

# The Free Thinker

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## THE NEW ECLECTIC CHRISTIANITY.

THERE is a "New School" of Christianity which has many preachers and which ought to be taken into account. Whether true or not, it must be allowed to be—if not a mitigated form of superstition—a mitigated form of Christianity. Those who have complained of the injurious nature of orthodox tenets must admit that the new theory of Christianity is better than the old in its influence upon character and society. The new teaching is founded upon the principle which Secularists have all along maintained—that of eclecticism.

The new Christianity is less candid or less bold than Secularism; for Secularism takes ethical principles where it finds them, and disowns and rejects the errors with which they have been associated. New Christianity takes the better principles and says nothing about those that contradict it, which, if believed, would render nugatory what it selects.

By request of one who had read with much interest the story of *David Grieve* by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, I looked into that work—not reading it carefully, it being on the whole doleful, as there is enough of that in real life without seeking it in fiction. But reading the book cursorily, one could not but discern its superiority to *Robert Elsmere*. In the faculty of delineating character and evolving incidents *David Grieve* shows a new power in the authoress. In *Elsmere* the crucifix was to be the instrument of conversion, which could only influence those who had feelings without thought; for all who reflect what the crucifix means as the index of the character of Deity, who chose it as a means of atonement, the crucifix is a dreadful and repellant symbol.

*David Grieve* is nobler and subtler in its arguments than *Elsmere*, and the spirit of the book is a fine example of the new toleration. The authoress is neither unfair nor imputative, but retains a respectful neutrality to heretics, and it is only by implication that they are assailed. "The hero has read writings of 'Holyoake and Bradlaugh.'" It is not said that they did him any harm, nor is it said they did him any good. But since *Grieve* lacked sustaining ethical power, when the crisis in his character came, it is to be inferred that those writers did not supply to him that rectifying element needful to him. Neither did Christianity supply it to Deeming nor to Wood—lately hanged at Lewes for an atrocious murder, whose mind was saturated with "Holiness to the Lord." Mrs. Ward does not see that the noblest writings or preachings do not always influence the bad.

It is not clear that Mrs. Ward is a Fabian, but in the following passage she gives the theory of that new philosophy of deferred redress and Tory mastership. "David tried to explain to her the common Socialist ideal in simple terms—the hope of a millennium, when all the instruments of production shall be owned by the State, and when the surplus profit produced by labor, over and above the maintenance of the worker and the general cost of production, will go, not to the capitalist, the individual rich man, but to

the whole community of workers; when everybody will be made to work, and as little advantage as possible will be allowed to one worker above another."

Grieve, in many respects, is a grievous young man, but there seems nothing very dangerous in his conception of the millennium, which is thus given:—"David Grieve read with a sense of superior scorn and of wild sympathy for a world in which love and not law, and truth and not legal fiction, were masters of human relation."

One of the characters give Grieve a little private information. The speaker says: "At least so long as you are not a Christian you wont know what we mean by it—what the Bible means by it. It's one little word, Davy—*sin*." If David was only half as intelligent as he is represented, he must have known this well. Christianity and the Bible always means that errors of opinion or of conduct is a crime against God; whereas in ethics all crime is against man; and not a crime then unless the act or error is conscious and intentional. There is no "sin" either against God or man when error of idea or error of action arises in ignorance or unwitting misconception. Christianity does great moral harm to men, by representing their errors as "sins" against heaven instead of being sins against humanity. Of the views of heaven we have no human measure. Of the interest of humanity we have.

Mrs. Ward, on her part, speaks of vegetarianism "without understanding it." She speaks of it in repelling terms, which she has a right to do if she does not like it; but she makes remarks which would be disowned by those who do understand it; and her words would deter an inquirer from investigating it. In theology a writer speaks with the pomp of infallibility, but you cannot do this in affairs purely human, which shows that theology is in itself a mental evil. Mrs. Ward's genius is best shown in her secular sympathies, which happily are not over-shadowed by her creed, which exercises a perverting influence whenever she attempts to explain the causes of action. The literature of social Secularism has no finer passage than the following, in which she depicts *Grieve* as an employer who reasons from consideration pertaining to this world. *Grieve* says: "My plan is copied from the 'Maison Leclaire,' but I have worked a good deal of my own into it. Our English experience of this form of industrial partnership has been on the whole unfavorable, but, after a period of lassitude, experiments are beginning to revive. I retain adequate superintendence wages, a bonus on these calculated in the same way as that of the men, a fixed percentage on the capital already employed in the business and a nominal thirty per cent. of the profits. Hereupon *David Grieve* is asked, "Do you think working men *better* than other people that you are so much more interested in them?" To which he makes the following admirable reply. "Oh dear no, they have their own crying faults and follies. But so many of them lack the first elementary conditions which make the better life possible—that is what

trys at one's heart and fills one's mind. How can we—we who have gained for ourselves health and comfort and knowledge—how can we stand by patiently and see our brother diseased and miserable and ignorant? How can we bear our luxuries so long as a child is growing up in savagery whom we might have taught, or a man is poisoning himself with drink whom we might have saved; or a woman is dropping from sorrow and overwork, whom we might have cherished and helped? We are not our own, we are parts of the whole. Generations of workers have toiled for us in the past. And are we, in return, to carry our wretched bone off to our own miserable corner—sharing and giving nothing? Woe to us if we do! Upon such comes indeed the 'second death.'

"We are not our own; we are parts of the whole," is a doctrine on which Robert Owen built his whole system. George Sand she speaks of as an enemy; yet in power, passion, and love of mankind; in strength and wish to serve it, there is no comparison between George Sand and Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Mrs. Ward writes as though she regarded art as immorality, which shows how Christianity can pervert a fine intelligence. She takes the reader to Paris, and cites the terror of marriage which comes into a young woman's mind at the sight of a mother dragging her children about, whom she cannot feed, nor clothe, nor educate. Such a sight may well beget repugnance to that lot. Mrs. Ward treats devotion to art as a source of sin. Why is devotion to art—for which you incur privation for excellence—less noble than devotion to Christianity? Art fills life with grace and brightness—orthodoxy with distortion and terror. Both may be vicious if divorced from morality.

The defect of the new Christian eclecticism is, you cannot trust it. It is always falling back on pure Christian contempt. Paine is described as "Tom Paine." If anyone spoke of the "Gospel according to Jack" or "Jim," Christian reverence would pucker up with disgust; but it seems not to understand that other persons may have reverence for Thomas Paine, who did more for human freedom than all the twelve apostles put together.

We read in Mrs. Ward's book that "On Grieve's little book-table lay papers of Huxley's, of Clifford's. The brooding intellect was for ever raising the same problem, the same spectre-world of universal doubt, in which God, conscience, faith, were words without meaning." In so short a paragraph three things are untrue. No sceptic ever sought "universal doubt," but doubt of Christianity only. "Conscience" is as real to the Secularist as to the Christian; and "faith" also when—as Archbishop Whately says it ought to be—it is founded on reason. If God be a "word without meaning," it is because no Christian puts any intelligible meaning into it. The new Christianity does not as yet excel in truth or respectfulness. No wonder, as our authoress says, "Every day some new and exquisite method of harrying the devout occurred to the more ingenious among the Secularists." Christians can remedy this by not giving them so much to go upon.

Deeming is himself cemented now. The murderous scoundrel had no difficulty in "making his peace with God"; he "died a Christian," and commended his villainous "spirit to God." What taste God must have to take it! A Melbourne bishop offered the rascal spiritual consolation. Christianity must amend its morals, its taste, and its divine ideals before it can be acceptable to the ethical conscience.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

For the most part the ministry are the servile tools of the rich man's social clubs and Sunday opera companies which make a mockery of religion by calling themselves churches. —Thompson's Politics of Labor.

## WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

[CONTINUED.]

THERE is, however, a more subtle and plausible aspect of this "great exemplar" fallacy, which imposes on some who are entirely free from orthodox superstition. It imposed even on John Stuart Mill. That great man's essay on Theism was published after his death by Miss Helen Taylor, who confesses that it had "never undergone the repeated examination which it certainly would have passed through before he would himself have given it to the world," and that even its style is "less polished than that of any other of his published works." At the close of this unfortunate essay there occurs the famous panegyric on Christ. It is an unusually rhetorical piece of writing for Mill; its statements betray a great want of information on the subject, and its reasoning is remarkably loose and inconsequent. Nevertheless it has been eagerly seized upon by Christian apologists; and, as Professor Bain remarks, the inch of concession to the existing Theology has been stretched into an ell. Mill dismisses contemptuously the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and declares that the Prophet of Nazareth "would probably have thought such a pretension as blasphemous." Yet he treats it as "a possibility" that Christ was "a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue." "Religion," he says, meaning of course *Christianity*, "cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity." And he adds that even the unbeliever would have difficulty in finding "a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."

"My dear sir," might the unbeliever reply to Mill, "your illustration and argument are alike arbitrary and fantastic. Profound scholars like Strauss, and patient, well-informed thinkers like George Eliot, plainly declare (and who can seriously dispute it?) that the materials for a biography of Jesus Christ do not exist. The ideal Christ is a creation of centuries; nay, the process still continues, each generation of Christians adding to, subtracting from, or in some way modifying the never-finished portrait. The real Christ, if he ever existed, is lost beyond all hope of recovery; he is buried under impenetrable mountains of dogma, legend, and mythology. In vain will you search the New Testament for any coherent conception of his personality. The protean figure is ever passing into fresh shapes; a hundred contradictory aspects flash upon your baffled vision. The total impression upon the beholder is, as it were, a composite photograph, representing types and qualities, but no individuality. To make it one's ideal is only self-delusion. Even if this objection be waived, and the intelligible personality of Christ be conceded for the sake of argument, why should a rational, self-respecting man bind himself to the perpetual study and emulation of one type of character? The seeker for moral beauty, like the seeker for intellectual truth, should gather honey from every flower that blooms in the garden of the world. And why should Christ be made the ideal critic of our actions? Many a man devotedly loves his mother, or cherishes her memory. Would it not be a safe rule for him to act so that the dear dead or living parent would approve his conduct? But even this rule, in the wisest and loftiest estimate, is too personal and limited. It would be better to act so that every honest man would approve our conduct; better still, to act so as to secure our own approval. Let men be true to themselves, let them broaden and deepen their intellectual light, let them gain what help they can from the example of great and beautiful lives, let them consider the consequences of their deeds; and having acted, let them practise the benign art of self-reflection, let them bring their conduct before the inner tribunal of a sensitive conscience,

whose judgment, if sometimes mistaken, will always be pure and nearly always decisive. For every man who takes the trouble to *think* (and without *thinking* what avails?) will always know himself better than he can be known by others; and thus the verdict of his own conscience is not only superior to the brawling judgments of the ignorant world outside him, but even superior to the judgment of the wisest and best, who can never know exactly his motives, his powers, and his necessities, or the myriad circumstances of his position."

