

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"The injury which the theological principle has done to the world is immense. It has prevented them from studying the laws of nature."

—H. T. BUCKLE.

MRS. BOOTH'S GHOST.

THE Booth family have all keen eyes for business. If they shut their eyes you can see it by their noses. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Mrs. Booth-Tucker capping Mr. Stead's ghost stories with a fine romance about her dead mother. While the "Mother of the Salvation Army" was dying, the Booth family made all the capital they could out of her sufferings; and when she expired her corpse was shunted about in the financial interest of their show. Perhaps they would be exhibiting her still if there were no law as to the disposition of corpses. But as that avenue to profit is closed, the only alternative is to make use of Mrs. Booth's ghost, and this has just been done by one of her daughters.

Mrs. Booth-Tucker contributes her ghost story to the Easter number of *All the World*. No doubt Easter was thought a seasonable time for its publication. Christians are just then dreaming about the great Jerusalem ghost, and another "creeper" comes in appropriately.

Mr. Stead catches up Mrs. Booth-Tucker's ghost story and prints it in the *Review of Reviews*. He admits the want of evidence "as to its objectivity," which is a euphemism for "no evidence at all," and then observes most sapiently that if it was only a dream, "the coincidence of its occurrence at the crisis in her illness is remarkable"—which is precisely what it is not.

Mrs. Booth-Tucker was very ill on board a steamer when she saw her mother, fresh from "the beautiful land above." "Those with me," she says, "thought I was dying, and I thought so too." When a person is in that state, after a wasting illness, the brain is necessarily weak. But this was not all. "I had not slept," the lady says, "for some days, at any rate not for many minutes together." Her brain, therefore, was not only weak, but overwrought; and in ingenuously stating this at the outset the lady gives herself away. Given a wasted body, weakness "unto death," a brain ill supplied with blood and ravaged with sleeplessness; does it, we ask, require a "rank materialist" to explain the presence of "visions" without the aid of supernaturalism?

"Suddenly," Mrs. Booth-Tucker says, "I saw her coming to me." But how "coming"? The lady tells us she was lying in "a small sea cabin." This does not leave much room for the "coming" of the ghost. We should also like to know why a lady thought to be dying was left alone. It is certainly a very unusual circumstance.

Mrs. Booth's ghost, after as much "coming" as could be accomplished in a "small sea cabin," at last "sat beside" her sick daughter "on the narrow bunk." No doubt the seat was rather incommo-

dious but why should a ghost sit at all? It really seems to have been a mixed sort of ghost. Apparently it came through the ship's side, or the deck, or the cabin-door, or the keyhole; yet it was solid enough to touch Mrs. Booth-Tucker's hand and kiss her? Nay, it was solid enough to carry on a long conversation, which does not seem possible without lungs and larynx.

Mrs. Booth's ghost said a great deal. "Wonderful words they were," says Mrs. Booth-Tucker. This whets our curiosity. We are always listening for "wonderful words." But, alas, we are doomed to disappointment. The lady knows her mother's words were "wonderful," but she cannot reproduce them. Her memory is defective. "I can remember so few of the actual words," she says. Nevertheless, she gives us a few samples, and they do not seem very "wonderful." Here are two of the said samples: "Live, live, live, remembering that night comes always quickly, and all is nothingness that dies with death!" "Fight the fight, darling; the sympathy of Christ is always with you, and every effort you make is heaping up treasure for you in Heaven."

We fancy we have heard those "wonderful words" before. For all their wonderfulness, ghosts are seldom original. Mrs. Booth-Tucker reminds us of the gushing lady novelist, who describes her hero as divinely handsome and miraculously clever, but, when she opens his mouth, makes him talk like a jackass.

"General" Booth's daughter does not see that she found words for her mother's ghost. She is not so sharp as Dr. Johnson, who carried on a discussion with an adversary in a dream, and got the worst of it. For a time he felt humiliated, but he recovered his pride on reflecting that he had provided the other fellow with arguments.

When Mrs. Booth-Tucker tells us that "the radiance of her face spoke to me," we can easily understand the subjective nature of her "vision," and as readily dispense with a budget of those "wonderful words."

Nor are we singular in incredulity. Mr. Stead cannot put his tongue in his cheek at a member of the Booth family, but the *Christian Commonwealth* says "the story is both improbable and absurd," and adds, "it is just such fanaticism as this that brings religion into contempt with many educated people." Our pious contemporary, like any wretched materialist, declares that many persons have seen ghosts "when under the influence of fever or in a low state of health."

All this is sensible enough, and in a Christian journal very edifying. But if our pious contemporary only applied this criticism backwards, what havoc it would make with the records of early Christianity! Mrs. Booth-Tucker is not in all points like Mary Magdalene, but she resembles her in fervor of disposition. Out of Mary Magdalene we are told that Jesus cast "seven devils," which implies, rationalistically, that she was strongly hysterical. She was more likely to be a victim of "fanaticism" than Mrs.

Booth-Tucker. Yet the ghost story of Mrs. Booth's daughter is discredited, and even stigmatised as discreditable, while the brain-sick fancies of Mary Magdalene are treated as accurate history. She was at the bottom of the Jerusalem ghost story, and her evidence is regarded as unimpeachable. So much do circumstances alter cases!

Our pious contemporary regards all modern ghosts as "fever dreams." So do we, and we regard all ancient ghosts in the same light. The difference between ancient and modern superstition is only a question of environment. Superstition itself is always the same; it no more changes than the leopard's spots or the Ethiopian's skin. But the environment changes. From the days when there was no scientific knowledge or rigorous criticism we have advanced to an age when the electric search-light of science sweeps every corner and criticism is remorseless. Hence the modern ghosts are served up in Christmas "shockers," while the ancient ghosts are worshipped as gods. But this will not last for ever. The rule of "what is has been," will eventually be applied to the whole of human history, and the greatest ghosts of the creeds will "melt into the infinite azure of the past."

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

"The perpetual proffer of forgiveness is a direct premium upon what Christians are pleased to call the commission of sin."—*Ingersoll.*

THE stronghold of Christianity is its doctrine of the salvation of sinners through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Though this doctrine is repugnant to every principle of reason and of justice, there is much in it that is attractive to the sentimental as well as to the mean and cowardly. It exhibits Jesus as a devoted benefactor of his race, and his death as the expiation of human sin. The doctrine will not bear examination. As a God, Jesus could not die; as a man he could not atone for the sins of others. To transfer guilt from the guilty to the innocent is not only iniquitous, but impossible, for the innocent Christ could not have the consciousness of the guilt of others. If this doctrine makes Christ a hero, it makes God the Father a monster, only to be appeased by the blood of the innocent. No judge dare act on the plan which the orthodox Christian ascribes to his God.

In teaching that man need not necessarily bear the consequences of his own acts, that they may be evaded, and, by a blood bath, transferred to another and an innocent person, orthodox Christianity strikes at the root of morality, which is founded on natural law. Its salvation, moreover, is not from the real consequences of wrong-doing, but from the fictitious wrath of God, from an imaginary Devil and an impossible hell. That is, it first invents these bogeys and then offers protection from them—for a consideration.

The entire scheme of the atonement by Christ moreover depends on the fall of Adam—that is, the fiction rests on a fable. Mr. Cotter Morison, in his excellent work, *The Service of Man*, says:

"The whole scheme of Christian theology is meaningless except on the assumption of the fall of man from a primitive state of innocence and virtue. Unless theologians are prepared to throw over St. Paul, they must hold that 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' . . . But if ever a thesis was demonstrated, it is that man has not fallen, but risen, and that from the lowest level of animal existence."

The Christian doctrine of salvation is well calculated to obscure the truths that every event is the inevitable result of its antecedents, and that evil actions must be attended with evil consequences. Christians point to the dying thief and the promise

of Jesus, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise":

For while the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.

By death-bed repentance and reliance on the blood of Christ, the person whose whole existence has been a continual disregard of the rights of others may hope to obtain eternal happiness—

No matter what the sin has been,

How great the debt may be,

Only believe and then be set

From obligations free.

Deprive the widow of her mite,

Nor heed the orphan's call:

You've no concern in things like these,

For Jesus paid it all.

From their babyhood Christians are taught to believe, revere, and solemnly assert this sacred twaddle, without one particle of evidence. What wonder that "Christian veracity" is as sarcastic a phrase as "Punic faith"? Misinterpreted myths and downright falsities are solemnly impressed upon children as the most important truths by people who, if conscientious, instinctively feel that it would be vain to hope their dogmas would be accepted by minds arrived at maturity.

Orthodox Christianity is, as its most consistent advocates have always declared, a religion for scamps and sinners. Jesus preferred not ninety-nine sinners to one righteous man, but one sinner to ninety-nine just men who need no repentance. It is its doctrines of Repentance, Forgiveness of Sins, and Vicarious Atonement which give Christianity its emotional hold on the world. If its doctrine of a God crucified by God to appease God makes the Father a demon, it makes the Son a hero in sacrificing himself for others and taking their sins. The cowards and scoundrels who hope to escape the consequences of their own misdeeds, cling to the cross and rely on the merits of their blessed Savior. The most devout Christians are found on the scaffold. When attended by their spiritual advisers, men considered too vile for earth are jerked to Jesus, and resign their mundane prison for "mansions in the sky, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

From every gallows in the land

The blood-stained wretches go,

To sit at once on God's right hand

(Their victims down below),

And there they sit and claw their harps,

And each will loudly bawl,

"We owe nobody anything,

For Jesus paid it all."

The poor unbeliever has no such resource or consolation. He knows that neither prayers nor tears avail to wipe out the consequences of actions. Nature never forgives. Even first, accidental, ignorant mistakes leave their inevitable results. There would be more playing with fire if it was thought that burning might be escaped. The wise Buddhists placed Karma above all the gods, for there is no being spawned from the fertile imagination of man able to overcome the natural sequence of cause and effect.

