of a personal Devil! I have known men, claiming to be ministers of the gospel, deny the reality of damnation in a fiery hell! What pleases the Devil more than for people to believe that he does not exist? That is just what he wants them to believe! And it is to that end that he encourages Atheism and all the other ‘isms’ invented by the proud intellect of man.” From that time forth I paid no attention to the Rev. George Brown.

At the conclusion of his address, a very active member of the N. S. S., Mr. George Ward, rose to put a question to the chairman, who, as I then learned, was the wondrous Baxter himself! Mr. Ward referred to the offer that he had previously made at Myddelton Hall to become one of the trustees of Mr. Baxter's property after the year 1901, which is to see the end of all sublunary things. Ward repeated that offer, and challenged Baxter to give a fair answer to it. The Prophet, finding Mr. Ward supported by the open sympathy of a large section of his audience, advanced to the front of the platform, and, with a wicked smile, answered the question. He said it would be absurd to appoint trustees of his property, as the right thing for us all to do was not to hold our property, but to distribute it to the poor and other deserving people. Mr. Ward returned to the point and claimed a fair answer to his question, adding that he was prepared to pay all the legal costs of a trust-deed. The audience became excited, and Baxter said that if Mr. Ward were not quiet he would be put out of the hall. He then called upon a lady, Miss Coles, to speak, and the Freethinkers left the hall in a body.

As for me, I remained, still hoping against hope that there might be something worth hearing. But Miss Coles was as empty as her predecessors, and after listening to her for a few minutes I fled the scene.

Thus did I unprofitably spend my evening in company with Prophet Baxter and his tribe. If, in addition to wasting my own time, I have also wasted the time of any Freethinkers who may read this article, I can only crave forgiveness and promise that I will not offend again—at any rate, on that subject.

GEORGE STANDRING

THE BLESSINGS OF SORROW.

BY THE REV. CATER TOTHERICH.

Text: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—Matt. v. 4.

(CONCLUDED.)

THERE are times, indeed, when a cloud of gloom seems ready to settle on the mind and spirit, for the soul of man is so large than even wealth and leisure cannot quite satisfy it in a limited world. This is doubtless a wise provision of God to prevent us from being wholly satisfied with what this life affords; and, too, our unsatisfied yearnings serve to remind us of that better world in which much is laid up in store for those who truly love God, as we, my brethren, have much reason to, and do. But when these sombre moments come, as come they will, I have found it best to resist them, and often escape from them by pleasantly mingling with cheerful people, or by seeking some form of elevating amusement, such as the concert, the dinner party, or the opera afford, for it is a great mistake to suppose that such amusements were meant only for the children of the Devil, as our worthy but mistaken forefathers thought.

I am an optimist. I do not believe in encouraging sombre thoughts or gloomy views of life. Beware of pessimism, my brethren! And when I am overtaken with a mournful spirit I invariably shake it off, for, as I have already said, I do not discover that it is blessed to mourn.

But while it is true that the words of our text do not apply to us, there are vast numbers of persons to whom they do apply. Great numbers of God's dear children are in a very different station in life from that which we occupy. They are poorly endowed with gifts. They have not the money-making faculty. Their daily life is a round of toil. They are constantly wearied with the tasks which it has pleased the Heavenly Father to put upon them, in order to supply the needs of the world. They are not able to secure the best food in large quantities, and are not always shielded from the "icy fang" of frost and the "churlish wind" of winter. Sickness and death are frequent events with them, and are not accompanied with the ameliorating conditions which attend those misfortunes in our class. They have to see their loved ones suffer and die from want of proper nursing care. When the blow falls upon them, they have not access to those means of diversion that are so freely and appropriately open to us. It is true that liquor is always at hand, and there are places where cheap amusement may be had, but if they are the true children of God they will not avail themselves of such means of relief, for the use of the kinds of liquor within their reach, and the vulgar way in which they would drink it, would be very demoralising; and the amusements which are open to them are low and injurious, and should be discouraged.

I have nothing to say against a moderate and respectable use of wine, or against the theatre, the opera, or the dancing party, as we know and enjoy these diversions, for with us all the associations connected with these forms of innocent recreation are refining and elevating, but such amusements of a like nature as are open to the poor are coarse and debasing, and it is contrary to the will of God that his children should indulge in them.

It is a mercy to the poor that they have to work so hard, for oftentimes when trouble falls upon them their labor gives them no time to brood upon it; but even with the blessing of work in their favor the conditions of the Lord's poor are such that they must necessarily suffer many experiences in life which give rise to mourning. It is in God's plan that it should be so; and it is to that class of persons that the Savior's words must and do come with such wonderfully comforting power.

This world has in it very little for the poor. Jesus knew this, and hence he did not fail to speak these precious words, in order that our poorer brethren might not despair, or become discontented with their hard lot in this life, or rebellious against the constituted authorities.

In the light of the condition of the poor, how luminous the words of our text become: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Not here, my brethren, not here. Not in this life. There is little comfort for the poor in this fleeting world, for although God's rich children do a great deal, and should do more for the comfort of God's poor children (when they are worthy and deserving), it is impossible for us to supply all their needs. Nor would it be desirable that we should, else would their habits of sturdy industry be broken, and they be led to forget the divinely-inspired saying, "If a man will not work neither shall he eat." In any case we could not supply the needs of their hearts and souls, which only the Holy Spirit can reach. Not in this world is comfort promised to the poor who mourn, but in the world to come.

And herein lies the wisdom of the words of our blessed Lord; herein lies the reason why even the property-holding infidels approve of them. They contain a promise to the poor that sustains them in every hour of trouble, and prevents them from imbibing the doctrines and being affected by the evil influence of those shameless social agitators who would overthrow society, and who are nearly all Atheists, with no respect for the wise and necessary arrangement which God has ordained, by which one portion of the inhabitants of the earth give themselves to honorable and useful toil in order that a superior portion may have relief from the necessity to drudge for daily bread, and so be able to devote themselves to the cultivation of literature and art, which are so much more valuable than merely material goods.

Be assured, dear brethren, these words of Jesus to the poor will outlast the wrecks of time. They are too comforting to the poor, too valuable to the rich, and too useful to those whom God, for the well-being of society, has placed in authority over us, ever to be given up by the sons of men.

The reason why the Bible withstands every attack of the enemies of God is because its precepts so perfectly meets the needs of every class of men. Rich and poor, ruler and ruled, find in the blessed book exactly what is suited to their needs. The rich, the ruling class, do not need to be told that it is blessed to mourn, for they do not mourn; but the poor need those comforting words, for they do mourn; and the more favored class need to have the poor people assured that in heaven they will be comforted for all their mourning in this world, otherwise they would soon become restless, and be a menace to the established order of things.

My brethren, I am afraid you do not all realise what a blessing to the world the religion of Jesus Christ is. I am afraid you do not recognise what a safeguard to society, to property, to vested rights, it is. I have given a great deal of study to social problems, and I assure you that it is clear to me that the class to which we belong are living over a slumbering volcano. I refer to that vast body of persons called the masses. I am satisfied that if it were not for the restraining and comforting power of the religion of Jesus Christ, if it were not that these masses are such firm believers in the promises of God concerning the next world, that volcano would some day burst and destroy us, and with us all that makes this world a safe and peaceful place to live in.

This is why I so constantly urge you to give liberally to the support of our mission chapels, in which the blessed gospel is preached to the poor. As long as these people are kept spiritually enlightened and

submissive to the will of God, society is safe; but if they are allowed to fall away into infidelity, not only will their souls be lost, but civilisation itself will give place to socialism or anarchy. I beg of you, therefore, to cling to Jesus, and do not neglect the Church, for in Jesus and the Church alone are to be found spiritual comfort for the poor and material safety for the rich.

Twentieth Century.

HUGH O. PENTECOST.

LETTER TO A YOUNG LADY.

MY DEAR ———,

You say you are "proud of being a child of God." What do you mean by this? In what sense do you use the words? What do you know about God? Is God masculine, feminine or neuter? If your pride leads to your looking down on others as "children of the Devil," as Jesus called some of his contemporaries—I fear it is a bad kind of pride. Now if I am proud of anything it is to think I never shut my mind to reason nor my heart to love. Is this not as just a cause of pride as being "a child of God"?