Having seen that Christ is no real *exemplar*, and that he cannot save us from *sin* in the form of *selfishness*, let us now consider his power to save us from sin in its theological significance.

The Christian theory is delightfully simple, and at the same time brutally crude. It is not entirely derived from the Gospels, but the Epistles are an integral part of the Christian revelation, and a successful attempt to discard the inspired authority of Saint Paul would eventually wreck the entire structure of Christianity.

We must start with Adam, in whom all men sinned, as in Christ all men are saved, who *will* be saved. The grand old gardener, as Tennyson calls this mythical personage, was created as the father of the human race. He was placed in the Garden of Eden, and allowed to eat of the fruit of every tree except one, which was strictly forbidden. He was also given a wife, who was made from one of his ribs, extracted while he lay in a deep sleep. These two were the only inhabitants of the garden, but there came a visitor, called Satan, a powerful rival of the creator. This subtle and wily adversary tempted the woman to taste the forbidden fruit; she yielded, and induced her husband to taste it also. For this act of disobedience they were expelled from the garden; they were cursed by their offended God, and the curse fell upon all their posterity. Sin had vitiated their once pure natures, and this vitiation was necessarily transmitted to their offspring, who as necessarily transmitted it to theirs. Thus the whole human race is corrupt; in other words, full of original sin.

This original sin puts enmity between God and his creatures. God hates sin and must punish it. Every sinner, therefore—and *all* men are sinners—owes God an infinite debt, not because his sin is infinite, but because he sins against an infinite being. But finite men can never pay an infinite debt; therefore they are doomed to eternal imprisonment in Hell, where the God of infinite justice and mercy immures and tortures his wicked children.

This theory is set forth by hundreds of Christian divines, in thousands of treatises, but no one puts it more clearly than the once-famous Rev. Charles Simeon in his Nine Sermons on *The Sorrows of the Son of God*, preached before the University of Cambridge.

"We, by sin, had incurred a debt, which not all the men on earth, or angels in heaven, were able to discharge. In consequence of this, we must all have been consigned over to everlasting perdition if Jesus had not engaged on our behalf to satisfy every demand of law and justice. . . . Jesus having thus become our surety, our debt 'was exacted of him, and he was made answerable' for it. . . . Hence, when the time was come, in which Jesus was to fulfil the obligations he had contracted, he was required to pay the debt of all for whom he had engaged; and to pay it to the very utmost farthing. It was by his sufferings that he discharged this debt."

The suffering of Jesus was but for a time, but as an infinite being he suffered infinitely, and "hence his death was a full, perfect, and sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world." Such is the metaphysical juggling of Christian dogmatists!

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## THE N.S.S. CONFERENCE.

THE Secular Conference of 1892 will doubtless be one of the most important events in the development of English Freethought. The conditions governing our movement have undergone radical changes within the last few years; and however much some of those changes—necessitated alas! through death—may be regretted, our duty is to take things as they are, and by careful thought and judicious action do our best to consolidate and utilise the ever increasing Secular elements at our command. It was one of Mr. Bradlaugh's favorite sayings "that the best way to honor the dead was to serve the living." Undoubtedly this is so, and particularly at the present time, when so much practical Freethought work lies before us. If ever this age comes to be described in the future by some leading characteristic, as we are wont now to speak of the epochs gone by, it will probably be known as the age of Secular effort. Thought to-day runs on with lightning speed, and pushes its way into every nook and corner of the physical universe, revealing the hidden things of the past, and solving problems which our forefathers never dreamed of grappling with, until we read the riddle of nature with a success greater than old *Oedipus* ever brought to bear upon *Sphinx* of ancient times. To-day the masses think and inquire. Men want reasons now, not authority; they ask for argument, and will not be put off with dogmatic assertion. As Whittier has well said,

The power is gone to self-deceive  
With hollow forms of make-believe.

Now, if we wish to honor the memory of the dead, including that of the late great leader of the Freethought movement in England, we should make the Conference which is to be held Sunday, June 5, at Newcastle-on-Tyne a memorable occasion for the further carrying out, in a methodical manner, of those Secular principles with which the name of Charles Bradlaugh has so long been associated. Clearly the present time, with its increased agencies, is well suited for the performance of such a duty. In Mr. G. W. Foote the N.S.S. has a President of great ability and of almost unbounded energy, and he is earnestly supported, not only by young blood, which imparts a vitality to our cause, but also by the principal veterans of English Freethought, who are willing and determined to render him all possible support in augmenting the value and power of the great Secular movement. That this union of workers meets with general approval among Secularists is evidenced by the fact that the membership of the N.S.S. has lately increased, and is still increasing in numbers. These pleasing incidents of progress should secure a large attendance at the Conference, and inspire the various delegates to thoroughly study the agenda of business, as printed in the *Freethinker*, with a view of fully considering the importance of most of the sixteen notices of motions to be brought forward upon that occasion.

Newcastle is an excellent place in which to hold the Conference, inasmuch as it is the centre of a large section of Secularists who are exceedingly active—men and women who have proved that they know what to do and how to do it. They have grasped the true object of Secular advocacy, which is the recognition that disbelief in those creeds and doctrines that once held almost undisputed sway is extending on every side; and therefore our concern should be to take advantage of such disbelief, and to furnish those who are thus emancipated from theological superstition with a knowledge of sound principles to guide them in daily life. Whenever orthodox absurdities and errors impede our Secular work, the course to pursue is clear: destroy them if possible; but at the same time supply their places with teachings based upon reason and utility. It is more than ever desirable to

point out that any material advantage offered by Christianity can be secured by a faithful adherence to the principles of Secularism. To do this thoroughly, union of action and an efficient organisation are indispensable. It must not be ignored that, despite the noble triumphs of Freethought, orthodoxy is still dominant among a large portion of society, and the crudest forms of religion are preached from thousands of pulpits and accepted without question by thousands of hearers. The blood-and-thunder theology finds its advocates in many churches and in many families. Revivalist crazes break out periodically, like some epidemic disease, and the very air is filled with "the odors of sanctity." But, notwithstanding all this, a spirit of inquiry is abroad, and advanced minds are feeling the great need of something higher and better—teachings more in accord with the thought of the age and in strict harmony with science and mental freedom. In all phases of life progress is evident. Reliance upon the natural is preferred to dependance upon the alleged supernatural; the education of the study has become more potent than the preaching from the pulpit, the Church has been driven to give up much of its old theology, even some of our most popular novels have a decidedly sceptical tendency.

We sincerely hope, therefore, to see a large gathering of representative Freethinkers from all parts of the country at the Conference, so that those to whom shall be entrusted the working out of proposed plans for an enlarged propaganda may have the advantage of wise counsel and earnest support. Secularists have not hitherto been wanting in enthusiasm in the furtherance of the cause they hold dear. They have run counter to the fashionable opinions of the day, and by so doing they have frequently incurred pecuniary loss and bitter persecution, preferring what to them is true and useful, rather than compliance with popular sentiments. They are conscious that knowledge is power, and, having the interest of the human race at heart, it is with them a labor of love to do all that is possible to extend that power to their fellow-men and thus assist in raising them to a high level of intellectual dignity.

In the deliberations at the Conference differences of opinion will naturally be found, and it is from these very differences, if conducted with goodwill and mutual forbearance, that beneficial results will accrue. It is one of our cardinal principles that the right to differ should be fully recognised. Unfortunately it has happened in the history of progress that the usefulness of great movements has frequently been seriously retarded in consequence of some of its members not being able to have their own way upon some particular questions. To refuse to work with colleagues unless one can have all he desires after his own heart is an exhibition of weakness, which an adherence to Secular teachings would probably prevent. Fortunately our field of action is wide enough to allow scope for all workers in the sphere for which they are best adapted. It is, however, of the highest importance that each and all should be firm; and, moreover, that they should persistently adhere to engagements they may enter into and to promises they may make. It is necessary that avowal of intention should be supplemented with constancy of purpose in order to render any movement an organised success. Thanks to the achievements already won by Freethought endeavors, Secularists need not entertain the same dread of avowing their honest opinions and intentions as their forefathers did. Mrs. Grundy is fast losing her hold upon the intelligent portion of the community; and heresy, when allied with prudence and integrity, is no longer a serious barrier to social co-operation among persons of intellectual acquirements. Isolated cases, of course, still occur where bigotry exercises its cruel and unjust power, but with most thoughtful individuals actions are becoming the real factors in

the estimation of character in preference to either belief or unbelief. Practical Secularism, which is living in daily life up to the principles of honor, truth, and justice, is the passport of admission into the higher brotherhood of mankind.

CHARLES WATTS.

### SACRED MYSTERIES AND SECRET SOCIETIES.

"And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."—MARK IV. 11, 12.

CURIOSITY is an attribute of noble minds as well as an infirmity of weak ones. It is the incentive to intellectual discovery as well as the occasion of foolish tittle-tattle. There is a fascination about a mystery ever taken advantage of by charlatans. The earliest faiths, like the latest Theosophy, appealed to the sense of awe and wonder concerning the unknown. Nowadays, aware that mystery is usually synonymous with humbug, Christian ministers dispense as far as possible with allusion to the mysteries of their faith. In the ages of faith, reverence and superstition it sufficed to say of any difficulty in dogma or ritual it was a mystery. Priests might have said of their religion in the old doggerel—

What is hits is history,  
What is mist is mystery.

But now people want to know the meaning of their mysteries. When not told they begin to suspect that the mysteries have no longer a meaning for them, and that at best they represent ideas which we have outgrown. By the early Christian writers, and still by the great Roman Catholic Church, the fundamental dogmas and the sacraments of Christianity are called "mysteries." The word sacrament, indeed, implying something sacred, also implies something secret. The ideas of consecration and holiness are connected with ideas of separation and taboo.\* Things were first accounted sacred because they were prohibited. Prof. Robertson Smith, in his *Religion of the Semites*, and Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, have even shown that it is impossible to separate the root ideas of holiness from those of uncleanness and pollution. The special sacraments of the English Church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are both rites which are found in the ancient mysteries, and must therefore be explained in accordance with the ideas of those among whom these mysteries arose.

In assuming the rôle of a mystagogue, and pretending to give the real, original, and only genuine interpretation of the solemn mysteries of the faith once delivered to the saints, it may be well to make a few preliminary remarks on the origin and growth of mysteries in general, and to take a brief survey of the ancient mysteries, especially the Egyptian, Eleusinian, Adonian, and Mithraic, as most important in the elucidation of those of Christianity.

