

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XII.—No. 21.]

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 1892.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"When men will not be reasoned out of a vanity, they must be ridiculed out of it."

—SIR ROGER L'ESTRANGE.

## WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

CHRISTIAN Churches are big firms in the soul-saving business. The principal of all these firms is a person who is said to have established the trade nearly nineteen hundred years ago. Some sceptics have doubted his very existence, but they are generally held to be obstinately blind or wilfully captious. But in any case it is indisputable that if Jesus Christ ever lived he died, and though he is declared to have risen from the dead, he is also said to have ascended into heaven. He is no longer on earth, except in a theological or mystical sense. The salvation business is carried on by his agents, real or fictitious, appointed or self-appointed. They charge various rates, and issue diverse prospectuses. It seems impossible that the founder of the business can authorise such contradictory advertisements or such various price-lists; nevertheless the many different firms, who all pretend to be branches of the original house, and sometimes to be the original house itself, are all busy, and some do a roaring, profitable trade.

Soul-saving, as we have said, is the business of all these Christian establishments or branches. Many people, however, are doubtful whether they have souls to save, and they are not the least moral and intelligent members of the human species. Science is leaving little room for souls in our economy. Evolution shows a gradual line of development from the lowest to the highest orders of life, and it is more and more difficult to see where the soul comes in. The very Churches, indeed, are beginning to appreciate the growing indifference on this subject, and are issuing manifestoes about their intention to save men's *bodies* as well as their souls. General Booth himself was obliged to follow this line when he wanted to raise £100,000 for the promotion of his scheme of Salvation.

All these Christian establishments or branches profess to be powerless in themselves. Their strength and efficacy are derived. They do all things through Christ. It is he who works in them. They vend salvation medicine, but he is the patentee. We may therefore set them aside, and deal with him, his recipe, its virtues, and its testimonials.

We will consider, first, the disease for which he offers a remedy. He is to save us, but what is it he is to save us from? We are told it is from *sin*, and its *consequences*. What then is *sin*?

If sin is offence against our fellow men, inflicting misery upon them for our own interest or gratification, or withholding assistance when we might render it without greater injury to ourselves, it is hard to see how Christ can save us from it. Preaching appears to be of little avail. Didactic morality has always been barren. Many a boy has written "honesty is the best policy" all down the length

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of his copy-book, and gone to the playground and sneaked another boy's marbles. Have all the billions of sermons from the pulpit had any appreciable effect on the *morale* of human society? But culture, wise conditions of life, examples of actual heroism, flashing utterances from the brooding depths of genius, an arresting picture, a pregnant poem, a story of love stronger than death, of virtue stronger than doom; these have improved and elevated men, and quickened the springs of goodness in millions of hearts.

Selfishness is the root of much evil. In the natural sense of the word it is the only sin. But how will Christ save us from *selfishness*? We are told that he gave his life for us, and that should make us kind to our fellows, out of mere gratitude. He did not die for us, however; every man has to die for himself. If it be meant that he gave his life as an *atonement* to God, we reply that such a transaction is unintelligible. Jurisprudence does not allow one person to atone for another; and how can the suffering of innocence diminish the selfishness of guilt? Supposing Jesus Christ to be merely a man, he *could* not bear the sins of the world upon his own shoulders. Supposing him to be God, does it not seem farcical for God to atone to himself, satisfy himself, pay himself, and discharge himself?

Sin, in the form of selfishness, vitiates our nature; its consequences afflict our fellow men; and neither the interior mischief nor the exterior evil can be remedied by theological hocus-pocus.

Setting aside the huge improbabilities of the Crucifixion story, and treating it as substantially true, it is impossible to regard Jesus Christ as a real martyr. He died for no principle. He was not called upon to renounce his convictions. The slightest exercise of common sense would have saved his life. His end was rather a suicide than a martyrdom. His trial and execution are an incomparable tragic picture, which has made the fortune of Christianity; but if we allow reason to operate in the midst of terror and compassion, we cannot fail to perceive that the tragedy involves no ethical lesson or heroic example.

We are equally disappointed if we turn to the *teaching* of Jesus Christ. Nearly all his ethics have a selfish sanction. Future reward and punishment, the lowest motives to right conduct, are systematically proffered. Those who forsook family and property for his sake were to receive a hundredfold in this life, and a still greater profit in the next life. "Great is your reward in heaven" was his highest incentive, except in occasional moments when he was truer to the natural instincts of sympathy and benevolence. Not in such teaching is the cure for selfishness, but rather its intensification. A finer spirit breathed in the Pagan maxim that "Virtue is its own reward."

Christ cannot save us from selfishness, because he appeals to selfish motives. Still less, if possible, can he save us from the *consequences* of selfishness. No man or god can do that. What is said is said, what is done is done. The lie, the slander, the innuendo; the harsh word, the malicious smile, the savage frown; the fraud, the curse, the blow; these have passed from

effects into causes, and produce misery in ever-widening circles, as the stone dropped into a still lake produces an extending circle of ripple, whose vibrations continue when lost to the perception of human eyes.

Even if we admit the blamelessness of Christ's life, for the sake of argument, without laying stress on many great qualities that were lacking in his nature, it is impossible to regard him as our "great exemplar," and in that sense as our Savior. Regarded as God, he is beyond our imitation. We have not his means, he had not our weakness. If he was "tempted as we are, yet without sin," he was *not* tempted as we are. The external solicitation, is powerless without the internal proclivity. Public-houses are the same to drunkards as teetotallers, yet they alternately attract and repel. On the other hand, if we regard Jesus as a man, how are we to imitate him then? Most of his life-story is miraculous. We cannot cure the sick, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, or restore dead sons and brothers to their mothers and sisters. Our powers and duties are more prosaic. We want incentive and guidance as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, friends and citizens; and here the example of Jesus fails us as utterly as his teaching.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE HEATHEN.

CONSIDERED as a growth of earth, not a gift from heaven, as one of the many faiths that have from time to time embodied the superstitions and aspirations of man during the long ages of his development, Christianity has undoubtedly a most conspicuous place. But as a divine revelation—which is what it claims to be—it is a failure. After eighteen hundred years but a small portion of the human family are believers in this one only divine religion. Millions have not even heard of it; multitudes know it only to reject it. The countries where it is nominally accepted constitute not one-fourth of the population of the earth, and of these how few have ever investigated the creed in which they have been born and bred.

Considered in relation to other faiths, Christianity has neither the claim of highest antiquity nor of being the most modern improvement on past religions. Judaism, Parseeism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism are all older. Islam, the religion of the Sikhs, and reformed Brahmanism are younger.

When you have said a man is a Christian you have said nothing definite as to his character. The term is too general to convey real information. Taken in its restricted meaning as implying those who take Christ as their example, it may safely be said in all Christendom there is no Christian. The nearest approach to one we have heard of is the Russian Count Tolstoi, and he but for the restraining anti-Christian influence of his wife would have been ere this in the workhouse or lunatic asylum.

The honesty and sobriety of Mohammedans are proverbial. A man cannot be a Mohammedan or a Buddhist and be a drunkard; but the Christian nations are the most drunken on the earth. Christian Europe forcing missionaries and opium on China, Protestants and Catholics fighting each other in their efforts to evangelise the natives of Uganda, make an edifying picture for heathens to contemplate. We can imagine the effect upon the Moslems of India, who take such interest in their mosque in England, when they hear of the persecuting indignity put upon their fellow-worshippers at Liverpool last Friday, and reported in our "Acid Drops" this week.

It would appear from a copy of a memorandum sent to China from our Foreign Office and published in the *North China Daily News*, that Lord Salisbury has found it necessary to give Christian missionaries in China some wholesome advice to prevent them

from embroiling us in a war with the natives, as they are often likely to do. This memorandum "recommends that orphanages and schools should be, as far as possible, open to public inspection; and that Bible societies should refrain from circulating uncommenced translations of certain books of the Bible, such as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the Song of Solomon, etc., which contain passages easily open to misrepresentation if unexplained." That is to say, the word of God, left in its native grossness, is seen to be but a savage and indecent production by the Chinese, who are untrained in any superstitious reverence for it. The memorandum goes on to recommend that missionaries shall not interfere in disputes between Christian and non-Christian natives. "Finally, attention is directed to the Consul's observation that the practice of unmarried female missionaries travelling in the company and under the protection of unmarried male missionaries, however unobjectionable it may appear to those concerned, is incompatible with the Chinese views of decorum, and affords ground for scandal which gains publicity through the scurrilous pamphlets and placards circulated by the anti-Christian party." Lord Salisbury's memorandum forms a noticeable comment on Christian methods of converting the heathen.

Some nations have doubled their population in less than twenty-five years. If Christianity had doubled its numbers only every century from the first five thousand with which it started according to Acts iv. 4, it should now have numbered far more than all the people in the world. Yet here are the Church Missionary Society, the Society for Promoting the Gospel, and similar organisations boasting immense wealth, using every effort, yet bound to admit that the population of the heathen world, which on their theory are going headlong to hell, increase at a faster rate than their conversions.

It is strange, if Christianity is divine, that those who know it best, as for instance the Jews and Freethinkers, reject it most decidedly. It succeeds only with the lowest races. Converts are made of Central Africans, South Sea Island savages, and the aboriginal tribes of India. But educated Jews, Mohammedans, Confucians, Buddhists or Parsees are rarely or never brought to the fold, even with the tempting inducements Christianity is able to offer by its lavish subscriptions for the conversion of the heathen.

Despite its enormous endowments, the time, money, devotion and learning spent in its defence, despite its numerous sects adapted to every variety of prejudice, despite the frauds perpetrated, the battles fought, the massacres committed and the laws enacted in its behalf, Christianity is decaying even in the countries which give it nominal adherence. France is hardly a Christian country. In Italy and Spain the men of light and leading are Freethinkers. In Germany, Norway, Sweden and Denmark Christianity is undermined and broken into a myriad discordant sects. Roundly speaking, a thousand million of earth's inhabitants are still non-Christian. This is a poor result after the trouble God went to in coming to earth and getting himself crucified.

J. M. WHEELER.

JESUS AMONGST THE LORSTER CANS.—Another instance of the undoubted presence amongst us of Jesus Christ is afforded by the following announcement, which appeared last week, under the heading "Births, Marriages and Deaths," in the columns of our esteemed contemporary *Sheldrake's Aldershot Gazette*, whose common-sense arguments on the wretched "Star of Bethlehem" craze we alluded to some time ago. Jesus Christ, amidst his peripatetic wanderings in the neighborhood of Aldershot, happily seems to have dropped across the General Supply Stores at Ash. Very fortunately for the unostentatious person referred to in the undermentioned advertisement: "IN MEMORIAM.—In loving memory of Allen Chandler, who fell asleep in Jesus at General Supply Stores, Ash, Surrey, on May 2, 1891."