Your spiritual pride seems to me a dangerous kind of mental intoxication. There is a drunkenness of the mind as dangerous as that of the body. It also is acquired by degrees and in defiance of reason. What reason have you for the elevation which you ascribe to yourself? Why should you deem yourself worthy of eternal bliss, while others are doomed to eternal woe? You say you are "saved through the merits of Jesus." How know you this? Is there not something unworthy in the idea of relying on the merits of some one else? What do you make of those who reject this idea and those who have never heard of it? Just consider how many religions there are in the world. They cannot all be right. They may all be wrong. Study other religions than the one in which you have been bred, and see if it is not far more probable that *all* are wrong than that any particular one of them should be right. You have not time to study all faiths? Then at least be just enough to admit that others have lived good, useful, noble lives, without *your* religion. Consider the consequences of this admission. Think too, that if your God wished all could think the same on religion. Yet it has been and is a most fruitful source of strife and division, even between relatives. People will ever dispute upon subjects they understand nothing of, such as who are children of God, and salvation through the merits of Jesus. But are there not some things on which we can all agree? Let me see that you, not as a child of God, but simply as a woman, sharing the common faults and frailties of humanity, delight in making others happy. Show me that in your daily life you do your best to serve others, trying to do good and spread happiness around you, and I care no jot of what faith you call yourself. But this I call Humanity, not Religion. It needs no faith in the God that crucified God to appease God, nor in a son being born without a father, who turned water into wine, walked on the water, rose from the dead, descended into hell, and ascended into heaven. These seem to me but fables hardly fit for civilised children. Think for yourself, my dear ———, and you may come to see that the wise and modest course, where you know nothing, is to keep silence. LAON.

The Lick observatory reveals 100,000,000 stars, and some of them are so small that it would require 30,000 of them to be visible to the naked eye.

George Aspden, writing from Paris about the noted churches of that city, tells of a visit to the Cathedral of Notre Dame during service: "The voice of the priest reverberated as in a cavern. No distinct syllable could be heard—a big bumblebee in a big drum. Poor old church, poor old priest—one is as dull as the other. What do they want in this world? The void at which he is praying cares not for human conditions. Man must help himself; communities must be as one—mutually assisting, mutually dependent. How long will people persist in believing that the purposes of God have been frustrated; that he is a being of whims and passions; that he has decreed such suffering, or allowed, it as would break an ordinary father's heart?—*Carrier Dove.*

HOW TO MAKE A REVIVAL.

We once had the advantage of hearing a revivalist describe how he did it. The process was somewhat as follows:—First you put the people in a funk. Tell them all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and he that is guilty in one point is guilty in all. Picture the doom of a lost sinner on the way to death and eternal judgment. Give them a sniff of the lake of brimstone, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever. Then ask, Where will you spend eternity? Tell them without shedding of blood is no remission of sins, and that Christ has shed his most precious blood on the agonising cross. He has made a clearance of sins for those who accept Salvation. Praise the Lord—he has provided a way of escape when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel. Let all sinners consecrate themselves to the service of the Lord. Then give out an hymn, and take up the collection.—LUCIANUS.

THE POET IN PRISON.

EVEN though the torturers blind me,
Will the sun therefore lose its light?
In deepest dungeon let them bind me,
Freedom will triumph in my night.

And if my hand's asunder smitten
Because it wielded pen as sword,
Blows will be struck and songs be written
While hearts still worship Freedom's lord.

What tho' my voice the tyrants stifle
And still the echoes of my lyre!
One tone the less—'tis but a trifle
When myriad voices swell the quire.

Think ye to stay the springtide's glory
In budding grove and ringing dale,
Because, with cruel hands and gory,
Ye murder one poor nightingale?

—From the *German of Sallet.*

SCPTICISM.—By "scepticism" I mean a hardness of belief, so that an increased scepticism is an increased perception of the difficulty of proving assertions; or, in other words, it is an increased application and an increased diffusion of the rules of reasoning and the laws of evidence. This feeling of hesitation and of suspended judgment has, in every department of thought, been the invariable preliminary to all the intellectual revolutions through which the human mind has passed; and without it there could be no progress, no civilisation. In physics it is the necessary precursor of science; in politics, of liberty; in theology, of toleration.—BUCKLE.

DARE TO BE A DANIEL.

When Daniel was called to Darius' court
To counsel him what to do,

His enemies said his head would be turned
By mixing with such a crew.

But Daniel was not such a goose as they thought,
A hard-headed prophet was he;

"They can feed those lions 'most anyone else,
But they never can lionise me!"

NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

MR. C. J. HUNT'S TOUR.—Mr. Hunt, after lecturing at Morpeth on Monday, April 18; 19, Bedlington; 20, Ashington; 21, Blyth; and 22, Seaton Delaval, will deliver the following course of lectures:—Saturday, April 23, Blyth Market Place, "Christianity and Slavery." Sunday, April 24: morning (open-air), Choppington Station, "Christ: God, Man, or Myth?"; in the Co-operative Hall, Bedlington Station, at 2.30, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; 6.30, "Life and Death." Tuesday, April 26: Spennymoor (open-air), "The Philosophy of Secularism." Wednesday, April 27: Crook (open-air), "The Philosophy of Secularism." Thursday, April 28: Ox Hill (open-air), "Christ's Teachings." Friday, April 29: Ebchester (open-air), at 6, "Christ's Teachings." Saturday, April 30: Chester-le-Street (open-air), "Christ: God, Man, or Myth?" Sunday, May 1: Loraine Hall, St. Mary's-place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at 11, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; at 3, "Christianity and Science"; at 7, "Life and Death." Monday, May 2: Sunderland (open-air).

ACID DROPS.

Johnny McNeill was under constraint in a London pulpit. He feels at home now he is evangelising (at £1,200 a year) in his native Scotland. His latest performance is a wild whoop at Professor Huxley, whom he described as "a mean hound," a "humbug," an indulger in "rant and cant and clap-trap," and an "impudent sinner, not worth the trouble a body took about him." Poor Johnny! How badly he is bitten! How he roars for a hair of the dog! But he won't get it. He is as much beneath Professor Huxley's attention as an infuriated pug is beneath the attention of a prize mastiff.

The *Baillie* of godly Glasgow has a hit at the Rev. J. McNeill and the other men of God who are following in his wake. It suggests that we shall soon see advertised sermons by the Rev. J. Grimaldi on "Does your mother know you are out." Conversation lozenges provided. Or the Rev. Massa Bones will illustrate the process of conversion by washing the burnt cork off his face in the presence of his audience.

Says the *Baillie*: "The Rev. John McNeill said the other day that 'there were far too many brakesmen in connection with religious matters, and far too few engine-drivers'; but it was unkind of that young man at the back of the hall to whisper that there was at least one superfluous ex-railway porter."

J. Grinstead, editor of the *Bristol Messenger*, was taken to task by us for saying that a female orator challenged God to strike her dead on a Freethought platform. He now replies that the lady was Mrs. Harriett Lawe (*sic*), and his informant was George Collin, of Goschen-road, Carlisle. The worthy Collin says it took place in Aberdeen about twenty years ago. We are sorry to see that the Rev. J. Moffat Logan, with whom Mr. Foote recently debated at Bristol, also assures J. Grinstead that "he heard Mrs. Harriett Lawe [*sic*] say the same thing in Glasgow." We knew Mr. Logan to be imaginative, but we thought he had a better memory. To put it in the mildest way, he must be mistaken. That "strike-me-dead" story has been told of many Freethinkers. It is a bit of old stock business. Mr. Bradlaugh was declared to have called on God to annihilate him, if he could, in half the towns of England. Once he caught a man who said so (his name, we think, was Edgcombe) and made him pay for the luxury of lying. Mrs. Law has been off the Secular platform for many years, and perhaps the Christians think she is dead. Is that the reason why the fable is fastened upon her?

J. Grinstead's friends are "indignant" at our language. Poor creatures! We are not indignant at *his* language. It would be a waste of good sentiment. We feel only contempt for his folly.

It is to be hoped that our heavenly Father does not understand the Russian language. Otherwise his ears must tingle when he hears the bitter cry of famished Russians for bread. Pestilence as well as famine is rampant in Russia. Typhus and black small pox abound, and, exclusive of Siberia where whole villages are infected with leprosy, there are at present a thousand persons suffering from that loathsome malady in the Russian Empire.

