

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## AFTER THE CONFERENCE.

Two years and four months ago Charles Bradlaugh resigned the presidency of the National Secular Society. Broken health compelled him to take this step. He was really in the shadow of death. But Christian charity discovered another reason, or rather two reasons, which contradicted each other. It was said that he wished to free his political career from Secular associations; it was also said that the Secular cause was decaying, and no longer of any use to him. Twelve months later his career was ended. Christians then declared that the Secular movement died with him. According to men like Hugh Price Hughes and W. T. Stead, it was practically buried in his grave.

These enemies of Secularism allowed the wish to be father to the thought. They put prophecy for history. They buried us before we were dead, and wrote our epitaph while we were full of life and energy.

Subsequent events have shown their absurdity, and the hasty prophets have fallen dumb. Everyone can see that the Secular movement is not decaying nor retrograding, but strengthening and advancing. Its organisation steadily improves; its propaganda grows more active; it is engaging in larger enterprises than it ever before attempted. Changes have taken place, and changes will take place. But to live is to change. Rigidity is weakness. The stereotyping of organisations is ossification, and ossification is the slow approach of death.

Three N.S.S. Conferences have been held since Charles Bradlaugh's resignation. Each has been an improvement on its predecessor. Last Sunday's included the largest delegation of Branches for several years, and the list showed a considerable increase in the number of members per Branch. Those who take the trouble to read the President's report will see what progress has been made during the past twelve months.

The Conference did me the honor to re-elect me as President. There was no dissentient voice. I presume I have the confidence of the party. It is impossible to prevent differences of opinion. They necessarily arise among honest men with different minds, different points of view, and different ranges of experience. Nevertheless the Society must have a president, and it cannot have a president without his policy. What it should insist on is that he listen to the opinion of others. That I have always done and shall continue to do; but I shall always form my own judgment, and stand by it until I see reason to change.

The new Vice-Presidents were elected unanimously. Mr. Hartmann is a sterling Secularist. Mr. Roger is an old and active worker, though by no means an old man. Mr. Parris needs no commendation. Mr. Watts is a man of great experience and popular eloquence. I heartily welcome him as a very valuable colleague.

The change in the secretaryship was not made without friction. A personal agitation had been carried on in the district, and the Northern delegates were misled. A paragraph from my pen beforehand, or a word from me at the Conference, would have prevented most of the trouble. But I refrained. The policy recommended by the Organisation Committee, and approved by the Executive, should have been discussed entirely on its merits. Our supreme law is the good of the Society. The old arrangement was right enough in its day, but now we are entering upon an era of organisation, after the heroic period of Charles Bradlaugh's leadership, we must shape our policy accordingly. Lecturing and organising work in the provinces cannot now be done by the person who is to do the clerical work of the Executive in London. It only means confusion and delay. The clerical work will henceforth be done by a paid servant of the Executive, and the lecturing and organising work by the diplomaed special lecturers and others persons under the control of the Organisation Committee.

With regard to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, it should be noted that the Executive's action has been unanimously endorsed. The Fund is left to be dealt with on the conditions of the Trustees' circular. The Hall of Science scheme was not discussed, thanks to the haste of its enemies in moving for a committee of inquiry before the Conference. When the Committee's report is ready it will be decisive. I await it with absolute serenity. Meanwhile I confidently ask the Freethought party to support the scheme. The directors are to take possession of the premises at Midsummer.

One thing remains to be said. The National Secular Society's work cannot be carried on without funds. During the last year or two the Freethought party has been heavily taxed by special subscriptions. A more normal period is now opening. I appeal to the wealthier members of the party to send us an annual donation apart from their member's subscription. A separate list of such donations will be kept and published in the *Freethinker*. Let every well-to-do Secularist ask himself, "How much can I afford to give this year to the Freethought cause?" And having decided the question, let him (or her) send in the amount as early as possible. They will not dispute my right to ask this. My office is an unpaid one. It is all work, worry and expense. I am a good deal of money out of pocket every month; the presidential duties occupy a great deal of my time, which is withdrawn from profitable work; and the preoccupation of mind is itself a costly burden. But I do not complain. My life is dedicated to the cause. All I ask is that others should help it according to their means and opportunities. Many poor men, comparatively speaking, do the hardest work of our Society. Let the wealthier members, who do not give their time or tax their energies, afford us the financial support which is also necessary.

G. W. FOOTE.



## FIGHTING: FOR WHAT?

"Life," said Thomas Carlyle, "is a battle march"; and in our efforts to establish Secular truths we find a verification of the "Sage of Chelsea's" apt remark. As Freethinkers, we are fighters by necessity, inasmuch as we have constantly, in our struggle with the pretensions of popular theology, to contend with long-standing prejudices, uncontrolled emotions, and priestly intolerance. Our combats, however, are frequently too one-sided because the faith of our antagonists, like that of the ancient Romans, sits but lightly upon them. Church-goers, as a rule, are thoroughly indifferent as to the why and wherefore of the opinions they avow. While no doubt some professed Christians have examined the credentials of their faith, the great majority of them accept their beliefs on trust, without even attempting to study any logical grounds for so doing. Their position is illustrated by the temperance advocate, who, addressing a Sunday-school, asked: "Now can any of you children give me a reason why I am not a drunkard?" There was no reply for a moment; then a childish voice in the rear of the room piped out: "'Cause this is a prohibition town." In just the same way, no doubt, the great bulk of Christians are what they are because they live in what is called a "Christian country"—not because they know anything about any evidences of the truth of their religion.

The Secular mode of fighting is intellectual, and also on an honorable plane. We regard public discussion as being of great advantage, for the reason that it draws the attention of persons who are not in the habit of reading and thinking, or who only study one side of a subject, to the fact that many questions have two sides, and that the most cherished opinions, however persistently held and however dogmatically expressed, are open to controversy. Infallibility does not belong to human nature, and is unattainable by man, however great his intellect or profound his thought. This fact will be disputed by few in theory, but in practice many act as though they had already reached it, and that their chief business in life was to make it known. To such, listening to a discussion, conducted in a fair and gentlemanly way by competent advocates, cannot but prove of the greatest value as a lesson in educational training, tending to remove the rough asperities of one-sided thought, and to remove the bigotry and narrowness which are, alas, too common amongst men of all shades of opinion. And yet we know leading men in the Christian community who positively refuse to discuss even the minutest matter which appears to them to hint at unbelief, and we strongly suspect that a similar feeling influences most of their followers. The way they follow the injunctions of their pastors not to read, or allow their children to read, "infidel" literature, shows the keen sense they have of what the result would be should they permit any real evidence to enter their heads. It is comparatively easy for them to shut out the evidence—self-interest, indolence and ignorance are all involved in bringing about this result; but if the evidence once entered, and their minds were sufficiently cultivated to receive it and to understand it, nobody could question the result. Secularists are willing to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus"—as far as that "truth" can be made manifest. We say with Milton, "Let truth and falsehood grapple; whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" This is the watchword of Secularists, and hence they are always ready to meet an antagonist who is competent and gentlemanly, either on the public platform or through the press. The clergy also profess to believe in the truth of Milton's statement, but seldom indeed can they be found to act upon it. Their entire teaching is usually a protest

against controversy of any kind, and when it is engaged in, it seldom gains any support from the churches. This was painfully illustrated in my recent debate with the Rev. Dr. McCann in Birmingham. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but they are not numerous. And consequently when a clergyman, who has the courage of his convictions, and who is at the same time able to defend his views intellectually, comes out boldly to champion Christianity and oppose Secularism, he certainly deserves the gratitude of his class, though he is frequently blamed rather than praised by members of his own party for his course of action.

One of the first essentials in our fighting is true courage allied with sound judgment. The chances of securing a victory will be exceedingly remote where these two qualities are absent. Of course it is not always easy to judge, when two courses are open in reference to an act, which of the two is more courageous, unless one has all the circumstances before him, and weighs them with great care and deliberation. It was common in ancient times to look upon suicide as a brave act, and there are men now living who take that view. The truth is, however, the man who takes his own life is a coward, since he lacks courage to face life and its difficulties, and so gets out of the world by a sort of back door. True bravery must be allied with noble deeds, not with those which are mean and unmanly.

For what are we as Secularists fighting? Not, as it is frequently alleged, to destroy the true and the useful, even when they are found in the Bible, in the Church, or in any of the religions of the world. These are virtues necessary to the nobility of life, and are recognised by us as being of the utmost value wherever they are discovered. Our war is with the evils of theology, the curse of priestcraft, and the low grovelling teachings of orthodoxy. It is these impediments to human happiness that have robbed mankind of self reliance, producing a despicable feeling of submission to, and contentment with wrongs as humiliating as they are deplorable. The history of man proves that many of the drawbacks from which the human race suffer, are the unmistakable results of that ignorance and false teaching which have been fostered and indulged in by the priestly order and its unfortunate dupes. We desire it, therefore, to be understood that it is within the power of man himself to remove all evils that are capable of being removed if he will but attend to the proper duties of time rather than to the wild fancies about "eternity." The sincere toiler will always find abundance of useful work before him, for one improvement suggests another, and men, as they grow more refined, feel things intolerable which in their grosser state, seemed very decent to them.

We war also with that indiscriminate obedience to ancient beliefs which for ages fostered a blind prostration of intellect to a supposed supernatural power. When men could not reason, they accepted any conclusion that seemed to them to cover the whole of the facts. They did not investigate nature and try and ascertain the true cause of things; they attributed all phenomena to gods or devils. And upon this assumption Christianity, in common with many other religions, is founded. Men have always been seeking to please the gods, and they considered that it was a matter of very little concern what reputation they attained among their fellow men, so long as they had the approving smile of the Deity. Now the truth that Secularists seek to establish is that, in the present age, the real test of goodness of conduct is its usefulness to the world. Though we do not make loud pretensions of loving those who hate us, the whole gist and scope of our morality is directed towards promoting the welfare of society by means which shall also secure the welfare of its component elements. In our mutual relationship we find the



necessary encouragement and motive power for the display of every virtue. The theory of the supernatural and the doctrine of immortality have nothing whatever to do with our prudence, our courage, our honesty, or our purity of character.

CHARLES WATTS.

### HOW CHRISTIANS LOVE THE NEGRO.

As a negro lecturer is stumping the country extolling Christianity and vilifying Secularism, it may not be out of place to say a few words about the way in which his white fellow-Christians in the United States treat the black man.

Overwhelming proof could be given if necessary to show that the Christian Church in America was almost wholly on the side of slavery, but that was most effectively done some years ago in a little pamphlet written by Mr. Symes, published by the Free-thought Publishing Co., and, for all I know to the contrary, still on sale on our bookstalls. That is not my purpose however, being unnecessary. The few words I am going to write is to show that the negro is still socially an outcast and a pariah among Christians in the States.