The formation of the family was the first step in civilisation. Law, religion, and morality began at home, and often extended no further. Man first perceived his duties to his own brethren. Families who held together, and who enlarged their bounds and became clans, stood a better chance in the struggle for existence. Hence, even in savage societies, we find brotherhoods of adoption as a means of enlarging the tribe. The fundamental idea of the clan and of the tribe is that of a brotherhood. As the only safe alliances were with those who would recognise the family bond, rites of adoption implied belonging to a common family, and consisted in a common meal, or sharing the same blood communion.

\* See my chapter on "Taboos" in forthcoming *Bible Studies*.

Hence the widespread custom of blood covenanting.\* Hence, too, the acknowledgment of common ancestors, the mutual propitiation of their spirits, and the perpetuation of common rites and collective religion. "All ancient societies," says Sir Henry Maine, "regard themselves as sprung from a common stock."

Having the same totems, or gods, meant having a common ancestry; and such ceremonies as eating salt, and drinking blood, are symbolical of the family ties which were the foundation of all wider fraternal associations. From these brotherhoods, which were necessarily secret, in the sense of being unknown to outsiders, and with common marks of recognition, whether by tattoo, gesture, or language, arose the ancient mysteries. Their rites were always intended to constitute a fraternal communion between the members, whether, as with the Eleusinia, open to all Athenians; or, as with the Brahmins, confined to a caste; or, as with the Tantrikas, to a sect. Fully as important as the admission of outsiders into tribal brotherhood was the provision for the rights of growing youth to count each as one of the tribe. This brought the rites of initiation into connection with puberty and phallicism.†

Trials of courage and constancy formed the first and, in savage times, essential part of the initiation. Then the rites of communion were performed and the marks of recognition given. The initiate became one of the children of the clan, or of the common, perhaps fictitious, ancestor, or a child of the common god. Hence his initiation, his membership in a new family, often involved the taking of a new name, and was regarded as a new birth. As the child was washed, so an ablution or purification was deemed necessary for the regenerate person, and in taking his new clothing, whether the primitive apron or sacred thread, he was enrolled among the twice born. Here was the origin of baptism, as the common meal was of the Lord's Supper. Their further significance I shall show later on. In the mysteries traditional knowledge was handed down by word of mouth. This was the revelation of the Gnosis, the wisdom and dark sayings of old. The revealer of these oracles or Logia became the Logos—the Sayer or Word from of old, from everlasting. This knowledge generally concerned the way of influencing the spirits by spells and incantations, or prayers and gifts of food or sacrifices. These were the beginnings of religion. More practical were the knowledge of simple time-measurement, first by the moon and feminine periodicity, then by the sun and stars, whence came astrology and astronomy, the beginnings of science. While in the hunting stage, the mysteries were largely concerned with rites to ensure success in the chase and war, as in the buffalo, bear, and war-dances of the North American Indians. The doctrine of transmigration and new births grew in this stage, and expanded in succeeding ones. In the pastoral stage, the mysteries largely concerned the moon, stars, and planets and the return of vegetation. In a settled agricultural state the mysteries developed to large proportions. The need of keeping up the sacred fire and charms for rain and sunshine remained. But the important point was the re-appearance of the seed put in the earth, the triumph of spring over winter,

\* See my paper on "Blood Rites" in *Bible Studies*. Dr. E. B. Tylor points out the great principle of old world morals was "that man owes friendship not to mankind at large, but only to his kin"; so that to entitle a stranger to kindness and good faith, he must become a kinsman by blood.

† Mr. H. C. Lea, the historian of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages, has also written a bulky and valuable *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*. But he has not explained the ideas which lie behind it. The history of the mystery, the sacredness and the secrecy, connected with the union of the sexes has yet to be written, and apart from the delicacy of the topic, there is the additional difficulty that so few know anything of the life history of early man. When anthropology takes its due place in education, and physiology is taught both sexes in the schools, it will be possible to write this history, and the veil which confounds ignorance with innocence will be rent.

of light over darkness. The sun and the earth-mother, with their fruits of bread and wine, were important symbols, the first fruits being deemed instinct with divine life. The annual death, descent to the underworld and resurrection of productive life and vegetation became the chief subject of the mysteries, as with Osiris slain by Typhon and sought for by Isis; Adonis, the Syrian Tammuz, slain by the boar and lamented by Venus; Orpheus descending to Hades to find Eurydice, the lamentations of Demeter for Persephone, Dionysos slain by the Titans, Balder by Hodur; the deaths of Attys, Hercules, Mithras, and Christ; and, to come from the sublime to the ridiculous, the murder of Hiram-ab-iff in the Masonic Master's lodge, where Boaz meets Jachin and tests if he knows the Shibboleth of Tubal-Cain, Mahabone or Machenac.

Solar and reproductive elements appear in these myths, but that the return of vegetation was a chief element in the mysteries appears from the sacred bough or mystical plant as the lotus in Indian and Egyptian mysteries, the mystic rose of Isis, the myrtle of Venus, the fir-tree of Attys, the ivy and vine of Bacchus, the oak of Cybele, the golden bough of the Sybil, the Druidic mistletoe, and the accacia of the Freemasons.

In primitive times the head of the family or elders were the priests or instructors. But with the extension of tribal life a caste of mystery-men or priests developed who naturally have taken care to safeguard their own interests by concealing the knowledge of the humbug from the vulgar. We find everywhere a double doctrine, esoteric and exoteric, for the priests and for the people. This still prevails to the extent of keeping silent as to many things known to all cultured persons.

Said Theodoret, the Christian Father:

"All do not know what the hierophant knows; the majority only see what is represented. Those who call themselves priests perform the rites of the mysteries, and the hierophant alone knows the reason of what he does, and discloses it to whom he thinks fit."

Even in existing secret societies there is usually an esoteric circle. No Freemason who has not reached 30° knows the real inwardness of his craft. In 1813 the Grand Lodge of England, in order to check the many spurious outgrowths of their order, proclaimed there were only three degrees in Freemasonry. They might as well have proclaimed there were only three degrees in a circle. Most of the brethren of the mystic tie are *initiates* in the original sense of the word. They have the beginning of a mystery, but never proceed beyond the initial step. The mystic tie is no better than a mystic toy to gratify the vanity of overgrown children who rejoice in ribbons and regalia. Some of these orders survive chiefly in the interests of the manufacturers of tinsel. Any society that will not admit women is hopelessly against the spirit of the age. No secret is known in any of the secret societies that is worth concealing. Freemasons ridiculously say they are opposed by the Pope because they will not betray their secrets in the confessional. There are no secrets of any of these secret societies unknown to the Jesuits, who, indeed, instituted not a few of them, and no secrets of the Jesuits unknown to those who will take the trouble to penetrate them. The real reason of Papal opposition to Freemasonry is that the foreign lodges are a school of Freethought. The right understanding of Masonic mysteries leads to the elucidation of those of Catholicism. This is well shown in Ragon's work, *La Messe et ses Mystères*.

Modern secret societies—and the Western ones are all modern—retain a few of the ancient mysteries in their rituals of initiation and their symbols. Sometimes they even throw light on ancient myths, as in preserving the true meaning of the Rosicrucian I.N.R.I.‡ But the ordinary Freemason knows as

‡ Given in *Freethinker*, May 8; p. 300.

much of the meaning of the symbols and ritual of his craft as did Monsieur Panurge when, before consulting the oracle of the holy Bottle, the priestess Bacbuc wrapped him in a gaberdine, girded him with three bagpipes, bathed his sconce thrice in the fountain, threw a handful of meal on his phiz, and bumped him seven times.\*

Although their rôle in despotic countries is not quite ended, the time for mysteries and secret societies is rapidly passing away. The printing press has made democracy, and democracy is making all combinations open ones. Secret societies are fast becoming an anachronism. The game is never worth the candle. As James Thomson showed, in his *Essays and Phantasies*, the "open secret societies" are the strongest. One's thoughts can only be penetrated by his peers. No spy can pluck out the heart of my mystery, no uncongenial brother demand entrance to my *sanctum sanctorum*, because it is always open to the elect. I enter a railway carriage. One person's conversation shows he is of the great sporting fraternity, an initiate in "tips" or a past-master in "bookmaking." Another drops a word which shows he has read Darwin. I recognise at once an initiate in the evolution philosophy. Another word shows he has read Shelley, and I need no pansy in his coat to know I am in company with a fellow Freethinker.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### THE CASTLE BY THE SEA.

It frowns there still, its rugged time-worn front—  
Stern, cold, and quiet—mocks the storm,  
That yearly, daily, hourly gnaws its stone  
With slow, but sure decay.

A monument

It is of days departed. When it sinks,  
With the firm rock that holds it, in the sea,  
The fearful iron time that it records,  
Will have no memory here.

Consider this!

Religion is a castle on a crag,  
Worn with the storms of ages, sere, decayed.  
The crag is superstition. Soon the sea  
Of science—grinding, gnawing at its base—  
Will, rushing, overwhelm the rocks and walls.

RON. MAHON.

#### EITHER CHRISTIAN OR ATHEIST.

All unsuccessful attempts at conversion leave him who has been selected for a proselyte stubborn and obdurate, and this was especially the case with me when Lavater at last came out with the hard dilemma—"Either Christian or Atheist!" Upon this I declared that if he would not leave me my own Christianity as I had hitherto cherished it, I could readily decide for Atheism, particularly as I saw that nobody knew precisely what either meant.—*Goethe, "Autobiography,"* part iii., bk. xiv., p. 9, vol. ii.; 1849.

#### GOD IN A BOX AND JACK IN THE BOX.

The ancient gods, those of Israel included, are now to be mainly met with at the toymaker's—the divinities of childhood still. In the chimney corner, by the nursery fire, the deities are dozing away their second childhood, save that once a week the strings are pulled, and the puppets are compelled to keep up a kind of nodding acquaintance with the world from the pulpit, which now represents their box, on Sundays.—*Gerald Massey, "Book of Beginnings,"* vol. ii., p. 291:

OBITUARY.—We regret to hear of the death of Mr. J. M. Upright, of Exeter, at the age of 32. He was for years a victim of consumption. The *Western Times* speaks of him in the highest terms; but it omits to mention, and perhaps does not know, that he was a steadfast Freethinker. We tender our sympathy to his father, Mr. James Upright, and to the whole bereaved family.

\* Rabelais, bk. v., chap. xliii.