Under the heading "Missionary Martyrdom" "Anti-Humbug" tells us in *Modern Thought*, of Bombay, how different is actual missionary life in India from what it is pictured in Exeter Hall, and the tales which extract pence from Sunday-school children. He says: "Go to any of our large towns and you will see that even the Wesleyan, London, Free Church, and Episcopal Methodist Missionaries, live in some of the largest houses, keep a large establishment of servants, have splendid carriages and horses, and are more often to be seen at the band-stand or the tennis-court than at chapel. They are the worst of the government chaplains in never visiting their flocks and in altogether behaving as if they were of too high a class to associate with such common people, who they consider were only created to be fleeced for the support of missionaries." "Anti-Humbug" declares not only that the missionaries in India live in clover, but that their mission reports are cram full of lies. "If the conversions in

Indian Mission Reports were to be believed then India ought to have been fully converted a *hundred years ago*, and yet barring some hundreds of chucklers, scavengers, toddy-drawers and pariahs, India is, as far as its millions are concerned, quite unconverted as ever." —

Maria Owen, the Birmingham "lady doctor," seems to have taken a leaf out of the sky pilots' book. To an invalid she said: "I can cure you, if you will put your trust in me and the Lord. Take a few drops from this bottle, and pay me 10s. 6d." Maria has to take her trial for obtaining money by false pretences. —

The Lambeth Guardians seem to be pretty much under the influence of the sky pilots, for they have passed a resolution that in future applicants for appointments under the board must state their religious belief. —

Bishop Korum of Trèves is preparing a detailed account of the miracles alleged to have been wrought in connection with the exhibition of the Holy Coat at Trèves last year. Bishop Korum could use the words of Mokanna in Moore's "Veiled Prophet":

"Ye shall have miracles, aye sound ones, too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything but true."

Pope Pecci thanks Bishop Korum for the Peter's pence collected from the pilgrims to the Holy Coat of Trèves. That business pays better than writing encyclicals on the Labor Question. The Catholic Church is refurbishing up some other old relics, and the investment is expected to realise a big dividend. Cent. per cent. is nothing to it. —

Despite the Church's infallibility, Catholics are as divided as Protestants over the question of the Bible and Science. Professor Mivart is a Darwinian, and teaches Evolution without reproof from his ecclesiastics. His view of the Bible has been expressed in one of our leading magazines; it is, that all the Word of God in the "blessed book" may be so minute as to be easily written in a waistcoat pocket-book. On the other hand, the *Catholic Times* highly praises a book by Father Thein, who is said to smite the Evolutionists hip and thigh, and to prove the Deluge story as well as the other anti-scientific yarns in the Bible. Thus it is clear that the Catholics have strong internal differences. For our part, we leave Father Thein and Professor Mivart to settle this matter in their own fashion. —

Tom Grey, an Erith newsagent, unsuccessfully contested a seat at the recent Local Board election. He stood in the labor interest, and probably his opinions are liberal, but selling the *Freethinker* does not make him an Atheist. He was the recipient, however, of a pious postcard, containing the text about the fool and his God, and remarking that the sender would be known on "the judgment morning." Very likely he will—at a County Court. —

The *Weekly Dispatch* publishes under the heading of "The Cloven Foot" a letter on Booth's social scheme by "L. T. E.," who appears, as they say, to be "in the know." He asserts that the wood-cutters in the shelters get twopence for sevenpence worth of work. In his laundries Booth under-sells the poor washerwomen. Booth's humanity in only making safety matches is a bit of sharp commercialism. The phosphorus matches don't pay, but there is a demand for them, and ordinary manufacturers have to supply one sort with another. "L. T. E." also accuses Booth of supplying bonnets, etc., to Salvationists at ruinously high prices. This is a direct attack, precise figures are given, and some answer should be forthcoming. —

Meanwhile it is worth noting that Booth complains of slack subscriptions. He got the £100,000 to start his social scheme, but he does not get the £30,000 a year he bargained for to carry it on. The fact is, we take it, the public are finding out the truth of what Mr. Foote advanced in *Salvation Syrup* against the plans of the Salvationist Moses. —

"Sweating by the Churches" is an article in the Manchester *Clarion*. It draws freely from Mr. Walter Besant's article in the *Forum*. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, of which the Archbishop of Canterbury is president, is very warmly attacked by our reforming novelist. He

gives the instance of £12 paid to the writer of a book, of which 6,000 copies were sold, yielding a profit of £200. This, however, is owned up to as only £57, that being the profit after deducting payments to the society's officials! Mr. Besant cries out upon it as "Sweating—sweating—merciless, cruel sweating!"

Emile Souvestre, in his book *Les Derniers Bretons* (1836), mentions that at that time there still existed near Tréguier, in Brittany, a chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de la Haine, "Our Lady of Hatred."

Hudor Genone puts it thusly: "The earth is the Lord's and the foolness thereof."

The Rev. B. J. Harker, minister of Duke's-alley Chapel, Bolton, says that his chapel has been boycotted by the trustees of its own building and by the churches of its own order. He says the trustees have £343, yet the chapel is going to ruin, with mouldy walls, discolored ceiling, smoke-begrimed pews, and broken floors. Mr. Harker further says that although another site was selected, he was not allowed to move there because he would come into competition with other Congregational churches. How these Christians love one another!

In a recent paragraph on Bethshan Hospital we mentioned that one of our readers had endeavored to obtain an outside opinion on an alleged case of "divine healing" (in which it was claimed that a hopeless case of "lung disease" had been cured by prayer) by asking for the address of the doctor who had attended the case. The person to whom he wrote was the narrator of the miracle, but instead of replying to his letter, this person wrote to the secretary of "Bethshan, the house of the Lord's healing," saying: "The little girl was not in my family. The child's mother told me that she was never so well since she was born. She is seven. I could not give the doctor's name because he is a man that does not believe in anything of the sort, and he would not allow anyone to go near one of his patients [the patient is in Ireland!], and if the gentleman wrote to them about it he would get me into trouble. I was asked to go and see the child by the child's mother and by herself."

Councillor Kinnaird, on the Leith School Board, pointed to the fact that the clerical members only offered prayer when the reporters were present, and that personally it did them no good, as they only sharpened their pencils and smiled. He moved that each of the members prayed in turn, or, failing that, that the practice be discontinued.

The Bootle police have been instigated to commence prosecutions under the old Sunday Observance Act of Charles II. against certain milkmen and barbers who carried on their business on Sunday. The magistrates proved to be sensible men, and dismissed the cases.

The clergy formerly claimed the whole of the Lord's day. Now a few sensible ones are found who, like the Rev. Wray Hunt, vicar of Wilnecote, see a compromise must be made, and propose that men shall go to church on Sunday morning and play cricket in the afternoon. But the time may come when they wish to play cricket in the morning.

Some of the "unco' guid" of Portobello compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to, and petition against Sunday concerts at Portobello. They had to be reminded that the magistrates, even if they would, have no power to stop the Sunday concerts. As the late Lord Redesdale once told the Provost of Portobello: "The sea-beach belongs to the Crown, and if we grant permission to you to build a pier in the public interest, it must be for the public interest, and not for the gratification of private prejudices, and we will not allow it to be closed on Sunday."

"An Atheist's Death" is the title of a leaderette in the *Catholic Times*. It refers to the execution of Anastay at Paris, who is described as a Materialist, and declares that "from his materialism sprang the most heartless crimes." Nonsense, thou Catholic scribe! Are not hundreds of murders committed by Christians? But is it Christianity

that makes them murderers? No, you would repudiate the idea with scorn. Why then do you ascribe Anastay's crimes to his Materialism? Is it not because you are an unscrupulous advocate of Christianity? Because you value faith above honesty?

The Brighton murderer, Wood, who outraged and killed a little girl of seven, is a Christian and the son of a Christian. Under sentence of death, he is attending devoutly to the ministrations of a Congregational preacher. Does his crime prove the evil tendency of Christianity? Of course not. It was due to the man's bad passions and weak moral nature. But the same explanation must be applied impartially when a Materialist indulges his baser nature. What is sauce for the orthodox goose is sauce for the heterodox gander.

While we are on the job we may as well advise the *Catholic Times* to study another case. In a recent libel action (*Gorse v. Leaver*) arising out of the Whalley frauds, the judge (Lord Coleridge) made a pungent remark at the close of the defendants' case. Referring to the rascally Whalley, now in heaven or somewhere, the judge said—"In all countries we know this kind of man. He was a religious man, I presume?" Mr. Bradbury, the counsel, replied, "Oh yes, my lord, he was." The Judge: "He attended church twice a day, and took Holy Sacrament twice a week probably." Our *Catholic Times* friend should ponder this. Why does a judge conclude, as a matter of course, that a scoundrel like Whalley was a religious man?

We have the *Flaming Sword* sent to us pretty regularly from Chicago. This is the organ of Koreshanity, which claims to be a new religion that will supersede Christianity. Koresh, or Cyrus the anointed Messiah, is Dr. Teed, a gentleman of about 50, who advocates that God is bisexed, the world concave, and that theocrasis, or birth to a new state, is to be obtained by celibacy. The new Messiah's views are mainly derived from Shakerism, but he has drawn a considerable following around him, largely composed of women.

The *Flaming Sword* calls much attention to the social question. It points out that the celibate communities in America have succeeded and become rich while others have failed, and argues that this is a proof celibacy is of divine origin. But the fact only shows that all communities are liable to suffer unless they pay attention to the population question.