In this country, where the negro is a *rara avis*, people flock to see and hear a colored lecturer or preacher when they would not go into the next street to listen to a white man many times his superior as a platform orator or pulpit thumper. A negro always suggests a nigger minstrel with bones, banjo, rolling eyes and rollicking fun, and consequently, whether in the pulpit or on the platform, whenever the "darkey" says anything approximately funny, the fundamental difference between the genuine article and the artificial product is forgotten in the outward affinity of the two, and he invariably "fetches" us. We feel it our duty to laugh, and we laugh accordingly. The association of ideas is so strong that a "nigger" who wasn't a bit funny would be a dead failure. We get ready to laugh the moment he gets on his legs, and as soon as he opens his mouth the impulse is irresistible. It isn't the black man's fault: it's because we're not used to him. Then we almost instinctively look round for the old umbrella and the battered tall hat; failing these, we are fain to be content with contemplating his wool and the size of his feet, which, as the scriptures saith of the poor, we always have.

In America it is different. There the negro is common enough—too common the Americans think. Whilst English Christians flock to see and effusively shake hands with their "black brother," his co-religionists in the States refuse to worship in the same churches, and hold the "nigger" in undisguised contempt. This is as true of the North as it is of the once slave-owning South. In the Southern States, where Christian ministers, in common with Christian laymen, held slaves; where "niggers" were bred like horses and mules for the plantation by Christians (Virginia alone used to "raise" six thousand "niggers" annually for the Southern market); where Christians regarded and treated the negro as a mere chattel or brute, where he was without the protection of the Christian-made law, without having committed any crime except the crime of being born with a black skin; where he could be bought and sold or given away by Christians; where he could be scourged or tortured by Christians without possibility of redress; where negro husbands and wives, parents and children could be torn asunder and driven into separate bondage whenever it pleased their Christian owner; where there was no protection for the chastity of negro women from Christian debauchees; where he could make no contracts, hold no property, or be a party or witness in any suit where a white Christian was interested, however much he (the negro) might have been injured; where the Christian-made law

set no limits to the punishment a negro might receive from his Christian master; where, in South Carolina, a Christian who killed a slave could clear himself by his own oath; where he was forbidden to learn to read or write and punished for disobedience by Christian officers for the purpose; where he was prevented from meeting for religious worship by white Christians on pain of being whipped; where in Louisiana, if any person was caught teaching him, such person might have been imprisoned for life, or even put to death by white Christians; where legal marriages among slaves was not recognised, and where in Virginia he could be put to death by Christians for practising medicine; where all these things were done by Christians in the South, who defended slavery with weapons obtained out of that armory of all villainy, the Bible, it were but natural that they would be hard to reconcile to a recognition of the black man's rights. But even among the enlightened Christians in the North he is socially ostracised. Some years ago Fred. Douglas, the representative head of the colored race in America—whom the late Henry Ward Beecher said there was "no more gifted man, and no man whose superb eloquence more deserves to be listened to"—took a sitting in a Presbyterian church in Washington; but the good Christians could not tolerate such sacrilege, and protested vigorously against such a degrading association. The same Fred. Douglas is a personal friend of Col. Ingersoll, at whose house I believe he is a welcome guest. Let Mr. Celestine Edwards, who is never tired of holding Atheists up to public execration, make a note of this. H. J.

(To be concluded).

### LABOUCHERE FINDS SALVATION.

MR. HENRY LABOUCHERE was once the colleague of Charles Bradlaugh, at least in the representation of Northampton. He was also, at one time, like his deceased colleague, a severe critic of "General" Booth's balance-sheet. Since then he has become one of Booth's friends, and his name appears with Mr. Steads and other persons' at the end of an appeal for funds in aid of the "Darkest England" social scheme. This has caused a good deal of surprise, at which Mr. Labouchere *himself* affects surprise. In the pages of *Truth* he explains that he has "closely investigated" the "General's" expenditure, and is convinced that "a number of people in real want have been assisted," and that "a number of waifs and strays have been given a chance to make a new start." All this, of course, may be true without entitling Mr. Booth's social scheme to any greater support than scores of philanthropic experiments that are unable to gain its cheap publicity. Mr. Labouchere may not see this, but he *does* see that Salvationism is a queer form of religion. He therefore hastens to say that he expresses no opinion as to the religious side of the Army's doings, except that "if people can be induced to play banjos and pray in the open air, they are better employed than in fuddling themselves silly in a pot-house." In other words, one form of folly is preferable to the other; which is a questionable compliment to the "Army." Mr. Labouchere does not stop to inquire if the Army recruits are really drawn in any considerable number from the pot-house. He assumes what so many of Mr. Booth's critics have strenuously denied. By some means Mr. Labouchere has found salvation, or it has found him. He helps to beat "General" Booth's big drum, and so long as he does that effectually the Grand Old Showman will indulge in nothing but a quiet smile at his reference to banjos and pot-houses, and prayer and fuddling. We congratulate the "General" on his success in enlisting the editor of *Truth*. It is a further proof of what we have always held, namely, that the great Mr. Booth is one of the most dexterous men of business on this populous planet.



NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1892.

THE arrangements made by the North-Eastern Secular Federation for the Conference this year were of the most painstaking and satisfactory description. Central rooms were provided for the reception of delegates, and every attention given to their comfort. Business as well as pleasure was provided for, and at these rooms some twenty representatives of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Branches did a good stroke in the matter of union and federation.

Lovaine Hall, the handsome building of the Geographical Institute, was tastefully decorated. The names of leading Freethinkers of all ages and countries were on the walls, and the platform was decorated with plants and framed portraits of Col. Ingersoll and Charles Bradlaugh, the latter an oil painting by a local artist. Above appeared the motto, "Thorough."

There was a good muster, members and friends attending from Dublin, Edinburgh, and many other parts, in addition to the delegates by whom the following Branches were represented:—Arbroath, A. B. Moss; Ball's Pond, E. Bater; Battersea, A. T. Dipper and T. Jameson; Bedlington, R. H. Wharrier; Bethnal Green, R. Forder; Birmingham, C. Watts; Blyth, W. Rhodes; Bolton, W. Collins; Bradford, J. W. Gott and J. Sunderland; Bristol, R. Forder; Camberwell, S. Hartmann; Chester-le-Street, W. Shipley and W. Pace; Cramlington, M. Weatherburn and W. J. Bowman; Crook, J. Robinson and J. Roos; Deptford, W. H. Reynolds; East London, W. H. Reynolds; Ebchester, W. R. Thompson; Farsley, J. Gye; Finsbury, E. Bater; Finsbury Park, G. Ward and Miss M. A. Robins; Glasgow, J. P. Gilmour; Grimsby, G. L. Alward; Hamilton, J. P. Gilmour; Heckmondwike, W. B. Nicholls; Huddersfield, J. G. Dobson and T. Stead; Hull, G. E. C. Naewiger; Leeds, J. G. Fisher; Manchester, A. Hemingway and S. Standing; Newcastle, G. Selkirk, H. Keppel, and A. Dawson; North West London, Miss E. M. Vance; Nottingham, J. Hooper; Oxhill, H. Nicholson; Paisley, J. P. Gilmour; Pendlebury, J. R. Willock; South Shields, S. M. Peacock and J. Sanderson; Spennymoor, T. Phillips; Sunderland, R. Weightman and W. R. Stansell; West Auckland, J. Little and W. Hodgson; West London, C. J. Hunt and G. Brown; Westminster, C. J. Hunt; Wigan, J. Billing.

At half-past ten the President took his place on the platform, followed by Miss Vance, Messrs. Watts, Forder, Smith, Reynolds, Moss, Wheeler, and Stanley Jones.

Mr. FOOTE, in formally opening the Conference, said that on their agenda were some matters that would be regarded as contentious. But all were working for one common object. Differences of opinion would necessarily arise; Conferences would be tame without them. But they had a common wish for the success of the movement and the memory of a great leader, which should make them tolerant of each others' differences and respectful for each others' motives.

The minutes of the last Executive having been taken as read, Mr. HOOPER made an inquiry as to whether there had been any invitation sent to Col. Ingersoll.

The PRESIDENT said that had better wait until after hearing the report, which he then proceeded to read as follows:—

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

Last year's Conference was held under the shadow of a great grief, as the previous year's Conference had been held under the shadow of a great loss. Charles Bradlaugh's resignation of the presidency deprived this Society of the active service of a great leader; his death made the deprivation final and complete. His voice, pen, counsel, and moral support were lost to us for ever. All that was left us was an animating memory, and the prestige of a famous name.

The shadow of that loss has lingered over the year which has just closed. So great a leader as Charles Bradlaugh could not disappear without much perturbation. Changes have taken place, and perhaps the chapter of these is not yet ended. But such changes are not death, nor even decay; they are rather the adjustments of a sound, strong organism to altered conditions of existence. As a matter of fact, while there have been times of greater excitement than the present, under the stimulus of persecution, there has seldom, if ever, been a period in which the Society has shown so much steady vigor or enjoyed such a gratifying prospect.

Each year of late has shown a decided increase in the number of new members joining the Society. In 1889-90

the new members numbered 709; in 1890-91 the figure rose to 794; in 1891-92 it has risen to 1074.

Owing to the special subscriptions for the settlement of Mr. Bradlaugh's affairs, and the erection of a monument over his grave; the special subscription in connexion with Baskerville Hall, Birmingham; the Bradlaugh Memorial, and the London Hall of Science scheme; the appeals for all of which have drawn from the Freethought party more than £3,000; there has been a natural falling off in the Society's income during the past year. Fortunately the year was begun with a handsome balance at the banker's, otherwise the new balance-sheet would have shown a considerable deficit. In view of the Society's financial situation the Executive has put a notice of motion on the Conference agenda with respect to the secretaryship, which if carried will, it is believed, effect a large saving without impairing the efficiency of the Society's work.

Notwithstanding the reduction of the minimum subscription, and of the amount per member payable by the Branches, the balance-sheet shows an increase in the total amount of members' subscriptions, from £116 7s. 2½d. last year to £130 4s. 9½d. this year. There is reason to hope for a continued increase in this portion of the Society's income.

The balance-sheet also shows that the Society's *Almanack* has brought about the same return as last year. In reality, however, the sale has slightly improved, as both years' returns of unsold copies from the wholesale agents are included in this year's account.

The Executive takes this opportunity of regretting the inadequate operation of the rule that every Branch should make an annual collection for the General Fund and another for the Benevolent Fund. For the latter Fund 24 Branches have made collections; for the former Fund only 13. It is hoped that the Branches will not fail to make these collections punctually in future.

It should be here mentioned, in passing, that the figures presented to the Conference are only those of the Central Executive. All the Branches have their separate balance-sheets. For some time, under Mr. Bradlaugh's presidency, it was attempted to include these in the general balance-sheet, but they were sent in with such irregularity that the attempt was abandoned, and it has not been resumed.

During the past year new Branches have been formed at Luton, Rushden, Northampton, Cheltenham, Ebchester, Arbroath, Derby, and Bristol. A Mediterranean Branch has also been formed at Malta. The Chester Branch has extended into the Cheshire Branch. The Woolwich Branch has been reformed. The Chatham Branch, which seceded some years ago, has rejoined the Society. Since the close of the financial year new Branches have also been formed at Aberdeen and Dundee. This makes a total of 12 new Branches during the past year, with 2 to be carried forward into the next year's account.

Taking a broad survey of the Society's work, through its Executive, its Branches, and their district Federations, it may be said that there are abundant signs of life and activity. Crippled in some respects, through causes already indicated, the work has been carried on in other respects with unabated and even heightened vigor.