J. M. WHEELER.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

THE STAGE AND THE PULPIT:

THE stage and the pulpit have unquestionably played an important part in the formation and direction of human thought. The occupants of each profess to be public instructors; they are, however, in many instances diverse in their characters, and they differ widely in their influence on the popular mind. The preacher bases his teaching upon the alleged divine commands, and presents to his hearers pictures of an imaginary heaven; the actor rests his lessons on human nature, and confines his presentations to earth. The pulpit has been too often degraded by its supporters assuming for it a pharasaical superiority over its rival mentors and in manifesting an arrogant desire for monopoly. Theological advocates have dreaded, and frequently depreciated genius when its force has been directed to purely secular efforts. It is true that there are connected with the pulpit some who approve and patronise the drama, but it is also true that there are many orthodox Pecksniffs who condemn the stage as if it were the hotbed of iniquity and its art the forerunner of all crime. The late Mr. Spurgeon, for instance, in one of his sermons, observed that whenever he passed the doors of a theatre, the circumstances reminded him of a yawning hell, with hosts of damned souls rushing in. Men of this type are not content with being "miserable sinners" themselves, but they would make others the victims of the worst kind of theological melancholy. They are akin to those ancestors of ours mentioned by Charles Lamb, those who lived before candles were in general use, and who, when a joke was uttered in the dark, had to feel around for the smile. Such persons would rob life of its beauty and charm, and ignore the possible brilliancy of Time for the gloomy anticipations of Eternity. In the language of Byron, they live and act

"In hope to merit heaven by making earth a hell."

Despite reckless denunciations from the pulpit, the stage has become a great moral educator, and a stimulant to intellectual activity. It represents a great school in which are concentrated all the attributes of nature and art; no passion, no feeling, no circumstances are strangers to it, for in its delineations are found the lowest type and the highest development of human character. The drama embodies several arts in one—such as painting, statuary, music and elocution. The actors art is a living one, while other arts are comparatively dead. Even the pulpit owes its principal attraction to this fascinating art as shown by the Church of Rome with its miracle plays and the Ritualists with their dramatic display. The power wielded by such men as Spurgeon and Talmage upon the non-intellectual portions of society is not due to what is said so much as how it is said. True, their representation of the dramatic art is not of the highest or most refined order, nevertheless it is to this agency that revivalists in general owe their success, such as it is, inasmuch as it touches the emotions and thereby wins allegiance which probably their discourses would never secure without that aid.

The sublimest poetry in all ages and among all people has been dramatic. In ancient Greece it was employed to train the emotions and to enrich the intellect, the result being that the love of the beautiful there predominated to an extent which has never been realised in any other country either before or since, while philosophy may be said to have almost reached its culminating point. Refinement, culture and learning held a majestic sway and subordinated all else to their potent influence. Subsequently in our own country we find a muster roll of names of those identified with the drama whose transcendent poetic genius will furnish a theme for the admiration of all time. Where associated with the pulpit are such master minds as Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont,

Fletcher, Marlowe and Byron? These men tower like mighty columns above the rest of the race, and from them is derived a legacy of literature that will never fade and thoughts that can never die. The kingdom in which they bear sway is not of heaven but of earth; not of God, but of man. With them humanity takes the place so long usurped by divinity, and genius instead of theology becomes the guide of life, the foundation of hope and the inspirer of love. As Hallam truly said of Shakespeare, "His was the greatest name in our literature, the greatest in all literature." In him genius reached the loftiest pinnacle of sublimity, and by him every phase of human passion was recognised and delineated with unequalled exactness and beauty. What literature of the Church can be compared with "Lear," "Hamlet," "Julius Cæsar," or "As You Like It"? Where are the Bible heroes or heroines equal to the characters portrayed in these grand creations? Well might Johnson exclaim of the "Bard of Avon"—

Each change of many-colored life he drew,
Exhausted worlds and then imagined new.

An important fact connected with mentality is that knowledge is received through perception, the popular mind being slow to receive abstract truths. Hence stage representations are often more effectual in presenting truths than the reading of books. In fact, the great excellence of the drama is that it holds "as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Hamlet proclaimed the true function of dramatic representation when he gave the advice, "See the players well bestowed, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." "The play's the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

The proper training of the imagination is an important consideration, for we all possess it more or less. The pulpit, as a rule, bases its training on "airy nothing," while the stage regulates its discipline of this faculty by the facts of life. Aptly does Col. Ingersoll remark: "We must remember that the stage presents an ideal life. It is a world controlled by the imagination—a world in which the justice delayed in real life may be done, and in which that may happen which, according to the highest ideal, should happen. It is a world, for the most part, in which evil does not succeed, in which the vicious are foiled, in which the right, the honest, the sincere and the good prevail. It cultivates the imagination, and in this respect is far better than the pulpit. The mission of the pulpit is to narrow and shrivel the human mind. The pulpit denounces the freedom of thought and of expression; but on the stage the mind is free, and for thousands of years the poor, the oppressed, the enslaved, have been permitted to witness plays wherein the slave was freed, wherein the oppressed became the victor, and where the down-trodden rose supreme. And there is another thing. The stage has always laughed at the spirit of caste. The low-born lass has loved the prince. All human distinctions in this ideal world have for the moment vanished, while honesty and love have triumphed. The stage lightens the cares of life. The pulpit increases the tears and groans of man. There is this difference: the pretence of honesty and the honesty of pretence."

The Puritans, in their opposition to the Catholic Church, denounced all art. Cromwell destroyed church statuary; Knox broke images; the Scotch Church condemned music, and the Methodists to-day veto the drama. With such persons mirth or merriment, however innocent and rational, are seldom or ever mentioned by them as if it were at all compatible with a religious life; while to be gloomy, dismal, and melancholy, is looked upon by them as a virtue. With them it is the dividing line between sinners

and saints. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall weep" seems to be the governing impulse of many, and therefore the more miserable they are on earth, the nearer they feel themselves towards heaven. It is difficult to see what great advantage there is in being unhappy in this world, yet many people appear to imagine that it is the most effectual way by which to be happy in some other world. The pulpit proclaims a message of death, the stage illustrates lessons of life. The pulpit is a symbol of gloom and despair; the stage is an emblem of joy and hope. The pulpit appeals to a dying faith; the stage addresses a living principle. The pulpit perpetuates the old sorrows of the human race; the stage gives birth to new sunshine, and gladdens the heart and instructs the intellect of man, woman, and child. The pulpit is like a desert, comparatively barren in the production of intellectual food; the stage is an oasis, rich with the verdure of cultivated genius. The pulpit deals principally with precepts; while the stage, enunciating practice, exclaims:—

Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven?
Whilst like a puffed and reckless libertine
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And reck's not his own read.

The pulpit is limited to the believing few; while it can be truly said, in the words of Shakespeare:—

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.

Therefore,

- This above all—To thine own self be true;
And it must follow as the night, the day,
Thou can'st not then be false to any man.

CHARLES WATTS.

TEN CENTURIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE fourth century witnessed the accession to power of the Roman Emperor Constantine, and while this powerful monarch ruled he had undisputed authority in all matters relating to the affairs of the State. Religion was considered to be one of these, and Constantine, having been converted to the new faith, did all he could to increase its influence, so that during his reign Christianity became a great power in the State. The moment Christians were in a position of authority they wielded the sword and adopted all sorts of disreputable means, including bribery and persecution, to win converts to their faith. According to Gibbon, a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, were promised by the emperor to every convert.*

No wonder Christianity made rapid advancement! In the fifth century Clovis, king of France, followed the example of Constantine and embraced Christianity, and probably for a similar reason, viz., because he found it of service to him in cloaking his crimes and aiding him in extending his empire. In this century the pure and beautiful Hypatia was barbarously slaughtered by a fanatical mob, headed by Peter the Reader.† Hypatia was a teacher of philosophy, and attracted large audiences to hear her discourses on the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria, recognising that the Christian faith was likely to be weakened by Hypatia, no doubt incited the mob of monks to the foul assault. Christianity continued to spread, and in the sixth century it had extended its power among the barbarous tribes of the East and West. Threats and bribery were again the chief methods of conversion, and were found perfectly efficacious.

The wealth of the Church augmented rapidly; but with this increased prosperity a rapid decline of

learning took place—Greek literature was neglected, and philosophy banished entirely from the seminaries.* This is what we should naturally expect; for theological arrogance and learning do not go well together. Nor was this the worst. In the seventh century learning appears to have almost vanished, and many of the bishops were so illiterate that they could not compose their own discourses. In this century Boniface V. enacted the infamous law by which churches became the refuge to all who fled thither for protection; and thus the Church became a place of safety for murderers, bandits, and other disreputable characters.† In the eighth century Charlemagne (A.D. 772) turned his attention towards Germany, not only with a view of suborning a spirit of revolt, which from time to time troubled the empire, but also with the intention of converting the people to the Christian religion. By fire and sword both of these ends were ultimately accomplished. War after war took place, and after these encounters the defeated races found "their attachments to the superstition of their ancestors was so warmly combated by the allurements of reward, by the terror of punishment, and by the imperious language of victory, that they suffered themselves to be baptised, though with inward reluctance, by the missionaries which the emperor sent among them for that purpose."‡ While the soldiers converted the heathen with the sword, the clergy abandoned themselves to luxury, gluttony and lust.§ Nevertheless, Christianity made great headway.

Then arose the belief—which finds adherents even to this day—that the best way to atone for crime is to make gifts to the Church. By this means the Church became extremely wealthy. Nor was this its only source of wealth, for various kings made presents of land to bishops and other dignitaries of the Church with a view of winning their favor.

The ninth and tenth centuries showed no improvement in the condition of learning or the conduct of the clergy. Mosheim says:

"The impiety and licentiousness of the greater part of the clergy arose at this time to an enormous height, and stand upon record in the unanimous complaints of the most candid and impartial writers of the century. In the East tumult, discord, conspiracies and treason reigned uncontrolled, and all things were carried by violence and force. These abuses appeared in many things, but particularly in the election of the Patriarchs of Constantinople. . . . In the Western provinces, the bishops were become voluptuous and effeminate to a very high degree. They passed their lives amidst the splendor of courts and the pleasures of a luxurious indolence, which corrupted their taste, extinguished their zeal, and rendered them incapable of performing the solemn duties of their function; while the inferior clergy were sunk in licentiousness, minded nothing but sensual gratifications, and infected with the most heinous vices the flock whom it was the very business of their ministry to preserve or to deliver from the contagion of iniquity. Besides, the ignorance of the sacred order was, in many places, so deplorable that few of them could either read or write, and still fewer were capable of expressing their wretched notions with any degree of method or perspicuity."||

A strong indictment this from a Christian historian, but as true as it is forcible. This was the ninth century. What of the tenth? Historians are unanimous in condemning the "deplorable state of Christianity" in this century. The vices of the clergy were simply terrible to contemplate. Composed of ignorant, stupid, illiterate persons, the clergy were enslaved to superstition and sensuality, and were often guilty of the most odious crimes. Hallam says: "This dreary interval is filled up, in the annals of papacy, by a series of revolutions and crimes. Six popes were deposed, two murdered, one deposed. . . . A child of five years of age was made

* *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii., pp. 472–473.