We can understand how "those comps." put *a* for *o*, but we cannot see how they mistake *s* for *t*. The pious editor wrote down the hackneyed quotation from Pope, and it got printed:—

All are but parts of one stupendous whole
Whose body nature is, and God the tail.

We suppose they put "tail" for *soul* because they saw it would not rhyme with "whale."

We have no faith in any labor movement that is led by the Church. If labor cannot lead itself it will only be led into another slavery. What is wanted is for the laboring people to educate themselves where they will be capable of managing their own affairs. To put their cause into the hands of lawyers, politicians or priests is to hold out their wrists to be shackled. Let labor work for itself, vote for itself, look out for itself, if it ever wants to be independent. But of all leaders, let it beware of the priest, who has been the greatest parasite on the body of labor since the world began.—*Boston Investigator*.

The Rev. Charles Rogers, in his *Century of Scottish Life*, tells how one of the Educational Commissioners, examining a class of young persons on the Shorter Catechism, endeavored to ascertain what ideas were associated with the words committed to memory. Putting the question, "What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?" he obtained a ready answer in the words of the Catechism, "Eating the forbidden fruit." (Having changed the form of the question, he failed for a time to elicit any response, till at length a girl of fourteen said, timidly, "Committing adultery, sir." Curiously enough the girl hit on a similar explanation to the legend of the Fall which has been put forward by various eminent men.

The Rev. Marcus Dods has been preaching on the "Socialism of Paul." Paul was not much of a modern Socialist. Writing to the Roman Jews, in the time of Nero, he advised them to recognise the existing government and its class distinctions. "Let every soul," he says, "be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). He counselled submission of slaves to their masters with fear and trembling (Eph. vi. 5).

Paul, if himself a slaveholder, could hardly have done more to preserve the institution of slavery. He says, "Art thou called being a slave, care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free use it the rather." In this spirit he sent back into slavery the fugitive Onesimus, who had run away from his master to join the Christian movement. He advised the slaves to look to their masters interests as their own (as proslavery people have always done), and to act out their servitude as a merit to themselves. "Not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." Paul had small sympathy with the equality schemes of the fishing fraternity, and his doctrine is quite distinct from that of his Master.

It should be noted and generally known that wherever the New Testament speaks of "servants" (*Douloi*) the correct translation should be "slaves." This is admitted by scholars.

Henry Varley, who has returned to England *via* Singapore, makes the statement that slavery is virtually carried on by the Christians of that island. They engage "coolies" in China and bind them by contracts which makes them virtual slaves, exporting them to countries where they have no protection. Varley says, "Charleston was not more certainly a port for importation and sale of the African negro in the days of the Southern States slave trade than Singapore is in the year 1892."

Canon Gregory preached at St. Paul's on Easter Sunday. In the course of his sermon he asserted that the resurrection of Jesus was as well established as any event in history. Surely this is presuming too much on the ignorance of the congregation, or on the preacher's immunity from criticism. Sir George Cornwall Lewis laid down a very sound criterion, namely, that there must be contemporary evidence of every allegation. Canon Gregory will perhaps tell us what contemporary evidence there is for the story of Christ's resurrection. Can he produce the testimony of a single eyewitness? He knows he cannot.

Nor is that all. Canon Gregory is not so blind as not to see that the resurrection of Jesus is not an ordinary historical occurrence. It is a miracle, and a transcendent miracle. To establish it we need more than ordinary evidence. The evidence, in short, must be as strong as the story is marvellous. But where is such evidence to be found? Canon Gregory would do well to inform the world. It is more dignified to give proof than to indulge in reckless assertions—even when one is holding forth from "the coward's castle."

The Free Church of Scotland Synod has published a doleful wail on the state of Religion and Morals. Young men, laments the report, are so given to football and other games, that Sundays are wasted in idleness in order to recover from the fatigues of Saturday's play. This is as bad as the much denounced idolatry of Bible days. Play was their god and on the worship of it thousands spent far more than on the worship of the living and true God. The *Glasgow Herald* says the report "is practically a feeble keeping over the dead and gone influence of the clergy."

The good old Scotch elder who said "a kirk without a hell was not worth a damn," did not add that any sort of hell would do, or he might have been satisfied with the Rev. James Forrest, of Kilmarnock, who tells us that "to be virtuous is to be in heaven; to be vicious is to be in hell."

Pickpockets are very impartial. They visit theatres and prayer meetings, churches and secular halls. If they see a man coming from the worship of God, with a far-away look

of devotion in his eyes, they make no scruple of examining his pockets. At one West-end gospel-shop a notice is stuck up, the *Telegraph* says, advising the congregation to bring "only such money as they may need for offertory and general expenses." Something for the collection and something to ride home with. How provident! Especially of the collection.

The *Daily News*, the organ of Dissenting sweetness and light in the political world, observes that "the general spread of knowledge, and the subsequent zeal for the ascertainment of actual truth, have compelled the religious teacher to move lest he should find his audience too far ahead of him. A liberal insistence upon the cosmogony of Moses only raises a smile among the disciples of Darwin." Quite true. We thank the *Daily News* for noting that the religious teachers have been "compelled" to move. They never advance of their own accord. Religion altogether is stick-in-the-mudism.

Judging by last Saturday's reports of football matches, the principal English clubs care a good deal more for goals than they do for the crucifixion.

The church party in Conway have shown that they only interest themselves in the School Board in order to destroy its influence. After securing a majority on the representation, the whole of the Church members declined to attend the meetings, and consequently no quorum could not be formed. The matter has been reported to the Educational Department.

St. George's Church, Battersea-park-road, is another of God's edifices that nearly became food for the flames, the vestry and its contents being very seriously damaged.

Father Ignatius says he shall not be surprised if Buddhist temples are set up in England since Protestants now preach nothing better than Buddhism in their doctrine of self-salvation, instead of relying upon the merits of Christ, who says, "Without me ye can do nothing." The eccentric preacher has here hit a distinction between Christianity and the modern views of life, whether they are called Buddhist or Secularist. Self-reliance and self-salvation is a far manlier and far truer gospel than that of clinging to the skirts of some other.

The standard of literary morality in religious publications is by no means above the average. The *Record* complains that the *Religious Review of Reviews* takes without permission or acknowledgment reviews from its columns which it passes off as its own. It further says: "Some weeks ago we had to request the editor of a Nonconformist weekly not to reprint as his own original matter, 'Weekly Notes,' from the front page of the *Record*." Perhaps the Nonconformist thought that by conveying pars. from a Church organ he was hastening on the great, much-talked-of, providential work of Christian reunion.

Blowing hot and cold alternately seems to be the policy of the Rev. Mr. Waugh, the secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Freethinkers will remember how he backed up Bishop Jayne in saying that cruelty to children was most prevalent among working-class Secularists; a piece of slander which he had neither the courage to try to substantiate nor the honesty to retract. Mr. Waugh is now sailing on another tack. He declares that churches, chapels, and religious organisations in general afford very little help to the movement. It was a racing man who once saved the society from bankruptcy by a cheque for £4,000; and bazaars, fancy balls, and other frivolous agencies still beat the gospel-shops in the help they give.

THE REASON OF HIS KNOWLEDGE.

"WHAT bird did Noah send out of the ark?" queried a Sunday-school teacher of her scholars on a recent Sabbath.

After a pause of several moments' duration, one of the smallest boys in the class piped out:—

"A dove, mem."

"Very good," said the teacher, with an approving nod, "but I should have thought that some of you big boys should have known all about that."

"Please mem," exclaimed one of the tallest pupils alluded to, "It's nae wonder that wee Jock Grant kens a' about that. His faither has a hale lot o' doos."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 24, Hall of Science, Old-street, London, E.C.: at 11.15, "John Morley"; at 7, "Why I am an Atheist."
Thursday, April 28, Hall of Science, Old-street, E.C., at 8, "Prophet Baxter, and the End of the World."

May 1, Glasgow; 8, Belfast; 10 and 11, Aberdeen; 15, Edinburgh; 22 and 29, Hall of Science.

June 5, N. S. S. Conference; 19, Birmingham.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—April 24, Rochdale. 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.

H. E. DAUNCEY.—You mistake our object. We never pretended that professed Secularists or readers of Secular literature were impeccable. We call attention to the crimes of professed Christians, as reported in the newspapers, simply in order to disprove the orthodox assertion that religion is a guarantee of morality. On the other hand, you must be very rash, or very prejudiced, to form a judgment without waiting for the evidence.

J. HERRIN AND SEVERAL OTHERS.—Lecture Notices are not to be sent to Mr. Forder or to 28 Stonecutter-street. They must be sent to our editorial office, 14 Clerkenwell-green. Those who neglect this instruction have only themselves to thank if their Notices do not appear.