The London Secular Federation, a district organisation of all the Branches in the metropolis, has more than sustained its reputation for energy and usefulness. Its free propagandist lectures in various parts of London, its promotion of open-air meetings during the summer, its social gatherings, and its annual dinner and excursion, are some of the enterprises of an organisation which has put new life into the Freethought movement in London. Mr. Pownceby continues to act as secretary, and fulfils his duties with zeal and ability. Some idea of the propagandist work of the London Branches may be gathered from the fact that the common monthly program issued by the Federation includes more than twenty open-air stations during the summer, at which lectures are delivered (sometimes twice) every Sunday.

The North Eastern Secular Federation, whose centre is Newcastle, treads close upon the heels of its metropolitan elder brother. Under the able presidency of Mr. S. M. Peacock, and the indefatigable secretaryship of Mr. Joseph Brown, it has immensely advanced the Freethought cause in Durham and Northumberland. It has formed new Branches, sustained old ones, carried the propaganda of Secularism into all parts of the district, and held social gatherings which have strengthened the bonds between its



federated Branches. The lecturing tours of Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. C. J. Hunt, and Mr. Stanley Jones, under the Federation's auspices, have been very beneficial to the Freethought cause in this district.

Mr. Sam Standing, being stationed for at least twelve months at Manchester, with liberty to visit the neighboring towns, has been very active and enterprising, and his efforts have resulted in the formation of a Lancashire and Yorkshire Secular Federation, of which it is hoped that a good report will be given at next year's Conference.

Mr. Charles Watts, having returned from Canada to his native land, has settled at Birmingham, where, through the munificence of Mr. Daniel Baker, Baskerville Hall is placed in his hands for the advocacy and organisation of Secularism. Subscriptions have been raised to renovate and decorate the building, which is now a credit to the movement. Mr. Watts has been very energetic at Birmingham and elsewhere in this country during the past year. His intention is to form a Midland Secular Federation, with Birmingham as its centre. Preliminary steps have already been taken to effect this object.

On Good Friday your President had the pleasure of opening a Secular Hall at New Brompton. He was supported on that occasion by Mr. G. J. Holyoake. The hall is the property of the Chatham Branch of your Society. The site is freehold, the building is commodious; and the raising of the necessary funds by a comparatively small body, consisting almost exclusively of working people, is extremely creditable to them, and honorable to the cause they are maintaining.

For many years—in fact, from the opening of the place until last year—the Freethought lectures at the London Hall of Science were arranged by the lessee, Mr. R. O. Smith. After Mr. Bradlaugh's death, however, Mr. Smith felt unable to bear this responsibility. Your President also felt that the lecturing arrangements would be better in the hands of a representative body. Accordingly he proposed to the Executive to pay Mr. Smith £250 a year for the use of the large hall on Sunday mornings and evenings, and on Thursday evenings, with certain other uses of the minor hall and committee room. This proposal was unanimously accepted by the Executive, and the financial side of the experiment is shown in a separate balance-sheet which lies on the table and is open to inspection.

Prior to the new arrangement the money taken at the Hall of Science doors on Sunday were—after deducting cash expenses—divided equally between the lecturer and the lessee. On other occasions a fixed rent was paid for the use of the hall or other part of the premises. Under the new arrangement the fixed rent applies to Sundays as well as other days, and your Executive takes the entire management of all Freethought meetings.

The balance-sheet shows a deficit of £24 on six months' working. But it must be remembered that nearly that amount has been expended on a new feature of the Sunday evening meetings—namely, vocal and instrumental music. It must also be borne in mind that most of the Thursday evening meetings, and all Sunday morning meetings, have been thrown open to the public free. About forty free lectures have thus been given, and this could not be done without expense to someone. On the other hand, many members of the N.S.S. have been enrolled at these meetings, and subscriptions received for various objects. It is probable, therefore, if a complete debit and credit account could be shown—which is hardly possible—that there has been no *real* deficit in connection with this experiment, even if the gain of propagating Freethought be excluded from the calculation.

It is probable that the N.S.S. will soon be the tenant of the National Secular Hall Society (Limited), which has been formed for the general purpose of providing Secular Halls in London and the provinces, and the immediate purpose of acquiring the eighty-six years' lease of the London Hall of Science, and converting it into a first-class Secular Hall and Institute, so that the place which was the scene of Charles Bradlaugh's chief labors (as a Freethinker) may continue, under improved conditions, to be the headquarters of the Society which he established and so many years presided over. This enterprise has not been undertaken by the N.S.S., but as your President has taken a leading part in it, for no other reason than your Society's welfare, he will have an opportunity, before this Conference closes, to make a fuller statement of what has been done and what it is proposed to do.

A considerable number of persons regard this Hall of Science scheme as the most substantial memorial of Charles Bradlaugh it is possible to secure. The Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company, which declined to purchase the lease of the Hall of Science, and thus necessitated the formation of the National Secular Hall Society, has been in other hands than those of your President and his closest colleagues since last August. During nine months the directors have apparently secured something under 300 fresh shares, the great bulk of the total (999) subscribed shares having been secured by the original promoters. This rate of progress being regarded by many shareholders, and other friends of the object, as unsatisfactory; and many subscribers to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund being desirous to have their donations applied to the Hall of Science scheme; your Executive resolved to let the subscribers decide the matter for themselves, as far as possible individually, leaving the three trustees (Messrs. Foote, Anderson and Reynolds) to give effect to the subscribers' wishes. The result of this simplest method of dealing with a real difficulty will be disclosed in the statement to be made at a later stage of this Conference. Whatever discussion may take place, it is apparent that the Executive's action cannot now be undone. The only point that can be debated with any advantage is the disposition of that part of the Fund as to which the trustees have received no direction.

By the vote of the last Conference the old list of Special Lecturers was abolished. Fresh applications were made under the new rules, and diplomas have been issued to Messrs. A. B. Moss, H. Snell, S. Standing, R. Forder, Stanley Jones, and W. Heaford.

At the request of the Executive your President has drawn up a succinct statement as to the existing Blasphemy Laws, and the way in which they oppress and hamper our party. This statement will be printed and circulated immediately. It is chiefly intended for use during the forthcoming general elections. Every candidate should be furnished with a copy, and asked whether he will help to remove the disabilities under which Freethinkers, and only Freethinkers, suffer in the present state of English law.

The Liberty of Bequest Committee, which is presided over by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, having now provided in its draft Bill, not only for the right of inquiry, but also for the right of propounding and maintaining its results, this Conference will probably agree that the Bill should be heartily supported, although nothing can fully satisfy our party but the sweeping away of the odious Blasphemy Laws. It is gratifying to record that a very large number of Liberal and Radical members of the present House of Commons, and candidates for the next, have promised to vote for such a Bill if it should be introduced. The chief difficulty now is to find a member able and willing to take charge of the Bill in the House.

During the past year there have been two special attacks on the freedom of the press, which it has been left for the Freethought party (as usual) to repel. In the metropolis, Mr. H. S. Young was prosecuted for sending a Malthusian tract in a sealed envelope through the Post Office. Mr. Lushington, the Bow-street magistrate, before whom the case was tried, admitted that the tract was couched in unexceptionable language. Nevertheless he condemned Mr. Young to pay a fine and costs amounting to more than £50. This sentence, however, was appealed against; and owing to the dilatory action of the Attorney-General it is still undecided. With Mr. Young's social opinions this Society has nothing to do, but it is concerned with his right to express them. Your President, therefore, in conjunction with Dr. C. R. Drysdale, formed a Free Discussion Defence Committee, which collected subscriptions and held public meetings to protest against the prosecution. Those meetings had much to do, in all probability, with the more cautious attitude which the authorities have since assumed.

At Newcastle, a Christian gentleman, Mr. H. Loader, was prosecuted for selling a medical work on the population question. The Newcastle Secularists, with the aid of a few Spiritualists, formed a Committee, raised funds for Mr. Loader's defence, and held two very successful indignation meetings. Your President addressed the first meeting, which broke the silence of the local press. Dr. Drysdale addressed the second meeting, after Mr. Loader's imprisonment. But the heavy work fell upon the Committee, and especially upon Mr. Joseph Brown, its self-sacrificing secretary.

Mr. Young's case is put upon the shelf, and although Mr. Loader was taken to gaol, his term of imprisonment was



merciful in comparison with previous sentences. It may be hoped, therefore, that we have seen the last of these prosecutions. When journals like the *Newcastle Leader* are alive to the importance of ventilating the Malthusian as well as other social questions; when they champion free discussion, and boldly rebuke those who would stifle it; every one can perceive that the bigotry of presumptuous ignorance, or privileged imposture, is drawing near to its doom.

In concluding this report it will be well to cast a glance abroad. We have no direct communications from America, but the Freethought papers in Canada and the United States show a considerable activity in propaganda. Col. Ingersoll's re-appearance in the lecture field has stimulated the zeal and energy of the Secular party. Mr. Joseph Symes, one of your vice-presidents, is still fighting a very hard battle at Melbourne. He is also a candidate for parliamentary honors in the Collingwood division. Mr. Wallace Nelson is also laboring zealously in the southern hemisphere. Mr. W. W. Collins, another of your vice-presidents is leaving the Canterbury Freethought Association to return to Sydney and fulfil his engagements with the Freethinkers in that city. The Canterbury Association has applied to your President for a lecturer to succeed Mr. Collins. The duties are not too arduous, and a guarantee of £5 per week is offered for twelve months. Your President's recommendation will entitle any man to the post, but he does not, at the moment, know of any well-qualified lecturer who is ready to accept it.

The President, Vice-Presidents, the other officers and members of the Executive, now resign their trust into your hands. It is for you to approve or disapprove; for you to discuss the past and decide the future. All the Executive of a voluntary Society like yours are entitled to ask, is a just appreciation of their efforts, and a generous interpretation of their motives. And this, they believe, they will not ask in vain.

Mr. FISHER (Leeds) and Mr. HOOPER (Nottingham) moved and seconded the adoption of the report, which was carried without a dissident.

Mr. REYNOLDS (treasurer) read the items of the balance-sheet, which showed a balance in hand of £85 2s. 2d. on the General Fund and £19 7s. 7d. on the Benevolent Fund.

Mr. GILMOUR (Glasgow) asked concerning the grants made to Branches. He thought these tended to demoralise. Several delegates expressed a directly contrary opinion. On the motion of Mr. S. Standing (Manchester) and Mr. Naewiger (Hull), the treasurer's report was unanimously adopted.

The election of President being the next business, Mr. Foote resigned the chair to Mr. Forder, who called on Mr. Ward, of the Finsbury Park Branch, to move the resolution standing in his name—"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President." This he thought, on the whole, the most important business of the Conference. This was seconded by Mr. Bowman (Cramlington), and supported by Messrs. Bater and Hemingway, and carried amid much applause.

Mr. FOOTE, on resuming the chair, said he received the President's hammer from the hands of a great and strong man. It was not passed on to him by the dictation of others. He trusted his presidency would be as unstained as his. All he promised was that he would do his best. It was not possible to please everybody, and he should not try to do so. If a President waited to convince everyone, they would never move. When there is work to be done someone must go in front. There were always some with critical but not creative minds, who saw the objections without seeing the preponderating advantages. The proof of all policies lay in the result, and by that he was content to be judged. They wanted no dummy President, but a chief of the Executive; and while on the captain's bridge of the ship he would observe no man's dictation.