#### A DROLL SPECIMEN OF GOD'S HANDIWORK.

In view of God as a creator the following extract from "Seward's Anecdotes," fourth edition, 1798, vol. i., p. 170, quoted from *Buchanan's Scotch History*, would seem to suggest either a wicked joke or an awful botch:

"About this time (1500) a new kind of monster was born in Scotland. In the lower part of its body it resembled a male child, nothing differing from the ordinary shape of the human body; but above the navel, the trunk of the body, and all the other members, were double, representing both sexes, male and female. The king (James the Fourth) gave special order for its careful education, especially in music, in which it arrived to an admirable degree of skill; and, moreover, it learned several tongues; and sometimes the two bodies did discover several appetites disagreeing one with another, and so they would quarrel, one liking this, the other that; and yet sometimes again they would agree, and consult as it were in common for the good of both. This was also memorable in it, that when the legs or loins were hurt below, both bodies were sensible of this pain in common, but when it was pricked or otherwise hurt above, the sense of the pain did affect one body only; which difference was also more conspicuous at its death, for one of the bodies died many days before the other, and that which survived, being half putrified, pined away by degrees. This monster lived twenty-eight years, and then died. I am the more confident," adds the historian, "in relating this story, because there are many honest and credible persons yet alive who saw this prodigy with their own eyes."

#### FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

CHRISTIANITY.—That can never be acknowledged unreservedly as the true theory of religion which, taking no account of the unnumbered multitudes who have lived and died before its birth, continues to be what since its late birth it has been and is now—a saving grace to a small portion only of the countless myriads of the human race.—*Dr. H. Maudsley, "Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings,"* p. 354.

GOD IS A SPIRIT.—If any conclusion can fitly be drawn from a comparison of the religious notions of savages with the religious notions of civilised races, which are really alike only in being called by a common name, it is the conclusion that a process of contraction, thinning, and refinement, which has gone on so long and so steadily, will continue to go on with the advancing development of the human mind, until spirits are squeezed and refined out of existence.—*Dr. H. Maudsley, "Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings,"* p. 363.

The minister was calling for recruits for temperance work. "In one little town," cried he, "there's seventeen gin mills, that's where we want to go, brethren." "Yes, yes," shouted a red nose sleepy individual in the rear of the church, "Let's go now."

Mephisto: "If St. Peter doesn't stop sending American crank inventors down here I'll throw up my job." Asmodeus: "What is the trouble?" Mephisto: "Why, one of these fellows came to me to-day and submitted plans for having the place heated with steam and hot air instead of brimstone."

"I took the liberty of helping myself to the ink and scissors and mucilage, and a few other trifles at your desk, Mr. Hurdles," said Cheeks, with an ingratiating smile, when the sporting editor came in. "You know the Lord helps those who help themselves." Hurdles (taking off his coat): "Well, if the Lord is going to help you, he'd better hurry up about it."

"Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer, Aunt Chloe?" asked a young minister from the North of an old Georgia colored woman. "'Deed I does, boss," she replied fervently. "Deed I does, an' w'n my ol' man was tuck up for stealin' Cunnel Brown's pullets I jes' got down on my kunkers an' prayed an' prayed all ebenin' dat dem ossifers wouldn't come pokin' roun' my kitchen huntin' for chicken feathers, an' 'fo' de good Lawd, boss, nary one never come nigh. 'Deed dey didn't, boss."

## ACID DROPS.

Lord Salisbury's coach was overturned, and his coachman severely injured. The newspapers state that "the escape of his lordship was miraculous." We thought the age of miracles was past, but Providence seems to work them still for gentlemen of quality.

The age of miracles is never past where there are credulous people who believe in them. It is not, therefore, surprising that the relic of the arm of St. Anne, the grandmother of God, is said to be working miraculous cures among the Irish in New York. The relic in question has been brought for a time to New York, and of course the priests work up an excitement about it to draw in the shekels. The excitement once started, miracles follow as a matter of course.

The *War Cry* gives an instance of "the power of real salvation." One of the "saved" Laundry girls got one of her hands crushed and burnt between the hot rollers of the mangle. "She was in perfect agony, and yet she fervently prayed." The power of prayer, however, was not so clear as the power of real salvation. The Lord did the poor thing's hand no good: she had to be taken to the doctor's.

"General" Booth seems to be getting into low water financially. The "Army" exchequer is apparently running dry as well as that of the "Darkest England" scheme. A week or two ago the Grand Old Showman made a piteous appeal on behalf of the latter. He admitted having got more than the £100,000 he required to start with, but the £30,000 per year to follow was not flowing in effectually. This piteous appeal is followed by a letter, which is signed by a number of eminent persons, begging the public to come to the help of William Booth. Three lords head the list. Samuel Smith and W. T. Stead are of course included. But what is Henry Labouchere doing there? Is he trapped like a fly by the Salvation spider? And what about Tom Mann? For a working-class leader he has fallen of late among strange company.

"Travelling to Southend last Friday," "Theomachos" writes to us, "I got chatting with a London policeman out for a holiday visit to his native place, Leigh, a fishing village about a mile from General Booth's farm colony. He told me that previous to the formation of this Salvation colony, Leigh had for many years enjoyed a perfect immunity from theft and crime of every kind; people never troubled to lock their doors, anything could be left outdoors all night in safety, and that the solitary constable's office was a sinecure; but that since Booth's 'saved sinners' had arrived nothing was safe from theft, and the inhabitants had to keep a keen look out in order to retain any of their property from confiscation by the Lord's anointed."

The *St. James's Gazette* says Booth would do better to issue a business-like report of what has already been done with the money received than to continue these begging appeals. The *Standard* also wants to know if the number of paupers have decreased since Booth's scheme was started.

Our Whit Sunday, says Gerald Massey, "which is the seventh from the full moon of Easter, still memorises the annual seven-day festival, reckoned by seven sabbath days, as the white day of seven." Others, however, derive it from the assembling of the Wit-gemot, or meeting of the wise. This latter theory may be supposed to be held in favor by those who attend the congresses and conferences held at the time.

The Lord's Day Rest Observance Society has sent over to Chicago a petition against the Sunday opening of the World's Fair. It is signed by Sir A. Blackwood and other pious luminaries. Could not the Sunday League send over an opposition petition, as the Americans seem to lay some weight upon opinions expressed from this side the herring-pond?

Archbishop Janssens, of New Orleans, has given his opinion that the Oddfellows and Sons of Temperance are condemned by the Catholic Church, as well as Freemasons, on the ground that these societies "place natural religion above revealed religion and weaken the faith and practice of religion in the minds of Catholics."

A medical man, writing from Estado de Seriora, Mexico, says that on April 2, "a priest residing at Rayon gave it out among the faithful that he would say a mass for the soul of any departed for fifteen dollars cash. So the women got up a raffle at ten cents a chance, sold 150 chances, and drew for the prize of 'a holy mass for a departed soul.' A widow, at whose house I was stopping, drew the lucky number, and had the mass said for the soul of her husband, and was happy indeed that she had thus been able to give the soul of her dear departed the benefit of a fifteen-dollar mass by an investment of ten cents."—*London Figaro*.

The *Weekly Register* announces among the recent converts to Roman Catholicism Mrs. Labouchere, the wife of the proprietor of *Truth*. The lady in question was known some quarter of a century ago as the accomplished actress Miss Henrietta Hodson.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council have set aside the presentation to the living of Brentham made on the nomination of Sir Alexander Beaumont Churchill Dixie, on the ground that that gentleman is a Roman Catholic, and the Act is clear that no Papist can present to a living. It would appear, however, that there is no law to prevent an Atheist presenting a living to a properly qualified spiritual person, or even to prevent himself from becoming a churchwarden.

At the St. Albans Diocesan Conference the Rev. Mr. H. Henson declared "they had a hard fight to keep the people from falling into the open jaws of Satan, or into the hands of his unabashed emissaries the Dissenters." The Nonconformist papers are severely handling Mr. Henson for making them appear as agents of the Devil.

A cyclone in Kansas has done great damage. In one hall the Salvationists were praying, and before they could rise from their knee-drill, the roof crashed in and two were severely injured. At Wellington above five hundred persons were killed or injured.

Last week the church of St. Werburgh, Derby, was struck by lightning. One of the pinnacles of the tower crashed through the roof into the chancel, doing great damage. Jehovah has no more partiality to gospel-shops than to public-houses.

In Carinthia, Austria, a tremendous cloud-burst has made the whole countryside a scene of devastation. Orchards and growing crops are completely destroyed, and many birds and field animals were found lying dead on the ground. "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps on the *say*, and rides upon the storm."

The latest horror threatened us from America is sky-signs—not the wire arrangements which already disfigure our streets, but the projection by a gigantic magic lantern of images thrown upon the clouds, so that, we are told, we may yet see Pears' soap written over our heads in letters 100 feet long. This is perhaps the reason why God does not write his revelation in the sky. He does want to be outdone by the advertisers.

The late Rev. Henry Allon, the popular evangelical minister of Canonbury, must have a close squeeze to enter the kingdom of heaven. He was burdened with a personal estate valued at £27,556, which, it is feared, may have flattened his bulk in the attempt to pass through the narrow gates of the New Jerusalem.

The Rev. Hugh Allen, a parson of the Established Church, has been fined 20s. at the Lambeth Police Court for being drunk and disorderly. They had better hurry up with that Clergy Discipline Bill, for it seems sadly wanted.

Men of God will get into trouble. Here is the Rev. John Blackmore, rector of Morebard Bishop, fined £2 at Crediton police-court for assaulting Dr. Tronson, of the same village. It appeared in the evidence that the charitable man of God threatened, if the summons was proceeded with, to order his tenants to boycott Dr. Tronson, and to advertise in the medical papers for a new doctor, who should have board and residence at the rectory while he was getting away Dr. Tronson's practice. And of such is the Kingdom of heaven.

More vicar's-rate rows at Coventry. Tradesmen's goods put up for public sale, the auctioneer pelted with rotten eggs, collisions between the people and the police, windows broken, and faces cut—all on account of sky-pilot Mills, who is probably not worth as much English blood as would cover the back of a flea. Good old Church of England! The time is coming for a charitable hand to write her epitaph for the churchyard of churches.

The Rev. John Pickford, vicar of Tuddenham, St. Martin's, near Ipswich, went into his grounds and, placing a gun in his mouth, blew off the top of his head—an inconvenient method of meeting his maker.

Canon Julius Lloyd, rector of St. Phillip's, Salford, was called home to his father's house as he was addressing a meeting at the Manchester Town Hall in support of the Church Day School Association. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. How much more in the fall of a canon.

Had a Secular lecturer dropped dead while addressing an "infidel" meeting, what a hubbub it would have caused in religious circles! Sermons and pious articles would have moralised on the "awful" occurrence. But when a parson drops dead at a religious meeting, it means nothing; they just carry out the corpse, and take the next business.