## THE SECULAR WARFARE.

SECULAR advocacy not only involves the calm and dignified exposition of principles necessary to the right performance of the daily duties of life, but it also demands a firm and persistent warfare against the errors and follies that have so long impeded the recognition and acceptance of progressive views. In our conflict with orthodox obstructionists we have to prevent, as far as possible, the advantages of the thoughtful Present from being counteracted by the legacies of a fanatical Past. We see too plainly the terrible mischief caused by adhering tenaciously to that worn-out theology which for ages perverted the judgment and disturbed the healthy condition of the reasoning powers of its adherents. It produced within them an egotism born of an ill-balanced mind, which, in turn, became the parent of delusions and a self-sacrificed superiority to everything that did not come within the focus of their narrow mental vision. Thus many men, excellent in their normal state, were driven under the influence of their deteriorated mentality into extremes unacceptable to the cultured intellect of the nineteenth century.

True, this theological domination is now rapidly losing ground within the domain of modern thought. Still, in our Secular propaganda, we are continually coming in contact with theological assumptions and gross misrepresentations protected by orthodox cowardice, and these are the evils against which we must fight to the very last; for to ignore them would be to allow our opponents free scope to perpetuate a sad and degrading influence over the thoughtless and superstitious portions of their victims. Perhaps no fallacy has been conceived and clung to with greater tenacity in theological circles than the notion that the improvement which has taken place in the world during modern times is to be attributed solely to Christianity. This is consummate assumption, theological audacity, and barefaced pandering to that ignorance and credulity which are the offshoots of priestcraft and ecclesiastical falsification. Has no vitality emanated from the vast and prolific treasures of science, art, philosophy, commerce, general education and honest scepticism? Are no trophies of success to be laid at their feet and entwined around their fertile forms? May not some victories be claimed for their grand and successive marches? The records of human redemption emphatically say Yes; but the orthodox believer, in the name of his religion, says No. With him the vaporings of the pulpit have been more influential than the sober truths of the study. Compared with Christ, in his opinion Roger Bacon, Kepler, Copernicus, Bruno and Galileo toiled and suffered comparatively in vain; while Watt, Dalton, Priestley, Black and others labored for almost nought. The noble efforts of Franklin, Jefferson, Voltaire, Paine, Hone, Carlile, Hetherington and Watson were but of slight avail. The persistent services of Darwin, Tyndall, Mill, Huxley, Spencer and Clifford have all been only of secondary importance in advancing the present civilisation of the world. How long will a dense theology blind its devotees to the truth and cause them to pervert the facts of history and experience? When will they heed the lesson of the glorious struggles of the past—namely, that the progress of a nation cannot fairly be attributed to any one thing or period, but rather to a combination of circumstances, and those of a non-theological character, which have been in operation during many ages, forming, moulding and regulating human conduct?

Orthodoxy to-day is as cowardly as it is arrogant. In the early days of its history questions were allowed to be put in its churches by the hearers to the teachers, and thus some chance was given for eliciting the truth. To-day no minister dares to follow

the custom of his predecessors. His pulpit is a castle into which no shot must be fired, and his so-called sacred building an entrenchment behind which he makes as cowardly an attack upon his enemies as a man who shoots another from behind a stone wall. But fortunately the people, and particularly the young, are beginning to see through this trick, and are learning to appreciate it accordingly. The clergy will have to come into the open field and carry on the warfare, or confess that they have not sufficient faith in their principles to defend them in the presence of an opponent. Occasionally, it is true, we find a minister or clergyman who has the courage of his opinions and who will cross swords with us on the platform, but he has to do so unsupported by other leading exponents of the Church. And even these very rare "defenders of the faith" will not discuss what they preach. Judging from our personal experience, not one of them can be induced to debate such cardinal questions of orthodoxy as the Bible God, Infallibility of the Scripture, the Existence of the Devil and Hell-fire. Why is this? The explanation is that the ministers of all denominations are alike afraid to submit their teaching to the only crucible by which truth can be distinguished from error—which is free and open discussion. In their pulpits they make the most unfair, the most reckless and misleading statements regarding our principles, and they know, therefore, that an opportunity for contradiction would be fatal to the acceptance of their oracular utterances.

Not only do these "pillars of the Church" misrepresent us and our teachings, but they place themselves in antagonism to liberal thought and independent action. The *ipse dixit* of Protestant clergymen is considered by some almost as authoritative, and nearly as infallible, as the Bull of a Pope, and he who does not accept it is supposed to peril his soul's eternal salvation. "I have said it, therefore it must be so"—sums up with them the whole business. And he who is not satisfied with this questionable mode of dictation is in danger of being eternally confounded, not to use a stronger word. This is terrible to think of when we consider that the enormous power wielded by the clergy is in so many cases used on the side of oppression and wrong. Liberty is a word which appears to be hateful to them, freedom to think their especial aversion, and controversy a weapon of Satan. On every hand they try to curtail the rights of the people. The freedom of the press and free speech were wrung from them by unbelievers when the Church was powerless further to resist it. And their Sunday laws are just so many relics of a barbarous age, in which the Church was all powerful and her authority supreme. Science, even, must only be listened to when she speaks on their side, and thought, unless in a particular groove, is a thing to be strongly condemned.

It is against all this that we, as Freethinkers, unfettered by Church creeds, and undismayed by priestly dogmas, are fighting, and in opposition to which with us, it is war to the knife. The conflict is now raging with determined force, and the battle will no doubt grow hotter and hotter; but our motto will continue to be "Onward!" and the Secular warriors intend not to withdraw from the struggle until the conflict is ended and the victory won. This long dominant and despotic theology must be destroyed, and it is the imperative duty of all Secularists to assist in the noble endeavor of bringing peace to mankind and freeing them from the yoke of a hideous priestcraft and a barbarous theology. Let us ever remember that

Freedom's battle once begun,  
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,  
Though baffled oft, is ever won.

CHARLES WATTS.

## A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

## IX.—AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF THE C.E.S.

ON the evening of the 32nd of March last I returned home early, after an exceptionally arduous and harassing day's work. A Secularist friend whom I met upon the road accosted me, and gave me an advance copy (damp from the press) of a special report of the C.E.S. After reaching home and partaking of a hearty meal, I settled down before the fire to peruse this interesting document. On the first page I noticed an announcement to the effect that an extraordinary general meeting of the Society would be held in Exeter Hall on that very evening at 8.30. Finding that I had just sufficient time to reach the place, I determined to attend the meeting.

After a sharp walk I entered one of the smaller rooms of Exeter Hall at the moment when the principal supporters of the C.E.S. were filing on to the platform. The chair was taken by Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Smoothbore, K.C.S.I.—as pious a soldier as ever cut a fellow-creature's throat. Whilst the luminaries of the Society were settling into their places I glanced hastily at its assembled supporters. There was a large contingent of the old-maid-with-£5,000-in-Consols class; scattered here and there were a few callow curates, who were evidently still under the influence of youthful illusions as to their profession; and the remainder consisted chiefly of the open-air agents and advocates of the Society. These gentlemen assumed a very smug and demure demeanor, and appeared incapable of uttering a slander to save their precious lives.

My wandering attention was recalled by an announcement that the meeting would sing hymn 149 to the praise and glory of God. This was done with more vigor than sense of tune; and then one of the clerical brethren "offered prayer" through his nose. Sir Willoughby next addressed us briefly, shouting at us as another gallant warrior (the Duke of Cambridge) is reported to have shouted at the mutinous Guards. The chairman's speech was as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen,—I have no doubt you all know why you are here, and I will therefore call on the secretary, Mr. Longstrum, to make a statement."

The reverend secretary then rose, and, mildly deprecating the applause which came exclusively from the advocates' seats, addressed the chairman and the audience in a deferential tone. He said that the committee had decided to call an extraordinary general meeting in view of the position of the Society. That position simply was this—the funds were exhausted, and much work yet remained to be done in the Lord's vineyard. He would speak first of the funds, then of the work.

The balance-sheet, which he would read but which would not be printed, showed that the subscriptions to March 25 had been £1,001 18s. 4½d. He might state, as an affecting incident, that the odd farthing was supposed to be a moiety of a halfpenny which a Sunday-school girl had intended to invest in chocolate-cream; but she had resolved to forego one-half of her indulgence and to contribute the money thus saved to the cause of Christ. It was the widow's mite of the C.E.S. (At this point many wept aloud.)

The expenditure to date had been as follows:—

Salaries of secretaries	...	...	...	£750	0	0
Office-rent, firing, and services of small boy				25	0	0
Lectures, interviews, etc., by secretaries	...			120	0	0
Travelling and other expenses of secretaries				55	0	0
Payments to open-air lecturers, etc.,	...			51	18	4½
				£1,001	18	4½

The balance-sheet had been audited by Messrs. Hookey, Walker and Co., and could be inspected by subscribers.

With regard to the work of the Society, that had, under Providence, been greatly blessed. He (the secretary) was bound to admit that no public debate had taken place between the chief Secularists and the representatives of the Society, but he might explain that at present the Society was not in a position to secure the services of men competent to discuss with really able opponents. It would be simply giving the show away (if he might be permitted to use a worldly expression) to put up the average parson against such a man as Mr. Twelve-inches. Therefore the Society had not encouraged public debating; but it had sent representatives to one or more lectures by leading Freethinkers, and, if the results were not very imposing, it must be remembered that it was impossible to answer in ten minutes a lecture which occupied an hour in delivery. (This phrase sounded familiar in my ears.)

The most important matter, however, was the open-air lecturing, and it was owing to the urgency of this that the meeting had been called. The summer was close upon them; the Freethinkers were continually extending their open-air work; and the Society had hitherto been toiling painfully in their rear, endeavoring ineffectually to supply a dose of antidote to every dose of poison. In the lamentable condition of the Society's exchequer, God only knew how the operations of the infidels were to be counteracted during the coming summer. In every direction Secular platforms were springing up, and he appealed to earnest Christians to support the Society in their work of refuting infidel advocates. Their activity had of late been seriously impaired by the lack of funds; indeed, it was at one time feared that there would actually be a strike amongst their open-air lecturers. This, by the grace of God and the judicious distribution of shekels (if he might employ a word from Holy Writ), had happily been averted; but it was more than ever necessary that additional funds should be forthcoming. Skill of the kind required by the Society for its open-air work was cheap and abundant; in fact, all that was needed was cheek. But even cheek had to be paid for.