The following were proposed to be re-elected vice-presidents:—Dr. T. R. Allinson, Messrs. Geo. Anderson, Daniel Baker, N. B. Billany, Joseph Brown (Newcastle), J. A. Brumage, Prof. Ludwig Buchner, M.D. (Darmstadt), W. W. Collins (Sydney), J. Harrison Ellis, Robert Forder, Geo. Jacob Holyoake, P. A. V. Le Lubez, A. B. Moss, S. M. Peacock, Wm. Pratt, Wm. H. Reynolds, E. Schlaeger (Berlin), Thomas Slater, Robert Owen Smith, Mrs. Thornton Smith, George Standing, Joannes Swaagman, Joseph Symes, Edward Truelove, J. Umpleby, Miss E. M. Vance and J. M. Wheeler.

Mr. R. O. SMITH said, that on account of what had happened since the last Conference, he objected to his name being taken with the others. He had been originally

nominated by Mr. Bradlaugh, and being little known had been accepted on that account. Since his death, however, they had heard he had brought disgrace on the party and thwarted him. He wished everybody to have an opportunity of saying what they knew about him.

Mr. FISHER moved, and Mr. GUY seconded, that Mr. Smith be elected vice-president.

Mr. FOOTE stated that as Mr. Smith had raised this matter he had a duty to perform. Mr. Smith was nominated by Mr. Bradlaugh on May 13, 1883, together with Mr. Lees and Mr. Bradlaugh's two daughters. He had sat on the Executive since, and he, the President, knew nothing that happened that would induce him to say that he was less worthy now. He would therefore have pleasure in himself nominating him.

Mr. HUNT (West London) said that in differing as to the Hall of Science scheme, he had never thought of bringing charges against individuals; he therefore supported the re-election. Messrs. Watts and G. Standing testified to their esteem for Mr. Smith's character, and he was re-elected without any dissident.

Mr. SMITH thanked them for their vote. He had referred to no individuals, but he felt it his duty to act as he had done, since if a paragraph which appeared in the *National Reformer* were true, he was unfit to be a vice-president of that Society. He would not say any more. He had been loyal to Mr. Bradlaugh for twenty-five years, and had done nothing since his death which he had not done when he was alive. He now felt it his duty to be loyal to the present President, and he hoped that when they met next year nothing will have happened to make them regret his re-election.

Mr. FOOTE then moved, and Mr. HOOPER seconded, that Messrs. Charles Watts, Touzeau Parris, S. Hartmann, and V. Roger be elected vice-presidents; carried.

Mr. WATTS said he felt great pleasure in the honor conferred upon him, in placing him in a position where he had been before, because it made him the colleague of Mr. Foote, with whom he trusted to work side by side. When, in Canada, he first heard of Mr. Foote's nomination to the presidency, he wrote in his paper (*Secular Thought*) that the Secularists of England had done a wise act. Mr. Foote possessed the requisite ability, energy and youth. He would do his best to aid him in everything to advance their great movement.

Mr. HARTMANN said he doubted whether he was deserved the honor, but he would promise them he would devote the years he had further to live to the service of the cause, and that they should not regret their choice.

MESSRS. HOOPER and WEIGHTMAN moved the suspension of standing orders, in order that the name of Mr. S. Standing should be added to the list of vice-presidents, but this Mr. Standing himself declined. He would wait to win his spurs before wearing them.

On the motion of Miss VANCE, seconded by Mr. G. STANDING, Messrs. Early and Lupton were appointed auditors.

The PRESIDENT then introduced the following resolution on behalf of the Executive: "That the Conference elect an Honorary Secretary as before, and leave the Executive to employ and pay an assistant to do the clerical work of the office in London; and that this arrangement take effect three months after the present Conference." This was a matter of considerable gravity. At present two-thirds of the working funds were devoted to the secretaryship. This was not a position the Organisation Committee could be satisfied with. They had considered the matter week after week and month after month. The duties required were threefold: there was first the clerical work, which could only be done on the spot in London; second, lecturing; third, organising. The chances were always against a man being good in all three. If funds sufficed it might be well to pay the three separately. They had now a list of special lecturers, who should not remain a mere list of idle names, but whose services should be used all over the country. A lecturer was not necessarily an organiser. Organisers were not born every day. As President he was not content to go on for another year on the old arrangement. He had all the threads of the movement at his fingers, and it was idle to shirk his responsibility. All his colleagues were unanimous in agreeing to this resolution.

Mr. R. O. SMITH agreed. He thought it best to acknowledge that the Organisation Committee had made a mistake, and, having done so, must now do their best to repair it.

Mr. KEPPEL (Newcastle) opposed the motion on moral considerations. Mr. Jones had left Liverpool to come to this situation. He (Mr. Keppel) knew what it meant to have eleven doors out of every twelve slapped in one's face as an



Atheist, and submitted that Mr. Jones had a moral claim on their consideration.

Mr. HOOPER suggested that the term should be extended to six months.

The PRESIDENT mentioned that he was going to write to Canterbury (New Zealand) on behalf of Mr. Jones, and a telegram could come in reply in six weeks.

Mr. HUNT said he had come to the conclusion that the whole of the arguments of the Executive were fallacious. They were only robbing Peter to pay Paul. Mr. Jones would have to meet the world with the odium of having been secretary of an atheistical Society. He moved as an amendment, "upon our secretary obtaining suitable employment." Mr. Weightman seconded.

Mr. P. MACOCK said we had to deal with the inevitable and not with the abstract. He deprecated the idea that Atheists could not get a living as well as others. On the contrary, they were sought after by business men. The time of persecution was nearly past. All that was wanted was that men should be honest, straightforward and business-like.

Mr. GILMOUR also deprecated the appeal to sentiment and personalities. Messrs. Fisher and Watts supported the Executive.

At 12.30 the Conference adjourned, the delegates proceeding to the Grand Hotel, where an excellent repast was provided through the generosity of Mr. George Anderson.

(Continued on page 379.)

## ACID DROPS.

The Rev. C. L. Engstrom, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, is delivering Sunday afternoon discourses at Trinity Court Hall, Addington-square, during the month of June. The first was given last Sunday on "Why must we believe in something?" We did not hear the discourse. Probably it proved that we *must* believe in something. But, for Mr. Engstrom's purposes, would it not have been better to say "a sort of a something"?

Country clergymen who are fond of fishing may find their consciences touched at this season of the May-fly by a little anecdote related in *The Field*. A disciple of Walton and Cotton met an agricultural friend the other day by the river side, and addressed him in the words, "Well, Farmer Daw, how do you and the parson get on?" "Ther, it bean't for the likes o' we to critikise the parson, sir," was the reply, "but I dew say to my missus he be strange and fond o' fishing. He don't understand what be gude weather for the fush bean't gude weather for the craps. So soon as iver us wants bewtiful weather for the wheat us be bound to have to pray for rain. But I tell 'e how it be. When parson goes to church he takes a lewk at the river, and turns on the prayer for gude weather or rain according."

This story reminds us of another, which is probably known to some anglers. One Sunday a clergyman caught a lad fishing in a stream, and reproached him for desecrating the day. Nevertheless, being an angler himself, he stood and watched the youngster, who at last hooked a good sized trout, which, however, he was in danger of losing. Disgusted and excited, the clergyman shouted, "Hold up the point of the rod, man; hold up the point of the rod!" The angler did so, and caught the fish, to the intense satisfaction of the preacher, who had forgotten all about the Sunday.

"General" Booth has issued a new appeal for his Darkest England scheme. He also states that the funds for the spiritual work of the Army 'are nearly exhausted.' So," adds *July*, "is the patience of the public with the Army's methods."

The Rev. M. Macaskill, of Dingwall, is one of the good old-fashioned Presbyterians who would like to see a heresy hunt instituted against Prof. Bruce, Marcus Dods, and other New Licht heretics, who mildly question certain portions of the Old Testament. But the Free Church of Scotland has found it only spreads heresy by stirring these questions, and the General Assembly fairly sat upon Mr. Macaskill and his attempt to vindicate orthodoxy.

Archdeacon Sinclair thinks there are many inconsistencies in the Church service. "To hear merry-looking chubby-faced choristers," he says, "shouting with jubilant and

reckless carelessness, aloud to Almighty God, that they are miserable sinners, and that there is no health in them, is, indeed, distressing, and a woeful, almost irreparable, shock to the whole devotional spirit of the service."

About four hundred lives have perished through the fire in the silver mine near Prague. In many cases the remains of the dead persons were entirely unrecognisable. Here was a case for the interference of Our Father, but like Baal, he was asleep or on a journey.

The chronicle of the Lord's recent mercies includes sixteen hundred deaths through cholera in Cashmere, where food is at famine prices; ghastly and horrible deaths through the hurricane in Mauritius, where more than twenty thousand are homeless. To counterbalance this there is the shooting of one leopard in Bengal, who is said to have destroyed 154 persons.

Michigan, as well as other States, is petitioning against the Sunday opening of the World's Fair at Chicago. The Michigan petition is eminently successful. The petitioners outnumber the population by eight hundred thousand.

The *Truthseeker* says of the World's Fair: "As a matter of fact, the fair is already open on Sundays, and the Christians will have hard work to close it. The *Tribune*, of Chicago, reports that the attendance on Sundays is now about eight thousand. These people are local visitors, who desire to watch the progress of the work. When the exhibits arrive and are set forth the attendance must multiply wonderfully. The directory are having hard work raising the necessary funds, and to give up such enormous gate receipts would be financial suicide."

The mayor of Liverpool is one of the numerous class of bigots. He gave a casting vote against the application of the Liverpool Sunday Society for the use of the Town Hall, the Rotunda Hall being too small to hold its audiences. The *Clarion* remarks—

That, mad as Christians used to be  
About the thirteenth century,  
There's lots of Christians to be had  
In this, the nineteenth, just as mad.

The *Clermont Courier* doesn't approve of Ingersoll's libel suit against the Rev. A. C. Dixon. "It is to be regretted," it says, "that he stoops to notice so small an insect as the one that has assailed him, and who by contact with so great a light will for the first time in his life attract public attention."

Clericus: "Did you never in your experience have a prayer answered?" Cynicus: "Never, except in one instance." Clericus: "What was that?" Cynicus: "I started in on the 28th of February to pray for spring."

The Archbishop of Rheims, on the occasion of the recent Catholic demonstration singing hymns to the Celtic Virgin at Chartres, said, "The black marble Virgin of Chartres was chiselled in a spirit of prophecy by their Druidical forefathers." In the same way the figure of Isis, found in the Catacombs, is claimed as representing the ever-blessed Virgin-mother of numerous children. The truth is, the mother and child was a world-wide type long pre-Christian.

Our Vienna Correspondent telegraphs: It is reported from Warsaw that the newly appointed orthodox Archbishop Flavian is being everywhere avoided. The peasants retire to the forests before his arrival, and wait until he has left before they turn to their homes. Mass is read in the orthodox churches to empty pews. In some cases the police have taken peasants to church by force. The Archbishop has threatened severe measures against the population, who have been converted whether they like it or it.—*Daily News*.