† *Draper, Conflict*, p. 55.

• Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 146.

† *Ibid.*, p. 164.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Archbishop of Rheims. The See of Narbonne was purchased for another at the age of ten."*

The Prussians during the eleventh century were, by the force of circumstances, driven into the acceptance of the Christian faith. They resisted for a time, but were ultimately defeated. In this century the "Holy Crusade" against the "infidels" was commenced, and parts of Europe were deluged with innocent blood. "Men, women, and children poured eastward in that first crusade, and this mixed vanguard of the coming army of warriors was led by Peter the Hermit and Gaultier Sans Avoir." This vanguard was "a motley assemblage of monks, prostitutes, artists, laborers, lazy tradesmen, merchants, boys, girls, slaves, malefactors, and profligate debauchees."† "It was principally composed of the lowest dregs of the multitude, who were animated solely by the prospect of spoil and plunder, and hoped to make their fortunes by this holy campaign."‡ On the way to the Holy Land this "infernal rabble" was guilty of the most horrible crimes. More than half a million of people lost their lives in this holy crusade in the first few years of the campaign; but the number massacred, from the first in 1096 to the last crusade in 1270, was so vast as to be beyond computation.

The holy wars continued during the twelfth century, and in the thirteenth century the Holy Inquisition was established in France, and several attempts were made to extirpate heresy wherever it dared to raise its audacious head. In Spain also the Inquisition was at work, and it is estimated that during its existence over 30,000 persons were put to death, 17,000 burnt in effigy, and 291,000 punished severely by being put in gaol and subjected to torture.

The fourteenth century witnessed a variety of disputes among the Popes, and a rebellion among the monks. But the burning of heretics continued as energetically as ever. New sects of Christians arose, and these were persecuted and punished almost as mercilessly as the heretics. Such, then, is a brief summary of the doings of Christians when they possessed wealth and power. Christian apologists, when speaking on Freethought, sometimes say that they judge a tree "according to its fruit." What sort of fruit do they call this for a Christian tree to grow? Ten centuries of Christian growth! Assuredly it is not too much to say that this fruit was rotten to the core.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

THE MALTHUSIAN PROSECUTION.

MR. LOADER is in gaol at Newcastle, and will have to undergo the full month's imprisonment to which Judge Seymour sentenced him. Counsel has advised the Newcastle committee what I previously stated, that there is no means of releasing Mr. Loader or obtaining a new trial. The only effective method of "appeal" would have been to remove the indictment before trial by a *certiorari*. Counsel recommends the putting of a question in Parliament, and Mr. Joseph Brown has communicated with Mr. John Morley, who writes a sympathetic letter in reply, but says he cannot raise the matter in the House of Commons, as the proper place to do that is the Newcastle Town Council, the Watch Committee of which "have the conduct of the police in their own hands." Nothing further, therefore, can be done for Mr. Loader. As to the Newcastle committee, it means to fight on for the right of discussing social questions, and will continue to circulate Malthusian literature, leaving the police to attempt further suppression if they choose to do so. On my own part, I have conferred with Dr. C. R. Drysdale, the president of the Malthusian League, who will have a meeting of the Free Discussion Defence Committee called for Tuesday, May 17, when I shall be back from Scotland. At that meeting I shall submit a policy for future action, on the main points of which Dr. Drysdale is in agreement with me.

G. W. FOOTE.

* Hallam's *Europe During the Middle Ages*, p. 353.

† Mosheim, p. 232.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.

THERE are a number of estimable gentlemen in Fleet-street engaged in the useful occupation of calling the attention of the readers of the newspapers on which they are employed to the good, bad, and indifferent books that are turned out daily by the score from the many publishers in these kingdoms. Of some of these it may be said, to paraphrase the saying of Sidney Smith of the then Lord John Russell, that they are equally willing to review any subject, from the differential calculus to Jack the Giant-killer. Song and sermon, art and attire, religion and racing, poetry and pugilism, mythology and morals, or any other subject, is decided on by them in the easiest possible manner. One of these Admirable Crichtons is on the staff of the *Daily Chronicle*—one that I think I could name in twice. If I am right in my conjecture, he is an easy-going, amiable and genial Bohemian, the writer of several popular political works, but one who has a holy horror of Freethought and a terrible lack of knowledge of the very elements of biblical criticism. Once upon a time, if I am correct in my surmise as to the personality of this gentleman, I had, at considerable inconvenience to myself, to procure a Bible to convince this fervent democrat that the passage "Fear God. Honor the king" was in the New Testament. It *should* have been in the Old, but wasn't; but when confronted with it, he pronounced it a mistranslation. Of such, possibly, are our sometimes theological reviewers.

In the journal above mentioned, in the issue for April 20, there appeared a critique of the four volumes of our venerable friend Thomas Cooper, headed "A Defender of the Faith." Being childlike and bland, and thinking these were new editions of this old controversialist's books, I at once ordered them from the publisher. To my surprise, only three were in print; and had the reviewer read the title pages he would have seen that the one on "Evolution" bore the date 1884; that on "Miracles" 1887; and the other, on "The Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time," 1889. Now, I am much interested in these lectures of Mr. Cooper, for I have heard most of them several times, those on "The Bridge" more than a quarter of a century ago; and when a tyro in knowledge of the evidences of Christianity had the temerity to oppose the lecturer at Parsons' Hill Chapel at Woolwich, getting well drubbed for my youthful appearance, my dirty face (for I was working over-time and had gone straight to the chapel from the workshop), and my lamentable want of knowledge of certain early fathers of the Christian Church. And I probably deserved it.

These lectures were delivered by Mr. Cooper more than a thousand times in probably nearly every town in England, Scotland, and Wales. He says in the preface this much, referring to "The Bridge," and in the conclusion of the book appeals to young men to master the subject of the Evidences of Christianity, so as to get them "into your minds and rehearse them in the ears of your sceptical acquaintances." Although we have some twenty-five or thirty thousand paid defenders of the faith in this country, the writer most pathetically deplores that "I have felt myself alone for these fourteen years while constantly traversing this our loved British ground in every direction." By the bye, this "fourteen years" should have conveyed to the reviewer that this covered the years from 1856 to 1872, when I believe the lectures were first issued in book form. Since then they have been redelivered scores of times, until old age forced this Christian champion to enjoy a well-earned rest and well-merited retirement. He continues: "There ought to be at least one hundred men in these realms devoting themselves to this work." Certainly not an hundred, but thousands; every clergyman in the country that is paid to preach the Christian mysteries ought to attempt to prove them when challenged to do so. We wish they would. We shall return to these Evidences as so often set forth by Mr. Cooper, but in the meantime we will revert to the reviewer.

Writing of the Bridge, he says: "Mr. Cooper deals with two curious theories put forth to account for Christianity. The one is the 'Sun Theory,' the other the 'Mythical Theory.' The 'Sun Theory' was first put forth as a complete hypothesis by the singular Sir William Drummond, in his *Edipus Judaicus*, and for a time it held the field." Why was Sir William singular? and when did he "first" put forth this theory as a complete hypothesis? Has he ever read a line of it, or Mr. Cooper either, for the latter seem-

to have misled him on the point of the sun theory of Christianity? Was Drummond before Dupuis or Volney? The latter published his celebrated *Survey of the Ruins of Empires* in 1791, an English translation appearing before the close of the eighteenth century, and Dupuis' *Origin of Religions* in 1795. In passing I may remark that every Freethinker has read Volney's *Ruins*, or should read it. It was one of a few books that made me a Freethinker. Not so with Dupuis. I have never met with an English translation; but there are at least three translations of the chapters on the Origin of Christianity; by Charles Southwell, Miss Partridge, and by a writer in Scott's series of tracts.

These two works, both referred to by Mr. Cooper, were therefore certainly published before the close of the last century. When, then, did Sir W. Drummond's *Edipus Judaicus* first see the light? Mr. Wheeler* says in 1811; Mr. Bradlaugh has said in 1826. I am under the impression that Mr. Wheeler is wrong, and that this date refers to their first appearance in a quarterly publication, but am not sure. Several of the essays appeared in the *Classical Journal*, the first, the "Dissertation on the 49th chapter of Genesis," in that paper in the June number of 1811. However, this is sufficient to show that it was some years after Volney and Dupuis. But the fact has to be considered now, Is there a line in the entire volume that refers to Jesus as being the sun? No! emphatically No!—not even the last, which treats of the heathen origin of the Paschal Lamb.

R. FORDER.

(To be continued.)

THE FREETHINKER'S TOAST.

Here's to the man who is honest and true,
Who despises deceiving and slander;
Who fears ne'er a God, nor a Devil, nor man,
But lives as he ought with all candor!
Here's to all such, whatever their hue,
And whatever their country or station,
Who enjoy the few pleasures of life while they can,
Not as fools, but with due moderation;
Knowing that death puts an end to each plan,
That it's lies about hell and salvation.

J. A. GIBSON.

ACID DROPS.

Colonel Ingersoll's "destitution of good taste" is complained of in the *New York Christian Advocate*. The illustration is derived from ancient history. It appears that when Ingersoll spoke at a great meeting in honor of Frederick Douglas, holding the audience for three-quarters of an hour with "wit, pathos, and eloquence," he begged the negroes "not to follow the God of the whites, or any God who had permitted slavery in the world." Well now, tastes differ, and what is bad taste to a Christian editor may be very good taste to a Freethought editor. Why should any man condescend to worship a God who permitted slavery? Of course the *Christian Advocate* cannot deny that the God of the Bible did so. It only tries to get out of the difficulty by saying that "the spirit of Christianity"—whatever that is—brought about the gradual abolition of slavery. But Ingersoll denies this, and is willing to defend his position. Where then does the bad taste come in?