J. ROBERTS.—Thanks. See paragraph.

A. HOLLAND.—See paragraph. We presume you are in communication with Mr. Watts.

R. S. PENGLLY.—The verses appeared in the *Freethinker* two or three years ago. Thanks all the same.

LIVERPOOL READER.—We are tired of answering questions about the black champion. Full information as to his readiness for a set debate was given in our last issue.

M. WEATHERBURN.—You sent your postcard too late; you also addressed it to Mr. Forder instead of to us. Mr. Hunt's list of lectures in the Tyneside was thus excluded.

J. F.—"Who was David's mother?" is one of those catch questions by which ignorance of the Bible is tested. It is not to be found in that volume. But we can give you the traditional name, "Nezebeth." It appears in the Talmud, Baba Bathra, cap. v.

S. H. ALSON.—(1) The Alfred Field case is a very dirty one, but we fail to see any connexion between his offence and the "reading of Secularist books," as the newspapers put it. Secularist books did not teach him to be vicious. We prefer not to deal with the case while it is *sub judice*. (2) Glad to have the approval of a veteran of 87, who stood by Charles Bradlaugh on Bonner's Fields, and hopes the Hall of Science will be preserved as a memorial to him. Your own approval is also appreciated.

J. A. GIBSON.—Shall appear.

S. ALWARD.—Pleased to hear you made the affirmation at Grimsby, and left the swearing to your orthodox fellow citizens; also that no exception was taken to your exercising your right. All Freethinkers should follow your example. If they did so, the courts would soon cease insulting those who prefer decent language to blasphemous oaths.

A. GUEST.—It certainly looks fishy.

J. KEAST.—See paragraph. Sunday lectures at Bristol will be a good sequel to the Logan-Foote debate.

LIVERPOOL FREETHINKER.—The black champion is, we believe, in the employ of the Bishop of Bedford, who will have to be held responsible for his *protégé's* statement that Atheism denounces marriage and teaches promiscuous intercourse. It is almost incredible, as you say, that even the baser sort of Christians, at this time of day, can sit and applaud such wretched stuff.

W. HOLLAND.—Always thankful for cuttings.

E. COLLE.—See paragraph.

J. E. ROOSE.—Thanks. Shall appear.

R. SHAW.—See answers to other correspondents on the subject.

A. DEMPSTER.—We have commented upon it in "Acid Drops."

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) The "lower classes" were more civilised in any Pagan civilisation than they were in Christendom until the break of the Dark Ages. Slavery existed for centuries under Christianity. (2) Who were *real* Christians is not for us to decide. We say that Christianity is responsible for what was deliberately done in its name, not by isolated individuals, but by the whole Church for hundreds of years, in fact till it was *compelled* to improve. Read Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity*. (3) We hope you will soon see your way to join the N. S. S.

HALFWAY.—Mr. Josiah Spencer left £500 for the Manchester Secularists, Charles Bradlaugh and George Payne being named trustees. The money was intercepted by order of the court. A few years before some house property was left to the Bolton Branch. That was also intercepted. Bequests for Freethought purposes are invalid under the Law of Blasphemy, common and statute.

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—Clarion—Bootle Times—Glasgow Herald—The Baillie—Birmingham Mail—Daily News—Modern Thought—Open Court—Natal Advertiser—Protestant Standard—Twentieth Century—Star—Glasgow News—Bolton Star—La Vérité Philosophique—Hackney and Kingsland Gazette—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Grays and Tilbury Gazette—Manchester Guardian—North Devon Journal—Kensington News—Lancaster Observer.

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.

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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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

The Sheffield committee worked hard for a success on Sunday, and Mr. Wollen was simply indefatigable in advertising Mr. Foote's lectures in Sanger's Circus. It is doubtful if any Freethought lectures were advertised so well before. Of course the expenditure was very heavy, but the meeting were three or four times as large as they would have been in the Secular hall. Altogether it was a really successful experiment. Many Christians were induced to hear a Freethought lecture, perhaps for the first time, and the three doses of discussion must have done a great deal of good. The same may be said of the publications sold at the bookstalls.

After the morning lecture on the reasonable subject of the Resurrection, some opposition was offered by the secretary of the local Christian Evidence Society. This body has undertaken the arduous task of settling the hash of Sheffield "infidelity." It appears to depend chiefly on the efforts of the negro champion, who is to visit Sheffield on Sunday, May 1, and deliver three lectures in Sanger's Circus in reply to Mr. Foote.

Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (April 24). His morning subject is "John Morley: Past, Present, and Future," his evening subject, "Why I am an Atheist." Before the evening lecture there will be vocal and instrumental music and a poetical reading. On the following Thursday (April 28) Mr. Foote lectures from the same platform on "Prophet Baxter, and the End of the World."

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, to the largest audience he has had in that town since his return from Canada. His subject was, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" Many strangers were again present, and a deputation from the Derby Branch of the N. S. S. also attended to confer with Mr. Watts upon the proposed Midland Federation of the Freethinkers of the district. After the lecture there was an interesting discussion, which was enthusiastically applauded by the large and highly appreciative audience. Every copy of the *Freethinker* on hand was sold. To-day (Sunday, April 24) Mr. Watts lectures three times in Rochdale.

The Rev. James McCann sends to the Birmingham *Daily Gazette* some correspondence he has had with Mr. Charles Watts. It appears that Mr. Watts invited Dr. McCann to come to Baskerville Hall for three or four nights and discuss "the leading problems at issue between Christians and Secularists." Dr. McCann accepted the invitation, although "not generally in favour of public debates." The conditions he lays down (which Mr. Watts agrees to) are, that he shall deliver a lecture one night, and be replied to the following week. The subjects are to be, "The Existence of a God," "The Moral Nature of Man," and "Christianity the True Secularism."

Good Friday was indeed a good Friday for the Chatham Secularists. It was the occasion of the opening of their Secular Hall at New Brompton. A few minutes before 5 o'clock the President of the National Secular Society unlocked the front door, in the presence of a large knot of people, and formally declared the building open. Inside the ladies had been busy laying out the tea things, and soon afterwards the tables were crowded with nearly a hundred members, friends, and visitors, several of whom had been attracted from distant places by the notices in the *Freethinker*. At 5.45 Mr. Foote called upon Mr. G. J. Holyoake to propose the first toast, "Success to our New Hall." Mr. Holyoake's felicitous little speech was highly relished and very warmly applauded. Mr. Taylor having neatly responded to this toast, Mr. Stanley Jones proposed "Prosperity to the Chatham Branch," advising them to look carefully to the children. This toast was responded to by Mr. Thompson, the Branch secretary, whose hearty greetings showed how the members appreciate his long, ungrudging, and invaluable services. Mr. Andrews proposed "The Freethought Cause," and Mr. Foote responded with a speech that was enthusiastically cheered. Mr. Boorman proposed "Success to the National Secular Society," Mr. Hill proposed "The Visitors," and Mr. Rowcroft responded humorously. Then came an interval, during which the tables were cleared away, and the seats arranged for a public meeting.

Mr. Taylor took the chair at 7.30, after a glee excellently rendered by the choir. The chairman made an interesting speech, and then called on Mr. Thompson for a financial statement. With mingled humor and pathos the secretary told how a body of working men and women had "saved up" for years to get a decent home for Chatham Secularism. They raised over £200, then £50 was sent them by a lady in London, and they entered into a contract for building. The hall was open, the property was in the hands of five trustees, and what they now wanted was to clear off the debt of £90 within six months. Mr. Thompson hoped, as we hope, that the money will be forthcoming. Such a brave body of Secularists deserve support.

Speeches were then delivered by Mr. Foote, Mr. Stanley Jones, Mr. Holyoake, and Mr. Boorman, which we have not space to report. Suffice it to say that the meeting seemed to be enjoying "a treat." After the speeches the room was cleared for dancing, which went on till the small hours of the morning.

The Secular Hall at New Brompton is erected on a bit of freehold land. The hall is built of iron; it is nicely fitted up inside, and well ventilated. The cost has been about £300. When the place is decorated with more portraits and a few busts it will be really handsome. It is not colossal, but it is large enough; it is not a marvel of architecture, but no one has been robbed or spoiled to build it; it is not so imposing as most of the churches and chapels, but honest, self-sacrificing men and women have raised it, and they will maintain it as a Temple of Humanity.

Easter Sunday was well celebrated by the Camberwell Branch. First, the members' quarterly meeting was held, Mr. Thomas presiding. The report showed an improved financial position, the Branch having fully recovered from the losses it sustained a year ago. The old officers and committee were re-elected, and Messrs. Hartmann and Thomas appointed as delegates to the N. S. S. Conference. This business was followed by a tea and entertainment, and so great was the rush that after 7.30 only members of the N. S. S. could be admitted. The Battersea Branch gave valued assistance in providing the entertainment.