The Rev. W. H. Banken, vicar of Christ Church, Surbiton, had a gardener up for sending anonymous letters, threatening to burn down the vicarage. The man was kept in gaol three days before being tried, when it was discovered that the accused was perfectly innocent, and he was discharged.



"Well, little boy, what's your name?" asked the teacher. "Shadrach Nebuchadnezzar Jones." "Who gave you that name?" "I don't know, but if I find out when I get older they'll be sorry for it."

"Durham's Deadheads" is the title of an article in the *Sunday Chronicle*. It is a scathing attack on the Bishop of Durham, pointing out the absurdity of praising him for trying to end the strike. His salary is chiefly derived from mining royalties. He and the coalowners are therefore in the same swim. We wish we had room to reproduce the *Chronicle* article for the sake of our readers in all parts of the world.

The *Church Times* is again distinguishing itself by advocating the claims of curates and the poorer clergy for better incomes. The *C. T.* cries out that the clergy of the wealthiest Church in the world is a standing reproach to her members. The bulk of them, it seems, have a difficulty in making ends meet with a paltry two or three hundred a year. It forgets that the big prizes range from fifteen thousand a year downward, and that many a parson gets a thousand a year or more, while the bulk of his work is done by underpaid curates.

The only sensible plan yet proposed to improve the position of the poorer men of God is the taxation of the bloated incomes of right reverend fathers in God and other church dignitaries. But this is too dangerous a project for the *C. T.*

The other Sunday a visiting clergyman addressed the Sunday-school of a Detroit church. After a serious talk he said to the children: "All of you who desire to live in a better world than this, please rise to your feet." All the children rose except one small boy in the corner. The good man looked at him in pained surprise. "My child," he said, very gently and kindly, "why don't you rise with the others?" "Detroit's good enough for me, that's why," sung out the youngster, and the solemnity of the occasion was knocked to pieces.

At the annual meeting of the Church Defence Association, as reported in the *National Church*, the Rev. G. S. Reaney said the logical end of the liberation of Church from State would be a movement to permit an Atheist on the throne of England in the name of religious equality. Mr. Reaney ought to know that Atheists do not take much stock in thrones. They usually care more for the opinions of schoolmasters than of kings.

After reading that dance music was not to be permitted in the parks on Sunday, one of our readers was greatly surprised to hear the band in Battersea Park on Whit Sunday playing "Knock 'em in the Old Kent-road." If this tune cannot be danced to, it's enough to make some of the bigots dance with rage.

Last week an elderly woman, named Mary Humphrey, was being immersed in the Baptist Chapel, Talybont, when the shock of the new birth being too great, she died in the hands of the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Francis. Verdict—Visitation of God.

The size, power, wealth, and populousness of pre-Christian civilisations has always been misrepresented by orthodox advocates. Speaking of London, therefore, it is not surprising that Mr. Gladstone described it the other day as "such an aggregation of individuals, such an accumulation of wealth, and capital, and influence as has never been seen in the history of the wide world." It is, of course, very difficult to disprove this absolutely, for we have no precise figures as to the great cities of antiquity. But the population of Rome, in the second century of our era, was put at 1,750,000 by Gibbon; and Mr. E. J. Gibbs, in the *National Review*, gives reasons for believing it was 5,000,000. Whether it was as wealthy as London or not, it was at least more beautiful.

The Peace Society have publicly remonstrated with the Committee of the Religious Tract Society, on their devotion of a considerable proportion of the pages of their *Boy's Own Paper* to attractive descriptions of military and naval adventure. Such papers say the P.S. foster the idea that revenge and violence are quite compatible with the duty and character of Christian believers.

The Rev. Father Antonine Scanelle, speaking at Glasgow, said that Pantheism and other forms of infidelity were being spread by the press, and should be counteracted by the press. He advocated the establishment of a Catholic daily paper, and believed that if St. Paul came now he would be a journalist.

The Rev. Canon Bodington A.K.C., Canon of Lichfield and Vicar of St. Andrew's, Wolverhampton, gives in his parish Magazine a discourse on "God's Building." He sets out with the old platitudes "the heavens declared glory of God" etc. "Where there is law there must be a lawgiver," etc. But the term "law," like that of design, is but an analogy drawn from human works, and applied to natural forces, means no more than the observed invariable sequence of cause and effect.

The consequence of saying that God, some personal being external to Nature, made its laws, is that he did so at some particular time, whether six thousand or sixty billion of years ago. Whenever he began to make law there must have been unlimited prior time when there was no law. Thus the Theist lands God as existing for ages in a universe of chaos. If "laws" ever existed, they need no "lawgiver" or "lawgivers."

Canon Bodington, A.K.C., passes on to "the wonderful good the Christian religion has done in the world." Well the first thing he says it does, and this is an argument which doubtless comes home to his commercial congregation, is, "It makes men pay their debts." Does it? Were then the Pagans dishonest, or are Mohammedans, Parsees, Buddhists or Atheists less scrupulous in fulfilling their engagements. The contrary is the fact. Trust in the Lord is not calculated to render human engagements imperative. The Christian often prays "forgive us our debts," and trusts to the Lord to wipe them off.

It is curious to read in the *Church Times* that the Bishop of Bedford "does not and could not approve O. H. R." Very curious indeed, when the letters mean Our Holy Redeemer, but fully explained when it is known O. H. R. is an Anglican brotherhood of strongly pronounced Romanising proclivities.

A good old Scotch minister did not satisfy, by his preaching, the Calvinistic portion of his flock. "Why, sir," said one of them, "we think ye dinna tell us enough about renouncing our ain righteousness." "Renouncing your ain righteousness!" vociferated the doctor. "I never saw any ye had to renounce."

The Rev. Charles Douglas, of 2 Delamere-crescent, Paddington, has been arrested for indecently assaulting Florence Huntly, a girl of thirteen. One of the witnesses alleged that he had seen the prisoner more than once insulting little girls.

Music can be overdone. A Roman Catholic paper in Philadelphia complained the other day that the warbling miss who "does" the amens kept it up so long at St. Augustine's Church that a devout "bead-repeater," who was vainly endeavoring to keep his mind on his prayers while she warbled a four and a-half minute amen, finally turning round to the choir loft, and said, "May the devil choke you! The Lord forgive me!"—*New York Independent*.

With a view of getting future control of the public schools of America, the Pope has sanctioned what is called the Faribault system of school management. The Faribault system is a compromise with Secularism. The parish or denominational school is handed over to the School Board, to be maintained by the community with reservation of right to teach religion out of school hours. This it is hoped will prove a means of Catholics having the benefits of free education together with maintaining their faith. Some of the Roman Bishops dislike the scheme, doubting the probability of getting the children to attend the religious instruction. Their hesitancy is justified by the experience of a priest at Pittsburg who qualified for a head-mastership some years since, gave his schools over to the Board, and attempted to get the children to church before school hours for religious teaching by himself. They would not come, and he retired in disgust.



**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

Sunday, June 12, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.; at 7, "Is Unbelief a Sin?"

June 19, Birmingham; 26, Hall of Science.

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

**MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—June 12, Sheffield; 15, debate at Birmingham; 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, Rushden; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham; 18, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

**H. ROSE.**—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

**H. SNELL.**—Pleased to hear from you, and to learn of your successful outdoor meetings in London. Probably you are right in supposing that the chance of disturbance would diminish if lecturers and chairmen would cultivate tact.

**CHARON.**—Well-written letters in the local press do great service to our movement.

**J. DUFFY.**—Mr. Foote has not time to pen letters for the local papers himself. Local friends must do that business. He is already overworked.

**W. ANGUS.**—You must be strangely constituted if you think it possible to convert Mr. Foote from the views expressed in his articles on "Will Christ Save Us?" by sending him a penny pamphlet, written by a man who solemnly believes in the truth of Noah's Flood. "Stupid" is an adjective that few but yourself would ever apply to Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll. Wordsworth called Voltaire a "dull scoffer," and Charles Lamb retorted "Why dull?"

**J. K. SYKES.**—Papers or cuttings are always welcome.

**W. BRYCESON.**—We are obliged. See "Sugar Plums."

**F. WILSON.**—Thanks. See paragraph. The whole subject is dealt with in the pamphlet Mr. Foote has written for the N.S.S., and which will be published immediately.

**E. POWNCEBY.**—The Conference report occupies all our available space this week; but see "Sugar Plums."

**J. HARKIS.**—Thanks for the letters. The Rev. A. Stewart complains of your youth. He forgets that Jesus was only twelve when he discussed with the Temple doctors. Mr. Foote does not intend to join in the local fray. He is willing to meet Mr. Stewart in public debate; that is, a pitched battle, but no skirmishes.

**A. FORAESTER.**—It is not a lecture notice. We have given you a paragraph.

**A. STRONG.**—The letter of 'Jesus to Abgarus is universally regarded as a forgery by scholars. See the chapter on Pious Forgeries in Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity*.

**E. BOWLES.**—Your adventures are amusing. No doubt the legal right to affirm instead of swearing will, for some time to come, be misunderstood by many officials. Many of their heads are very thick. It takes a good while for ideas to penetrate them.

**RON MAHON.**—Shall appear. Lady missionaries, we fancy, are not likely to convert you. Their logic is less seductive than their smiles, in some cases; in others, it is nearly as bad as their temper.

**F. A. DAVIES.**—See "Sugar Plums."

**J. EDMUNDS.**—(1) Constantine the Great "was probably born at Naissus," says Gibbon, and his judgment is not to be lightly disputed. Some of the modern Greeks have maintained that the first Christian emperor was born at Drepanum, a town on the gulf of Nicomedia. There is no evidence of his being born in Britain. (2) Pope Gregory sent Augustine with forty monks to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity six hundred years after the birth of Christ.

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—Kritankaron—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Flaming Sword—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—Clarion—Watts's Literary Guide—Echo—Church Reformer—Southend Standard—Star—Liverpool Review—Weekly Irish Times—Truthseeker—La Vérité Philosophique—Liberator—Liberty—Froidenker—Evening North Wilts Herald—Open Court—Secular Thought—Southend Echo—Cosmopolitan—Fédération Française de la Libre Pensée—Ulster Echo—National Church—Modern Thought—Glasgow Herald—St. Andrew's Parish Magazine, Wolverhampton—The Moralist.

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

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

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

**SUGAR PLUMS.**

Mr. Foote occupies the London Hall of Science this evening (June 12). His subject will be "Is Unbelief a Sin?" The lecture is a reply to the new pamphlet of Dr. A. J. Harrison, who lectures for the Christian Evidence Society, and is perhaps the ablest and most gentlemanly champion it ever had. Mr. Foote debated with him for four nights at Newcastle in 1877. Previous to that Dr. Harrison debated with Mr. Bradlaugh in London.