To show the undeniable success which had blessed the efforts of the Society's speakers, he would quote from one or two of the reports. Those reports had certainly been written by the speakers themselves; but they were all men of honor, and it was simply inconceivable that they could state an untruth. Mr. Anak reported:

"NORTH LONDON.—Spoke on Sunday last to an audience of at least 50,000. (Some of our friends said 100,000, but I desire to avoid exaggeration.) Subject: 'The Early History of the Church.' Lecture lasted an hour; for fifty-five minutes I gave the Freethinkers beans. A Secularist opposed in a trembling voice; I replied with such vigor that his friends had to carry him away on a shutter. Collection, 1s. 4½d."

Mr. Dagon reported:

"SOUTH LONDON.—Lectured on 'Miracles.' Proved that it was only by a miracle that any Secularist escaped imprisonment for murder, arson, wife-beating and forgery. Audience simply tremendous. An ignorant Secularist (they are all ignorant) opposed, and had the audacity to quote from a work that I had never heard of—I think he called it Hunt's (or Home's) *Essay on Miracles*. Do you know anything about it? Where can I borrow a copy? In reply I said that the author of that essay had lately been fined 40s. for being drunk and incapable, and that I couldn't recognise such a man as any authority on the subject of miracles. That went down all right for once; but I should not like to try it again. There was no collection, because a Secularist lecturer commenced to speak before I had finished, and he took away all my audience."

These two reports (continued the secretary) were suggestive as showing at once the difficulties and the triumphs of their work. The outdoor speakers were valuable, as they could be repudiated if necessary. It had been asserted that many of them made

statements which were deliberately false, and which no decent man would utter; but could any instrument be too despicable if used for the glory of God and the good of the Church? He appealed to the dear friends present to subscribe liberally in order that the Society might rake the gutters to find additional laborers for God and Christ. (Applause.)

When the secretary had finished his address, the chairman arose and asked if any person present desired to put a question or to make any observation on the report. I at once accepted the invitation and went upon the platform. Addressing the meeting, I congratulated the Society upon the candor which the secretary had displayed in speaking of the open-air agents of the Society. I then asked how it was possible that the secretarial work could be done efficiently at so small a cost, and suggested that it might be advisable to appoint an assistant-deputy-secretary.

Here the chairman rose to his feet and said that I was "evidently guying the Society." He, for one, could not stand that at any price, and challenged me to fight him under the Marquis of Queensberry's rules. No doubt his clerical friends would form a ring and see fair play. The secretary deferentially replied that, as a minister of the gospel, he did not approve of fighting as a general thing; but no doubt a point could be strained for so earnest a Christian as Sir Willoughby Smoothbore. As for me, I am not a fighting man; and if I engage in single combat I like the other chap to be smaller than myself; but my blood was up, and I was determined that no red-nosed Lieutenant-General should bully me. So I took off my coat while the parsons formed the ring, and Smoothbore and I "waded in." The audience stood upon their chairs and became intensely interested in the affair, which is believed to have been without precedent in the annals of the Society.

After two or three rounds Sir Willoughby's nose became redder than ever, and my right eye felt as if it was leaning out of the window. As I was preparing to give my opponent what I fondly hoped would be his *coup de grace* I received a fearful blow upon the back of the head. It was a foul blow, and I heard several people call out "Shame!" as I lost consciousness.

Or, rather, as I regained it; for I had fallen asleep over the C.E.S. report, and the foul blow was not struck by the secretary, but by the back of my chair. My wife, who was reading Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, and was therefore wide awake, said I had been muttering incoherently in my sleep, and that I had leaned forward and then fallen backward in the chair. The knock was a pretty severe one, but, as it was only my head that was concerned, she thought it didn't matter.

But I really did enjoy myself very much at that extraordinary general meeting of the C.E.S.

GEORGE STANDRING.

## THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.—II.

It may be of some interest to the younger generations of Freethinkers to have a few particulars of this book of Drummond's after its singular misdescription by Mr. Cooper and the reviewer. Its author was a man who had occupied several important posts in the Diplomatic service of his country; was for some years a member of parliament, a profound Arabic, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew scholar, and the author of several historical and philosophical works. His *Edipus Judaicus* was printed for private circulation, and the edition was limited to two hundred and fifty copies only. It is also possible that at the time of its appearance it would have been very difficult to have found a publisher; besides, Sir William was enjoying his large pension, he having been British Ambassador at Constantinople, and at this period there were scores of persons of both sexes suffering long terms of imprisonment for selling Paine's *Age of Reason* and other similar works; therefore a man in Sir William's

position was not likely or willing to jeopardise his emoluments by courting persecution.

The preface commences by saying, "It will naturally be asked by those, who may chance to see this volume, why its author has caused a book to be printed, which he yet does not choose to publish. When, however, it is considered that I have treated of things deemed sacred, and that there is considerable novelty in some of my opinions, I trust that I shall be easily pardoned, if I confine the circulation of this work to a narrow circle." When we remember that even such a great man as George Grote, member of parliament for the City of London, and the historian of Greece, at almost the identical time the *Edipus* appeared, was constrained to publish his atheistical work, *The Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, under a feigned name, I think we may reasonably conclude that my reasons are the true ones for its private publication.

The object of the book is then stated. "It is the object of my book to explain the hidden sense of many passages in the Hebrew scriptures; but as Christians are, for the most part, so well satisfied with the literal sense as never to look for any other, except when it is thought that some allusion is made to the advent of Christ, I feel myself unwilling to publish any explanations of the original text, which may not coincide with those notions concerning its meaning which are most commonly received. Besides, there may be passages in this volume which are capable of alarming the timid and of provoking the prejudiced." Who were the timid and prejudiced that Sir William was afraid of frightening or provoking? We know that at the period when he wrote that all writings like these in question were prohibited by the authorities, and heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment were meted out to the publishers of works like the *Age of Reason*. Drummond proceeds: "Ignorance bears ill being told that it has much to learn, and to instruct pride is to offend it. The Old Testament is a book which we have all read in our childhood, when reason proposes no doubts, and when judgment is too feeble to decide for itself. But its early associations are generally the strongest in the human mind; and what we have been taught to credit as children, we are seldom disposed to question as men. Called away from speculative inquiries by the common business of life, men in general possess neither the inclination nor the leisure to examine *what* they believe or *why* they believe. A powerful prejudice remains in the mind, ensures conviction without the trouble of thinking, and repels doubt without the aid or authority of reason."

Every unprejudiced reader of these words of Sir William will at once see their wisdom and truth. Religion, dogma, and custom may be almost called hereditary in the human race. Boys in their teens are sent to a college where one side of the case is placed before them; assumptions and assertions are taught them as verities; history is distorted, legends are assumed as facts, and evidence made to conform to the hereditary opinion. Then in a year or two (they having had the Holy Ghost imparted to them, by the laying on their heads the hands of a bishop) they become ministers of a religion and preachers of a gospel, of which, so far as its origin and evidence is concerned, they are utterly ignorant. And so constituted is modern society now, with the foibles and weaknesses of mankind, the prizes open to these half-fledged clerical birds in their profession—emoluments and honors not to be met with in any other of the walks of life—that it is almost impossible for them to ever allow a thought to enter their minds that is not in accordance with the training they have received. For one Colenso we have one hundred Spurgeons; but, fortunately, the work of the former is enduring; that of the latter, ephemeral and only for a generation.

Drummond shall now state the immediate object of his book. After saying that Christians, when it suits their case, apply a figurative meaning to many parts of the Old Testament, says: "While the Deity is represented with human passions, and those none of the best; while he is described as a quarrelsome, jealous and vindictive being; while he is shown to be continually changing his plans for the moral government of the world; and while he is depicted as a material and local God, who dwelt on a box made of Shittim wood in the Temple of Jerusalem; they abide by the literal interpretation. They see no allegory in the first chapter of Genesis\*; nor doubt that for the

\* They do now.

greater portion of the human race is doomed to suffer eternal torments, because our first parents ate an apple, after having been tempted by a talking serpent. They find it quite simple that the triune Jehovah should dine on veal cutlets at Abraham's table; nor are they at all surprised that the God of the universe should pay a visit to Ezekiel, in order to settle with the Prophet whether he should bake his bread with human dung or cow's dung. They believe the facts to have happened literally as they are stated; and neither suspect, nor allow, that the language of the sacred writers upon such occasions may be entirely figurative."

(To be continued.)

#### A CHAT BETWEEN MOTHER CHURCH AND SATAN. (From "our" Special Reporter.)

"The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are the largest leviers of royalty in Durham. Last year the county of Durham produced 29,809,523 tons of coal. Putting the average royalty at 5d. a ton, that meant that the royalty owners took in that year £820,990. One-third of that sum, £240,000, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners—that is to say, the Church—took. . . 'Keep your prayers,' say, in effect, the miners; 'keep your prayers, and surrender the wealth which by God's law, though not by the law of the bench of bishops, belongs to the nation.'"—*Special Correspondent, "Daily News."*

SATAN :

Well, Mother, and how are things looking with you?  
You yourself are not looking *too gay*.

MOTHER CHURCH :

If I look as I'm feeling, I'm looking too blue,  
In fact there's *the Devil to pay*.

S. : I'm here to receive it; you owe me a dot,  
Your stock-in-trade I don't refuse,  
For as "royalties" bring you in such a fat lot  
To the Devil you'll give his (coal) dues.

M. C. : Don't "frivvle," my son; there are breakers ahead  
That will break us in time, well I know;  
Though you now come to me, by th' wicked 'tis said  
Soon the Church to the Devil must go.

S. : Well, we've had a long innings together I trow,  
And made some good running I'm sure;  
If "bowled out" by the wicked I think you'll allow  
That no *wicket* can rival *our* score.

M. C. : The true love of labor my labor of love  
Has been to ingrain in the masses,

S. (*aside*): A love I may state that's so holy and great  
That all *understanding* it passes.

M. C. : They'd rob me of "royalties"—children of sin,  
*These*, at least, are my bishops' prayers worth.

S. : Well, of course I've *my* business, but you have none in  
(So I fancied) the bowels of the earth.

M. C. : My flocks once so dutiful, docile and good,

S. (*aside*): (Now are cutting unorthodox capers)

M. C. : Are demoralised quite by the foul mental food  
Supplied by low Radical papers;  
As the *friend* of the people I've posed for so long,  
But *now*—they're beginning to doubt it,  
And they speak of their Church in a manner that's  
"Disestablish—and let's do without it." [strong,

S. : That's bad (and the bust-up is near, I can tell),  
But the people *are* selfish and hollow,  
Still, think of their *souls*, mother. M. C. : Oh! you  
go to — S. : Well,  
I'm going—and soon you will follow.  
Tra-la-la—there's my telephone. Yes, are you there?  
What! some *more* of the Church's bright beacons?  
*Au revoir*, I must go; they're receiving below  
A consignment of bishops and deacons.