The American clergy seem dreadfully alarmed at the spread of "Ingersollism," and their game is now, apparently, to drop argument and try defamation. One of the holy libellers, as we have already mentioned, is likely to get a trouncing. He is the Rev. A. C. Dixon, and it will be a bad day for him when he meets Ingersoll in a court of law. Meanwhile the pious Dixon, who is such a striking example of the charity which thinketh no evil, looks brave and cries "Who's afraid?" in the *New York Evening Telegram*, which affords him two columns of small type.

Dixon sets up a curious plea. He says he has a right to say all he thinks about Ingersoll because Ingersoll says all he thinks about God. Yes, and Ingersoll has the right to sue him for telling libellous lies. And Ingersoll's remedy against Dixon is open to God against Ingersoll. Let him take out a summons, and claim damages.

Dixon doesn't retract his slander of Ingersoll, but he would rather fight it out in the papers than in a law court. Very likely. But Ingersoll is too astute and too dignified to fall into such a trap. It is simply ridiculous to expect a public man to spend his days in discussing his own character with every malicious liar who chooses to attack it. Such a game must be played *with stakes*; it won't do to play it "for love"; and when Dixon is taught this there will be a great increase of (compulsory) veracity among the American clergy.

For Ingersoll personally, Dixon says he has only "feelings of compassion." He invites "Bob" to repent and confess, and get a chance for heaven. Which takes the cake. Ingersoll pitied by Dixon! The lion pitied by the skunk!

The great joke of Dixon's screed is his reproof of Ingersoll's jocularity. Dixon tries the game himself in nearly every paragraph. "Said the Quaker to his friends," "Said one neighbor to another," and so on and so on—chestnut after chestnut. The difference between Dixon and Ingersoll is that the latter is witty and the former tries to be; and here, as elsewhere, failure hates success.

Mr. Gilbert Parker, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, accuses Ingersoll of the frightful crime of plagiarising himself—that is, of appropriating his own words and stealing his own ideas. He declares that Ingersoll, in his speech at Whitman's grave, used over again some of the sentences he spoke over his brother's grave several years ago. We have not the means by us of testing this assertion. But suppose it is true—what then? Some general thoughts will always recur in one man's funeral panegyrics, and we really cannot see why they should not. Only the special reflections will vary with the different persons. Mr. Parker has discovered a mare's nest, and in venturing to call Ingersoll a "showman" for no better reason than this he is simply impertinent.

The "May meetings," which always begin in April and do not end till June, are already upon us. Their chief design is to give the sky-pilots a holiday in town and to transfer cash from the pious to their caterers. Many of the religious and philanthropic societies now preparing a show are run simply in the interests of the officials who conduct them. This is so generally known that a religious firm, in publishing a guide to the May meetings, finds it its duty to give a warning to the charitably-disposed public.

Selah Merrill, the United States consul in Jerusalem, has published a carefully prepared paper on the "Jews and Jewish Colonies in Palestine." It shows that, despite vast sums of money lavished on "the restoration of the Jews," the attempt to get them to colonise their own land has been a signal failure. For one thing, the country itself is a sterile and little productive one, and the most knowing of the chosen race by no means display a disposition to be restored.

The whole number of Jews now in Palestine is computed at about 42,000—not half the number that now live in New York alone. The reports of flourishing colonies are mostly business lies to get up a boom in real estate in Palestine in connection with the still unfinished railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem.

Mr. Merrill finds that 255 families are actually paid by the Rothschilds so much a month to remain in Palestine, a sum which in a family of five persons amounts to about 240 dols. per annum. The tendency of this gratuity, the consul maintains, is bad, in that it encourages the so-called colonists to continue to be dependants. The effort to make agriculturists of them has also been a failure. For them the Promised Land is the land where they can rake in most shekels.

"Peter Lombard," writing from Palestine to the *Church Times*, says that the Samaritans there are dwindling towards extinction. They are strict in marrying only among themselves; and as there are twenty-five young men unable to obtain wives, the birth of a son is the cause of lamentation, while that of a daughter gives rise to rejoicings. The Samaritans recently petitioned the Jews to let them marry a few of their girls, but they would only do so on condition of their giving up their old version of the Pentateuch.

* *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, p. 113.

Mr. Tait, chief inspector of schools to the Leeds School Board, startled a Sunday-school convention at Leeds by a vigorous attack on some of the hymns children are made to sing. He wanted to know how many who sang

I want to be an angel
And with the angels stand,

really meant what they say. Then Mr. Tait objected to their singing

There is a dreadful hell, and everlasting pains,
Where sinners must for ever dwell
In darkness, fear, and chains.

He would have this hymn expunged from the book as being too gruesome for the juvenile mind, or, for that matter, for the adult mind. He was wroth, too, with the words

Asleep, awake, by night and day,
When at my lessons or my play,
Although the Lord I cannot see,
His eye is always fixed on me.

He ironically called this picture a nice one, conjuring up a sort of almighty policeman ever ready to turn on his bull's-eye. These things are getting too silly for the children, and soon, as Ingersoll says, will be passed on to the missionaries.

The *Natal Advertiser* points out that the Rev. Mr. Nauhaus, of Botsabelo Mission Station, Transvaal, collected over £500 in fines from the natives in one year. It says: "It was found that three-fourths of this sum consisted of fines imposed for adultery and other immoral acts. Now it is a well-known fact that adultery and seduction are very rarely heard of among the Makatese in their native state. It is only in the older and more flourishing mission stations that the majority of fines were imposed for these offences. In Botsabelo, the churches and schools were founded and built through the immorality of the inhabitants, and it is highly questionable whether the station would have been in so flourishing a condition at this moment had the natives conducted themselves more respectably."

The son of the ex-mayor of Tauranga [New Zealand] has murdered his wife and four children. When caught he said, "Glory, hallelujah! I did it, and God told me to do it!" For some days previously he often spoke of offering sacrifice to God. Of course, he is mad, and, perhaps, has been studying the scriptures *re* Jephthah's sacrificing his daughter to God (Judges xi. 31-39), Abraham's purpose to offer Isaac, and similar sacrifices. Two curious facts present themselves in this connection. When a man of these times murders somebody, and solemnly declares that God told him to do so, everybody condemns the murderer; but in the days of Jephthah, etc., when men murdered anybody and said God told them to do so, superstitious churches accepted the tales, glorified the murderers, and the masses even now treat the old impostors as demi-gods!—*Liberator*.

Dr. Legge, the new Bishop of Lichfield, doesn't think the subject of Socialism one calculated to be of benefit for the Church. The subject was put down for discussion at the annual diocesan conference, but the bishop put his veto on it, not without an energetic protest.

The following lines on the Sky-pilot are by Clinton Loveridge, several of whose verses in the *Twentieth Century* we have already reprinted:—

With eyelids closed, and palms pressed close together,
He tells God what he should and should not do;
Gives him much-needed hints about the weather,
And asks some special blessings for a few.

Inspector Williams, of the New York Police, says Dr. Parkhurst employs detectives to find disorderly houses, and by his disclosures does more harm in arousing the curiosity and polluting the minds of his congregation, than a host of sin that is compelled to hide its head. He adds: "When I was captain of the Twenty-ninth Precinct, I went with Dr. Talmage on his errand for sensational information for his sermons. I know, from observation and from reports which I was careful to gather, that never in their history were the places he described as thronged by patrons, largely from Brooklyn, or so much money spent there for debauchery as after those sermons."

"Is Faith Decaying?" the *Christian Commonwealth* asks.

Its answer is Yes and No. People are enjoying this world as they never did before, and the future world is falling into neglect. Even in religious circles "the trusted custodians of the faith are now often seen to be revelling in a perfect intoxication of critical license," upsetting everything that was supposed to be certain. Nevertheless, the masses are ready to believe, only the question is—What? Ay, there's the rub! In any case Atheism has no chance, thinks our pious contemporary. "The battle between Atheism and belief was fought last century." Where? Certainly not in England. The Freethinkers of the eighteenth century, from Anthony Collins to Thomas Paine, were Deists.

Wrong in its history, the *C. C.* is equally wrong about Charles Bradlaugh, who is declared to have "revived" the old fight between Atheism and belief, and found it an "anachronism" since at last "he gave up the fight." Of course he did when he died. If our pious contemporary means that he gave up the fight before then, it is simply telling a falsehood or displaying its ignorance. Charles Bradlaugh's paper was "Atheistic" to the last number he edited, and the last lecture he ever delivered was in opposition to Christianity. If this is "giving up the fight" the dictionary must be rewritten.

The *Christian Commonwealth* has a kind of "agony column" in which it answers doubts afflicting its readers' minds. Some of its answers are peculiar. Last week "T. D." quoted the saying of Jesus, "No man hath ascended into Heaven," and asked, "What does this mean? Did not Elijah ascend into Heaven?" Of course he did. There's no denying that, unless you deny the Bible. Still, the editor is not cornered. It is not so easy to exhaust the resources of piety. Putting on his exegetical spectacles, he discovers that the difficulty is "only apparent," that "the Master's words are elliptical," that they "imply more than they express," and that what "he meant to say," only he forgot it, was that no man had gone to heaven and "come back." But Elijah *did* "come back." He appeared with Moses in the company of Jesus at the transfiguration. Thus the truth of the explanation is about equal to its modesty.

"T. D." did not point out the whole difficulty of this passage. What Jesus said was "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven"; so he must have been in heaven and discoursing with Nicodemus at the same time. Which things, we should fancy, were an allegory.

The vicar of St. Michael's, Coventry, continues to push his demand for a vicar's rate upon an actively hostile parish. An intimation that a collector was in a street was sufficient for every door to be barred against him. The vicar should be invited to preach from the text "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

Dr. Mills, the vicar of St. Michael's, Coventry, means to have his pound of flesh. He locked the door of the vestry against a meeting of his opposing churchwardens, and intends applying for 250 warrants against persons who have not paid the rate.

The parson who punched a parishioner's head for smoking near his church, was probably of a different stamp from the Rev. G. Whitehead, vicar of St. Andrew's, Northampton, whose vestry find fault with him for turning the church into a dining-room and beer shop. It was alleged that a gallon beer-jar had been found in the church, and a whisky bottle in the font. The vicar says it is too far to go home, and he shall continue to take his lunch in the sacred edifice.

The vicar of Whitworth near Rochdale seems to think the Affinity Table of prohibitions should be extended by the clause "Thou shalt not marry a Nonconformist." A young woman who married a Dissenter went to an entertainment at her old Church school, and was then publicly referred to with the expressed opinion that Church people ought to marry Church people and not Nonconformists.

