

# The Free Thinker

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## A BISHOP IN THE WORKHOUSE.

PERHAPS the title of this article will suggest a tragic story of a fall from a high place, wealth, and dignity, into abjectness, poverty, and misery. Such things do occur in the lottery of fortune. Sometimes a beggar gets seated on horseback, and sometimes a proud knight is thrown from the saddle and pitched in the mud. But it is scarcely conceivable that a bishop should become a pauper. Episcopal servants of Christ usually feather their nests snugly against the cold; and were adversity to overtake them, they generally have rich friends to save them from "the parish." No, it is not a tale of woe that we have to tell. We do not know of any bishop who is reduced to beggary. The time has not arrived for such an awful occurrence. Some day, perhaps, when priestcraft is exploded and Churches are played out, an ex-bishop may find it hard to obtain a living in the open labor market; but meanwhile the lawn-sleeved gentry will continue to live on the fat of the land, and prove that godliness is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life that is to come.

Well now, as Shakespeare says, let us leave off making faces and begin. Let us no longer keep the reader in suspense, but let out the secret at once.

The Bishop of Winchester went last Sunday to Farnham workhouse. He did not go in disguise as a "casual," in order to see for himself how the pariahs of society are treated in this nineteenth century of the Christian era. He went in "full fig," dressed in a style which, as Mill remarked, no man could assume without feeling himself a hypocrite, whether he was one or not. Nor did he go for the purpose of giving the old women an ounce of tea, or the old men an ounce of tobacco. His lordship's mind was above such low, contemptible carnalities. The object of his visit was spiritual. He went to preach to the paupers, and give them a little medicine for their souls. They were in the union, the "half-way house on the road to hell," and the bishop told them (we suppose) how they might still hope for a place in heaven, though it would have to be a back seat, for as "order is heaven's first law" it would be a shocking violation of the divine economy to let paupers jostle big capitalists, and landlords, and bishops, and princes of the blood, who hold front-seat tickets, numbered and reserved.

"This is believed," says the newspaper report, "to be the first occasion on which a Prelate of the See of St. Swithin has taken part in divine service in such an institution." The first time in all those centuries! Truly the very paupers are looking up. Or is it that the bishop is looking down? In any case, what a change from the old days when paupers were certain of Hades! Was it not a West of England workhouse in which an old pauper lay dying while the chaplain was in the hunting-field, and the governor was obliged to officiate? "Tom," said the boss of this luckless establishment, "Tom, you've been a dreadful fellow; you're going to hell." "Oh, sir," replied Tom, "you don't say so." "Yes, Tom, I do say so," rejoined the

governor, "and you ought to be thankful you've a hell to go to."

His lordship of Winchester doubtless talked to the Farnham paupers in a different strain. Christianity is now, not only the friend of the poor, but the friend of the poorest; for even paupers have to be reckoned with, the revolutionary spirit having penetrated to the very lowest strata of our disaffected population. But the "friendship" must be understood in a Pickwickian sense. Indeed, the joke of a bishop, with £6,500 a year, hobnobbing with the social wreckage of a system which supports his wicked luxury, is colossal and pungent enough to send the very Fat Boy into convulsions of laughter. We cannot help thinking that the Bishop of Winchester is a humorist. Perhaps if the Church is disestablished in his day, and the worst comes to the worst, he will turn his attention to the Stage, and take the shine out of Arthur Roberts and Fred Leslie.

On this supposition, our regret at being unable to find any report of "Winchester's" sermon to the Farnham paupers, is too deep for expression. All we can do in the circumstances is to present our readers with a condensed report of what the Bishop *might* have said; and what, indeed, he *would* have said, if he had risen to the level of the situation.