W. E. IMEON.

#### 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.

## ACID DROPS.

The Rev. John McNeill has been doing a little of his well-paid free-and-easy business at Dundee. In one of his addresses John compared himself with his Savior, who went about sometimes in an ill-smelling fishing boat, while John rides first-class. John half complained that "yesterday," after one of his meetings, a carriage came for him, drawn by two splendid horses; he "sank down in the dreamy luxuriance of rich cushions, he was driven up a broad avenue to a magnificent mansion, where master, mistress and servants vied with each other to entertain him." Poor John! How sad to be persecuted with such attentions! Yet how humbly he submitted to the trial, not getting out of the luxuriant carriage, but riding on to the bitter end.

The only ride J. C. ever had was on a jackass. Evidently the soul-saving business pays a lot better now than it did nearly two thousand years ago.

"What a fool," exclaimed John McNeill, "is the man who tries to get through the world without Christ." John is not such a fool, anyhow. He finds that godliness is great gain, and he means to stick to it. He travels in the Salvation line, with £1,200 a year and expenses, and perhaps commission. Many a commercial traveller, not so thick with Jesus, does a lot more talking for less money, and has to give value afterwards.

The Rev. John McNeill, who has a somewhat eccentric pulpit style (says the *Daily Chronicle*), has been taking his audiences to task for smiling. At Dundee the other day he said he would rather a man walked out of the church declaring "McNeill had insulted him" than sit smiling in his seat. "Don't smile," he said; "this is what knocks heart out of a preacher. Whatever way he looks he cannot even get crossed. Don't pretend you like this preaching, if you don't. Don't get up a sickly smile over your face, and try to smile when you are just mad. Let madness out, and if you like, throw a hymn-book at my head."

Mr. George Mitchell, secretary to the Labor Society of Glasgow, gave evidence before the Labor Commission on the Scottish chemical industry. In the course of his evidence he objected to employers giving money to evangelical missions in Scotland while they paid their employees such miserable wages as 13s. 6d. to 16s. a week of sixty hours. Mr. Tom Mann asked him to give an instance, and Mr. Mitchell replied, "At the present time the men have heard by the meetings of the Evangelical Union that the proprietor of the Shothill Chemical Works is guaranteeing the expenses of the Rev. John McNeill in Scotland just now."

This is a fine comment on Mr. McNeill's address to "the sinners" of Scotland. His £1,200 a year, guaranteed by the chemical-works capitalist, looks very much like a compulsory tax on certain working men. "Come to Jesus!" sounds less inviting when you know the preacher's salary and who pays it.

Leith School Board will no more open its meetings with prayer. By an overwhelming majority the Board has decided to let "the Almighty" alone and go straight to business. And this in godly Scotland! How long will it be before the House of Commons abandons the farce of "prayers" and saves the salary now paid to Pluralist Farrar?

One of the small minority at Leith School Board declared that if they did not seek the guidance of God they would be worse than the old Greeks, who saw a god in every mountain and river. This gentleman seems to think a thousand gods better than none. Perhaps he will import a few, from Greece or somewhere, and advertise them in the *Scotsman*. Old Jehovah is falling into neglect, and maybe some fresh deities would revive the business.

Instances of the grovelling effect of superstition and priestcraft may often be witnessed in India. The long penance of a Hindu for killing a cow was recently described by a correspondent of the *Daily News*. But this is comparatively reasonable, for the preservation of the cow was doubtless a social necessity in ancient India. A more irrational penance is the Pycurmas prescribed by Brahmins for offences against themselves. Women and men have to make a pilgrimage to

a shrine, prostrating themselves the whole journey the length of their person.

An abominable instance of Christian intolerance has taken place at the Mohammedan mosque, Liverpool, which in its petty malignity is about as bad as anything Christian missionaries have to complain of when among the heathen. It is known, of course, that Mohammedans at prayers take off their shoes, and at certain times make a complete prostration, placing their hands on the floor and touching the same with their foreheads. The Liverpool mosque is carpeted with Turkish velvet pile, and has been open all day in order that anyone who desires may enter. Knowing this, it appears, some Christians entered and strewed a large quantity of broken glass in small particles all over the carpet. Fortunately some particles were discovered just about the time that prayers were going on on Friday last. This led to an examination. The carpet was taken up, beaten, and enough fragments of glass found to fill a quart jug. The matter is put into the hands of the police.

The first result of this Christian fanatical folly is that the mosque at Liverpool will be closed to all except Moslems. But a far more serious one will be the indignation of all those of our forty million of Mohammedan fellow-subjects in India who hear of the treatment accorded to their co-religionists in Christian England.

"Peter Lombard's" articles, "From the East," to the *Church Times*, are interesting. Like others, he has been trying to locate the scenes of the gospel narratives. He finds two different sites for the feeding of five thousand, and cannot choose between them. Perhaps this is because the sun-god, who turns water into wine, walks on water, and feeds multitudes, extends his operations over the face of the earth.

"Peter Lombard," however, thinks he has discovered the hill whence the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. No lonely hill is found nearer than Hattin, and that he thinks must be it. Accordingly he finds "a wonderful fitness in the locality." But if "Peter Lombard" turned to Luke's gospel he would find that much of the discourse said in Matthew to have been delivered from a mountain was delivered from a plain, and if he compared the same sermon with the old Jewish sayings he might find that it smacked more of the study than of either mountain or plain.

"Peter Lombard" could not venture to stay in Capernaum, which indeed is so fever-begetting that it is deserted. Laurence Oliphant and his wife are said to have been killed through staying there a single night. Bethsaida, too, the city of Andrew and Peter, he found to consist of "only a hovel or two." Jesus Christ really ought to look after the condition of his native land. But perhaps he is better occupied being re-incarnated in some out-of-the-way corner of some other planet.

The New Testament doctrine of possession by devils still flourishes in Bavaria. The Berlin correspondent of the *Daily News* (May 12) tells of the official report of casting out a devil from a boy in Wemding. The boy had fits of bad temper, but the devil was, after much trouble, and, it is said, "great pain to the boy," driven out by the potent names of "God, the Holy Virgin, and the Holy Archangel Michael." When asked "Hast thou and thy companions left the boy?" the answer came "Yes." "Where art thou now?" "In hell." And, says the official report, "this last answer seemed to come from hell." To us it suggests the "hello" of the telephone.

The true inwardness of the story is, however, revealed in the last part, where Father Aurelian explains why the devil took hold of the boy. The father, a Catholic, had married a Protestant, and was married in a Protestant church, and the children had been brought up in the Protestant faith. The father has now, says the report, "made good his fault." The marriage ceremony has been celebrated again according to the Roman Catholic rite, the children have been rebaptised, and it is even hoped that the mother will go over to the Catholic Church. Protestants laugh at this fraud and folly without thinking that their own gospels are plentifully tarred with a similar brush.

In a leaderette on the subject the *Daily News* says,

"Charles II. was for ever having himself exorcised." But in his case the devil had a firm grip.

A writer in the German *Medical News* points out a curious instance in his village of all the Catholic children having measles and all the Protestant ones escaping. Probably it was to be explained by different schools and rigid boycott. But some gave another explanation. They thought Protestants and Catholics must have a different "Herr Gott."

The Rev. John Page Hopps, who is always doing his best to elevate the idea of Deity, prints, in the *Coming Day*, a sermon on "God in the Streets of London." We should say he must be there in the shape of the policeman—always absent when wanted.

We had just read this when we heard a noise in these said "streets of London." It was the piteous bleating of numerous weary sheep being driven to slaughter with the barking of dogs and shouts and blows of the drovers. God in the New Testament takes the character of a lamb. If he is in the streets of London, he might show some consideration for his poor bleating brethren.

Provincial papers have headed their reports of the Field case, "Secularist Scandal." They do not use the heading of "Christian Scandal" when professed Christians go wrong, perhaps because such cases are too common. With regard to the paragraph in so many reports, to the effect that the *Freethinker* was handed up to Mr. Justice Grantham, and that he called it a scandalous publication which no father who valued the welfare of his family would read—we are informed by Mr. Forder, who heard the trial, that the judge said nothing of the kind. What he did say was, that it had no bearing whatever upon the prisoner's conduct in his defence.

Henry Solly, laborer, of Stone, Dartford, has been ordered to pay 5s. per week for 16 years for the maintenance of his illegitimate child by Elizabeth Clough, aged fourteen. Solly had a wife and three children. He used to call at the house of the girl's parents with tracts every Sunday morning. The Bench said it was the most frightful case they had ever had before them. Solly said "The Lord was on his side."

The Rev. Kennedy Bell, who has been curate in charge at Little Bedwyn, Hungerford, in the absence of the rector, was charged at Hungerford Police-court on Tuesday, with having assaulted two young ladies. He was remanded.

Fanny Emma Harvey, in a case at Bow-street, said excitedly she had been seduced at confirmation. "Beware of those confirmation classes, girls and mothers of England. I knew not what harm was until then."

The lad Moritz Guttman, who was recently convicted in Paris for swindling, found conversion a money-making game. During the last few years he was baptised thirty-six times, sometimes as a Catholic and sometimes in the Protestant faith. Finally, not content with a present of money from a lady who stood his sponsor, he robbed her of some jewellery. His religious proclivities will now be kept under restraint for five years.

Dickson, the clerk, who murdered his child at Wanstead and then committed suicide, was evidently pious. He left a letter to his wife, commending her to the protection of God. The jury found that the murderer and suicide was insane.

The Bishop of Hull (suffragan), in taking his leave of the East Riding as Archdeacon, delivers himself on a number of topics, including unbelief. Churchmen, he says, are all standing closer together "in face of Secularism and Agnosticism, of vice and irreligion." A little previously he had mouthed that old saying, which has such a small meaning on Christian lips, "In all things, charity." Evidently his charity begins at home, and ends there; otherwise he would not class vice and scepticism together. The Bishop can hardly be so ignorant of the world as to believe what his language implies. He must surely be aware that the overwhelming bulk of vice and crime is chargeable upon professed Christians. Freethought decidedly objects to being the dumping-ground of Christian refuse.