The National Sunday League has arranged for the Sunday opening of the Gallery of the Royal Society of British Artists throughout May. Tickets may be had by forwarding stamped addressed envelope to Mr. H. Mills, secretary, 221 High Holborn, and stating the date for which they are required.

"Nunquam," then of the *Sunday Chronicle*, had a very enthusiastic reception in the Manchester Secular Hall at the unveiling of Charles Bradlaugh's portrait. His speech showed he was no orator, but he is certainly a pungent, idiosyncratic writer, with a lot of the spirit of humanity in him. Since September, 1891, "Nunquam" has left the *Chronicle*, and started a paper of his own, *The Clarion*. It is as readable a

paper as we get among our exchanges. We don't say "ditto" to the whole of its social *credo*, but what of that? The world is wide enough for different opinions. "Nunquam" and his colleagues are Freethinkers anyhow, they must be doing a lot of good in ways outside our special province, and long may they blow *The Clarion* in the battle of freedom and progress.

Dudley, Walsall, West Bromwich and Darlaston Freethinkers bent on local organisation are desired to meet this evening (April 24) at 7 at Mr. Burke's, game dealer, near the Market Place, Wednesbury.

The *Popular Science Monthly* speaks out on the reactionary movement in Germany, the effect of which it declares would be to fill the German fatherland with intellectual stagnation, formalism and hypocrisy.

La Vérité Philosophique gives a portrait of M. Emile Pasquier, the secretary of the French Federation of Freethinkers, and has some translations from our columns.

Modern Thought, of Bombay, reprints Mr. Ball's able and concise little paper "Atheist or Agnostic" from the N. S. S. Almanack. Any member of the N. S. S. who has not yet read this and the other interesting matter of the Almanack should procure it at once, as there are a few copies yet unsold, the sale of which will add to the funds of the Society.

The West Ham Branch held its quarterly meeting on Sunday. The report showed progress. Owing to resignations some changes were made. The new officers are—E. Parker, president; O. Ivatts, treasurer; Ellen Colville (229 Leytonstone-road) secretary.

Mr. C. B. Brogden was two years ago nearly expelled from the South-West Ham Liberal and Radical Club for being such a pronounced Freethinker. He is now president of the club. At a recent meeting he moved that the *Freethinker* be taken in with the other papers, and the motion was only lost by the *pro tem.* chairman's casting vote. Notice of a fresh motion was given immediately, amidst loud applause. We are also informed that the Radical parliamentary candidate supported by the club, Mr. J. Leicester, has promised his hearty support to any bill repealing the Blasphemy Laws or legalising Freethought Bequests.

The new Bristol Branch means business. Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Charles Watts have been engaged to deliver Sunday lectures in St. James's Hall on May 8 and June 19, and arrangements are being made for another visit from Mr. Foote. The ordinary Branch meetings are now held at the Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street. Every Freethinker in Bristol should join the Branch and push forward the good old cause. Those who *cannot* join as active members can join as passive members, their names in that case being kept in strict confidence.

The National Secular Society's Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday at Newcastle. Branches should lose no time in making arrangements for being represented. Notices for the Agenda, from branches or individual members, must be sent to the general secretary by May 14. Mr. Foote will, of course, attend the Conference. Mr. Charles Watts will also be present, and we hope to see Mr. G. J. Holyoake there. Other announcements will appear as we are able to make them.

Until the twenty-fourth of June we must constantly press the Hall of Science purchase scheme upon our readers' attention. By that date the Directors of the National Secular Hall Society must take possession, and it is highly desirable that they should do so with as little encumbrance as possible in the shape of mortgage. A large number of shareholders (the number is already very considerable) will make it easier to accomplish, as the calls or shares cannot exceed half-a-crown at a time and two months' notice. Every Freethinker should do something, if at all possible, to secure headquarters for our party in London, which shall be at the same time a substantial memorial to the great leader who consecrated the spot. Mr. George Anderson has promised to take ten shares for every hundred taken by the rest of the party combined. This is a generous offer, and we hope to keep Mr. Anderson busy in writing £10 cheques.

INGERSOLL'S SPEECH OVER WALT WHITMAN'S COFFIN.

My FRIENDS,—Again we, in the mystery of life, are brought face to face with the mystery of death. A great man—a great American—the most eminent citizen of this Republic—is dead before us. And we have met to pay a tribute to his greatness and to his worth. Walt Whitman is no more. He had passed on life's highway the stone that marks the highest point, but, being weary for a moment, he lay down by the wayside, and, using his burden for a pillow, fell into that dreamless sleep that kisses down his eyelids still. While yet in love with life and raptured with the world, he passed in silence and pathetic dust. Yet, after all, it may be best, just in the happiest, sunniest hour of all the voyage, while eager winds are kissing every sail, to dash against the unseen rock and in an instant hear the billows roar—a sunken ship. For, whether in mid-sea or among the breakers of the further shore, a wreck at last must mark the end of each and all. And every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every movement jewelled with a joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy—as sad, and deep, and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death. Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word. But in the dark night of death hope does sometimes see a star, and listening love does sometimes hear the rustle of an angel's wing. This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock, but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He climbed the heights and left all superstitions far below, while on his forehead fell the golden dawning of a grander day. Walt Whitman's fame is secure. He laid the foundation of it deep in the human heart. He was, above all that I have known, the poet of humanity, of sympathy. Great he was—so great that he rose above the greatest that he met without arrogance, and so great that he stooped to the lowest without conscious condescension. He never claimed to be lower or greater than any other of the sons of men. He came into our generation a free, untrammelled spirit, with sympathy for all. His arm was beneath the form of the sick. He sympathized with the imprisoned and despised, and even on the brow of crime he was great enough to place the kiss of human sympathy. One of the greater lines in our literature is his. Speaking of an outcast—and the line is great enough to do honor to the greatest genius that has ever lived—he said :

Not until the sun excludes you will I exclude you.

A charity as wide as the sky. And wherever there was human suffering, human misfortune, the sympathy of Whitman bent above it as the firmament bends above this earth.

He was built on a broad and splendid plan—ample, without appearing to have limitations—passing easily for a brother of the mountains and seas and constellations, caring nothing for the little maps and charts that timid pilots hug the shore with, and giving himself freely, with the recklessness of genius, to winds and waves and tides, caring for nothing as long as the stars were above him. And he walked among men, among writers, among verbal varnishers and veneers, among literary milliners and tailors, with the unconscious dignity of an antique god. He was the poet, also, of that divine democracy that gives equal rights to all the sons and daughters of men. No man has ever said more for the rights of humanity, more in favor of real democracy or real justice. He neither scorned nor cringed, was neither tyrant nor slave. He asked only to stand beneath the great flag of nature, the blue and the stars.

He was the poet of life. It was a joy to him simply to breathe. He loved the clouds. He enjoyed the breath of morning, the twilight, the wind, the winding streams. He loved to look at the sea when the wind and waves burst into the white caps of joy. He loved the fields, the hills. He

was acquainted with trees, with birds, with all the beautiful objects on the earth. And he saw not only those objects, but understood their meaning. And he used them that he might exhibit his heart to his fellow men.

He was also the poet of love. He was not ashamed of that divine passion that has built every home in the world—that divine passion that has painted every picture, and given us every real great work of art—that Divine passion that has made the world worth living in, and gives some value to human life.

He was the poet of the natural, and taught men not to be ashamed of that which is natural. He was not only the poet of love, not only the poet of democracy, not only the poet of the Great Republic—he was the poet of the human race everywhere. He has uttered more supreme words than any writer of our century, and possibly of almost any other. He was, above all things, a man. And above genius, above all the snow-capped peaks of intelligence, above all of art, rises the true man—greater than all. He was a true man. And he walked among his fellow-men as such.

He was also, as has been said, the poet of death. He accepted all—life and death. And he justified all. He had the courage to meet all, and was great enough and splendid enough to harmonise all, and to accept all there is of life as a devoted melody.

You know better than I what his life has been. But let me say one thing. Knowing, as he did, what others can know and what they cannot, he accepted and absorbed all theories, all creeds, all religions, and believed in none. His philosophy was a sky that embraced all clouds, and accounted for all clouds. He had a philosophy and religion of his own, broader, as he believed—and as I believe—than others. He accepted all. He absorbed all. And he was above all. He was true absolutely to himself. He had frankness, courage, and he was as candid as light. He was willing that all the sons of men should be absolutely acquainted with his heart and brain. He had nothing to conceal. Frank, candid, pure, serene, noble. And for years and years he was maligned and slandered simply because he had the candor of nature. He will be understood yet, and that for which he was condemned—that is, his frankness, his candour—will add to the glory and greatness of his fame. He wrote a liturgy for humanity. He wrote a great and splendid psalm of life. And he gave to us the gospel of humanity—the greatest gospel that can be preached—the gospel of humanity.