This year's Conference of the National Secular Society was one of the most successful ever held. The delegation from Branches was considerably in excess of recent years. Nearly a hundred delegates and distant visitors sat down to the luncheon at the Grand Hotel, to which they were invited by Mr. George Anderson, who, being unable to attend himself, took this graceful and practical way of testifying his interest in the day's proceedings. The South Shields friends got up an elegant memento of the occasion as a present to Mr. Anderson. It was an artistic menu, adorned with a drawing of South Shields old town-hall and a view of Tynemouth, neatly executed by a local artist.

The speaking at the evening meeting was unusually good. As the hall was crowded and the weather was warm, the chairman needed some generalship to work in eleven speakers in two hours and a quarter. Mr. Watts was in splendid form, and had got up steam for a big oration, but twenty minutes was all the Rhadamanthean hammer-holder would allow him. Mr. J. P. Gilmour said he had been victimised by the President, and then surprised the meeting with the fluency and point of his speech. Mr. S. M. Peacock spoke like a sound, practical reformer. Mr. Sam Standing was jocose in style and sober in advice. His brother George spoke earnestly, but could not hide his native humor. Mr. Moss was impressive, Mr. Jones epigrammatic, Mr. Hunt appealing, Mr. Forder earnest, Mr. Copland admonitory, and Mr. Brown full of conviction. Mr. Foote's energy did not seem impaired by a hard day's work.

Never was any N.S.S. Conference so reported. The difference, in fact, is not a step forward, but a leap. The *Leader* gave three columns and a half, including long extracts from the President's report. The *Chronicle* also gave a column and a half. Surely this is a proof that Newcastle editors don't consider our cause a dying one, or our Society insignificant, though we have lost the leadership of Charles Bradlaugh. And "canny Newcastle" applies to its newspaper editors as well as the rest of its inhabitants. By and bye the London editors, who are always behind, will wake up to our existence.

The London Secular Federation's annual excursion takes place on Sunday, July 17. A special train will run from London Bridge to Worthing, a Sussex watering-place, where sailing and rowing boats can be hired, or walks taken through charming scenery. As the return tickets are only 3s., a big party is expected. Mr. Pownceby, the Federation secretary, is distributing the tickets for sale among the London Branches. They can also be obtained at the Hall of Science and at 28 Stonecutter-street.

The Federation will make no special provision for dinner or tea, but there are a number of hotels, dining rooms, and coffee houses open on Sundays, and the excursionists must distribute themselves over the town. There will be accommodation for all pockets.

The Federation Council, at its last monthly meeting, decided to advise the London Branches to suspend the open-air lectures on July 17, so as to give the lecturers, chairmen, and other workers an opportunity of joining the excursion without neglecting their duties.



Mr. W. Heaford, one of the N.S.S. special lecturers, has a three weeks' holiday from August 14. He would like to visit Belfast and Scotland and lecture for the Branches. We hope they will avail themselves of Mr. Heaford's services. His address is 67 Mantua-street, Falcon-road Battersea, S.W.

The Lambeth Branch is carrying on an open-air lecture station in the classic New Cut (near the Victoria Hall) on Sunday mornings. We hope it will be strongly supported by the local Freethinkers. Last Sunday morning Mr. Victor Roger lectured, and the platform narrowly escaped demolition by a gang of roughs, headed by a Christian apologist who has recently done a term of imprisonment for theft. Christians may or may not be proud of such a champion. It is their own business. But such blackguards cannot be allowed to disturb our meetings. The nuisance must be stopped.

Some time ago Mr. Foote had very successful meetings in Sanger's Circus, Sheffield. This building is to be pulled down. But before it is demolished it will be the scene of another Freethought demonstration. Mr. Charles Watts lectures there to-day (June 12), and no doubt the Freethinkers of the district will give him a hearty reception. After the recent visit of the black champion there will probably be a good deal of discussion.

On Sunday next Mr. Charles Watts lectures at Bristol. We invite the members of the new Bristol Branch to bring their friends to hear our eloquent colleague.

Mr. Symes has not succeeded in getting elected to the Victorian Parliament for Colingwood. Religious prejudice is no doubt largely accountable, and the fact that Mr. Symes does not reside in Colingwood told against him. But though defeated he is undaunted. Mr. Bradlaugh tried for many years before being elected, and, like Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Symes will try again.

Mr. Putnam tells in the *Truthseeker* how, when he called on Col. Ingersoll, he was answering a letter from a convict soldier who had killed a man in a moment of passion, and perhaps in self-defence. He had been imprisoned for life and had served twenty-two years. Mr. Putnam says: "It was a pathetic letter. The author had no friends. He had written to many people, but not an answer had ever been received to give one ray of comfort in his loneliness and agony. Out of his busy life Ingersoll immediately answered the poor fellow's appeal—the only one who for twenty-two years had taken any notice of the captive, who undoubtedly was far more unfortunate than criminal. How many a Christian had passed him by. The first word that would give him new life, a hope for the future, came from the pen of the infidel, whose table was crowded with messages from all parts of the world. The rich man, and the prosperous man, and the big corporation might be unanswered; but the trembling prisoner receives a message worth its weight in gold, flooding the gloomy bars with light, and giving hope after years of desolation."

Mr. Arthur Clayden, the Liberal candidate at Dulwich, who seeks to oust Mr. Maple, the Tory upholsterer, has informed the Liberal and Radical Association that he is in favor of the disestablishment and disendowment of the State Church, and also of the immediate repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. This should be carefully noted by Freethinkers who have votes in this constituency.

The Hon. T. S. Brand, Liberal candidate for the Eastbourne division of Sussex, states that he was ignorant of the existence of the Blasphemy Laws, and promises, if he has the opportunity, to vote for the Liberty of Bequest Bill.

Mr. W. Digby, Liberal candidate for South Islington, says he would gladly vote for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. He considers their retention "a grave injustice."

Mrs. Samson writes the *Star* on dance music in the Parks on Sundays, and points out that Booth's bands play music-hall tunes. She mentions that "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Ring the Bells of Heaven" make good polka-mazurkas.

The International Congress of Freethinkers at Madrid is to take place in October.

Mr. Stroud Williams's sermon at Swindon in opposition to the orthodox doctrine of hell has been followed by a thoughtful letter in the *North Wilts Herald* from the pen of "Deist." The writer really takes the position of the Secularist, that our main concern is to ameliorate present circumstances.

The Glasgow Branch has an excursion to Gleniffer Braes to-day (June 12). The party meets at the south side of Jamaica-bridge at 10.30. The return fare is 1s. 6d. Tea will be provided at the Braes at a nominal cost. Otherwise friends must bring their own provisions.

The Bradford Branch will have its annual on Sunday next (June 19). The train starts for Morecambe at 8.20 a.m. Return fare 3s. 6d. Addresses will be delivered at the demonstration by Messrs. Grange and Wakefield.

### SUNDAY DANCING.

SCRATCH a Christian and you find a Bigot. Even the Rev. Fleming Williams, who is an excellent democrat in his way, has a strong objection to letting people go to heaven (or elsewhere) in their own way. He would like to make them go the Christian way, and as he cannot drive them in he would hedge them in. Probably he is also, like other ministers, a Protectionist in regard to religious matters, and especially to Sunday observance. For these reasons he appears to have supported Mr. Doubleday's motion on the London County Council, that the bands in the parks should not play dance music on Sunday. Dance music, he said, would lead to dancing, which was an awful thought on the Lord's Day. No doubt Mr. Williams prefers religious music, hymns and so forth, that might put the Londoners in a frame of mind for visiting the gospel-shops. Mr. John Burns vigorously "went for" this attempted tyranny. He begged the Council not to play into the hands of a few people who wished to make London as long-faced and miserable as themselves. Did not the Boothites sing music-hall tunes, and was not the tune of the "Old Hundredth" introduced into lancers and quadrilles? The Council had as much right to spend the money of Sabbatarians on dance music as to spend the money of non-Sabbatarians on Sabbatarian music. Thus "honest John" went on, smiting the bigots hip and thigh. Nevertheless the bigots, though defeated in argument, triumphed in the ballot by 54 to 49. It was a slight victory, however, and its fruits cannot be lasting. By and bye that vote will be reversed. Meanwhile the Council should look after the Salvation Army, and stop its hands from playing tunes on Sunday that make cab-horses frisky.

### WORKING THE ORACLE.

A sacrilegious fraud has been practised on the superstitious inhabitants of a village not far from Cosenza, in Calabria, where is a rock upon which legend says the Madonna once appeared. For some time two women of the place went about with their eyes turned up to heaven in ecstacy, and uttering disjointed words as they falteringly pursued their way. Having thus prepared the minds of their neighbors for something mysterious, they gradually let out that they were empowered to put all those who would pay for it into relation with the Madonna. Very soon they were able to set to work. They led their victims by night to the rock, and on its summit, amid the sound of a bell and the flickering light of a torch, the Blessed Virgin appeared, stretched out her arms to receive the offerings in money or goods, and replied to the petitions tendered. One woman gave thirty francs, and prayed to be blessed with a son; another offered five hundred francs to be saved from hell when she died, she having deserved punishment for cheating in her trade of a baker. A wife paid twelve francs to have her sick husband cured; thirty were offered in favor of a patient about to undergo a surgical operation, etc. One of the two swindlers represented the Virgin, hiding behind the rock till she was summoned, and disguising her voice when she answered questions; while the other lighted the torch and rang the bell. The two women have been arrested, and will be tried for cheating.—*Daily News*.

"No sir," said the man with the dyed whiskers, "I never go boating on Sunday. If I want any Sunday amusement I go to parks. One may be just as bad as the other, but if the Lord wants to punish me for Sabbath-breaking, he can't get at me half as easy on land as he can if I'm in a sail-boat."



## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

(Continued from page 375.)

### AFTERNOON MEETING.

On resuming at half past two, the PRESIDENT stated he could not take Mr. Hunt's amendment, since it meant that the secretary could stay as long as he pleased. Mr. Hunt altered his amendment to extend the term for six months. Mr. Weightman seconded. Mr. Alward (Grimsby), supported the Executive, as did also Messrs. Ward and Bater.

The PRESIDENT said that he and the Organisation Committee could not go on for six months with any satisfaction. Mr. HUNT rose to a point of order. He denied him the right to say what the opinion of the Organisation Committee would be before it was formed.

The PRESIDENT: I am telling you the opinion of the Organisation Committee that has existed. This matter had not been laid before them without due deliberation. He regretted so much agitation had been worked up on that matter in the district. Mr. Jones had been communicated with in the month of January, and it was three months ago since he knew the decision of the Organisation Committee. He knew his term only lasted in any case to the Conference. They had given him three more months, and to ask that the present arrangement should be carried on half way, would be not only unpleasant but a real hindrance to the work of the Society.

In reply to a question from Captain Thomson, Mr. FORDER said he had worked for five years for 15s. a week. He did not personally consider Mr. Jones the man for the clerical work. The matter had been used as a means to injure Mr. Foote. Mr. Hunt had been his enemy, and he had in consequence resigned his membership of the Westminster Branch.

Mr. JONES, asked by several to speak, said he didn't wish to influence their votes. He had been a Freethinker since a boy, he had formerly been secretary of the Liverpool Branch, and had won scholarships and certificates in Science and Art. No matter what their decision might be he had still a future before him, something to fight for, an honorable ambition to do valuable work for the Freethought party.