A good deal of fuss has been made in the religious papers and the *Daily Chronicle* about "Sermon Transference" anent the charge made against the secretary of the Congregational Union of having copied a sermon by the Rev. Oswald Dykes. The practice seems very common; but to explain it we need not resort to any of those abstruse theories of thought-transference by which Madame Blavatsky explained how a speech by Prof. Kiddle got into a letter from the Mahatma Koot Hoomi. We have a far easier theory. Ministers are all praying men, and doubtless before writing their sermons seek direction from the Holy Ghost. What wonder, then, when prayed to for enlightenment on the same topic, he inspires his holy ministers with the same words.

Paul suffered not a woman to speak or teach in a church, but said nothing as to their becoming churchwardens. Accordingly, the Bishop of Peterborough has consented to allow Mrs. Pell, wife of Mr. Albert Pell, J.P., to hold the position of churchwarden at Hazelbeach.

Hope-street Church, Liverpool, is a Unitarian "place of worship," and the minister is the Rev. R. A. Armstrong. Its "Monthly Calendar" for May reports 48 applications for literature through the post—44 from the *Freethinker* advertisement, 2 from the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and 2 from other sources. The applications came from 32 towns in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Does not this prove what we have often asked our business readers to believe, that the *Freethinker* is a first-rate advertising medium?

"Our correspondents," the report adds, "have almost all come through the *Freethinker*." Good! We like our readers to show inquiring minds. But we guess they will furnish very few converts to Unitarianism. Let Unitarianism try its luck, however; this is a free country—up to a point, and Unitarianism should have all the success it merits. It is an excellent *stepping-stone* from orthodoxy to Freethought; though, alas, a good many people *sit* upon it and say "Thus far we'll go and no farther."

Ben Tillett is rather too fond of talking about religion. Let him stick to the labor question, of which he knows something. He wastes his time in preaching a "new religion"—one to cry down wealth and bless poverty. Jesus Christ tried it a long while ago and failed. Surely friend Tillett, although he seems to have a fair opinion of himself, is not conceited enough to imagine that he will be more successful than his "Savior." Drop religion altogether, Mr. Tillett; you are only nursing the eternal enemy of the masses. So long as religion has any power, it will always be used to bamboozle and plunder the people.

Christian regard for rotten potatoes has been shown by the multitude of religious epistles sent to the wife-murderer, Deeming. Verily there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

At Carelia, on the borders of Finland, Russia, the inhabitants have "died off like flies," uncared for, apparently, by their Father in heaven.

Floods on the lower Missouri and Mississippi have done vast damage, and at Anthony (Kansas) five coloured children have been drowned. Yet all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

A Madras paper gives a romantic account of the kidnapping of the girl, Ammani, aged 14, a pupil of the Wesleyan Mission Girls School by missionary poachers. It appears that the missionaries had beforehand provided her with a boy's suit, which she donned late at night and walked along the street rather hurriedly. The villagers were thus eluded, and Ammani reached the Mission Bungalow whence she was sent off to Madras. The mother of the girl, an old illiterate widow, was persuaded into the belief that her daughter was being educated to enhance her wifely usefulness, while all the while her faith was being tampered with and undermined. These men of God, anxious to save the soul, act regardless of aged mothers.

⊠ The *Mahratta*, in commenting upon this case, observes "every possible method has been tried by these missionaries to attract converts—schools and missions and workshops, and

Zenana mistresses. All these baits have, however, failed; nay, even promises of good pay and fair wives do not now charm Mahars and Chamars (low caste natives), who a few years ago used to swell the ranks of converts. Now they have taken to libelling Hindu gods; and the incident of Ammani shows that siren songs of Zenana women are also brought into active requisition to gull a child."

On Whit-Sunday the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark is going to solemnly open the new Church of the Precious Blood. The very name of the sacred edifice takes one back to the days of Pagan savagery.

The Ritualistic *Church Times* is one with the Protestant organs in denying Dr. Vaughan's right to the title of "Archbishop of Westminster." It says, to call him so is an insult to the English Church and an attack upon it. The Pope has as much right to make Mr. Smith Duke of Westminster as to give an archbishop that title. The Catholics, however, don't mind the *Church Times'* splutterings. They know the people are getting used to the Catholic titles, thanks to the Irish writers on the press.

The Rev. W. Rowthorn, rector of Oughtbridge, has had to apologise and pay costs for libelling the schoolmaster of the village.

In Baxter County a large bear, in the presence of their distracted mother, killed two children of the name of Carter and partially devoured one of them. It is not stated if the children had been calling any prophet "baldhead."

In Tomachie, Mexico, a man who claims to be the Messiah returned to earth has appeared. He was heralded as the Savior of the community, and worshipped as an incarnation of Deity. Like Mohammed, he propagated his doctrines amongst those outside the village at the point of the sword. Government had to be appealed to for help. The Messiah organised a large force for defence, and the fanaticism has grown to the proportions of a revolt.

The London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews has an expenditure of £39,735 11s. 4d. For this they have in London baptised twenty-four persons. Sir Moses Montefiore is dead, or he would possibly make up the society's deficiency of £8,000 odd. This wealthy and benevolent Jew used to subscribe on the ground that the Christian society took the worst scoundrels out of the ranks of Judaism.

An anti-Jewish riot at Lodz, in Petrokoff, Polish Russia, resulted in many being killed and wounded. Religious and social prejudices combine to make the lot of the chosen race far from a happy one.

The vicar of Coventry means to have his pound of flesh. The police have seized the goods of some tradesmen for not paying the vicar's rate. There is likely to be a difficulty in effecting a sale by auction. The proceedings are helping to bring the church into disrepute.

The Irish Nationalists who threw over Parnell now find the priestly yoke, which he freed them from, galling their necks again. At Monday's meeting of the *Freeman's Journal* Company, Mr. Scallan said he held a proxy for Archbishop Walsh representing 8,620 votes. Mr. Dillon said that if that sort of thing went on it would end the national movement. Then followed a pretty squabble with Tim Healy, who seems to be the priests' advocate. Altogether it was an instructive though a sad spectacle.

Prayer isn't as good as insurance, at least nowadays. The Archdeacon of St. Albans urges on all the district Church officers the necessity for properly insuring the churches under their care. Jehovah must be protected against himself.

"Language," said Dr. Parker last Sunday, "has been man's greatest curse—his greatest curse that ever he was able to speak." We are glad Parker thinks so, and hope he will leave off. Many people have felt that way in listening to him.

Sunday-school Teacher: "Who was the first man?" Scholar: "Adam." Teacher: "Quite right. Where did he live?" Scholar (who has his own notions of Paradise, though he has not read Darwin): "In the Z'logical Gardens."



MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 22, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: at 7.30, "After Death—What?"  
 Thursday, May 26, Hall of Science: at 8, "A Night with Byron."

May 29, Hall of Science.  
 June 5, N. S. S. Conference; 12, Hall of Science; 19, Birmingham; 26, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS. — May 22, Birmingham; 17 and 31, debate with Rev. Dr. J. McCann at Birmingham; 29, Liverpool. June 5, N. S. S. Conference; 14, debate with Dr. McCann; 19, Bristol; 26, Birmingham. July 3, Hall of Science; 4 and 5, public debate with the Rev. P. F. Duffy; 10, Hall of Science; 17, Birmingham; 24, South Shields; 31, Newcastle. August 7 and 14, Birmingham; 21, Manchester; 28, Sheffield. September 4, Birmingham; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

S. P.—Mr. Wheeler wrote on "Hospitals not of Christian Origin," in the *Freethinker*, Sept. 4 and 11, 1887. A paper also appeared in the *Westminster Review*, Oct. 1877. An extract from the *Hospital* on the subject appeared in the *Freethinker* May 4, 1890. Mr. Symes has a pamphlet on the question.

J. READ.—Always glad to receive material for a paragraph. See "Acid Drop."

W. R. BRADLAUGH sends "A Correction" of our last week's "Sugar Plum." It would fill a column, and is too long for insertion. He says he was not "goaded by his own supporters" into meeting Mr. Hunt; he readily and cheerfully accepted the challenge to debate. He also considers he gave his opponent "a good drubbing." Of course!

AGNOSTIC.—See "Acid Drops." There is no other *Freethinker*, nor can there be while copyright exists.

R. MAHON.—Copy, if accepted, cannot always appear immediately. We are usually supplied in advance.

W. H. TAYLOR.—(1) Sorry to hear that Mr. Cohen continues to be insulted and molested at the Columbia Market open-air station. We hope the local Freethinkers will support the platform. Christian roughs must not be allowed to disturb our meetings at their pleasure. (2) Read Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes and Bible Romances*, and as many as possible of the most important works mentioned in the footnotes.

H. M. RIDGWAY.—(1) You will see by the Conference agenda that your wish is anticipated. (2) Mr. Guest will perhaps make up a yearly "Christian Criminal Calendar" as you suggest. (3) Mr. Foote's northern tour has, to all appearance, stimulated Freethought in those parts.

J. G. GIBSON.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. BURRIDGE.—Quite right. See our leading article this week.

H. J. (Manchester).—We have mislaid your address. How is it we never hear from you now?

J. M.—Shall appear.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Write whenever the spirit moves you.

H. NICHOLSON.—The Christian advocate of course does not consider any pagan philosophy "reliable." There were philosophers, however, in India, China and Egypt long before 600 B.C. See Max Müller's *Chips from a German Workshop*, and Max Duncker's *History of Antiquity*.

CHARON.—About two hundred religious denominations and sects are given in *Whitaker's Almanack* as existing in England. Blunt's *Dictionary of Heretics and Sects* enumerates several thousand. Nearly twenty years ago one M. Shapira attempted to palm off some forged portions of an alleged old Bible MS. upon the trustees of the British Museum. Some years previously another named Simonides attempted similar frauds. This person said he was the writer of the Sinaitic MS., one of the most esteemed versions. He was, however, probably a liar as well as a forger.

F. PLASKITT.—(1) Printing all the good parts of the Bible separately is hardly a work for Freethinkers. (2) Freethinkers support hospitals as well as Christians, though they boast less of their "charity." (3) Atheism does not deny the existence of any intelligence in the universe superior to man's. It simply knows of none and says so. It is not called upon to assert a universal negative. (4) What would we put in the place of Christianity? Nothing in the shape of theology. We offer Secularism, or, as it is sometimes called, the Religion of Humanity—truth, freedom, justice, and brotherhood in this life, the only one we are sure of.

C. STEPHENS.—John Lee, the murderer, who could not be hung owing to the failure of the scaffold, is still in prison. Some time ago a letter from the Home Office stated so. The story of his liberation is due to the fancy of those who saw an act of providence in the failure of the hanging apparatus; and its prevalence, despite official contradiction, shows us how easy it was to float pious yarns in times of greater ignorance and less publicity.