A certain auctioneer named Kinsman, residing at Fitzroy, Melbourne, has discovered how godliness may be great gain. Believing in free trade in religion, he started, without either church or congregation, a Free Church of England, and applied to the Victorian Government, as head of a denomination, for power to issue marriage licences and perform marriages, which being granted, he soon got a large and lucrative marriage business. The name Free Church of England was attractive, and, as he advertised and took low fees, he soon united more couples in holy matrimony than all the clergy of the Church of England put together. These were highly incensed at the rival shop. The real genuine ordained men of God used some strong language against the pseudo cleric, and even invoked the Melbourne authorities to put him down.

The Dean of Norwich has presented the rich living of Great Yarmouth to a friend in Tunbridge Wells, although by law, the presentation is in the hands of the Dean and Chapter, and must be given to one who has served five years in the same diocese. But men of God always stretch a point or two for a friend.

Religion is seen in something like its original purity and beneficence among the Jebus, of Lagos, who, when they decided to oppose the British troops, killed two hundred of their own people, many of them girls, as a sacrifice of propitiation to their gods, who are evidently of a similar sanguinary character to old Jahveh.

Monsignor Hirth, superior of the Uganda Catholic Mission, has written a letter, in which he says that the Catholics have been shamefully betrayed, crushed, and driven out by the Protestants. How they love one another!

Ritualism is spreading in Canada. In 1890 only 1,402 churches had altar lights; in 1892 there are 2,048. Everywhere it is the same, the more rottenness the more paint.

"Mr. G. W. Foote's company is requested" at a meeting of the Lawyer's Prayer Union, to be held at the Mission Hall, Bloomsbury, on June 16, 1892. Tea and coffee at 6.30; prayer and addresses at 7.15. It is also intimated that "a few stamps to cover the expense of postage would be very acceptable." Mr. Foote isn't a lawyer, he doesn't go to prayer meetings, and he is rather short of stamps.

Voltaire said there was this to say for the Catholic Church with all its vices and intolerance. It was the opera-house of the poor. The Church of England is going in the direction of becoming the opera-house of the well to do. At Lincoln Minster they have half-guinea seats for sacred oratorios. To give an air of piety to the traffic, it is announced that "no money will be taken at the doors."

It is amusing to see the wealthy Bishop of Durham posing as the friend of the working man. When the Durham miners

are reduced to semi-starvation by a long and resolute resistance to the mine-owners' attempt to reduce their wages by 13½ per cent., his lordship intervenes as a peacemaker. And what is his advice? Why this. Let the miners accept a reduction of 10 per cent. and go to work, and let the odd 3½ per cent. be arbitrated upon afterwards. What splendid advice! And what acuteness of mind and richness of heart it required to offer it to the poor Durham miners. Verily the Bishop of Durham is worth his salary, if only to act on such occasions as "a friend" of the working classes.

The Sydney legislature has assimilated its divorce law to that of Victoria; that is, it has much widened the grounds on which divorce is given.

The clericals posing as upholders of the interests of morality, are leaguely not to consent to the re-marriage of divorced persons, on the ground that such permission is not accorded by Jesus. They omit to mention that since, according to Jewish law, an adulterous woman was punishable by death, there was no question of her husband marrying again in her lifetime.

The Fulton, Kentucky, *Baptist Gleaner*, says that within seven years over 800 United States preachers have been published in the papers as guilty of some sort of immorality.

We hope no member of the Liberty of Bequest Committee is responsible for the seemingly inspired report in the *Echo* of May 27. After a somewhat inflated account of the Committee's object (which, of course, is a very good one), the report says, "It is to be noted that the Committee do not aim at the repeal of those statutes under which prosecutions for outrageous and wantonly blasphemous publications can be instituted." Now there are no such statutes. All prosecutions for blasphemy have been under the Common Law. So much for the writer's *knowledge*. As to his *taste*, we may remark that it is Freethinkers who will have to fight for the Committee's draft Bill, and a few such silly sentences as this will perhaps damp their ardor.

John Burn Bailey (who is J. B. B ?) has published through Chapman and Hall a book entitled *From Sinner to Saint*, in which he holds up Thomas Paine (no one asks who was T. P. ?) as a frightful example. "In the whole range of biographical literature," he says, "there is no more appalling spectacle than that determined infidel and blasphemer presents; his like-minded companions had nothing but taunts to give him when disease laid him low." Every word of this is a lie. If scribbler Bailey doesn't know it, he is an ignoramus, who should learn the facts before addressing the public.

This wicked or ignorant, and in any case foolish, Bailey is soundly rebuked by the London *Daily Chronicle*, which informs him that "Paine did more for human liberty than any man of his day, and he was, perhaps, the clearest political thinker of any day." As for his heresy, he "shared that with Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, and he was, perhaps, the most orthodox of the four." Even if Paine did suffer towards the close of his life from the neglect of old friends alarmed at his heresy, the *Chronicle* asks "Who would not fail with such a man rather than prosper with some of Mr. Bailey's 'transformed characters'?"

The plucky curate of St. Pancras who assisted a policeman and enabled him to secure two prisoners, has been presented with a gold cross for his courage. He acted like a good citizen, but as a bad follower of Christ, who said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and "Resist not evil," etc.

Adam's rib has been made a bone of contention among various writers in the Dublin *Weekly Irish Times*. The question whether Adam originally had thirteen ribs on one side and twelve on the other, and which side Eve came out of, gives good scope for Irish theology. One of the writers asks if the present-day surgeons are more skillful than their Maker.

The *Irish Independent* is piously indignant with the blasphemy of a writer in the Dublin *Figaro*, who describes a statue of J. C. as "a plaster figure of a man with a heart pinned on his dressing-gown." This it says "is insulting, not only to Catholicity but to Christians of every denomination." But is it not possible the blasphemy lies with the maker of the statue?



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—June 5, N.S.S. Conference at Newcastle; 12, Sheffield; 15, debate at Birmingham with Rev. Dr. J. 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, Grimsby. Sept. 3 and 4, Rushen; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham; 18, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

**B. J. SWAN.**—The author is ignorant and a rowdy. We cannot deal with his pamphlet.

**W. M. KNOX,** secretary of the Ulster Branch, has removed to 15 Kilronan-street, Belfast. Lecturers, etc., will please note.

**C. DOEG.**—The black champion will not be drawn into a set debate. He is too wily.

**NEWCASTLE.**—It is customary to admit reporters to Conferences. If anything of a private nature arises they are sometimes requested to withdraw. We do not anticipate any "squabbling" at the N.S.S. Conference. Mr. Foote does not fear the Conference passing out of control.

**R. CHAPMAN.**—See paragraph.

**JAS. NEATE.**—Pleased to see that bigotry is decaying in the East-end.

**J. KEAST** (32 Morgan-street, St. Paul's, Bristol), secretary of the new Bristol Branch, says that a West of England Secular Federation is contemplated. Perhaps the Secularists in Plymouth, Devonport, Exeter, Cardiff, Swansea, and other towns, will communicate with him. It may not be possible to do much during the summer except in the way of preparation for the winter.

**CAZIQUE.**—The only passage in the canonical books of the Bible at all like what you refer to is Jude 9, which alludes to "Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses." The book of Enoch, to which Jude refers, verse 14, is a part of the Bible of the Abyssinian Christians.

**T. LUTZEN.**—*Comic Bible Sketches* have long been out of print.

**A. B. K.**—Thanks for the cutting, but we have already dealt with Messrs. Lax and Shaw's pious circular. The first partner's name seems appropriate.

**W. HOLLAND.**—Jokes are always welcome, but the one you send this time has already appeared.

**J. K. SYKES.**—Thanks. See paragraph.

**W. MANN,** 21 Heath-road, Watford, would be glad to hear from local Freethinkers willing to form a Branch of the N.S.S. This correspondent's copy is under consideration.

**C. HEATON.**—You are responsible for £1 on account of each share in the Hall of Science scheme, and not a farthing beyond under any circumstances. Two months' notice is given for every call of 2s. 6d. until the share is fully paid up, when responsibility ceases.

**G. J. WARREN,** 20 Rhodeswell-road, London, E., will be glad to receive back numbers of this journal or other Freethought literature for distribution at meetings.

**W. SIMONS.**—We are obliged for the cuttings.

**E. ANDERSON.**—Thanks for the replies you have obtained from the West Ham candidates as to the Liberty of Bequest Bill. We hope the candidates in all other constituencies will be questioned in the same way.

**T. PHILLIPS.**—Pleased to hear that the newsagent whom you induced to display the *Freethinker* has found six regular customers; also that the Spennymoor Branch is making fair though quiet progress.

**CURIOS.**—R. O. Smith who advertises on our back page is the R. O. Smith of the Hall of Science.

**G. W. DUNCAN.**—We recognise the hardship suffered by Freethinkers in the Army, and your letter shall be dealt with if possible.

**T. MILLAR.**—Rather long, but will find room if we can.

**B. INGHAM.**—The subscription shall be applied as you desire. The Hall of Science scheme will succeed in time. When Mr. Foote puts his hand to a big project he means to go through with it or break. He won't break easily, and he has the counsel and support of splendid colleagues.

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—Fritankaren—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Flaming Sword—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—Clarion—Watts's Literary Guide—Echo—Midland News Express and Star—Irish Times—Northern Echo—Northern Daily Leader—Manchester Examiner and Times—Freidenker—Secular Thought—Cosmopolitan—The Liberator—Natural Food—North Eastern Leader—Hackney News—Irish Daily Independent—Essex Herald—Glasgow Herald—Open Court—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—North Wilts Herald—Liberty—Cambria Daily Leader—The London Figaro.

**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. 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 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Despite the summer weather, which usually reduces the circulation of all sorts of papers, the sale of the *Freethinker* increased considerably last week. Next week we shall publish a full report of the N.S.S. Conference, and as the proceedings are likely to be very interesting, and many Freethinkers will want to keep copies by them for future use, we shall print an extra supply to meet the increased demand.

It was melting weather on Sunday evening at the London Hall of Science, but there was a good audience to hear Mr. Foote explain why he could not be a Christian. Mr. R. O. Smith presided. After the lecture, which was enthusiastically applauded, Mr. Foote made another appeal on behalf of the National Secular Hall Society, and several new shareholders were enrolled by Miss Vance and Mr. Forder.

The unfortunate strike in Durham will prevent a great many pitmen Secularists from attending the National Secular Society's Conference to-day (June 5). There will, however, in all probability be a very good attendance. All the local arrangements are now complete. Delegates and other members arriving at the Central Station should carry a copy of the *Freethinker* as a means of recognition. Those who escape notice should go to Fielden's Café, New Bridge-street, opposite the Free Library—about five minutes' walk. The reception committee will wear pink and white rosettes.