The Bishop of Chester, who circulated the calumny that Secularists were cruel to their children, reiterates old Solomon's advice not to spare the rod. He says flogging is "an admirable thing for boys"—no cane, no character—and

laments that while the boys of the upper classes may be flogged without question, this privilege is denied to their poorer brethren. If it is a fact that more corporal punishment goes on at Eton or Harrow than in our Board schools, we take this as another sign that barbarism remains in what Dr. Jayne calls "the upper classes," while civilisation is extending among the lower.

Ananias Hughes has been telling an interviewer that suggestions have been made to him about sitting in the House of Commons. He evidently thinks a seat is ready for him whenever he chooses to take it. In the same way he talked as though he had returned all the Progressive majority to the London County Council. But the said Council only gave him *two* votes when he was nominated as an alderman.

For the present, however, Ananias Hughes has no intention of taking the premiership or even sitting in the House of Commons. He has his pastoral duties to perform, which are "superior to those of Parliament." Nevertheless, he *might* take a seat in the House of Lords, if they would change its constitution to admit him. Modest Ananias! For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

The Baptist Union wishes it to be known that the death of Mr. Spurgeon has not in any way loosened its hold on orthodoxy. One of its ministers, the Rev. Mr. Aked, wickedly exchanged pulpits with the Unitarian Rev. Mr. Armstrong, who lectured on Mazzini to the Baptist flock, but Mr. Aked has been called over the coals, and Baptists generally will show they have no fellowship with unbelievers.

The Rev. Mr. Barker, of the Wesleyan Chapel, Hornsey-road, held Sunday afternoon conferences at his chapel on such questions as "Was Christ the Best Friend of the Poor?" For this he has been boycotted and evicted by his well-to-do Methodist elders. What a farce is their pretended religion of Jesus!

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are the largest leviers of royalties on coal in Durham. Last year they took some £240,000, which has of course to be added on to the price of coal.

Among the Lord's weekly mercies are cholera in India, small pox killing hundreds daily in Russia, and spotted typhus on the Russo-German frontier.

Prof. Herrick-Johnson, of the McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, protests against the holding of a Parliament of all the Religions at the World's Fair. He says no good can come from inviting all the false faiths to a conference. It is tantamount to an admission that Christianity is not the only one true and exclusively divine religion. Prof. Johnson believes moreover that it will seriously affect the cause of foreign missions. Very likely. If people knew more about Confucianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Mohammedanism, there would be less money wasted in the vain attempt to convert these heathen to the gospel.

Between the years 1590 and 1680 no fewer than 3,400 women were burned in Bible-reading Scotland for witchcraft, in accordance with the divine law in Exodus xxii. 18.

We are delighted to hear that the Christian Evidence Society is waking up at Liverpool, for its activity is sure to help on the cause of Secularism. Special meetings were held at Hope Hall one day in last week, but the local ministers of religion were conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps they do not like controversy—or its results. Perhaps they are ashamed of the black champion's tactics.

The new Liverpool Christian Evidence Society means to "go the whole hog." One of the speakers at the above meeting, a Manchester sky-pilot, loudly complained of domestic heresy in the Christian fold. He had actually heard a minister doubt the literal truth of Jonah. The Liverpool C.E.S. means to tow the whale along until the hawser breaks.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* of Monday last thus expresses itself:—"The fact is to be taken into account that the number of people is very small indeed who have such an intellectual training as to be able to give an absolutely accurate account of any circumstance within their knowledge without

coloring it more or less with their own prepossessions and prejudices. Considering that this is a professedly Christian nation, it certainly seems extraordinary that the injunction of the Founder of the Faith should have been in this matter so entirely disregarded. 'Swear not at all' is certainly as clearly expressed and clearly defined commandment as anything in the New Testament. There is an obvious incongruity in this that would be inexplicable but for the well-known absence of the logical faculty from the British mental constitution, which makes it entirely blind to the impassable gulf between the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the Christianity of the end of the nineteenth century."

The last sentence may be taken as throwing some light on the course adopted by the *Liverpool Daily Post* in publishing a foul slander uttered by a clergyman against Freethinkers, and refusing insertion to a contradiction.

Some of the more impatient spirits amongst the Freethinkers in Liverpool and Birkenhead desired to have a debate arranged with Celestine Edwards. An intimation was accordingly sent that the Branch were willing to arrange for a set debate, provided that the Christian Evidence Society or a number of representative Christians would accept him as their champion. No reply was received, and the Branch issued handbills announcing the fact. This of course aroused Edwards's ire, and the Billingsgate dictionary was largely drawn upon. As a sample of the style of this apostle of the gospel of "sweetness and light," take the following. The *Freethinker* was always referred to as the "*Weekly Stinker*," the members of the Branch were "parasites," and "every Atheist is a liar; they teach lying in their halls," etc. A debate with Edwards would probably have to be conducted on the same lines that Daniel O'Connell adopted in his celebrated contest with a virago.

It has been observed that no artist has ever painted a black angel—angels are "ever bright and fair." A look at Celestine Edwards will explain the reason. "If you want to be lubbed, you must be lubby," as he says. Michael Angelo Raphael, and all the lot of them combined, would throw down their brushes in despair of ever doing justice to *him*.

Religious mania, according to the verdict of a jury at Bradford, was the occasion of the suicide of a lad of seventeen named Harold Gilchrist, who shot himself on Easter Tuesday. Religion is like opium, very soothing, but very dangerous if you take too much of it.

The Rev. A. J. Tilson, rector of Kilglass, co. Longford, has to pay Miss Lappin £375 for breach of promise of marriage.

The *Dwarf* tells the following story, which is a slightly improved version of one which appeared with an illustration in the *Freethinker* three or four years ago. A young mother was endeavoring to reconcile her four-year-old to being left in the dark at bedtime. Said she, "Now, baby, don't be frightened; remember God is with you always. He's here in this room with us now. I'll take the candle, but say your prayers and don't be frightened." The babe thought the matter over for a moment, and a certain philosophic instinct came to its rescue. "Look here, mummy," he replied, "you take God into the next room, and leave me the candle."

"Claudius Clear," writing in the *British Weekly*, wishes to see trained Christian journalists who will take Christianity for granted. Fortunately the training of journalists usually indisposes them to take anything for granted; hence we have the not uncommon spectacle of heterodoxy showing itself in papers supposed to be rigidly orthodox.

"There are empirics and adventurers now," says Dr. Parker, "who are publishing placards calling upon the unwary public to come and hear the meaning of the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days who never loved an enemy and never helped a friend." That's rather rough on Baxter and Co. But set a Christian to catch a Christian.

The Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hoxton, says, "You will never get into the kingdom of heaven so long as you knock with an intellectual stick." That explains the character of the people inside. No wonder the Bishop of Exeter confirms idiots.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Thursday, April 28, Hall of Science, Old-street, E.C., at 8, "Prophet Baxter, and the End of the World."
 Sunday, May 1, Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street, Glasgow: at 11, "Is Christianity the Friend of the People?"; 2.30, "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "After Death, What?"

May 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.— May 1 and 8 (m. and e.), Hall of Science; 5, Hall of Science; 15 and 22, Birmingham; 17 and 31, debate with Rev. Dr. McCann at Birmingham; 29, Liverpool. June 5, N. S. S. Conference; 14, debate with Dr. McCann; 19, Bristol; 28, Birmingham. July 3 and 10, Hall of Science; 17, Birmingham; 24, South Shields; 31, Newcastle. August 7 and 14, Birmingham; 21, Manchester; 28, Sheffield. September 4 and 11, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

F. ABLARD.—The pious lady who told you she had received a message from Charles Bradlaugh "now in heaven," is probably not a dangerous lunatic. Better leave her to her dreams while she is harmless.

J. KEAST.—We note that the Bristol Branch's special lectures will be delivered in the large Shepherds' Hall. Mr. Foote will be happy to give week-light lectures at Bristol on his return from Scotland. Kindly inform him on what dates after May 17 the St. James's Hall is disengaged.

J. G. BARTRAM.—See paragraph. We wish the Newcastle Branch a very prosperous future in its new meeting-place.

H. SUTCLIFFE.—See "Sugar Plums."

W. HOLLAND.—The newly discovered document as to the burning of Bruno was noticed some months ago in the *Freethinker*.

T. HEADLEY.—Of course all sellers of Malthusian literature are liable to prosecution. But we do not think there is much danger. The prosecutions of Mr. Young and Mr. Loader seem only sporadic cases of bigotry.

MR. BRACEWELL, 111 Greenfield-road, Colne; and J. Andrews, 50 Maurice-street, Nelson, Lanc., sell all Freethought publications.

WOOD GREEN.—Lecture Notices must be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green.

T. MAY.—We are not aware that James Marchant was "officially" connected with the N. S. S. for "four years and nine months." The West Ham Branch will tell you a different tale. We really cannot waste time on a person who argues that Secularism justifies murder and all other crimes because it denies free-will. Luther denied free-will, so did Calvin, so did Spurgeon. Did they also justify crime? And if not, why not?

W. TAYLOR.—Thanks for the cutting. Not having Ingersoll's eulogy on his brother by us we cannot say. See "Acid Drops."

M. R. BROWN.—We have not time to answer such queries through the post. There is no Secular meeting-place at Croydon. The nearest is at Camberwell. If that is too distant, you could join the N. S. S. through the general secretary, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

A. W. thinks that if some tailors were to advertise in this journal their charges for making up suits, it would be advantageous to themselves and likewise to Mr. Gott of Bradford.

SILENT ADMIRER.—Too late for this week.

J. READ.—Always glad to receive cuttings, but Church and Dissent are in the same boat religiously.

P. KAVANAGH.—Subscriptions handed to Mr. Jones. If you claim to affirm you must follow the directions in the National Secular Society's Almanack. Every Freethinker liable to serve on a jury should keep a copy of the Almanack by him. The directions would occupy too much space in this column.

W. MOORE.—Pleased to hear from one of our converts; also to learn that the change has brought you happiness. Thanks for cuttings.

J. HARRIS.—Subscription passed to Mr. Forder. You can only prevent vaccination of your child by getting out of the parish or defying the law.