R. EDWARDS.—Your shares in the Memorial Company cannot be transferred to the Hall of Science scheme. That is a legal impossibility. It is only the subscriptions to the Memorial Fund that the trustees' circular relates to. Those subscribers who wish their donations to go to the Hall of Science scheme as a substantial and feasible memorial to Charles Bradlaugh are at liberty to give directions to that effect.

J. M. SHERRARD.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

O. E. SMITH.—We are obliged.

E. G. PACKMAN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

P. DAINE.—Cuttings are always welcome.

E. WALTERS.—We do publish a list of Freethought Sunday meetings every week—generally on the fourteenth page. You must have overlooked it.

P. W. B.—Received. Will find room if possible.

H. J. HUDD.—The music is discontinued at the Hall of Science during the summer. It will be resumed in September. Summer audiences are not large enough to pay for the extra cost, but the "service" may be carried on without a break by and bye, when the Syndicate takes full possession of the premises. In this, as in other matters, we must creep before we run.

C. G. BIRD.—The joke is a good one, but it has already appeared in our columns.

S. G. GRANT.—Mr. Wheeler dealt with the correspondence in Mr. Foote's absence. We shall be glad to see the rest as it appears.

T. KENT.—We do not read the letter in your fashion, and have nothing to alter.

L. SPURGEON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." Well-written letters to the local press are most useful to the cause.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Flaming Sword—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—Clarion—Church Reformer—Pearson's Weekly—Young Men's Review—Sheldrake's Advertiser—De Dageraad—Independent Pulpit—Der Arme Teufel—Star—Open Court—Manchester Evening Mail—Tyldesley and Atherton Chronicle—Volkstimme—Liverpool Courier—Echo—Watts's Literary Guide—Daily Chronicle—Daily News—Modern Thought.

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

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.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stouecutter-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 NEWCASTLE CONFERENCE.

THE National Secular Society's 1892 Conference will be held at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Whit Sunday (June 5). The agenda of business will be found in another column of the *Freethinker*. Some of the matters down for discussion are of great importance. I invite the Branches that have not already done so to elect delegates. Individual members, unconnected with Branches, are also invited to attend as numerous as possible. Every member is entitled to speak and vote. Freethinkers, not members of the N.S.S., are free to attend, but they will sit apart from the members, and take no share in the proceedings.

This is the second Conference since Charles Bradlaugh's death, and the third since his resignation. Many changes have taken place since February 16, 1890. This was inevitable, and the transition period is not yet ended. But the Society does not retrograde; on the contrary, it advances, as will appear by the Executive's report. There have been times of greater excitement, under the stimulus of persecution, but I do not remember a time of stronger vitality. I look forward with pleasure to the approaching Conference, and with fresh hope to the new year's work.

G. W. FOOTE, *President*.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote is back in London again, dealing with large arrears of work and correspondence. His lecture at the Hall of Science on Thursday (May 19) is entitled "A Night with Shelley." His Sunday evening lecture (May 22) is "After Death—What?" Next Thursday he gives "A Night with Byron." Previous to the Sunday evening lecture he will give a poetical reading. The Sunday morning lectures are discontinued during the summer.

Mr. Foote's meetings at Aberdeen were very successful, especially in view of the remarkably fine weather. Fair reports also appeared in the local papers. Tuesday's lecture, "Why I Cannot be a Christian," was apparently keenly relished by an excellent audience. Councillor Maitland, who presided, read a letter from the Rev. A. Stewart, declining the invitation to attend. The reverend gentleman's reason for absenting himself was that the lecturer's opponents would not have equal time with himself. He overlooks the fact that discussion is incidental to the lecture, and that in the discussion itself the lecturer and his opponents do have equal time. Mr. Stewart appears to think that equality consists in the lecturer speaking for an hour and all his opponents speaking for an hour each afterwards! However, there was a clerical opponent at Tuesday's meeting in the person of the Rev. A. Brown, a very accommodating Evangelical, who was willing to hail Mr. Foote as a Christian though he rejected all the doctrines of Christianity.

Wednesday's lecture, "Is there a God?" drew a still larger audience, which was most attentive and enthusiastic. Several critics took advantage of the opportunity for discussion, and the meeting did not break up till half-past ten. Afterwards a more private meeting was held of the Secular Society's members for consultation with Mr. Foote. The Aberdeen Secularists will now constitute themselves a Branch of the N.S.S., which may possibly be represented at the Newcastle Conference. They are also in favor of the Hall of Science scheme, and promise it their support. Mr. Foote left them with a feeling that they mean business; on the other hand, they seemed satisfied with his leadership, and not very apprehensive of his "arbitrariness."

The new Aberdeen Branch will contain a good number of Socialists. We hope the harmony of the Branch will not be disturbed on that account. Socialism and other reformatory views may surely dwell together in peace inside a Freethought society, whose great object is to destroy the superstitions that enchain and enfeeble men's minds and make them impervious to all ideas of radical reform. Secularism is neither Socialistic nor anti-Socialistic. Every member of the N.S.S. can belong to what wing he pleases of the party of political and social progress. Inside the Society we must respect each other's various views on other questions, and sink all such differences while there, in order to push on firmly and unanimously with our special work of spiritual emancipation.

The Aberdeen Branch probably has the youngest secretary in the kingdom. His name is Harkis, and he is only seventeen. He looks extremely intelligent, speaks concisely, and is modest although "all there."

The *Freethinker* has an increasing circulation in Aberdeen. Miss Calder, one of the Branch members (a bonnie Scotch lassie), sells the paper and displays the contents-sheet outside her shop. She began with one copy, and now disposes of three dozen. The paper is also sold elsewhere in the city.

On the Friday night Mr. Foote lectured in the Victoria Hall, Dundee. Considering the very brief announcement, there was a good audience, the overwhelming majority being evidently in sympathy with the most thorough-going parts of the lecture on "Why I am an Atheist." A few questions were put, but no one ventured to discuss. After the public meeting a number of friends stopped to talk with Mr. Foote about a Dundee Branch of the N.S.S. Sixteen names were taken of intending members, a *pro tem.* secretary (Mr. Carr) was appointed, and it was resolved to hold a meeting as soon as possible to formally institute the new Branch. Due notice of it will be given in the *Freethinker*.

There are a great many Freethinkers in the third city of

Scotland, who won't be converted by John McNeill's preaching. We have good hopes of the new Dundee Branch.

Mr. Foote wound up his northern tour with three lectures at Edinburgh on Sunday. Each was heartily relished, and Mr. Foote was pressed to "come again soon." Owing to the limited size of the Labor Hall, a uniform charge of sixpence had to be made for admission, and the announcement was confined to an advertisement in the papers. Next time a larger hall must be taken, if possible, and the lectures billed in the usual way. Mr. Foote wants to get at the threepenny as well as the sixpenny people, and to address Christians as well as the more heterodox public.

Miss Russell, the late secretary of the Edinburgh Society, left for America a few days before Mr. Foote's arrival in the city. The members had a social function in her honor, and presented her with a gold locket as a mark of their high regard. Mr. Dewar and other sterling Freethinkers are left to carry on the work, and we rejoice to learn that the Society is more flourishing than it has been for many years. It has excellent Sunday evening meetings and an increasing list of members. Some of the Edinburgh friends intend going to the Newcastle Conference.

Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at Baskerville Hall last Sunday evening, when he lectured on "Bible and Science." Every copy of the *Freethinker* on hand was sold. The monthly socials, under the management of Mrs. Watts, will, by request, be continued for the present. The next will take place on Wednesday evening, May 25. This Sunday evening (May 22) Mr. Watts lectures on "The Devil: his Rise and Fall." Next week we shall give an account in these columns of the first night's debate between the Rev. Dr. McCann and Mr. Watts, which took place at Baskerville Hall on Tuesday last.

Mr. Watts has succeeded in causing considerable excitement among the orthodox party in Birmingham. During the past week letters have appeared in one of the leading local papers, in which the Christian writers lament the work Mr. Watts is doing at Baskerville Hall. The *Birmingham Gazette* of Monday last contains a long letter by Mr. Watts in reply to his opponents. This is doing useful propagandist work.

Mr. Ben Jones, Labor candidate for Woolwich, in a letter to Mr. J. G. Gibson, promises if he ever has the opportunity to vote for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. He believes that "they only do harm instead of good."

Mrs. Samson will lecture this Sunday evening at the Battersea Secular Hall, on "Prayer." Previous to the lecture Mr. Shambrook will give a short address at the Park Gates, and then invite the audience to come and hear the lady's lecture, which will be free. This will be the last indoor lecture for the season. Future lectures will be delivered at Battersea Park Gates, commencing at seven o'clock. After these lectures there will be social gatherings, concerts, and dramatic entertainments in the Secular Hall every Sunday.

The Failsworth Secular Society held its half-yearly "services" on Sunday. The choir of 50 voices and string and wind orchestra gave great satisfaction. Mr. Sam Standing delivered two lectures to large audiences.

Mr. Sam Standing meets a number of delegates to-day (May 22) at Bradford, where he lectures morning and evening, to form the new Lancashire and Yorkshire Secular Federation. Mr. Standing has recently been visiting Doncaster, Penistone, Barnsley, and other places to see if he could find any Freethinkers willing to help in starting N.S.S. Branches.

Mr. Hemingway, president of the Manchester Branch, and Mr. J. R. Willock, ex-secretary, have taken and stocked a shop at 106 Oxford-road for the sale of Freethought literature, which they believe could be much better distributed in Cottonopolis. They will also sell other periodicals, pamphlets, and books, and we hope their brave enterprise will be heartily supported. Messrs. Hemingway and Willock undertake to deliver papers and other orders in any part of Manchester. Mr. Sam Standing is to have an office on their premises. We understand that they have bought out Mr. Watts and that they will "run" the bookstall at the Secular Hall.

The Wolverhampton Branch wishes to take a permanent meeting-place for twelve months. A general meeting for this object will be held on Monday (May 23) at 8, at the Tramway Restaurant, Queen-street. All members and friends are strongly urged to attend.

The Liverpool Branch is bent on studying Christian evidences thoroughly. On Monday evening the members are going in a body to the Torture Exhibition in Lime-street. They would be glad of a capable C.E.S. lecturer to act as *cicerone*.

A superb picture of the "Funeral of Shelley," by Louis Fournier, is now on view at the South London Fine Art Gallery, Peckham-road, Camberwell. This gallery is open on Sundays.