The Conference meets on Sunday morning at 10.30 prompt in the Lovaine Hall, St. Mary's-place, Newcastle-on-Tyne. After the morning session a dinner will be served at the Grand Hotel. The afternoon sitting opens at 2.30. At seven there will be a public meeting, addressed by G. W. Foote, C. Watts, R. Forder, Sam Standing, G. Standing, Stanley Jones, S. M. Peacock, Joseph Brown, and Elijah Copland. Delegates and members will be admitted by tickets till 6.30, when the doors will be thrown open to the public.

A meeting of the Lancashire and Yorkshire delegates to the N.S.S. Conference will be held on Saturday evening (June 4) at Fielden's Café, New Bridge-street, opposite the Free Library, Newcastle-on-Tyne. The meeting begins at eight, and its object is to consider the business of the new Lancashire and Yorkshire Secular Federation.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake, we very much regret to say, is unable to attend the N.S.S. Conference. We should have rejoiced to see his venerable head crowning the platform. He has Co-operative engagements at Rochdale, and is very sorry that they deprive him of the pleasure of being with his Secular friends at Newcastle.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times last Sunday in Liverpool. The audiences, afternoon and evening, were the largest he has ever had in that town. The various points in the lectures were received with immense enthusiasm, and at the close of the night's lecture Mr. Watts received quite an ovation. His reply to the black champion gave great satisfaction. There was some debate at each meeting, and a collection was made for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, which realised £1 12s. 3d. Although Mr. Stocker had increased his order for *Freethinkers*, every copy was sold, and more could have been disposed of.

At the evening meeting Mr. Watts made a strong appeal to Liverpool friends to take shares in their local Hall Company. Liverpool is sadly in need of a new Secular Hall, and if the majority of Freethinkers in the district would take shares in the company, which has been formed for several months, the need would be supplied. We shall be glad to know that the directors have received sufficient support to justify them in commencing active operations at an early date.

The annual general meeting of the shareholders of the Liverpool Hall of Science Company (Limited) will be held at Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, during the ensuing week. The precise date has not been fixed, but shareholders will receive the necessary notice, and further information can be obtained at the Hall this evening (June 5).

The Freethought Depot at Manchester, started by Messrs. Willock and Hemingway for the better sale of our literature, has received a visit from a curate of All Saints, who had preached against it. He came to say he was going to shut up the shop. Mr. Sam Standring, who happened to be in, offered to sell him anything in the window before witnesses, with a view to a blasphemy prosecution. The curate said he would "stop the sale of indecent literature." Mr. Standring asked him what indecent pamphlet was in the place. The curate replied that there was a copy of *Was Jesus Insane?* which he regarded as *very* indecent.

That All Saints curate should ventilate his grievance. No doubt the *Clarion* would give him a few paragraphs—though he mightn't like them. As for a blasphemy prosecution, it is precisely what Mr. Standring wants. Go on, thou All Saints curate! Smite the infidels hip and thigh. You won't slay many of them, but they will never take away your jaw-bone of a jackass.

Mr. Sam Standring has been preaching Freethought on Woodhouse Moor, Leeds. There was much uproar at his afternoon meeting, and blows were struck. The excitement brought a big crowd in the evening, who were very orderly during the lecture, but there was riotous conduct afterwards. Mr. Standring and his knot of friends were followed through the streets by Christian ruffians, yelling and flinging sods and stones. But the meetings will go on.

Mr. James Hooper, of Nottingham, went to the Denmark-road open-air station at Manchester on Sunday, but was not allowed to lecture there. The police warned all speakers off the ground. This is a sort of victory for the bigots, but it isn't much after all, for the Branch platform was wheeled round to Stevenson-square, where Mr. Hooper delivered his lecture.

The annual report of the South Shields Branch shows satisfactory progress. Income has increased by twenty-five per cent., and there is a similar increase in membership. The younger members have found the Improvement Class helpful, and the Branch Library has been added to considerably by the generosity of members and friends. A large quantity of Freethought literature has been sold or distributed gratuitously. Altogether the Branch is proud of the past year's work and full of hope for the future. It has a good secretary in Mr. Chapman, and an invaluable president in Mr. S. M. Peacock.

The West London Branch desires to draw the attention of its friends in Hammersmith to the open-air lectures that will be delivered every Thursday evening, at 8 o'clock, during June, at the corner of The Grove, the lectures in the hall of the Hammersmith Club being now discontinued for the season.

Mr. Neate, the active treasurer of the Bethnal Green Branch, was re-elected auditor to the Bethnal Green Vestry without opposition.

Balaam's ass being the subject of a sermon at Southend, the *Echo* admits a racy letter on the subject from Mr. J. K. Sykes, who draws freely, with acknowledgment, from Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*.

Saint Denis, a suburb of Paris, with a freethinking Municipal Council, has adopted the system of "Civil baptism." Civil

weddings and funerals have long been common, but hitherto parents have either baptised their children in the church or been content with registering them. At St. Denis, they have, however, recognised the utility of having *parrains* and *marraines* to act on behalf children in the event of their parents dying, and an official registry is now kept for that purpose.

Since writing to us last week Mr. E. Anderson has heard from Mr. Keir Hardie, the Socialist candidate for South-West Ham, who says: "I am in heartiest sympathy with and will support any proposal having for its end the objects aimed at in the draft Bill you send me. . . . I may add that I am opposed to disabilities or disqualifications being imposed on a man or a body of men for their beliefs, religious or otherwise."

The correspondence on Eternal Punishment still goes on in the *Bristol Mercury*. Mr. Logan, without knowing it, is acting as nurse to unbelief. We congratulate him on being more useful than he intended.

Judge Waite, of Chicago, has secured for the American Secular Union a promise that its representatives shall be heard before the Sunday closing of the World's Fair is definitely decided upon.

The Secular Union has decided that a grand international Freethinkers congress shall be held in Chicago during the exhibition.

M. Renan says he made the discovery long since that by writing amusing things one grows sad, and that the best way of remaining merry is to write on serious subjects. Perhaps our readers will think of this when they find us too serious.

The Humanitarian League's fourth tract (Reeves, Fleet-street; 2d.) is entitled *The Horrors of Sport*. It is written by Lady Florence Dixie, who speaks "with the matured experience of one who has seen and taken part in sport of many and varied kinds in many and varied parts of the world." She pronounces sport "horrible." We are glad to hear her eloquent voice raised against this legacy of barbarism. Killing of animals will be necessary while men are meat-eaters, but the "sport" which both kills and tortures for man's wicked pleasure is becoming more and more hateful. The Humanitarian League is doing a good work in issuing these tracts.

The Japanese some time ago adopted burial of the dead, but they have reverted to their old custom of cremation on account of its sanitary recommendations.

At one of Mr. Charlesworth's Secular lectures in Cincinnati, a Unitarian minister made the "If-I-did-not-believe-in-God" speech, but with a turn at the close that must cruelly jar on the feelings of the truly faithful. He said: "If I should be positive to-day that there was no God, and believed that death ended all, and was an Atheist, still, I would think just as much of my wife, children, and humanity, and would live just as happy and do what I could for the good of my fellow man as I would believing as I do now."

Even the Conservative Common Council of the City of London are moving, though slowly, with the times. A motion to open the City Art Loan Exhibition on Sunday was only rejected by a majority of seven. This is an augury that the time is not so far distant when the Sunday rights of the people will be conceded.

From the just published *Life of Charles Keene*, the great artist who succeeded Leech on our world-famous *Punch*, it appears that he was a sceptic. Holman Hunt says that he called upon Keene when he was in a dying condition, and plied him with "overwhelming" arguments in favor of immortality. Keene, however, was not convinced; he shook his head, and said "I cannot see it." After this it is worthy of notice that his geniality and generosity of nature held out to the very end.

It appears from the census returns that the Freethinkers of New Zealand number over 26,000, which is allowed by the *Lyttelton Times* to be an increase of over 50 per cent. The

proportion of males to females among acknowledged Freethinkers is 4 to 1. This shows the direction in which work lies.

The *Liberator*, of Melbourne, is reprinting Mr. Wheeler's articles on "Freethought Fifty Years Ago" from our columns.

Mr. Symes is busy prosecuting his candidature for the Victorian Parliament. His address to the electors of Collingwood is given in the last number of the *Liberator*. He stands as a democrat, land nationaliser, and would make the Sunday a public holiday. Of course he has much bigotry to contend against. We wish our old friend all success, and know if he is returned he will do his duty.

The new Pendlebury Branch have made arrangements to take the Co-operative Stores for Sunday afternoons. All Secularists in the district are earnestly desired to assist.

Applications for shares in the Hall of Science scheme are coming in steadily. Nearly three hundred shares have been allotted since Mr. Foote's return from Scotland. We are getting well forward with the second thousand shares. The prospect is gratifying. Still, the Directors want "More, more, more!" They are to take possession at Midsummer, and they would be greatly pleased to see 3,000 shares taken up by then. There is ample time to do it in, and we appeal to our friends and supporters to do it.

#### THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

THE twenty-first annual general meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, held at Sion College, Thames Embankment on May 25, was not quite so lively as the extraordinary meeting reported by Mr. G. Standing in our issue for May 22, but it possessed many features in common. There was the same kind of audience as there described, the same general air of twaddle and humbug, and the same kind of report and balance-sheet. The figures were not exactly the same as those of the extraordinary meeting, the total being £1,181 5s. 5d., instead of £1,001 18s. 4½d., the secretaries only taking £493, together with a sum of £369 19s. for lectures, sermons, open-air work, etc. But on the whole, many a prophet's reputation has been built upon more meagre evidence than Mr. Standing's dream.

In the absence of General Sir Willoughby Smoothbore, K.C.S.I., the chair was taken by the Lord Chancellor Halsbury, who, having acquired the woollack largely through his pertinacious opposition, as Sir Hardinge Giffard, to Mr. Bradlaugh, forgets that Christ said, "Woe unto you lawyers," and poses as a most sanctimonious Christian. His lordship's opening address was of the commonplace, Court-of-Common-Pleas order. Never before in the history of the world was there a time when it was more necessary to encounter the learned ignorance of unbelief. To simple minds the Bible itself is its own best exposition and best proof. But there were others led away by the sophistry and learned ignorance of which he had spoken, not knowing that all those theological problems which still occupied our attention had been fought in the past by some of the keenest intellects—the Christian Fathers. But there were features peculiar to our time; it was a commercial age, and many lent but an indolent attention to these problems. There had grown up a pernicious class of literature, half fiction and half controversial. Who now reads the *Age of Reason*? It had passed away and was unknown. (Oh!) But it had vigorous thought and vigorous writing. Let, however, anyone make a fashionable novel out of the *Age of Reason* and it had a large circulation. The Bible itself was the best weapon in the hands of the Christian evangelist. Recently a novelist had shown M. Renan's ignorance of the Bible. He would therefore say, don't believe what M. Renan or anyone else says about the Bible, but take it, read it, and understand it. (Much applause.)