PAPERS RECORDED.—Fritankaron—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Better Way—Echo—Ironclad Ago—Lucifer—Crossbearer—Islington Gazette—Manchester Evening News—Medium and Daybreak—Chatham and Rochester News—Weekly Times and Echo—Dublin Evening Herald—Irish Daily Independent—Clarion—Star—Twentieth Century.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

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

THE HALL OF SCIENCE SCHEME.

LAST Sunday evening, after my lecture at the London Hall of Science, I made an appeal on behalf of this scheme. Miss Vance took several applications for shares, and a gentleman applied to me for *one hundred*. After Mr. Charles Watts's lecture this Sunday evening (May 1) there will be similar facilities for receiving applications, and I hope Miss Vance will be kept busy at her desk.

From the outset I have tried to impress upon the Freethought party the absolute necessity of securing the Hall of Science as our headquarters for propaganda and organisation, as well as a substantial memorial to our great leader. I now venture to urge the matter decisively upon their attention. Those who have faith in my leadership, and trust in my policy, cannot complain if I seriously ask them to provide the means I require. It is not for myself, but for the cause; and I only put it in this personal way because there are times when an elected leader must ask his supporters to express their confidence *in deeds*. I ask every one of my supporters to see at once what help he can afford, and to render it promptly. The shares are only £1 each, and the instalments of payment are accommodated to all pockets. It gives me great pleasure to know that many working men have taken shares. I want five hundred Freethinkers to take one or more shares before Whit-Sunday.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

After an absence of several years Mr. Foote is once more visiting Glasgow, where he delivers three lectures to-day (May 1), particulars of which will be found at the top of our ninth page. For a few days he will then get a much needed rest down the Clyde, and on the following Sunday (May 8) he will deliver three lectures in St. Anne's Hall, Donegal-street, Belfast. Returning to Scotland, he will proceed to Aberdeen, and lecture there on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 10 and 11, when he hopes to see the local Freethinkers constitute themselves into a Branch of the N. S. S. On the following Sunday (May 15) he lectures at Edinburgh, after which he returns to London. During his absence from home he begs the indulgence of correspondents.

Despite the extraordinarily fine weather, there were good meetings at the London Hall of Science on Sunday, especially in the evening, when the attendance was most excellent. The morning lecture on "John Morley" seemed particularly interesting to the audience. At this lecture Mr. J. Brumage, late of Portsmouth, presided. Mr. Foote's evening discourse on "Why I am an Atheist" was heartily relished, judging from the laughter and applause. Mr. R. O. Smith presided as usual.

After the evening a lady and gentleman introduced themselves to Mr. Foote as two of his converts, and he was positively proud of them. Both were tall, robust, well-

avored, and intelligent. They were good to look at and good to talk to. When such people are brought over to Free-thought by our advocacy, we can afford to smile at the insults of our enemies.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had three good and enthusiastic audiences in Rochdale last Sunday. Debate followed each lecture, the opponents speaking highly of the fair and gentlemanly manner in which Mr. Watts treated his subjects. It is to be regretted that the local friends did not obtain a good supply of *Freethinkers*. Many applicants had to be disappointed. This Sunday (May 1) Mr. Watts lectures morning and evening at the Hall of Science, London.

Subscribers to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund are earnestly requested to read the letter addressed to them by the Trustees, which appears in another column of this journal. Branches that sent up subscriptions should lose no time in deciding their answer. Individual subscribers should write immediately. Mr. Forder has kept the subscribers' list, and it will now be useful. Circulars will be sent by post to those whose addresses are known; the rest must please take the *Freethinker* notice as sufficient. As this matter has been sufficiently discussed, we refrain from saying anything at present to influence subscribers in their decision.

There are still many of our readers thoroughly in sympathy with our work who are not yet members of the N. S. S., though every time the prospectus of the Society is inserted in these columns it brings many fresh members. We should like to see the number much further increased before next Conference, that this year, already a very successful one in point of adding new members, may outdo all its predecessors.

N. S. S. Branches should be making arrangements for the Whit-Sunday Conference at Newcastle. We hope to see a very large delegation, partly for the Society's sake, and partly for the sake of the Newcastle Branch, which, with the other Branches in the North-Eastern Secular Federation, has been fighting so gallantly for the last three or four years. Newcastle provides a first-rate hall for the Conference and guarantees all the expenses. Canny Newcastle!

Branches and individual members must please note that all notices of motion for the N.S.S. Conference agenda must be sent in to the secretary on or before May 14.

The Newcastle Branch used to have its special Sunday lectures in a large, dirty hall in Nelson-street. The state of the place was a great drawback. Happily a very nice hall is now available for such meetings—the Lovaine Hall, St. Mary's place. It is large, clean, well fitted-up, and most comfortable. Miss Campbell has just lectured there, and she is to be followed by Mr. C. J. Hunt and Mr. Stanley Jones. Freethinkers in the district should note the change. They can now go to a Secular lecture at Newcastle without the least apprehension of discomfort.

Mr. Stanley Jones and Mr. Job Williams had an open-air discussion at Tottenham last Sunday. The question was, "Is there Evidence for the Existence of a God?" Mr. Jones thought there wasn't, and the same opinion prevailed amongst a large section of the audience. The crowd was enthusiastic but orderly.

Freethinkers in Yarmouth and the neighborhood willing to take part in forming a Branch of the National Secular Society are requested to communicate at once with Mr. J. Headley, 76 George-street.

Our good old friend, Joseph Symes, of Melbourne, Free-thought lecturer, editor of the *Liberator*, and terror of the Australian bigots, sends us a long letter to his "British Friends," which will appear in the next number of the *Freethinker*.

Mrs. Harriet Law, who is more amused than indignant, sends us the following letter:—"Neither you nor any Free-thinker of long standing will require my explicit denial of the statement made by the editor of the *Bristol Messenger*, and vouched for by Mr. George Collin and the Rev. J. Moffat Logan. You, and all whose recollections of the party extend back twenty years, well know that this statement has been often made, often contradicted, often withdrawn. It used to

be famous in Free-thought circles as 'the old Watch Story,' the original form of it having been that I challenged the Deity to put a period to my existence in so many minutes—five, I think—and stood, watch in hand, waiting. This little narrative has afforded food for laughter so often; it is such a 'thrice told tale,' that it is difficult to treat it seriously. But for the benefit of Christians, young Freethinkers, and 'all whom it may concern,' I beg to say that the story with or without the 'watch' is entirely destitute of foundation. It was a maxim of the Jesuits, and has been an unavowed principle of action with many other Christians, that 'to lie for God's honor is more meritorious than to tell the truth.' We are loth to believe that the narrators of this tale were actuated by an such motive as this. It is far more probable that their memories have played them false. In any case they have, to use the polite phrase of the North American Indian, 'said the thing that is not.'—Yours sincerely, HARRIET LAW."

The quarterly meeting of the Leyton Branch will be held next Tuesday (May 3) at 8.30 in the Workman's Hall, High-street, Walthamstow. This Branch is doing excellent work, and all Freethinkers in the district should see if they cannot join it. During the summer the Leyton Branch carries on two open-air lecture stations.

The Bethnal Green Branch have a special tea-meeting on Sunday at 5.30, followed by a concert and dance. Tickets sixpence each. The Branch, which is carrying on three outdoor stations, will be pleased to see the Freethinkers of the neighborhood at Libra Hall.

The *Chatham and Rochester News* devotes a column and a half to the proceedings in connection with opening the new Secular Hall at New Brompton. Pretty full reports of the speeches of Messrs. J. J. Taylor, G. W. Foote, and G. J. Holyoake are given.

Mr. Sam Standing reopened the outdoor propaganda at Manchester on Sunday. He had good meetings and plenty of opposition. He promises to improve the literature department of these functions. At present Free-thought papers are not on sale, nor are back numbers or tracts distributed. Mr. Standing also informs us that Mrs. Thornton Smith had good indoor meetings in the Secular hall.

Dr. Nicoll, editor of the *British Weekly*, has been addressing the London Baptist Social Union on the religious press. "Among literary circles," he says, "agnosticism is supreme," and journalists "as a whole are alienated from the Christian faith." The *Methodist Times* says "We believe that every one competent to give an opinion will agree with Dr. Nicoll."

A school for the study of eclectic Buddhism has been established in Paris under the auspices of Prof. Leon de Rosny.

Mr. Voysey, of the Theistic Church, has published a sermon on the Jewish hope of a Messiah. He says roundly that "There is not one *bona-fide* allusion to Jesus Christ, or prediction of him, in the whole of the Old Testament."

Our lively exchange, the *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis (April 9), gives Col. Ingersoll's address at Walt Whitman's grave, and reprints Mr. Foote's article on Devil Dodgers.

Moncure D. Conway, who attended Walt Whitman's funeral, gives some jottings concerning the poet in the *Open Court* of Chicago (April 7), and points out some affinities between his thoughts and those of Hindu and Persian poets.

OBITUARY.

On Monday, 25th inst., in Glasgow Necropolis the grave closed over the body of John Wright, formerly secretary of the Glasgow Eclectic Institute. Mr. Wright passed away at the mature age of 69. Death came very peacefully. Mr. Wright's official connection with the Eclectic Institute began in 1854. He was an energetic and devoted worker for the movement in the days of Robert Cooper and O. Southwell. In his latter days Mr. Wright, who had manfully borne his share of the "heat and burden," retired from active service; but he never ceased to feel a warm interest in the fortunes of local Secularism, and of the wider movement throughout the world.—J. P. GILMOUR.

RATIONALISM LENGTHENING OUR LIVES.

(From the "Truthseeker," New York.)

ONE of the answers to the question, "What has infidelity given us in place of Christianity?" is, that it has given us longer lives. This fact is not so well known as it should be. It has been known at all only about fifty years. The few who have learned it in that period are statisticians and a few circles of scientific readers. The old-time and the religious books that a large part of the population read do not mention it. The clergy, of course, will be the last to promulgate it. All channels of communication under ecclesiastical influence will be backward in transmitting it. But the spread of scientific interests will ere long have diffused this glorious, this inestimable intelligence. There is now full recognition of it among all scientific observers and statisticians. When it has been made equally evident to the masses they will begin to realise the infinite gain of our substitution of Rationalism for ecclesiasticism.