Co-operative Congress sermons are not to the taste of all. Mr. J. Whitehead, of Halifax, writes to the *Co-operative News* protesting against them. He regards them as "an infliction" Their object is to represent Co-operation as a stepping-stone to something higher, the "mysterious something being the parson's creed, or in other words, the support of himself." Mr. Whitehead is "fully persuaded" that the Co-operative movement "contains men of sufficient intelligence, virtue and energy to carry on our cause to a triumphant climax without the aid of clerical makeweights, Bibles, creeds, or gods."

Col. Ingersoll has crowded audiences whenever he finds time to lecture. The Academy of Music, Brooklyn, was thronged on Sunday evening, April 3, many prominent citizens being in the meeting. Of course the orthodox folk are intensely annoyed. One of them, the Rev. T. F. Ward, a Romish priest, denounces the directors for "letting the Academy for such an infamous purpose." Poor Father Ward! We really pity him.

The *Illustrated World's Fair*, an art journal published at Chicago, reproduces the picture of Col. Ingersoll and his little granddaughter, Eva Ingersoll Brown. An editorial leaderette represents the baby as asking the Colonel, "Who on earth— who are you?—what business can you have that you should encroach on my existence, on me, who have the rich treasury of all the years?" "So says the baby," it adds, "to the most instant orator, the most terrible controversialist, the most resolute and considerate foe, the most seductive of human entertainers."

The third annual meeting of the Texas State Liberal (Freethought) Association was attended by Mr. S. P. Putnam, an able Freethought lecturer. Judge J. P. Richardson was re-elected president, with Dr. R. W. Park as treasurer, and Mr. J. D. Shaw, editor of the *Independent Pulpit*, as secretary.

*Modern Thought*, the organ of the Secularists of Bombay, which has passed from being a monthly into a fortnightly journal, hopes soon to be issued weekly. It is well conducted and deserves to succeed. We hope Mr. Balfour will soon be able to issue it every week, and at a price which will put it within the reach of the many.

Money appropriations having been made to sectarian schools in Illinois in opposition to the Constitution of the State, Judge Waite, the president of the American Secular Union, has taken the matter up and had a bill in chancery filed for an injunction to prevent funds being paid to such schools.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1892.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last meeting.
2. President's Report.
3. Treasurer's Report.
4. Election of President.  
Notice of motion by Finsbury Park Branch—  
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
5. Election of Vice-Presidents.  
(a) Notice of motion by Executive—  
"That the previous list of Vice-Presidents be re-elected."

- (b) Notice of motion by Executive—  
"That Messrs. Charles Watts,\* Touzeau Parris, S. Hartmann and V. Roger be elected Vice-Presidents."  
\* Also nominated by Birmingham Branch.
6. Election of Treasurer.
7. Election of Auditors.
8. Notice of motion by Executive—  
"That the Conference elect an Honorary Secretary as before, and leave the Executive to employ and pay an assistant to do the clerical work of the office in London; and that this arrangement take effect three months after the present (1892) Conference."  
Notice of motion by Finsbury Park Branch—  
"That Mr. Robert Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary."  
Notice of motion by Executive—  
"That Mr. Stanley Jones act as paid Secretary until the new arrangement as to the secretaryship comes into effect."
9. Notice of motion by West Ham Branch—  
"That Vice-Presidents shall not in future vote at Executive meetings unless representing a Branch."
10. Notice of motion by Newcastle Branch—  
"That at future Conferences no one but duly elected delegates of Branches, members of the Executive, and Vice-Presidents be allowed to vote; but that any individual member be allowed to speak on any motion before the Conference by asking leave of the President; and that any Branch of less than 20 members be allowed one delegate, and an additional delegate be allowed for every 20 members up to 60, and no Branch to be allowed more than three delegates in all."
11. Notice of motion by West Ham Branch—  
"That it is desirable for all Freethinkers to wear a distinctive badge (say, a pansy)."
12. Statement by Mr. Foote *re* Bradlaugh Memorial Fund.  
Notice of motion by Battersea Branch—  
"That all undecided money *re* the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund (*i.e.*, money which subscribers have not stated which scheme it shall be devoted to) shall be divided between the two schemes in proportion to voting on decided money."
13. Statement by Mr. Foote *re* London Hall of Science Scheme.  
Any motion thereupon.
14. Notice of motion by Battersea Branch—  
"That in order to make the N.S.S. Executive thoroughly representative, each provincial Branch may elect a London member of the N.S.S. to represent it at all Executive meetings."
15. Notice of motion by Ox Hill Branch—  
"That a Temperance Society be formed in connection with the N.S.S., under the title of the National Secular Temperance Society."
16. Notice of motion by Ox Hill Branch—  
"That it be an instruction to the Executive to consider the formation of a Friendly Society for Secularists."
17. Notice of motion by Mr. Jas. Glen, Renfrew—  
"That some means should be found to publish periodically the names and addresses of Branch secretaries."
18. Notice of motion by West London Branch—  
"That the subscription payable to the Executive by the Branches be reduced to fourpence per member per annum."
19. Notice of motion by Mr. Foote—  
"That the N.S.S. shall, if possible, be represented at the World's Freethought Convention, which is projected to take place next year at Chicago; all arrangements thereanent to be left to the Executive."

The Conference will be held at the Lovaine Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne.  
The morning sitting will commence at 10.30, and will close at 12.30. The afternoon sitting will open at 2.30, and close at 4.30. The public meeting in the evening will be held in the above Hall, commencing at 7.  
The Conference will be open to all Freethinkers, but only members of the National Secular Society can speak and vote.

## ORIGIN OF MAN.

(From the "Twentieth Century.")

ALL forms of vegetable and animal life have evolved from the cell. These cells are composed of at least four elementary bodies: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, united into what is called protein. Cells multiply by division—that is, one cell becomes two, two cells become four, four become eight, and so on. The single cell becomes a republic of cells. From this tiny clot of mucus has developed every form of life, from the organless, naked cell, floating in the primeval, Laurentian ocean, to the mind of the philosopher, who can weigh and measure the distant stars.

Aggregate cells first take a leaf-like form, which afterward develop a tendency to curl into a worm shape—a simple gut—as yet without organs of any kind. These primitive gut animals are the foundation trunk from which all species of animals have diverged, like the branches of a tree. One branch of this suppositious trunk of gut animals has developed into animal plants, a second into sea stars, a third into insects, a fourth into mollusks, and another into vertebrates, which in their development have evolved man. The various branches are our collateral cousins, but the gut-like worm is our direct ancestor.

The aimless action of natural selection, in the pitiless and embittered struggle of all against all, has, in the course of millions of ages developed (on the direct line to man) the primeval cell to the gut-like worm, which has developed to the headless shell-fish; which in turn has developed to the skull-less vertebrate fishes; which have developed to the amphibitans; out of which have developed mammals.

The evolution of the different organs has been on the line of progress to more complicated structures. The present intricate digestive organs of man have developed from a simple gut; our vascular system, with its pumping engine the heart, has developed from a mere tube. The primitive eye, a simple spot of pigment, at first does not reflect any image of external objects; later is added a sensitive nerve, then gradually the first beginning of the lens. Reproduction, at first a simple division of the cells, gradually developed into hermaphroditism (double-sexed individuals) which gradually evolved into our present separated sexual system.

The most momentous period in the evolution of man was when his headless, vertebrate ancestors developed from a small dilation on the end of the spinal column, the skull. This skull, with its inclosed primitive brain (which was primarily a mere nerve), has developed into a power which masters and controls the rival organs of defence, the horn, tooth, and claw—the human mind or soul. The soul or mind of man, as that of animals, is a purely mechanical activity. Changes of brain tissue, in man and animal alike, control conduct. The same injury to the brain of an animal will produce like effects on the brain of man. Diseases of the mind are inherited, as are bodily diseases.

The proofs of these statements are overwhelming. It is an evolutionary law that the development of the embryo is a recapitulation of the ancestral history of species. Take the human foetus, for instance: from actual observation it has been seen to pass through the principal forms of its primeval ancestors. At first it is a mere cell which multiplies by division. This protean being follows along the route of its ancestors until, in its vertebrate stage, the human foetus cannot be distinguished from the foetus of its cousins, the reptile, bird, or dog. If it were to cease to exist at this stage, it would die with the gills of a fish—the indelible stamp of its fish ancestors. At a later period, the human foetus is identical with that of a dog. The tail of man, which is similar at this time to that of a dog, later on becomes aborted and

rudimentary, but in fully developed man's skeleton, the five vertebræ of his tail are there to remind him of his tailed ancestry.

The actual preservation of the immediate ancestors of the horse is a good illustration of development. When one is first shown the skeleton of a small fox-like animal with five toes in front and four behind, it is difficult to believe that it has developed into our modern racehorse with its one toe. Prof. Marsh has found and preserved the skeletons which are the links which bind them as one species. The different skeletons are like the steps of a stair which surely lead from one to the other. Each link becomes more horse-like; the neck becomes elongated, the skull is altered, the teeth changed, the number of toes are reduced by gradual concentration of all power of the limb on one toe, the unused toes become useless and dwindle away. The foetus of the horse preserves in a rudimentary form the five-toed foot of his distant progenitor.

When we see that the limbs of different vertebrates, in spite of their different external forms, possess essentially the same internal structure, we can only explain it by supposition of a common transmission by inheritance from a primary ancestral form. The difference proceeds from adaptation to different conditions of existence, as for instance, serpents which have a narrow body have only one lung fully developed, the other being in a rudimentary stage. Many animals that have teeth in the foetal stage lose them when born. Pythons, boas, and whales, besides many true fishes, have purposeless bones, the rudimentary remains of useless legs.

It is not asserted that any existing ape is the direct ancestor of man. Manlike apes have developed into ape-like men, and in the deadly struggle for existence many types have been exterminated. But considering the extraordinary resemblance between the present lowest woolly-haired men and the gorilla, it requires but a slight stretch of the imagination to depict the connecting link—primeval speechless man—with his long slanting teeth, woolly hair extending over his dark-skinned body, long arms, knock-kneed legs with undeveloped calves, and half erect walk. Is there not a wider gap between the cultivated philosopher and this naked, speechless, fireless cannibal, eating his parents and children, than between this same savage and the gorilla? There is undoubtedly less difference between the savage and the gorilla than between the gorilla and other apes. There are tribes in Southern Asia and Central Africa without fire, which roam in herds like apes. No Australian language counts beyond four. Many savage tribes can count no further than ten or twenty. Some dogs can count sixty.