Mr. Waterman then read an abstract of the report. Their defence "included a full recognition and affirmation of the Divine Inspiration and Authority of the Old and New Testaments." He read letters from some out-of-door lecturers, speaking of large audiences and numerous converts, and then slid to the delicate matter of finance. Who will send £100 and make collections for the society? They needed double their income to carry on their work effectively.

Prebendary Wace, in moving the adoption of the report, said it was true no society was needed to defend science, but this society was necessary because there was always a moral reluctance to accept the blessed Savior. There was already in existence the Church, the greatest society in the world, to set forth his claims, and gratitude was due to all ministers for doing this. But they had not time to attend to the work of defence. It needed a deal of learning. If there was ignorance there was also a deal of learning on the other side, and if that learning is not met it would gain the day. Prebendary Wace concluded by referring to the words of St. Peter to be ready to give an answer to any one "with meekness and with fear." From his dwelling at length on this last clause, we fancy Prebendary Wace must have heard something of the outdoor methods of the society.

Dr. Mackennal followed, and showed himself a little more up to the time of day than the Lord Chancellor by speaking of Butler and Paley as antiquated. Theological students should be thankful for opposition that produced such works as Edersheim's *Life and Times of the Messiah*. The controversies now gathered round the person of Christ, and that they should be thankful for, as he was their stronghold and greatest moral power.

After another clerical supporter and a hymn, the Rev. A. J. Harrison addressed the meeting. Mr. Harrison is always able and earnest; so much so that it is a constant wonder to us that he places his services under such a body as the C.E.S. Mr. Harrison, knowing himself to be the very man for the post, advised subscriptions for lectures at the University, and for lectures to clergy to teach them how to meet sceptics. Twenty-one years ago, said Mr. Harrison, there were plenty of Atheists, but now there were only Agnostics. We suppose it is the C.E.S. that congratulates itself on having made this vast improvement.

A vote of thanks to the Lord Chancellor and a collection terminated the proceedings. A leaflet appealing for cash was circulated, stating "a postal order for 5s. will be acceptable if you cannot send a cheque." LUCIANUS.

#### HEAVENWARD BOUND. BY THE ORTHODOX ROUTE.

To a Freethinker (at large or otherwise) the theoretical difficulties and trials of spirit life may seem to be matter scarcely worth consideration, but the orthodox Christian ought to regard this subject with deep concern. He professes to believe that he has a precious soul to save—more precious, indeed, than any other thing he possesses. It may be true that in the case of a good many Christians their souls need not be worth a great deal in order to be the most valuable things they own; but I want to know if they ever think of the possible difficulties that may beset those spirits who have departed for the heavenly shore. If they do, they have surely much cause for apprehension; for what bodily fear can be supposed to equal the dismay of the spirit who, honestly desirous of getting to heaven, finds he has undertaken the journey without instructions, and is quite overwhelmed at the extraordinary character of his new surroundings, and utterly unable to comprehend what has happened to him.

Never having visited these spirit regions before, and having no reliable information regarding the habits and customs of the inhabitants, he wonders how a respectable Christian spirit is expected to comport himself. By-and-bye, when he has somewhat recovered from the shock attending his sudden arrival on to the spirit "plane," he begins to have some idea of the extremely serious nature of the proceedings he is involuntarily engaged in. There is plainly no joke about it this time. "But where is St. Peter? and oh," he wonders, "where am I; and where—dreadful thought—where is the Devil?"

Dear friends, the position is a painful one, especially for one who so recently was a man of light and leading and a pillar of the church. Now, alas! he knows not where he is, nor exactly how he got there. He doesn't even know of what material (if any) he consists, nor how much there may be of it; nor has he any means of ascertaining, having left body, brains, eyesight, speech, and feeling all behind. The only thing he is sure he possesses is consciousness. He is appalled, not unreasonably, at the unsubstantial character of his being—his absolute nothingness, as it were. As the Christian poet feelingly observes, "Oh, what must it be to be there." He knows that he represents the late John Smith, who weighed twenty-two stone in the flesh, and he deeply regrets

having left such a goodly dwelling-place. Formerly it was no light thing that could move him; his actions were the result of mature deliberation. Now, alas! he is at the mercy of the slightest breeze; a puff of wind sends what is left of his one-time highly respected person tumbling heads over heels in all directions. If he had anything to see with, it would soothe his offended dignity to observe countless millions of spirits in the same predicament—bishops braying their spiritual heads against clowns and cardinals—all seeking their way to heaven. How this bewildered spirit would rejoice if he had only something to hold on to, or a little ballast to keep him right side up.

He hasn't even the power to ask a question. Discussion is not allowed. Thus unable to get any information from his fellow spirits and lacking the power to investigate, he begins, to long for the resurrection. His former self-esteem, conceits and pride are of no value to him. His "weary, sin-sick soul" is a burden to him; he sometimes wonders how it is some spiritualistic medium doesn't require him to do some table-rapping. He would give up all his hopes of future glory to have the privilege, if but for one occasion only, of describing his late grandmother or performing a few amateur conjuring tricks at a spiritualist meeting. It would be a most welcome diversion. But that, too, he finds is a fraud. Disappointed on every hand, he concludes to rely on the chance of an early resurrection.

In view of the difficulty of resurrecting bodies that do not exist, it may be anticipated that some unlucky spirits will have to go unsupplied. That will probably lead to an undue scramble for bodies; and inasmuch as no being but a spirit can fully realise what it is to be minus a body, the scene is likely to be a lively one. The competition will be keen; the ungodly gutter-snipe will contend with the stately bishop, and very probably leave him outside. The contest will be open. What though the spirit be that of some worthy coal dealer and class leader—yea, though he were a defunct deacon or the editor of a Methodist paper—he will have to take his chance.

In those days the fact may perhaps dawn upon some of those wretched spirits that a good sound body is as precious and as much to be esteemed as a doubtful, unsubstantial soul.

The prospect and glory of some day becoming a dead Freethinker, unquestionably and thoroughly dead, is surely to be preferred to the mysterious fate of a helpless, hopeless, spirit, doomed to await a resurrection that may never come—with a faint chance of ultimately obtaining salvation in a decayed human body.

J. M.

### CHRIST'S WASTED LIFE.

'Tis said that Christ had power to cure disease,  
To make afflicted creatures sound and sane,  
To feed the poor, and banish grief and pain;  
All this, we read, he managed at his ease.  
A priceless pow'r! which surely he did use  
From morn till night, to bless his fellow men;  
But no, he used it only now and then,  
And sometimes though requested did refuse!  
What man, to-day, if blest with such a pow'r,  
Would not make haste therewith to bless his race?  
His healing zeal would circle time and space  
To cure afflicted thousands ev'ry hour!  
A gifted man who can, but does not save—  
Whose pow'r to cure is greater than his will;  
Who holds from bleeding hearts his healing skill—  
Is kin to him who digs his victim's grave!  
In all enlightened lands of ev'ry clime,  
The measure of a healing gift unused,  
A guilty measure is of good abused;  
Directly as the talent, is the crime.  
So, Christ, who had the pow'r a thousand times,  
And yet, withal, did cure but two or three,  
Instead of all that Pity's eye could see,  
Was thereby guilty of unnumbered crimes.  
If much shall be required of him to whom  
Is given much, Christ's heartless waste of pow'r,  
That could, but did not, thousands cure each hour,  
Shall sink his worthless soul to deepest doom!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly meeting of the Executive was held at the Hall of Science on May 23, Mr. Foote in the chair. Present: Miss Vance, Mrs. Thornton Smith, Messrs. Moss, Reynolds, Smith, Standing, Wheeler, Forder, Brumage, Ivatts, Killick, Hunt, Warren, Bater, Samson, Wehrle, Roger, Hartmann, Quinton, Larkin, and Jones, secretary.

The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed, also minutes of the Organisation Committee. The financial statement for the year was presented.

An application to form a Branch in Pendlebury was granted, subject to there being no reasonable objection on the part of the Manchester Branch. An application from the London Secular Federation for a grant of money to carry on the outside lecturing work was met by a suggestion from the President to grant £10. Mr. Bater proposed, and Mr. Wheeler seconded, that £10 be granted; carried. Mr. Killick proposed, and Miss Vance seconded, that the President's report be sent by post to members of the Executive.

Mr. J. Samson then moved the following resolution: "That a committee of inquiry be appointed by the Executive of the N.S.S. to ascertain whether the London Hall of Science was morally secured for the use of the Freethought party for thirty years or other term of years dating from 1868."

The resolution was seconded by Mr. S. Hartmann, and strongly supported by Mr. O. J. Hunt. Mr. Bater advised the Executive to pass it over till next year. Mr. R. O. Smith, before the resolution was put, desired to say a few words. Many statements, he said, had been made about him during the past nine months, but in no meeting of any kind had he said anything till now. He welcomed the appointment of the committee in order that the accusations made against him might be substantiated or withdrawn. For himself, as a man and as a vice-president of the Society, he confidently awaited the result.

The President deplored the raising of this matter after a lapse of twenty-three years, and after the death of Mr. Bradlaugh. He called upon the Executive to witness that he had done his best to prevent the stirring up of ancient water, and so far as was possible, even now, he should pursue the same policy. But as the resolution was moved, seconded, and supported by those who were hostile to the Hall of Science scheme—by those who had not worked with him as closely as they might—he would not oppose it nor even hinder it. Those who moved in this matter must now take the responsibility.

The resolution was carried by 13 to 1.

Mr. Hunt proposed that five form the committee; Mr. Hartmann seconded. Mr. Bater proposed three, Mr. Wheeler seconded. Five was carried. The President proposed Mr. J. M. Robertson as a member of the committee, Mr. R. O. Smith seconded, and added that he would only vote in this instance; carried. Mr. Foote proposed Mr. G. Anderson, Mr. Roger seconded; carried. Mr. Moss proposed Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Mr. Killick seconded; carried. Mr. Hartmann proposed Mr. Samson, Mr. Hunt seconded; carried. Mr. Roger proposed Mr. Brumage, Mr. Forder seconded; carried. It was agreed that the President should sit *ex officio* on the committee, but take no part in drawing up its report.