He was not afraid to live, nor afraid to speak his thought. Neither was he afraid to die. For many years he and Death lived near neighbors. He was always willing and ready to meet and greet this thing called death. And for many months he sat in the deepening twilight waiting for the night—waiting for the light. He was not afraid; cheerful every moment, the laughing nymphs of day did not desert him. They remained that they might clasp the hand of the veiled and silent sisters of the night when they should come. And when they did come Walt Whitman stretched his hands to both—on one side the nymphs of day, on the other side the silent sisters of the night. And so, hand in hand, between smiles and tears, he reached his journey's end. From the frontier of life, from the western wave-kissed shore, he sent us messages of content and hope. And those messages seem now like strains of music blown by the mystic trumpeter from Death's pale realm.

To-day we give back to Mother Nature, to her clasp and kiss, one of the bravest, sweetest souls that ever lived in human clay. Charitable as the air and generous as nature, negligent of all except to do and say what he believed he should do and should say. And I to-day thank him, not only for you, but for myself, for all the brave words he has uttered. I thank him to-day for all the great and splendid words he has said in favor of liberty, in favor of man and woman, in favor of motherhood, in favor of fathers, in favor of children. And I thank him for the brave words he has said on the subject of death. Since he has lived Death is less fearful than he was before, and thousands and millions will walk down into the dark Valley of the Shadow holding Walt Whitman by the hand. Long after we are dead the brave words he has spoken will sound like trumpets to the dying.

And so I lay this poor wreath upon this great man's tomb. I loved him living, and I love him still. And now, to you who have been chosen from among the many men he loved to do the last sad office for the dead, we give his sacred dust. Speech cannot contain our love. There was—there is—no gentler, stronger, manlier man!

DYNAMITE IN FRANCE.

PARIS and France are at the present moment vastly interested in the subject of dynamite. Both have good reason to be, for the quantity of the explosive to the square inch just now is decidedly abnormal. During the past few weeks dynamite has been in the air, so to speak, but in many instances its summary method of getting there naturally caused considerable alarm. Dynamite, though an excellent article for use in various industrial pursuits, is rather an unpleasant thing to have about the house—a truth which Paris has recently had forcibly impressed upon it. Dynamite cartridges have been found in the most extraordinary places during the last few weeks—under garden walls, under bridges, and in many other places where, even if they had exploded, they could but have caused a minimum amount of damage.

Now that there is a slight lull in the explosions, Frenchmen are carefully considering the matter, and are asking themselves who are the producers of these outrages. When large quantities of dynamite are found in the most public places without having so much as a fuse attached to them, a suspicion arises that they have been placed there for some other object than simply that of causing an explosion. That object is boldly stated by many Frenchmen to be that of increasing the present feeling of uneasiness, and by doing so to produce a condition of the public mind which shall culminate in the overthrow of the Republic and the institution in its place of a Monarchy.

Therefore they point blank accuse the priests of being at the bottom of the mischief. Undoubtedly the clergy have to an extent laid themselves open to suspicion. In at least two public instances they have shown sympathy with the Anarchists, and in doing so have taken it for granted that the Anarchists were the agency from which the outrages came. One leading light in the Church, preaching to a fashionable congregation the other day, declared the Anarchists had what might be a mistaken motive, but that doubtless God would understand them at the judgment day better than humanity did at the present moment. Assuming for a moment that the Anarchists have been the authors of the mischief, it does seem to a mere outsider that Providence would have a certain amount of difficulty in reconciling recent proceedings with any extant earthly or heavenly code of morality. But this by the way.

This sudden defence of Anarchism, for into such has it been construed by Frenchmen, by the unflinching advocates of reaction, is taken as a political move with a distinct reactionary intent. The clergy, despite the fact that some of the bishops have decided to recognise the Republic, are well known to have a mortal hatred of that institution, and at the bottom of their hearts to sincerely desire its overthrow. Therefore when events occur which are calculated to endanger the existence of that institution—and events which create a feeling of insecurity undoubtedly have that effect—that particular class of the community which is known to be most interested in the existence of that feeling of uneasiness at once gets the credit of supporting and fostering its cause. Only get a majority of Frenchmen to be convinced that life and property are insecure, and the moment has arrived to clamor for a radical change of government, and the placing of the country under such a form of government as will secure safety to person and property. Evidently, will say the priests, that form of government is not Republican, as is now plainly to be seen. Thus a *prima facie* case is made out for the establishment of a monarchy.

At present there is no actual proof that there is anything at the back of the suspicions, which are very widespread. The trial of Ravachol is eagerly awaited to see if any additional light will be thrown on the question as to who are the real instigators of the dynamite outrages. Is it the priests? Is it the Anarchists? or are the explosions the work of a few miscreants, of whom Ravachol is one? Much more convincing evidence than is at present in the hands of the public is required before the question can be satisfactorily settled.

A. S. L. (Paris).

OBITUARY.

Died at Wiesbaden, on April 18, Friedrich Martin Bodenstedt, the German poet and Freethinker. Herr Bodenstedt, who had nearly completed his 73rd year, was best known by his translation of the quatrains of Omar Khayyam and by his imitation of Oriental poems published under the name of Mirza Scheffy.

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

ISN'T that a funny phrase? The sin of unbelief! What kind of a sin that is we do not know. We don't know much about sin anyway, but sins of unbelief stump us. Let us get help from the dictionary. Webster says, sin is "transgression of the law of God; disobedience of the divine command; any violation of God's will, either in purpose or conduct; moral deficiency in the character; iniquity." Unbelief is "disbelief; especially, disbelief of divine revelation, or in a divine providence or scheme of redemption."

The sin of unbelief is supposed to be disbelief of divine revelation, or disbelief in a divine providence or scheme of redemption. Where is the law of God which commands us to believe in a divine revelation? Where is the divine command that man must believe in a divine providence or scheme of redemption? What is there that shows that unbelief is a violation of God's will? What is there about unbelief that shows moral deficiency in the character? Wherein is unbelief iniquity?

Instead of unbelief being a sin, it strikes us that it is the highest virtue, it is the evidence of an honest mind. Unbelief is simply the candid confession that we cannot believe; the statement that the evidence does not convince; the expression of an honest doubt. Where is the sin in acknowledging that one cannot believe in a divine revelation? The only honest thing for a person to do who does not and cannot believe in such a revelation is to honestly say so. The man who professes to believe when he does not believe seems to us to be the real sinner. There is where the sin comes in, if there be a sin. Lying, pretension, hypocrisy, make-believe, are open to the charge of being sinful, but how an honest avowal of one's lack of faith, a candid confession of doubt or unbelief, is a sin we cannot comprehend.

That one of the bravest acts of man has been looked upon as a vice and punished as a crime, is due to priestly power and priestly avarice. The priest has maintained his supremacy by making it a sin to disbelieve. The priest has assumed divine authority for his acts, and has endeavored to crush out intellectual honesty in order to prevent exposure of his pretences. Unbelief is the dawn of truth. Where man doubts he is safe from imposition. What is called "the sin of unbelief" is the revolt of the honest mind against priestly deception.—*Boston Investigator*.

HOW CHINAMEN ARE CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY.

The *Philadelphia Times* gives the following explanation of "how the heathen Chinese works the Christian dodge." He has found that by joining a Sunday-school he can increase his business and make love to the pretty young women preachers at the same time, and thus kill two birds with one stone:—"It begins to look as if another sentimental fad promoted by good women is not bearing the expected fruit—the Chinese Sunday-school. In many churches in New York and New England the Chinese annex to the Sunday-schools has been abandoned. It has been discovered that the Chinaman is not a convertible person. It is conceded that at best the Chinese Sunday-school scholar only desires to learn English, and he will not consent to do that except under the instructions of an interesting young woman. The Chinaman further insists that each teacher shall only have one scholar. Then he pursues the pathway that leads to conversion in a way that looks devious to say the least of it. He calls upon his teacher at her home at least once a week. He asks and sometimes succeeds in inducing her to visit him. He makes her presents. He writes letters to her, and he has been known to write in her album, 'me lovee you'; and yet the heathen remains a heathen to the end of the chapter. John Chinaman is a very designing person. He is not much concerned about a hereafter in which he does not believe. If he will not consent to go to heaven except with a pretty young girl to lead him, the only thing to be done is to let him go to the other place."

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—shoots, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Fordor will send them on application.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. James Berry, ex-hangman, has written a book, or got some one to write it for him, and his publishers have favored us with a copy "for review." The title is *My Experiences as an Executioner*, the publishers are Percy Lund and Co., Ludgate-circus, and the price is one shilling.