The desire of communication was the force impelling man to the production of articulate language. Probably the first attempt at communication was by gesture signs, and even in our own day this method is carried to a high degree of perfection. I have myself attended a council of four different savage tribes where gesture signs were alone used in discussion; and if development had proceeded altogether on this line, we might now allude to the "handiness" of the orator instead of his "tonguiness." There are natural tones indicative of feeling, as there are natural gesture signs. If we hear a cry of joy or a shriek of pain, a laugh or a groan, we need no word to tell us what it means. As the first start in the accumulation of capital is the difficulty, so in language must have been the first spoken word.

From this naked, human horde with females and young as common property of the horde, has developed in comparatively recent times the family. The hordes would be small, and would probably be recruited by births and capture of women and children. The children would know no father, but would know their mother and cluster around her. All

ancient peoples, and many modern, trace descent for this reason from the mother. This gathering of the children around their mother, and the consequent union of the brothers and sisters, would originate the various different systems of human marriage.

The merciless competition for existence has forced matter to assume new forms. By the law of the survival of the fittest, man has emerged from the bitter sanguinary battle with his fellow animals, the monarch of animal life. The inferior races of men are being exterminated by the superior. In the struggle for supremacy and food, by famine, storm, and pestilence, nature destroys the weak and perpetuates the strong. The individual may be pitilessly crushed, but the race will progress. Our common origin with the lower animals is certain. Why should our destiny be different?

HENRY MACDONALD.

BOOK CHAT.

From "Ye Bibliophilés Paradise," 54 Charing Cross-road, Mr. Bertram Dobell issues (at one shilling) the second part of his *Catalogue of a Collection of Privately Printed Books*. This is no mere bookseller's catalogue. Mr. Dobell is a bookseller, but his publications, nay this catalogue, would suffice to show he is much more. He knows not only the worth of books, but of their contents. Every book in the catalogue has annotations, revealing the critic, poet and philosopher, as well as the biographer. Many entries are of interest to Freethinkers, particularly those under Hibbert, Julian, Linton, and Mitchell. Of the first-named Mr. Dobell says: "Julian Hibbert was a man of fine character and of liberal opinions. He was a warm supporter of Richard Carlile, James Watson, Henry Hetherington, and of all other champions of the freedom of the press, and of free expression of opinion on religious and political subjects. . . . It is to be regretted that he left no abiding memorial of his very considerable abilities. He commenced a work entitled *A Dictionary of Anti-Superstitionists*, in which, however, he proceeded no further than the middle of the letter A, owing to want of encouragement."

A new edition of Walt Whitman's *Poems*, edited by William Michael Rossetti, is announced by Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds* is reprinted by the "Truth-seeker" Publishing Company, of New York. It has already had a wide circulation in all parts of the English speaking world.

Dr. Carus, the editor of the *Monist*, has published an account of the principal contents of his quarterly review under the title of *Moïsm: its Scope and Import*.

Alas! the poor old Devil is likely to follow his residence, which is being refrigerated into a solid block of ice. Here is a German, Prof. George Langin, with a book on *Biblical Teachings as to the Devil*. Prof. Langin thinks the old book gives him little or no countenance, and that he came from Persia. But when Satan is explained away as merely metaphor and allegory, is there not danger that the same methods may be applied to the evaporation of his divine antagonist?

Mr. Reeves, of Fleet-street, has issued a pamphlet by J. Godard, concisely putting the case for Disestablishment and Disendowment.

Mr. W. M. Thompson, a barrister, has drawn up a handy penny book of *Law for the People*, concisely stating the laws affecting labor, the home, and criminal law. On the Sabbath law it says: "Under the auspices of the immoral George II., an Act was passed making innocent recreations criminal if indulged in on the first day of the week." The publication is a useful one and should have a large sale.

Mr. Cattell's very interesting article on John Baskerville, for which Freethinkers are much indebted to him, mentions several beautiful editions of classical works that came from the Baskerville press. One important work, however, is omitted—in some respects the principal one. We have in our own library a fine copy of Baskerville's splendid edition of *Shaftesbury's Characteristics*. It is in three large octavo

volumes, dated 1773. The printing is bold and handsome; a pleasure to read, apart from the wit and philosophy of the writing. Opposite the title-page is a noble engraving of the full-length portrait of the author by Closterman. The book cost us more than we could well afford, but we would not part with it except on compulsion. It is a memorable edition of a great Freethought writer by a Freethinker who was one of the greatest of printers.

A copy of the original edition of Shelley's *Refutation of Deism* was sold at Sotheby's on May 13 for £33. Our reprint of the pamphlet costs fourpence.

"Nunquam," editor of the *Clarion*, is issuing a series of "Clarion" Pamphlets. The first is on *Socialism: a Reply to the Pope's Encyclical*. It is by the editor himself, and is written with all his force and verve. We don't suppose the Pope will answer "Nunquam." He would find it difficult to defend his platitudes against such a swordsman.

Dr. T. R. Allinson has just published a fourth volume of his interesting and valuable *Medical Essays*. Apart altogether from his vegetarianism, about which medical men differ, Dr. Allinson gives a mass of practical information and guidance to all who wish to obtain or preserve that greatest of blessings—health, with which the poor man laughs, and without which the rich man groans. We are glad to know that these cheap and useful volumes have a very wide circulation.

A volume on *The Decline of the Pulpit and its Causes*, by a "Scottish Churchman," will be published shortly by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall, and Co. The object of the work is to show the predisposing causes which have led to the rapid decline of pulpit power and the lapsing and growing indifference to church-going, principally in Scotland.

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.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Mrs. Louisa Samson, "Prayer" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class. Thursday at 8, committee.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7, music; 7.30, T. O. Bonser, M.A., "Large or Small Families"; 9.30, free concert and dance. Monday at 8.45, members' special meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 5.30, debating class, Mr. Beal and R. G. L., "The Execution of Charles I."; 7.30, H. Snell, "Freethought in English Novels."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "After Death, What?" Thursday at 8, G. W. Foote, "A Night with Byron."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove Thursday at 8, C. J. Hunt, "The Resurrection."

Notting Hill Gate—Duke of York, Kensington-place, Silver-street: 9, general meeting of members re Conference.

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

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, Mr. Smith will lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, J. Rowney, "The Sermon on the Mount"; 7, Mr. Shumbrook, a short address.

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

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, H. Snell, "Good Old Bible." Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, W. Heaford, "A Gospel of Gloom"; special meeting after the lecture.

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, R. Rosetti, "Where and When was Jesus Born?"

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen will lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, E. Calvert, "History of the New Testament Canon"; 3.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt."

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. Heaford, "The Character of Christ."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Bible Ladies."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, Mr. St. John, "Atheism."

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, H. Courtney, "The Teachings of Christianity Unsuitable to Man."

Lambeth—New Cut (near Victoria Hall): 11.30, C. Cohen, "The Value of Christianity."

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, J. Marshall, "God, Nature Personified—III."

Midland Arches (near Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, T. Thurlow, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, a lecture.

Old Pinlicko Pier: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The Creation."

Plaistow Green: 11.30, J. Facan, "How I Became a Secularist."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, W. Heaford, "Pious Bogies and Bogie Men."

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, a lecture.  
 Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15. S. H. Alison, "Soul, Spirit, and Ghost"; 3.15. C. Cohen will lecture.  
 Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, O. Cohen, "Miracles."  
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Bible."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings, Crooked-lane: 12 noon, W. Moir, "Extracts from M. de Mirabaud."  
 Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, Charles Watts, "The Devil: his Rise and Fall."  
 Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 6.30, business; 7, "Mr. Harvey, "The Effects of the Industrial Revolution upon Society."  
 Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: A. B. Moss, 11, "Follies and Fictions of the Bible"; 7, "What do Christians Believe?"  
 Derby—44 Howard-street: 7, George Harper, "Man and the Lower Animals."  
 Hull—St. George's Hall, 6 Story-street, Albion-street: 6.30, musical entertainm nt.  
 Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11.30, committee meeting; 3, philosophy class, Mr. Small, B.Sc., "Bain's Mind and Body"; 7, Mr. Booth, "Does A heism Conduce to Immorality?" Monday at 8, visit to Torture Exhibition, Lime-street, admission 6d.  
 Manchester N S. S., Secular Hall, Rushome-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Miss Ada Campbell, 3, "Labor and Poverty: why do Men Starve?"; 7, "Truth and Christianity" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Monday at 8, Sam Standing, "The Holy Gospels Critically Examined" (free).  
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, H. Keppel, "Capital."  
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, J Hooper "Genesis v. Geology."  
 Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.  
 Sheffield members meet at Victoria-station 1.15, to pay a visit to a gentleman in Nottinghamshire.  
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, Secretary's annual report.  
 Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, W. R. Stan-sell, "Origin of Christianity."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bradford—Main-street, Bingley: 10.30, Sam Standing, "Poison from God's Bible." Upper Godarn-street (near market), Brad-ford: 6.30, Sam Standing, "Christianity's Failure."  
 Huddersfield—Market Cross; Saturday, May 21, Sam Standing, "Christ and the Labor Question."  
 Hull—Corporation Field: 3, Mr. Badley, "Christian Peace."  
 Nottingham—Sneinton Market: 11, J. Hooper, "Our Aristoc-racy; their Origin and Deeds."  
 Pendlebury: Thursday at 7.30, Sam Standing, "The Bitter Fruit of Christianity."

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O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—May to Sept., all mornings booked.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—May 22, m., Mile End. June 5, m., Camberwell; 12, Clerken-well; 19, m., Hornsey. July 3, m., Camberwell; 10, Clerkenwell; 17, m., Westminster.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—May 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 STANDING, 106 Oxford-road, All Saints' Manchester.—May 22, Bradford; 29, Leeds. June 5, Newcastle; 12, Rochdale; 19, Manchester; 26, Chester. Mondays, Manchester; Thursdays, Pendlebury.

O. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—May 22, m., Bethnal Green; a., Tottenham; 29, m., Columbia-road. June 5, m., Vic-toria Park; 12, m., Columbia-road; 19, m., Lambeth; 26, m., Victoria Park. July 10, m., Columbia-road; 17, m., Lambeth; 24, m., Bethnal Gr. en; 31, a., Finsbury Park.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Chant-street, Stratford, E.—May 22, m., Vic-toria Park. June and July, all mornings booked except July 17.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon-street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—May 22, Nottingham; 29, Manchester. June 5, N.S.S. Conference

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—May 22, m., Old Pimlico Pier; 29, m., Wood Green. June 5, Conference; 12, m., Kingsland Green; 19, m. and e., Battersea. July 17, m., Kingsland Green. Aug. 7, e., Hammersmith; 28, m., Lambeth.

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