On a poll being taken, the resolution was carried by 741 against 531 for the amendment. Some attempts to continue the question were disallowed by the chair.

Mr. Forder was re-elected hon. sec., and Mr. Stanley Jones appointed to act as secretary until the new arrangement comes into effect.

No one appeared to take up the motion of the West Ham Branch, that vice-presidents should not in future vote unless representing a Branch. On an explanation from the President, the notice of motion by the Newcastle Branch, restricting voting at Conferences to delegates and the Executive, was withdrawn. Another West Ham motion, "That it is desirable for all Freethinkers to wear a distinctive badge, say a pansy," was not moved.

Before the President rose to deal with the matter of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, a delegate moved that we pass to the next business.

The PRESIDENT said that the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund was collected through the N.S.S. and held in the names of trustees on its behalf. In accordance with a resolution of the Executive, a circular was sent out to a great many of the subscribers (whose addresses they had) to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, asking them how their money was to be devoted. Up to the present subscribers representing £130 6s. 10d. had ordered their subscriptions to go to the Hall of Science scheme, subscribers representing £51 had ordered their subscriptions to be held over, and £213 13s. was the balance for which no word had been received. The Executive thought that it should still be left open for application by those who had not yet given direction.

Mr. HUNT moved, and Mr. WEIGHTMAN seconded, the adoption of this proposal, which was carried against a Battersea resolution, moved by Mr. Dipper and seconded by Mr. Jameson, that all undecided money should be divided between the two schemes in proportion to voting on decided money.

The PRESIDENT then made a statement *in re* London Hall of Science. At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive Mr. Samson had moved, Mr. Hartmann seconded, and Mr. Hunt supported, a resolution for a committee of inquiry to see if

the London Hall of Science was morally secured to the Society for thirty years from 1858. That committee met for the first time last week. Under these circumstances he should only tell the Conference one fact which it ought to be in possession of. When Charles Bradlaugh nominated his successor he told him nothing of any right to any property or of any documents, and no documents were discoverable in the archives of the National Secular Society.

Mr. HUNT thought the functions of the committee lapsed with the Conference.

The PRESIDENT said there was always some business carried over from year to year. When the new Executive met they would re-appoint the committee, and the matter go on as before.

Mr. JAMESON (Battersea) then moved: "That in order to make the N.S.S. Executive thoroughly representative, each provincial Branch may elect a London member of the N.S.S. to represent it at all Executive meetings." It was explained that this was already possible, and the matter had only been put on the agenda that provincial Branches might learn their right in this matter.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Oxhill) then moved: "That a Temperance Society be formed in connection with the N.S.S., under the title of the National Secular Temperance Society." He thought perhaps to be a member of such a Society need not necessarily mean total abstinence.

The PRESIDENT thought it should be so construed.

Mr. J. M. WHEELER remarked that the Church of England Temperance Society did not so construe it. It allowed wine.

The PRESIDENT: But the Church of England have the right to juggle, which we have not.

Mr. GREEVZ FISHER, though a teetotaler, opposed the motion. They might as well form an honesty society, or a society for the promotion of any of the virtues.

The matter was referred to the Executive for consideration, Mr. Reynolds, as a teetotaler, being desired to look into it.

The motion of the Oxhill Branch about a Friendly Society was withdrawn absolutely.

Mr. J. P. GILMOUR, on behalf of Mr. J. Glen (Renfrew), moved: "That some means should be found to publish periodically the names and addresses of Branch secretaries." This would supply a want felt by those travelling from place to place, and necessitated by changes. He proposed that if inserted in the Freethought papers they should be paid for as advertisements.

The PRESIDENT said that once a year they issued an Almanack, which all should provide themselves with. However, he would undertake to put in the *Freethinker* occasionally a list of changes.

Miss VANCE thought the matter might be met by sending a stamped addressed envelope to the general secretary.

A motion for the reduction of the subscription to the Executive was withdrawn.

The PRESIDENT then moved: "That the N.S.S. shall, if possible, be represented at the World's Freethought Convention, which is projected to take place next year at Chicago; all arrangements thereanent to be left to the Executive." Mr. Reed seconded.

Mr. HUNT asked how this could be done without expense to the Society.

The PRESIDENT said the Conference could not decide on doing a thing without being prepared to carry it out. He would promise a special subscription should relieve the funds of the Society in this matter.

This concluded the business on the agenda, and the President stated that now only matters could be taken that were non-contentious.

Mr. CHARLES WATTS moved, and Mr. R. O. SMITH seconded—"Resolved: That we, the Secularists here assembled at the Conference of the N.S.S. in Newcastle-on-Tyne on Sunday, June 5, 1892, desire to express our earnest sympathy with our Freethought co-workers in Canada and in the United States, and we wish to assure them that the noble work they are doing in the emancipation of the human mind from the degrading influence of theological superstition is watched by us with intense interest." This was carried unanimously.

Mr. GUY (of Farsley) moved: "That this Conference heartily endorses the candidature of Mr. J. M. Robertson for Northampton, and promises to do all in its power to secure his return." This was objected to as political, and therefore contentious.

Mr. FORDER moved a vote of thanks to the North-Eastern Secular Federation for the admirable arrangements made for this Conference. Mr. Alward (Grimsby) seconded, and took



occasion to remark that he wished they had heard more of the work in London.

Mr. JOSEPH BROWN, who was received with much applause, acknowledged the vote of thanks.

The PRESIDENT then formally closed the Conference. Differences of opinion, he said, were not necessarily signs of rending or of decay. (Hear, hear.) The stagnant pool would be harmonious enough, its surface was only occasionally broken by the snapping of a toad or the leaping of a frog; but true, wholesome, fertilising water runs and leaps and dashes, and their party never could have the quiescence of the stagnant pool. Let them have the vehemence of the rushing river. It was easy enough to organise sheep; one good dog would organise a thousand; when they came to organise Freethinkers it was a different matter. They had more individuality, or they would never have become Freethinkers. (Applause.) They sought for truth. They could not have the flash of the lightning without the meeting of the thunder clouds, and out of the thunder clash of diverse opinions in honest debate they hoped, and experience justified the hope, there might leap forth the lightning of truth. (Loud applause.)

The Conference ended at five o'clock.

#### THE EVENING MEETING.

The Hall was crowded in every part when the President took the chair at 7 o'clock. He explained that time was short and the list of speakers was long; he would therefore require each address to be very brief.

Mr. SAM STANDRING first spoke, dealing with the subject of organisation. One point that had been almost entirely neglected was the organisation of the ladies, whose efforts and influence might be made extremely useful in Freethought work.

Mr. S. M. PEACOCK, president of the North-Eastern Secular Federation, confined his attention to the subject of education. As a member of the South Shields School Board he urged upon Freethinkers the importance of keeping the priest out of the school. While the cumulative vote remained in operation there was an opportunity for the Secular party to make its influence decisively felt.

Mr. A. B. MOSS pointed out that it was the bounden duty of Secularists to do their best to destroy superstition, and especially the Christian superstition. One of the worst features of this was the idea that unbelief was a crime. The work of Freethought was gradually becoming complete. The Devil had already disappeared, and God would sooner or later follow him to oblivion. When the miraculous element in theology had died out, religion would be nothing but a question of conduct. The contention of Secularists had always been that, if mankind required a religion at all, it was a religion based not upon belief, but upon conduct. Secularists could be as good citizens and fathers as their orthodox brethren. In past times, perhaps, theology had to some degree moulded life and thought; but to-day it failed to influence the intellect of Christians. The ranks of Freethought should be recruited from the Christian party, as it was impossible to get any assistance from indifferentists.

Mr. STANLEY JONES said this was a field day. He argued that neither philosophers nor scientists were on the side of the black army or against Freethought. The work of the National Secular Society was one of emancipation. Our business is to do the same work for the mind as the abolitionists did for the slaves of America. The Society had been led by a great man, and was now in the keeping of a distinguished leader. The future depended on the youth in its ranks, and it was needed to give them that training and discipline which would make them efficient in warring against superstition and dogmas, like the brave men of old.

Mr. CHARLES WATTS congratulated them upon the excellent day's work. An attempt had been made to consolidate and extend secular forces. They had evils in their midst which theology had failed to correct and remove. It had a fair trial, but, with every advantage, was not only a failure but a barrier. The great requirement of the age was a more comprehensive standard of right—of faith based not upon the conjectures of the future, but upon the experience of the past. (Hear, hear.) The voice of all history was that so far as society had progressed and broken away from the fetters of a dark and ignorant past, it had been achieved not by theology, but by secular effort. Mr. Watts surveyed the work of Freethinkers from the time of Thomas Paine, Carlisle, Hetherington, Southwell, and G. J. Holyoake, the father of

Secularism, to Charles Bradlaugh, the Napoleon of Freethought. We had now another Napoleon in Mr. Foote, and not a Napoleon the Third. We recognise there is much to be done. Our temple is vast; its dome covers the earth. The Bible we put forward is nature's whole page. Our Garden of Eden is a place where the tree of knowledge is not prohibited, where there is no Devil to tempt and no God to curse. Mr. Watts wound up with a fine peroration on the duty of striving in the work of human progress.

Mr. E. COPLAND thought it was Mrs. Grundy they had chiefly to attack. It was she who prevented people acknowledging that they had outgrown the errors of Bible teaching. One of her chief strongholds was Sabbatarianism. That they should strike at, and cut the ground from under Mrs. Grundy's feet.

Mr. G. STANDRING again recommended—as by one of his humorous slips he said he had recommended for the last fifty or sixty years—attention to outdoor propaganda. The great thing was to keep pegging away, and they must be prepared to say the same thing over and over again. He had faith in the future of Freethought, and that the coming generation would have a still larger measure of freedom than we have enjoyed.

Mr. J. P. GILMOUR, in an excellent speech, complained that, as a Scotsman, he had been victimised in being made to speak, and told the President a little story of a thief in a church who, having to descend by the bell rope, found the villagers awaiting him at the bottom. Addressing the bell, he said, "If it had na' been for your lang hied and lang tongue I should hae got off this time." He reported steady progress in Scotland. There was a revival of interest in the movement in the large towns such as Dundee, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh. Sabbatarianism was declining in the large towns. Music was extending. Churches—even the Free Church, despite its "Highland host" of bigots—was being secularised. He felt it an honor to be a member of a party who had fought so well in the past, and who sought to make things smoother for others in future.

Mr. C. J. HUNT said no name received more applause than that of Mr. Bradlaugh. But did the applauders belong to the Society of which he was president? Organisation was absolutely necessary, and he urged the duty of all Freethinkers to join the Society and do their share. Their greatest enemy was still the powerful Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. FORDER showed the advance made by the manner in which the social question was now regarded by religious leaders like General Booth and the Pope. If Mr. Bradlaugh was a Napoleon, he looked on Mr. Foote as the Carnot of the movement.

Mr. JOSEPH BROWN (of Newcastle) reported that they had made great progress in that district, where they had fourteen bulwarks for freedom. He urged that other Branches would do well to form like federations.