Mr. Berry's portrait is opposite the title-page. He is broad-shouldered, broad-jawed, and broad between the ears. Lombroso would not have put him among the *élite* of the human race. Still, you cannot help feeling a little awe in presence of Mr. Berry. He has had his fingers on the throats of so many gentlemen with their last nightcaps on, prepared for their last sleep.

The trade of hangman was taken up by Mr. Berry to provide food for his home. He is said to be free from cruelty, and he is evidently a man of piety, for in the gaol before his first execution he says: "I knelt down and asked the Almighty to help me in my most painful task, which I had undertaken to carry out." What a grim and ghastly prayer! We should say it takes the cake in its own line.

Mr. Berry is really a business-like man, and those who are inquisitive in such matters will read with interest what he writes about his professional apparatus. His chief anxiety seems to have been to hang his clients decently, without pulling their heads off or marring their physical integrity. On one occasion he did decapitate a man, but this was not his fault, as he assures us; the blame lay with those who interfered with his plans. Another "terrible experience" was the attempt to execute John Lee. The apparatus would not work, and the man had to be reprieved. He is now in penal servitude, but superstitious people say he is liberated, and that his escape was an act of Providence to save an innocent man. The explanation, however, is purely mechanical; the work was not strong enough, and the iron catches locked when Lee stood upon the trap doors.

It has been said that Mr. Berry is opposed to capital punishment. This is not true. He justifies it as the greatest, in fact the only, deterrent against murder in the case of certain brutal natures. He says that death is the one thing they really fear. Perhaps so. Mr. Berry's experience enables him to speak with some authority. But the question of capital punishment must be determined on very much broader grounds than Mr. Berry touches. It is more a question for society than for the criminal.

The ninth volume of the new edition of *Chamber's Encyclopædia* is in active preparation. Among the subjects treated of will be Shakspeare and Shelley by Prof. Dowden, Schopenhauer by Prof. Caldwell, Secularism by G. J. Holyoake, and Socialism by T. Kirkup.

We have received from India a volume on Henry Derozio, the Eurasian poet, teacher, journalist and Freethinker, whose memory is still esteemed in India. Mr. Upshon, the secretary of the Madras Secular Society, who sends us the volume, tells us that there are a good proportion of Freethinkers among the Eurasian population of India, though they have for the most part to keep their opinions quiet.

In the *Popular Science Monthly* Prof. E. White continues his new chapters on the warfare of science, dealing with astronomy and the case of Galileo. He says: "The Protestant Church was hardly less energetic against the new astronomy than the Mother Church had been." Dr. South denounced the Royal Society as irreligious; and the great Puritan, John Owen, declared that Newton's views were advanced by "arbitrary presumptions against evident testimonies of Scripture."

John Hutchinson, professor at Cambridge, published his *Moses Principia* in 1724, in which he assailed the Newtonian theory as "atheistic," and led the way for similar attacks by such Church teachers as Horne, Duncan Forbes, and Jones of Nayland. So Wesley, who declared that "unless witchcraft is true nothing in the Bible is true," suspected the demonstrations of Newton, and said that if he had been a mathematician he might have been led to Atheism.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President, G. W. FOOTE.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

MEMBERSHIP.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

"I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects."

Name

Address

Occupation

Active or Passive

Dated this.....day of.....18

This Declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription; and, on admission of the member, a certificate will be issued by the Executive.

The minimum subscription for individual members is one shilling per year; all beyond that amount is optional, every member being left to fix his subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

Members are classed as *active* or *passive*. Passive members are those who cannot allow their names to be published. Active members are those who do not object to the publication of their names, and are ready to co-operate openly in the Society's work.

Fill up the above form and forward it, with subscription (as much, or as little, as you think just to yourself and the cause), to Mr. Stanley Jones, sec., 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.; or to a local Branch Secretary.

OCCULT SCIENCE.

We are told of signs and wonders and powers that are beyond the scope of our common experience. They do not shrink from being talked about; but it must be on their own terms, and there must be no meddling in the dry light of normal day. When it comes to real cross-questioning these candid and innocent observers of unexplored phenomena begin to shift their forms as fast as Proteus, and few there be that can hold them to any tangible certainty. As surely now as forty years ago, or, for that matter, forty centuries ago, they "shun rather than court inquiry." [Emerson's phrase on magic, dreams and occult science.] They say, of course, that they love light of all things. They invite the fullest examination and the strictest of tests; but somehow, when the examining begins in earnest, it always turns out that the sceptic's candle must be put in a dark lantern provided by the showman, or there will be no show to-day—*Saturday Review*.

CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY.—According to this doctrine, then, God created out of nothing a weak race, prone to sin, in order to give them over to endless torment. And, as a last characteristic, we are told that this God, who prescribes forbearance and forgiveness of every fault, exercises none himself, but does the exact opposite; for a punishment which comes at the end of all things, when the world is over and done with, cannot have for its object either to improve or deter, and is therefore pure vengeance.—*Schopenhauer*, "Religion: A Dialogue and other Essays," translated by T. B. Saunders, p. 108.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green-road: 7, grand concert.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, free entertainment and dancing. Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, committee.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 6 tea (d.); 7, musical selections; 7.30, E. Calvert, "Is Matter of Itself able to Produce Phenomena?"; 9, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, impromptu speaking; 7, debate between the Rev. Dr. P. F. Duffy and H. Snell on "Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "John Morley" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, G. W. Foote, "Why I am an Atheist" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Thursday, at 8, G. W. Foote will lecture.

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The End of the World Craze."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday, at 8, Mr. St. John, "Fallacies of Spiritualism."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, C. Cohen, "Miracles."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, W. Heaford, "The Consolations of Religion."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, E. W. Osborn, "Animal Instinct"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Reason v. Revelation."

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. Norrish, "The Teachings of Christianity Unsuiited to Man."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, A. Guest, "The Two Adams."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, H. Courtney will lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Norrish, "The Devil: who and what is he?"

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Behold the Glad Tidings!"

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, J. Rowney, "The Sermon on the Mount."

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, debate between Job Williams and Stanley Jones on "Is there Evidence for the Existence of God?"

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, H. Snell will lecture; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Follies and Fictions of the Bible."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings, Crooked-lane: 12 noon, W. N. Allan, "What is Life to Us?"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 6.30, business meeting; 7, T. Hulion, "Buddha and his Teachings."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11.30, W. B. Thompson, "He Rested on the Seventh Day"; 7, A. E. Rowcroft, "The Possibility of Aerial Navigation."

Derby—44 Howard-street, New Normanton: 7, W. Whitney, "The Holy Bible."

Edinburgh—Labor Hall, 50 South Bridge: musical evening.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, debating class, J. P. Gilmour, "Materialism: an Exposition and a Defence"; 6.30, R. M. Ritchie, "American Humor" (illustrative readings).

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Meaning of Atheism"; 3, "Christianity and the Social Question"; 7, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Mrs. Thornton Smith, 11, "Miracles"; 3, "And yet it Moves"; 6.30 "The Resurrection." Monday, at 8, Sam Standring, "The Jews as Christian Evidence" (free).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Geographical Institute, St. Mary's-place: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Sunday in the Light of Reason"; 7, "Truth and Christianity" (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

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

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: Mrs. Samson, 3, "Vital Questions"; 7, "Prayer"; meeting of members after last lecture.

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: Charles Watts, 11, "The Bible and Modern Thought"; 3, "Materialism and Spiritualism Tested by Reason"; 6.30, "The Difficulties of Theism."

Sheff-ld—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, James Weston "Description of a Recent Visit to Palestine."

South Shields—Free Library Hall, Ocean-road: A. T. Dipper, 3, "The Moral Code: Christian or Secular?"; 7, "Malthusianism: a Justification."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, W. R. Stansell will lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Crook—Market Place: 7, C. J. Hunt, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

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H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—April 24, m., Victoria Park; e., Camberwell. May 1, m., Victoria Park; e., Battersea; 8, m., Wood Green; e., Swaby's Coffee Palace; 15, m., Battersea; a., Finsbury Park; 22, m. and e., Camberwell; 29, m., Salmon and Ball; a., Regent's Park. June 5, e., Camberwell; 12, m., Wood Green; a., Finsbury Park; 19, m., Battersea; a., Kilburn; 26, m., Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 17 to May 1, Annual Tour. May to Sept., all mornings booked.

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

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—April 24, a., Victoria Park; e., Plaistow. May 1, m., Bethnal Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., Edmonton; 8, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 15, m., Mile End Waste; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 22, m., Lambeth; a., Victoria Park; e., Leytonstone; 29, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M., Manchester.—April 24 and 25, Manchester. May 1, 2 and 9, Manchester; 15, Failsworth; 16, Manchester.

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