Attention was first drawn to the lengthening of our life-term by the managers of the government annuities in England. These annuities were a device of the government for raising money in times of necessity. In return for a lump sum paid by a private person the government made him a certain payment annually for a term of years. This term of years the receiver of the annuity would calculate to extend to the utmost year of his life that he could possibly reach. Or the annuity might be stipulated to be a life one at the beginning. The government had derived much profit from these speculations. But in the first half of this century it discovered itself to be losing money. An investigation revealed the disagreeable fact that the annuitants had ungratefully taken up the custom of living too long. There was no more profit to be made on them. As they could not be persuaded out of their new fashion, which seemed to be enjoyed by them as much as it was disrelished by the annuity officials, these latter had nothing to do but go over their annuity tables and change them altogether to meet this contingency. They found that the length of life in 1725 as compared with that in 1825 was as 3 to 4.

Then men turned their attention to some vital statistics of Geneva, Switzerland, that had been instituted in 1551. It was found that a death-rate of 40 in the thousand before 1600 had sunk before 1800 to 29 in the thousand. This decrease has continued, and fifty years ago the average life in that city was reckoned at 45 years.

This 45 years was compared with Roman statistics of 500 B.C., which made the mean life 30 years, and a gain of one-half appeared.

It was found in France that while the deaths in 1781 had been one in 29, in each of the five years preceding 1829 they were one in 39. In the city of Paris they had been in the fourteenth century one in 16, and in the seventeenth century one in 26; in 1824 one in 32.

As the ascertainment of these good effects of sanitation in place of prayer, of medicine instead of miracle, England and France redoubled their efforts. The other countries, into whose gloom of ecclesiasticism few rays of science had penetrated, lagged behind or remained motionless. But in England and France vast benefits were immediately felt. It was even declared by Sir Edwin Chadwick, "the father of sanitation," that there is in man a potential longevity of one hundred years and death before this age is premature. There is reason to believe that his opinion will before long be verified by experience.

Numerous statisticians affirm that our life-term has lengthened nine years since the beginning of the present century.

Let us now survey some of the causes of this, the greatest possible benefit to the race of man.

In the first place, we have far more abundant food. This is obtained in part through the application of agricultural chemistry. It is now better known than formerly what constituents are in certain soils, and what in certain crops, and what in certain manures and fertilisers, and these are brought together with a reference to the needs of the case that gives largely improved results. And of the mineral fertilisers we are able to obtain great quantities against almost none procurable in older ages. Our increased supply of food is also obtained in part through the use of steam and other like forces. Another cause is the multitude of agricultural machines. These, without resting or eating, do the work

of armies of laborers. We will add as another factor in our ampler food supply, our wonderful means of transportation. In Europe of old it often occurred that food was plentiful in one part while but a very short distance away the people were starving. At present, deficiency in one neighborhood or nation is promptly supplied from other ones. The great famines which used to destroy millions, and by depleting the strength of the survivors prepare them for the dreadful pestilences, are now unknown. The only exception to this at present is in the land of Russia, still cursed by science-hating ecclesiasticism. A statistical writer of Queen Elizabeth's time was pleased to be able to say that the deaths from starvation in London were not over 1 in a thousand. But at that rate the deaths in London at present would be 1,250 a year; while as a fact there are none but from suicidal mania, or refusal to ask food at the provided places of relief.

Another element of the prolongation of life is the invention of machinery for the manufacture of clothing. By means of this the common laborer now wears more abundant clothing, and makes many times more changes of underwear in a year than the nobleman of old. The toil of a country full of spinners at their old spinning-wheels is now equalled by that of a girl at one machine. By the plentiful outer clothing we are protected from cold, and by the frequent change of underwear fever-producing impurities are banished.

Drainage of land may be noticed next. This has been usually executed to enhance the agricultural value of the land. As it has been found to diminish the prevalence of fever and ague and all malarias and consumption, it has of late been instituted not unfrequently to abate disease. In Birmingham, England, an investigator found that despite many deleterious manufactories the deaths were but one in 40, owing to good drainage; while in Liverpool deficient drainage overbalanced many sanitary advantages so as to bring the deaths up to one in 31. Bay Ridge district, in Long Island, N.Y., not only was changed by drainage from malarious swamps into excellent cornfields, but was so altered in salubrity that the druggists' sales of quinine fell off three-fourths, and the physicians proclaimed a cessation of chills and fever and all species of intermittent or remittent fever.

The supply of pure water to communities is to be reckoned next. Whether the water is conveyed from a pure source on the surface of the earth or drawn from a depth by artesian processes, its superior effect as compared with that of impure supplies is invariably shown in the diminution of diarrhoeal and typhoid diseases.

The knowledge and practice of ventilation is not the least among the sanitary reforms of late years. Says one writer on this subject: "The need of pure air—air that has not previously been breathed by another person—is by no means as well understood as could be wished, but enlightenment is surely making its way, and ancient evils are vanishing before it. Typhus, or ship fever—a disease most easily and directly communicable from person to person—is now known, when it arises spontaneously, to be the fruit of rebreathed air. It formed the "plagues" of the earlier centuries; there are still spots in London—infected houses—from which typhus is never absent, and in 1839 five per cent. of the tailors of London died of it; it is to get rid of it, in large measure, that the wholesale demolition of London "rookeries" is at this moment going on. When men ceased to weave in their own unventilated hovels, and were gathered together in high, airy, light factory rooms, it was very soon seen that the number of consumptives, hunchbacks, and bow-legged diminished—an unanswerable testimony to the value of light and air in saving and prolonging lives. When it was shown that the annual death-rate from preventable typhus, which attacked persons in the vigor of life, was double that of the allied armies at Waterloo, England began to suspect that there was a commercial value to a man's life, and enacted laws for its protection; indeed, public sentiment in this matter has become so educated that no employer would dare to crowd eighty workmen into a space where the "cubic feet of air" to each was less than one hundred feet—less than one-tenth of that required for healthful breathing. The reduction of the deaths of children in a single hospital, by having it well ventilated, from 2,944 out of a total of 7,650 down to 279, convinced the most stolid conservative that "there was something in it." It seems to an intelligent person of to-day as if everybody, everywhere, and all the

time had understood the importance of pure air; but when it is remembered that the constitution of the atmosphere has been known only a little more than a hundred years, and the vital relations of oxygen to the human blood for a much shorter period, it will be seen that the idea is wide of the fact."

(To be concluded.)

THE COMMON GOOD.

BY SUSAN H. WIXON.

WHILE others sing in highest praise
Of rare and costly gems,
And tune their harps to graceful lays
Of sparkling diadems;
I turn in contemplation, free
From care or busy strife,
And chant the glory that I see
In common things of life.

I lay my head upon thy breast,
O earth, so sweet and fair;
Thy pulsing breath gives joy and zest,
With which naught can compare;
Thou yieldeth strength and all good gifts,
With beauty thou art rife;
Thy royal grace for aye uplifts
The common things of life.

The air I breathe is mine and thine,
And millions share the same;
What boundless love to thus entwine
All hearts within one name!
No rich, no poor, no robber bold,
No peer of lofty birth,
More than he needs can take or hold
Of common air of earth.

I drink the water from the spring—
No nectar like to this
Ere touched the lips of crowned kings
With pure and honeyed kiss.
The rippling stream runs full and free,
From vale and mountain wall;
Runs round the wall from sea to sea,
A common gift for all.

The glorious sun gilds cottage low,
The same as lofty tower,
Gives joyous life and healthful glow
Alike to man and flower.
All lavishly, exquisite grace
Adorns the fields above;
For thee and me the star-gemmed space
Is bright with hope and love.

And thus the things we daily use,
By all who live, possessed,
Are those we did not seek or choose,
Yet are to us the best.
Like loving hearts they palpitate
With truth and honest worth;
They make for all a high estate—
These common things of earth.

—Truthseeker.

E. Stredder has in *Notes and Queries* of April 16 an interesting article on Hot Cross Buns, which he traces to the worship of the moon, queen of heaven, to whom an altar was erected by the Romans in Britain under the title of Diana of the Crossways.

Alfred W. Benn, reviewing several recent works in the Old Testament in the *Academy*, says: "The critical position remains unshaken: that the religion of Israel at its best was an inspiration of the prophets, working no doubt on older traditions, but giving the faith of their people a spirituality which neither it nor any other faith had ever possessed before."

It is stated by the well-known Shaker, F. W. Evans, of Mount Lebanon, N.Y., who has been investigating the subject, that of the fifty-six signers of the declaration of American Independence, *all were infidels except six*. No wonder the treaty-making power of the Government declared: "The government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."

BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL FUND.

TO THE SUBSCRIBERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

This Fund was originated, as you will remember, by the Executive of the National Secular Society, whose officers and members collected it, and under whose control it was always intended to remain.

In view of the present situation of affairs, which we assume to be more or less familiar to all of you, since it has been sufficiently discussed in the Free-thought journals, the above Executive has passed the following resolution:—

"The Executive of the National Secular Society, considering that a number of subscribers to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund are anxious that their subscriptions should not be indefinitely locked up, resolves that the said subscribers shall be allowed to decide for themselves, and as far as possible individually, whether their subscriptions shall be invested by the N. S. S. in the National Secular Hall Society, or held over by the N. S. S. until the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company puts forward a practical proposal for carrying out its object; and this Executive further resolves to leave the Trustees of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund to ascertain and give effect to the wishes of the subscribers."

We therefore, being the three trustees in whose joint names the Fund is banked, now invite you to tell us how we are to deal with your subscriptions. Our addresses are subjoined, and a letter to either of us will suffice. The earlier we receive your directions the better, as we are anxious to relieve ourselves of this responsibility before the date of the National Secular Society's Conference.

According to the terms of the above resolution, the total amount of subscriptions intended for the Hall of Science scheme will be immediately invested in shares in the National Secular Hall Society (Limited), the shares being held by the National Secular Society, either directly or through trustees. Subscriptions as to which we receive no instructions will be dealt with by the Executive. The remainder of the Fund will continue on deposit at the Birkbeck Bank.

P.S.—Please say plainly: "I wish my subscription to go to the Hall of Science Scheme." Or,

"I wish my subscription to be still held over on the terms of the resolution."

G. W. FOOTE, 14 Clerkenwell Green, E.C.

GEO. ANDERSON, 35A Great George-street, S.W.

W. H. REYNOLDS, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E.

NEW TESTAMENT DEVILS.