The PRESIDENT remarked he was sure the meeting would feel the cause had not lost its speaking power. He controverted those who said that the Freethought movement had received its death-blow in the death of Mr. Bradlaugh. No great cause was ever buried in the grave of a leader. Was his Titanic labor so barren as to leave no fruit? No! his work lived beyond the dust of death in the hearts of those animated by the example of his greatness, courage, and earnestness. Freethought existed for the right of equal freedom for all. No party had ever been persecuted like ours; no party like ours had sprung into the breach when freedom was assailed by strong and fierce enemies. They lived also for the secularisation of life. We believe that deed is higher than creed, and conduct higher than belief. All the churches begin with the child and place him in the attitude "I believe." They needed no priest coming in at birth, marriage and death with his mummery and fees. What are the shibboleths of the creeds worth? What more knows the parson muttering over the open grave about the "glorious hope of a resurrection" than the clay cold corpse at his feet? We must turn the priest out of the school as in Paris. Why suborn the minds of children in the interest of dogmas but to provide artificial customers for artificial goods in their artificial trade? He sometimes compared the priests with Jesus. He died upon the cross and they lived upon it; and many lived well upon the cross who could not make 30s. a week upon the square. We must continue to fight as Mr. Bradlaugh had fought, by making equal laws, extending freedom and secular life, and the right to secure endowments of which we are unjustly deprived. All these



things were to be done by the force of education. It had been said, When should education begin? and the answer given was, "Twenty years before birth." We must get the mothers. Freethought did not say, "I suffer not a woman to teach." It held her the equal companion of man, and their steps should keep time in the march of progress. Education the churches hated. Schopenhauer said religions were like glowworms, requiring darkness to shine in. Knowledge is power. It was not theology or sermonising, but science, that led to the fraternisation of peoples. Let us spread science, and education its instrument. Martyrs had smoothed the path. Let them carry on their inheritance unimpaired to their children. Then, having done their best for the human race here, they might face any hereafter if there be such; and if there should be no hereafter, the consciousness of duty done would tint with rainbow and orient colors the mists of death far more surely than any expected glories from the vague and mystic land of dreams.

A collection was made for the Freethought Benevolent Fund, to be devoted to those suffering through the Durham strike, and realised the sum of £3 5s. 5½d.

On Whit Monday many delegates were escorted over the castle, museum, and other places of interest.

#### LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE SECULAR FEDERATION.

At the first annual Conference of this Federation, held at Newcastle-on-Tyne on June 4, 1892, Mr. Stanley Jones (Liverpool) presiding, the following officers were appointed—President, Mr. J. Greevz Fisher (Leeds); vice-presidents, Messrs. H. Smith (Farsley), A. Hemingway and E. H. Jones (Manchester); and J. Grange (Bradford); financial secretary and treasurer, Mr. J. R. Willock (Manchester); and organising secretary, Sam Standring. Several rules were agreed to, and the meeting closed. As all the work of the Federation is purely honorary, any subscriptions devoted to this cause will be spent absolutely and exclusively on propagandist work. Nearly twenty Branches were represented.—SAM STANDRING, Org. Sec., 106 Oxford-street, Manchester, to whom donations and all communications should be addressed.

#### THE SECOND BIRMINGHAM DEBATE.

ON Tuesday, May 31, Baskerville Hall was again the scene of another encounter between the Rev. Dr. McCann and Mr. C. Watts.

The subject of discussion was "The Moral Nature of Man," upon which the learned doctor had discoursed on the previous Tuesday, having no one to controvert his utterances. At the debate there was a large attendance, every seat being occupied. There was a good deal of applause on both sides, but no disagreeable sounds were uttered on either. Some merriment was caused by the doctor's allusion to the fact that God, in dealing with our first parents in the Garden of Eden, did give them the fruit of the garden, but he did not tell them to steal it! The audience seemed to think the idea of a man stealing an apple out of his own garden a good joke. It reminds me of the negro's text on that subject, "And the Lord said, Who stole de winter apples?"

The disputed points were free-will and responsibility. Mr. McCann can select and do anything by simply touching a patent steel spring in his own mechanism, which he calls conscience, which in him is innate. He can choose a rose or a nettle, be a teetotaler or a drunkard; he only has to touch his patent spring, and off he goes in any direction. It is fortunate for his power of selection that both brandy and lemonade exist in his time, or it would go hard with his power of selection.

Of course Mr. Watts argued that conscience is the result of organisation and circumstances. Mr. McCann instanced a good character being occasionally found among evil surroundings. But he should have gone a step further, and claimed it as a result of them. It is not at all an uncommon fact that out of a boatload upset, one at least can swim. On the other hand, it is by no means uncommon to find one living in a villa, attending church and Sunday-school, getting off the line. As an instance of antagonism between utility and morality, he gave a man endowing an hospital because he knew it would be applauded.

Mr. Watts considered Christianity a selfish thing, but Mr. McCann of course could not entertain such a proposi-

tion. So you may act as a Christian so as to secure the aid of God here, and an eternity of bliss hereafter; but to think of relieving the suffering because your fellows will approve it—that's flat blasphemy. It is quite true the idea of utility may not be present to the mind at the moment every action is performed, but the purpose and result may be judged without it. Mr. McCann instanced a watch as being neither moral nor immoral; but who said it was? One thing strikes us as being peculiar in his own mechanism—it has a conscience that tells which is best, brandy or lemonade, and a free will that can upset that by ordering whichever it likes. But even that would be inoperative in the absence of either alcohol or water. Then Mr. McCann contends we are "partly" free. We are free to do what we can do that we want to do, but not free to do what we want to do if we can't do it.

He contends that in speaking the truth and doing the right thing he is obeying the wish and will of God, while Mr. Watts contends that he is only doing what is useful to himself and society—the first is an assertion, while the second can be tested by the beneficial effects upon men.

With regard to actions be preordained, as taught by Luther and others, Mr. McCann had long ago repudiated them, but Mr. Watts offered to oblige him with a text or two out of the Bible confirming it, but he declined to accept the generous offer. With a free will to do as he likes, and a conscience always telling him what is right and wrong, it is not easy to see what Mr. McCann wants with a Bible at all. Mr. Watts settled the conscience question by an appeal to history, where the Protestant conscience dictated cruel persecution of the Catholic, after suffering similar persecution at the hands of his opponent. He thus exposed the glaring absurdity of man being held responsible for his opinions, and at the same time demonstrated the utter inutility of taking conscience as a test of acts that are beneficial to society, seeing that its decisions are contradictory. By such a test the acts of every tyrant and fanatic that has cursed the world are pronounced moral and virtuous instead of atrocious and diabolical.

The same good temper and propriety of speech prevailed as on the former occasion, so that, if the truth has not been promoted, no one's reputation has suffered in the contest. In the next debate Mr. McCann has to prove that Christianity is the true Secularism, and, if he should succeed, it is impossible to predict the consequences. Baskerville Hall may be transformed into a cathedral and the chief into the Rev. C. Watts.

CHARLES C. CATTELL.

#### THE HAIGH GREEN.

Not long ago, a poor boy went into a shop in Glasgow, which belonged to one of the baillies. The boy having an interesting appearance, the baillie put some questions to him respecting his education and moral instruction. Upon these points he found the boy very ignorant, as might be expected. The baillie also inquired how he was employed on Sunday, and was told that he begged on the week days and played on the Sabbath day.

"What!" says the baillie, "is that the way you spend the Sabbath day? Do you know, my lad, where all those go that play on the Sabbath day?"

"Ay, sir," says the boy, "they gang to the Haigh Green!"

"Do yez remember the talk about soigns and superstitions the other evedin', Mrs Flannegan?" "Oi do." "Have yez thried the horseshoe yit?" "Faix, an' we have, ah' it worruked at wonct. It hadn't been up two hours before it fell on Michael and broke open his head. Now all he has to do is to lie in bed an' dhraw's money from the lodge."

Uncle Billy recently developed interest in religious matters, and it was observed with surprise by several boat-owners that he was no longer willing to take a hand at the work offered him. One of the men said, "I'm sorry that you won't work any more." "'Deed, sah, I is pufflickly willin' to wuk; but I kain't wuk in yoh boat." "Why not?" "Kase she's a two-master." "Why, that's no reason at all." "Massa, ef you wants to 'peril yer own soul, 'tain' none ob my business; but de Good Book says plain as day dat no man kain't sarbe two masters."

Two parsons, one massive in build and the other diminutive, were out in a boat in a storm. Prayer was proposed, but the skipper sung out, "The little 'un may pray, but the big 'un will have to pull."



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, free entertainment and dance. Tuesday at 8, social gathering. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class (few members wanted).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 6, tea (6d.); 7.30, music; 8, H. Vining will lecture; 9.45, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, B. Hyatt, "Some Bible Stories Astronomically Explained"; preceded by recital, Julius Caesar.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, W. C. Lyons will lecture.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Is Unbelief a Sin?"

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, S. H. Alison will lecture.

West London—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Notting Hill: 9, half-yearly general meeting, urgent business.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. Heaford, "Free Will and Necessity"; 7, W. J. Ramsey, "What must I do to be Saved?"

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

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, B. Hyatt, "What Think ye of Christ?"

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Christianity and Progress"; monthly meeting after the lecture.

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, C. J. Steinberg will lecture.

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

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, Mr. St. John, "Evolution and Design"; 3.30, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?"

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8, a lecture. Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Salvation."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Science."

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Creation."

Lambeth—New Cut (near Victoria Hall): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Miracles and Prophecy as Tests of Truth."

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, H. Courtney, "The Apostles' Creed."

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

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Forty Days' Fast"

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Heaven."

Plaistow Green: 11.30, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, a lecture.

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

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, T. Thurlow will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "Mesmerism, Hypnotism, and Modern Psychology"; 3, "The Evidence for Re-incarnation"; 7, "Crucified Saviors."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 12, business; 7, Mr. Chapman, B.A., "Evolution."

Heckmondwike—Mr. John Rothera's Bottoms: 2.30, a meeting, Delegate's Report.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Rhodes, "Clarke Russell, the Sailor's Novelist."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 6.30, Harry Smith "Poverty: its Causes, and how to Prevent it" (free). Monday at 8, Sam Standing, "The Torture Exhibition and its Lessons" (free).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, fortnightly financial meeting; 7, H. Koppel, "Spiritualism."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, Conference Report.

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Pinhorne, "Technical Education."

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: 6.30, Sam Standing, "Why we are Secularists."

Sheffield—Sanger's Circus, Pinstone-street: Charles Watts, 11, "Christ: his Birth, Death, and Resurrection"; 3, "The Coming Social Revolution"; 7.30, "What Christians have to Defend"; tea in Hall of Science at 5 (6d.)

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, annual meeting, election of officers.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Manchester—Stephenson-square: 3, Harry Smith, "Modern Christianity: what is it?"

Nottingham—Sneinton Market: 11, J. Hooper, "Secularists' Duty at the Coming Election."

Rochdale—Town Hall-square: 2.30, Sam Standing, "Bible Poison."

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LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—June 19, Liverpool.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—June 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 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—June 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 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 12, Rochdale; 19, Manchester; 26, Chester. Mondays, Manchester; Thursdays, Penlebury.

C. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—June 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 12, Nottingham; 19, Manchester. July 3, Manchester; 11, Grimsby.

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.

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