The President, in dismissing the Council for the last time before the Conference, thanked the members for their good attendance and assistance, and hoped, although they had their differences during the year, they had not lost any friendly feeling towards one another.

STANLEY JONES (Secretary).

### OBITUARY.

Died, on March 26, at 429 Pitt-street, Sydney, N.S.W., Ebenezer Skinner, author of *The Secular Guide*, and for many years an earnest worker in the Freethought cause. He was born at Guernsey, 22 March, 1837, and at the time of his death was President of the Sydney Freethought Association and chairman of the Freethought Hall Company.

### 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.

Rector: "Are you denying yourself anything during Lent?" Mrs. Lakeside: "Indeed I am. I'm putting off getting a divorce until after Easter."

## SUNDAY OPENING OF MUSEUMS.

LAST Sunday week nearly fifty members and friends of the Sheffield Secular Society demonstrated their appreciation of the opening of museums on Sunday, by responding to the invitation of R. S. Wilson, Esq., the liberal-minded owner of Tuxford Hall, situated in the quiet, picturesque little town of Tuxford, Notts, about thirty miles from Sheffield. The object was the inspection of the extraordinary collection of rare and antique specimens acquired by Mr. Wilson during a period of many years. Carved oak, paintings, old books, china, earthenware, antique costumes, and armory were prominent in a collection of such extent and variety as to constitute it a museum such as any individual in the community might be justly proud to own. The party were most cordially received by Mr. Wilson, who conducted them through the house. They then sat down to an excellent tea, afterwards strolled about the grounds and the town, and finished by taking part in a service which Mr. Wilson usually conducts for the benefit of his townsmen in his own private chapel. The service consisted of music, singing, short scientific and moral addresses, and recitations, by a kindly and cultured lady who took the chair, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Law (of Halifax), and members of the party. The visitors will long remember their host as an example of human brotherhood in a man "who dares to do his own thinking." W. A. LILL.

## A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY.

THE Jew adores a bargain now,  
And so he did of old,  
Which caused much wrangling and delay  
Before our Lord was sold.

The buyers thought the price too high  
'Twould make a Christian weep  
To hear the cruel things they said  
In hopes to get him cheap.

But good old Judas would not budge,  
And in this wise he spoke,  
"D'yer think I'd sell Almighty Gawd  
If I weren't stoney broke?"

He's cheap as dirt at thirty bits,  
The clo' he wears is nice,  
His coat that hasn't got no seam  
Alone is worth the price.

If you gives me the sum I claims  
I bets my soul it pays,  
For see what business you can do  
And in no end of ways.

Suppose you runs a show for drinks,  
The well is all you use,  
Just scourge him and you're right as rain  
For any kind of booze.

Or else you starts a supper rooms,  
For fried fish, fresh and hot.  
You gives him one and scourges him  
Until you gets the lot.

To sailor chaps you lends him out—  
A very paying billet,  
For when you wants to raise the wind  
You simply makes him still it.

You heals the sick, the blind, the lame,  
For money in advance,  
And if the owner pays you well  
No devil stands a chance.

The vivifying game 'ud bring  
The shekels in a lump;  
Give him a corpse, you scourges him  
Until he makes it jump.

The widowers, and widows too,  
You visits both their tribes,  
And swears you'll raise their dear lost loves  
Unless they give you bribes.

As showman you can cart him round,  
And charge the mugs a fee,  
Then scourge him till he trots on ponds  
Or blasts some bloomin' tree."

When Judas ceased they paid his price,  
And he decamped in haste;  
But when he learnt their nailing plans  
He cried "What wicked waste."

The matter preyed upon his mind,  
His end is still a wonder,  
For though he quietly hanged himself  
He somehow burst asunder.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

## DECREPIT BIGOTRY.

THINGS would appear to be in a rather serious condition in the Baptist denomination. At the meeting of the Baptist Union the other day it was deemed necessary to move with the utmost gravity a resolution calling upon the delegates present to affirm their continued belief in the deity of Christ and salvation through his atonement. This alarming action was due to the fact that some few weeks ago a rising young Liverpool minister—the Rev. O. F. Aked, of Pembroke-street Baptist chapel—had the temerity to exchange pulpits for one Sunday with the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, the well-known Unitarian minister (now of Liverpool, formerly of Nottingham), an able man and a former opponent on the platform of the redoubtable Charles Bradlaugh. To an outsider the temporary exchange of pulpits would appear a very harmless proceeding. Mr. Armstrong was debarred from speaking on any theological topic, while the Baptist parson was to be allowed to spout to his heart's content on his own subject and convert his Unitarian audience if he could. This seems to have been a good business move for the Baptists, but some of the bigwigs of the denomination took a different view of the matter. Whether seriously afraid for the stability of the Baptist Church, or a little jealous of the rising reputation of the reverend delinquent whose breadth of toleration, force of character, and advertising genius have put him in front of the respectable and plodding patriarchs—we do not pretend to decide. Anyway, the Rev. C. Williams moved, and Rev. F. B. Meyer seconded, a resolution calling upon the assembled divines to re-affirm their belief in the godhead of Christ, and to condemn any and every association with those who denied it. This brought Mr. Aked to his feet, and he defended himself with warmth and vigor. He claimed as firm a belief in the divinity of Jesus as any present, and stated that the cordial admiration he entertained for Mr. Armstrong and the warm personal friendship between them inspired his action in exchanging pulpits, and that he was not prompted in any way by insidious designs on the orthodox Baptist creed. It all appears to us to be another version of "Much Ado about Nothing"; but it proves that religious bigotry is still alive and kicketh, but with about the same power as that of a superannuated donkey. R. B. HITHERSAY.

## NAPOLEON'S RELIGION.

Mrs. Abell, in her interesting *Recollections of Napoleon*, tells how she asked him, when at her father's house at Saint Helena, why he adopted Mohammedanism in Egypt. She says (p. 69): "I at once came out with the question in my Anglo-French, 'Pourquoi avez vous tourné Turque?' He did not at first understand me, and I was obliged to explain that 'tourné Turque' meant changing his religion. He laughed and said, 'What is that to you? Fighting is a soldier's religion; I never changed that. The other is the affair of women and priests; quant à moi, I always adopt the religion of the country I am in.'"

Dealer: "Are those old books you have to sell in good condition?" Merritt: "Oh, yes they are nearly all religious."

The Minister's Wife (to industrial scholar): "Eliza Jane, I'm sorry to hear from your schoolmistress you are not diligent at your needlework. You know who it is finds work for idle hands to do?" Eliza Jane (intensely anxious to propitiate): "Yes'm; Please'm, you do."

A popular official once went fishing with a clergyman. Bites were plentiful, but the official seemed to get them all. The clergyman waited patiently, and at last was favored with a nibble. Then the line parted, and his hopes and a part of his fishing tackle vanished simultaneously. He said nothing for almost a minute, and then, turning to his friend, remarked, "John, if my early education had been neglected, what do you suppose I should say now?"

**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): 8.15, entertainment and dance. Monday and Tuesday at 8, social gatherings. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class (few members wanted). Thursday at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green — Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: Saturday, June 4, at 7.30, dancing class (6d.) Sunday at 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, H. Snell, "Is Civilisation Due to the Cross?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Holy Spirit."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 6, tea and social gathering.

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, A. Guest, "Paley's Evidences of Christianity"; 7, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Slavery."

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

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "God's Favorites."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Slavery."

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, S. H. Alison will lecture

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

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, J. Rowney will lecture; 3.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Bible."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8, a lecture.

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. J. Ramsay, "Glad Tidings of Great Joy."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. Durrant, "The God of the Bible."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, J. Fagan, "Miracles."

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Is the Old Testament a Divine Record?"

Lambeth—New Cut (near Victoria Hall): 11.30, a lecture.

Leyton (open space near Victoria-road, High-road): 11.30, R. Rosetti, "The Bible and Science."

Midland Arches (near Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, a lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Pious Bogies and Bogiemen."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Forty Days' Fast."

Plaistow Green: 11.30, H. Snell, "Christian and Pre-Christian Civilisation"

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, H. Courtney, "Common Prayer and Prayers."

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, a lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, C. J. Steinberg will lecture; 3.15, W. Heaford, "Christianity and Secularism Compared."

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, W. Heaford, "Reason and Revelation."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Why I am a Secularist."

**COUNTRY.**

Hull—St. George's Hall, 6 Story-street, Albion-street: 6.30, entertainment.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Smith, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (Exodus xxii. 18)."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 6.30, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., "From Christianity to Atheism" (free).

Newcastle-on-Tyne — Lovaine Hall, St. Mary's-place: N.S.S. Conference, morning, 10.30; afternoon, 2.30; public meeting at 7.

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, W. D. Macsiccar will lecture.

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

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, musical and other recitals, singing, etc.

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

Hull—Corporation Field: 3, a lecture.

Manchester — Stephenson-square; 3, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., "Origin of Man."

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**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—June 5, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—June 5, e., Camberwell; 12, m., Wood Green; a., Finsbury Park; 19, m., Battersea; a., Kilburn; 26, m., Camberwell.

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

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—June 5, m., Camberwell; 12, Clerkenwell; 19, m., Hornsey; July 3, m., Camberwell; 10, Clerkenwell; 17, m., Westminster; 24 to 31, Annual Tour. Aug. 7, Camberwell; 14, Southampton; 21, Westminster.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—June 5, m., Bethnal Green; e., Edmonton; 12, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 19, m., Mile End; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 26, m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow.

SAM STANDRING, 106 Oxford-road, All Saints' Manchester.—June 5, Newcastle; 12, Rochdale; 19, Manchester; 26, Chester. Mondays, Manchester; Thursdays, Pendlebury.

C. J. STEINBERG, 104 Mile End-road, E.—June 5, m., Victoria Park; 12, m., Columbia-road; 19, m., Lambeth; 26, m., Victoria Park; July 10, m., Columbia-road; 17, m., Lambeth; 24, m., Bethnal Green; 31, a., Finsbury Park.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Chant-street, Stratford, E.—June and July, all mornings booked; June 12, e., West Ham. Aug. 7, m. and e., Chatham; 14, m., Bethnal Green; e., Walthamstow; 21, m., Victoria Park; 28, m., Wood Green.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon-street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—June 5, N.S.S. Conference; 12, Nottingham. July 11, Hull.

T. THURLOW, 34 Wetherell-road, South Hackney.—June 19, July 3, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, mornings, Kingsland Green; May 29, e., June 12, e., and June 26, m., Walthamstow.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—June 5, Conference; 12, m., Kingsland Green; 19, e., Battersea. July 17, m., Kingsland Green. Aug. 7, e., Hammersmith; 28, m., Lambeth

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