The Jewish doctrine of possession at no time in its long course exercised a direct influence on the opinion of the civilised world comparable to that produced by the mention of demoniacal possession in the New Testament. It is needless to quote here even a selection from the familiar passages of the gospel and Acts, which display the manner in which certain described symptoms were currently accounted for in public opinion. Regarding these documents from an ethnographic point of view, it need only be said that they prove, incidentally but absolutely, that Jews and Christians at that time held the doctrine which had prevailed for ages before, and continued to prevail for ages after, referring to possession and obsession by spirits—the symptoms of mania, epilepsy, dumbness, delirious and oracular utterance, and other morbid conditions mental and bodily. (Matt. ix. 32, xi. 18, xii. 22, xvii. 15; Mark i. 23, ix. 17; Luke iv. 33-39, vii. 33, viii. 27, ix. 39, xiii. 11; John x. 20; Acts xvi. 16, xix. 13, etc.) Modern missionary works, such as have been cited here, give the most striking evidence of the correspondence of these demoniac symptoms with such as may still be observed among uncivilised races. During the early centuries of Christianity demoniacal possession indeed becomes peculiarly conspicuous, perhaps not from unusual prevalence of the amnestic theory of disease, but simply because a period of intense religious excitement brought it more than usually into requisition.—Dr. E. B. Tylor, "Primitive Culture," vol. ii., pp. 138-139; 1891.

BOOK CHAT.

We notice that Mr. W. P. Ball's work in the Nature Science Series, *Are the Effects of Use and Disuse Inherited?* has been reprinted in America, where it forms No. 141 of the Humboldt Library.

Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. will publish immediately a little volume by Mr. G. Laurence Gomme, president of the Folklore Society, entitled *Ethnology in Folklore*.

Mr. Isaac Zangwill, author of *The Bow Mystery*, is about to issue a new novel dealing with Russian Jewish Life in London.

Mr. J. J. Morse, of 80 Needham-road, Liverpool, sends us a small twopenny book of *Poems* on "Palm Groves" and "Modern Idolatry," by Dr. Wm. Sharpe, who has already published several volumes. The verses are in the unrhymed metre of "Hiawatha." The author denounces conventional church-going Christianity as "Greatest of the great delusions."

From the Oriental Publishing Co., Philadelphia, we have received a little book of verse by Dr. J. H. Mendenhall, entitled *Christianity a Fiction*. The sub-title, "The Astro-nomical and Astrological Origin of all Religions," explains the purport of the booklet. The verses are said to be the result of inspiration, but this may perhaps be interpreted to mean that the author found the writing of doggerel easy. He or his inspirer find the origin of most of the Bible myths in sun worship. The following explanation of the Abraham and Isaac legend will give an idea of the contents:

Now Abraham is Father Time, as Brahma was of old,
And Isaac is the Pagan god—the Sun—as you've been told.
Old Father Time conveyed the Sun to Hebron upon high—
The vernal equinox, just as the Ram of March passed by:
When the ecliptic and the sun with the equator brought
Within the view a cloudlet bush wherein the Ram was caught.
So with the more evident sun-hero Samson, the Jewish
Herakles:

Now, Samson is a Hebrew word, and, understood aright,
Denotes the Sun in bright array—in other words, the Light.
He is the Sun personified—his strength in every curl—
He represents a love-sick youth, the slave of some fair girl;
And lo! as he was on his way to Timnath, meaning height,
He slew the Lion of the sky, absorbed then in his light.
A mighty man of strength, he then engaged the Philistines,
Another name for winter's months, and other evil signs.

Those interested in mythological astronomy will like to look up the book. The author follows Dupuis in applying this theory to Christ, the twelve apostles, and the wonders of the Apocalypse.

Having noticed a pamphlet by a daughter of Sir Rowland Hill, asserting her father's claim to the invention of the adhesive postage stamp, we have been sent a pamphlet by Patrick Chalmers, urging the claims of his father, James Chalmers. The pamphlet is published by E. Wilson and Co., Royal Exchange, and those interested will do well to read both sides.

Mr. L. F. S. Maberley, of Dublin, has published a pamphlet on *The Ritualistic Confessional in the Church of Ireland*, in which he prints some very unsavory questions from a work entitled *The Practical Christian*, by the Rev. R. Sherlock, which he says is put by Ritualistic priests into the hands of women as a guide to the confessional. Mr. Maberley first sent these extracts to the Archbishop of Dublin, who counselled that the extracts should not be published, as the circulation must be attended by demoralising results.

Mr. John Armsden publishes through Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, a little volume entitled *Value* and a pamphlet on *Trade Depressions*. It is beyond our province to criticise such writings at length in the *Freethinker*. Suffice it to say, for the benefit of readers who are interested in such problems, that Mr. Armsden is an independent thinker with clear perceptions, a good grasp of his subjects, and a perspicuous and forcible style. His standpoint is midway between Socialism and the old Political Economy, and he offers a solution of their antagonism.

Old Testament Stories Comically Illustrated is the title of a volume which reaches us from the office of our excellent

contemporary, the *Truthseeker*, of New York. The illustrations are by Watson Heston, whose fancy is superior to his technique. Some of them are really very amusing. They are enough to sap the reverence of the longest-faced Christian. We are not told who wrote the letterpress, but it is very well done. Altogether it is a nicely got-up book, and one well calculated to impair the sanctity of the great Protestant fetish—the pretended Word of God.

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.

PROFANE JOKES.

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A man,
A loaded gun;
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Dead man.
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Whene'er she bends in prayer,
So she can see on every side
What other people wear.
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SUNDAY MEETINGS.

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

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 38 Newington Green-road: 7, Mrs. Louisa Samson, "Prayer"; preceded by music.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, H. Snell, "Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?"; preceded by dramatic recital (3d. and 6d.) Tuesday at 8, social gathering (1d.) Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, public tea (2d.); 7.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 4, debating class, Elocution; 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "The Battle between Capital and Labor" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Charles Watts, "Free Will and Man's Responsibility" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Thursday, at 7.30, Charles Watts, "Secularists: what they Teach and why it is Taught—an Address to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale and the Christian Evidence Society."

Lambeth—Mr. Roger's, 114 Kennington-road: 11, annual meeting.

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road N.W.: 3.30, debating class; 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "Theism, Atheism, Pantheism."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday, at 8, J. Rowney, "The Exodus from Egypt."

Walthamstow—Workman's Hall, High-street: Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation" (free).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 11, members' general meeting; 7, T. Thurlow "God, Man, and the Devil."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Bible God."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, C. Cohen will lecture.

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Trial of Christianity"

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The Creation"; members' meeting after the lecture.

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, S. H. Alison, "All about the Devil."

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, F. Haslam will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, F. Haslam will lecture.

Kilburn Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, J. Fagan will lecture.

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, E. Calvert, "History of the New Testament Canon."

Leyton—High-road (corner of Vicarage-road): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "God: a Personification."

Midland Arches (near Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, J. Fagan, "Is there a God?"

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Christ and his Teachings."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Gospel Tales"

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, C. J. Hunt, "Secularism and Christianity."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, H. Snell will lecture; 8.15, W. Heaford, "Why we Attack Christianity."

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, Stanley Jones, "God, Man, and Nature."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, Lucretius Keen, "What has Christianity done?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, Mrs. Charles Watts, "An Hour with the Poets and Dramatists."

Blackburn—Spinners' Institute, Peter-street: 3, business meeting; 7, discussion.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 6.30, business meeting; 7, Mr. Thatcher, "Matter."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, J. J. Taylor, "What is Secularism?"; 7, Dr. T. R. Allinson, "Our Health, and how to Keep it" (6d., members 3d.)

Derby—20 Newland-street: 7, G. Harper, "Lord Brougham."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: G. W. Foote, 11.30, "Is Christianity the Friend of the People?"; 2.30 "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "After Death—What?"

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, James Hooper, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" (free); at 5, knife and fork tea (1s.)

Houghton-le-Springs—Mines' Hall, Robinson-street: Miss Ada Campbell 11, "Sunday in the Light of Reason"; 3, "Hereditry"; 6.30, "Truth and Christianity." Admission, 1d. and 3d.

Hull—Coblen Hall, 6 Story-street, Albion-street: 6.30, special meeting of members, important business.

Leeds—Crampton Hotel, Briggate: 7, members' meeting, and lecture by Mr. Badley, "Man v. God."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: Mr. Small, B.Sc., 3 (philosophy class), "Bain's Mind and Body, chaps. iv. and v."; 7, "From Christianity to Atheism."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road. All Saints: 6.30, Sam Standring, "May Day: its Origin and History" (free). Monday, at 8, Sam Standring, "The Jews as Christian Evidence—From Moses to Babylon" (free).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Lorraine Hall St. Mary's-place: C. J. Hunt, 11, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; 3, "Christianity and Science"; 7, "Life and Death." Admission, 3d., 6d., and 1s.

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Pichorne.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Harry Smith, 3, "Education and Morality—Religion and Crime"; 7, "The Dangers of Religious Faith"; tea at 5.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting.

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, R. Weightman, "Christianity and Secularism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Hanley—Market-square: 11, James Hooper, "Is the Bible True?"

Hull—Corporation Field: 2.30, a meeting.

Manchester (corner of Denmark-road and Oxford-road): Sam Standring, 11, "God's Hard Labor"; 3, "Christ and the Labor Question."

Sunderland: Monday, at 7, C. J. Hunt, "Christ's Teachings."

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LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—May 1 and 29, Milton Hall. June 5, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—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.—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.—May 1, m., Bethnal Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., Edmonton; 5, Walthamstow; 8, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 12, Walthamstow; 15, m., Mile End Waste; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 19, Walthamstow; 22, m., Lambeth; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow; 26, Walthamstow; 29, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton. June 5, m., Bethnal Green; e., Edmonton; 12, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 19, m., Mile End; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 26, m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Milton-street, C-on-M., Manchester.—May 1 and 2, Manchester; 5, Pendlebury; 8, Nottingham; 9, Manchester; 15, Failsworth; 16, Manchester.

C. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—May 8, m., Columbia-road; 15, m. and e., Plaistow; 22, m., Bethnal Green. June 5, m., Victoria Park; 12, m., Columbia-road; 19, m., Battersea. July 3, m., Victoria Park; 10, m., Columbia-road; 17, m., Battersea; 24, m., Bethnal Green; 31, a., Finsbury Park.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Chant-street, Stratford, E.—May 1, m., Hackney; 8, m., Bethnal Green; 22, m., Victoria Park. June and July, all mornings booked.

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