### THE BISHOP'S SERMON.

"Dearly beloved brethren,—You see before you a humble servant of the most high God, who has come out from his wretched palace to spend an hour with you in this cheerful workhouse, built and maintained by a charitable nation for her most privileged children. Here for a brief space I shake off the cares and burdens of my own sad lot, and bathe my wearied spirit in the delicious restfulness of this happy asylum. Like you, I feel a child of our common Father in heaven. And as you gaze upon me, I also gaze upon you. Blessed sight! Delightful vision! Before me sit a goodly number of God's elect, his chosen vessels of grace, the predestinated inheritors of his glory. Happy mortals! soon to put on glorious crowns of immortality. Others have wandered from the path of salvation, but ye have persevered to the end. Wealth and power, pride and ambition, have no charm for your righteous souls. Ye have chosen the better part. Day and night, drunk and sober—I mean waking and dreaming—ye have pondered the words of our holy Savior, "Blessed be ye poor." And as he who studies long and deeply enough learns the hardest lesson, ye have gained a vital conviction of the truth which is hidden from the worldlings. 'Blessed be ye poor,' said our Lord, and ye *are* poor, and therefore yours is the blessing, and yours (in due course) is the kingdom of heaven. Ye shall walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem; ye shall gaze upon its jewelled walls; ye shall drink of the fresh, clear, untaxed, unmeasured water of the River of Life; ye shall bask in the light of the Lamb; ye shall look across the great gulf that separates the saved from the damned, and behold those who have chosen riches instead of poverty in the torments of everlasting fire. Fortunate paupers! Envious prospect! How gladly would I stay with you

and share your beatitude! But, alas, I am called away by the voice of my Master. I have taken up the cross of self-sacrifice; I have resolved to follow his example, and perish if I must that sinners may be saved. My salary is already £6,500 a year, and if it should be my fate to become Archbishop of Canterbury, I shall assume with resignation the more terrible burden of £15,000. I know its dangers; I know that wealth weighs us down to the nether pit; I know how hardly they that have riches shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But every pound I carry lightens the burden of a fellow man, and gives him so much chance of mounting to heaven, instead of sinking to hell. Oh, I feel on fire with self-sacrifice. A love of mankind burns in my breast capable of consuming (or appropriating) all the wealth of this planet. I would bear the burden of the whole world. Yea, I will bear as much of it as I can. And now I go forth to my fate, be it life or death, glory or gehenna. And you, beloved, who remain here, sheltered from the storm, think, oh think of your sad brother, staggering under the load of £6,500 a year. Pray that he may have the strength to bear whatever burden is laid upon him. And pray, oh pray that his wealth may be counted unto him as poverty, for his love to the brethren, and that he may attain unto everlasting life. Amen." G. W. FOOTE.

## ANCIENT MYSTERIES.

### I.—EGYPTIAN.\*

"O Egypt, Egypt, of thy religion there will be left remaining nothing but uncertain tales, which will be believed no more by posterity; words graven on stone and telling of thy piety."

—HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

EGYPT, the cradle-land of arts and civilisation, was also the great fountain-head of streams of religious mystery. An air of impressive massiveness and mystery remain stamped upon its monuments. Its hieroglyphs, despite the glimmering light of Horapollo, were impenetrable mysteries until the genius of Champollion unearthed the secrets of forty centuries and showed the cross as the sign of life on

Those mystic-story volumes on the walls long writ,  
Whose sense is late revealed to searching modern wit.

The lonely, watching Sphinx, profound and unfathomable, rearing its monstrous form and calm, impassive head above the drifting sands of time, is a type of Egyptian religion. The basis of that religion was nature and fetish-worship, as now found in the heart of the Dark Continent. Down to the latest times may be discerned traces of savagery, in animal worship, totemism, magical prayers, amulets, and methods of divination. As with other faiths where the priests were a dominant caste, religion overrode every part of life and ramified in all directions. As in India, the Brahmans sum up the three million deities into a sublime pantheism, with the motto *Ekam eva advitiam*—"There is but one being, no second," so the Egyptian priest recited hymns to Amen Ra as the one hidden creator, while the populace worshipped cats and crocodiles. I do not propose, in my limits, to wander in the maze of Egyptian mythology, but proceed at once to the central myth—that of Osiris, the deity who presided over the greater, as Isis over the lesser, mysteries.

Says Mr. Andrew Laing, in his *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (vol. ii., p. 84): "As one great river of

mysterious source flows throughout all Egypt, so through the brakes and jungles of her religion flows one great myth from a distant fountain-head, the myth of Osiris."\* This myth, says M. Le Page Renouf, is "as old as Egyptian civilisation." In brief, it tells how Osiris the beneficent, who taught agriculture and other useful arts, and instituted laws, was overcome and slain by Set (Typhon). His body was mutilated and strewn over the land of Egypt in fourteen pieces (perhaps representing the fourteen days of the waning moon). His dirge was sung by Isis, his sister and consort, and Nephthys, her sister and wife of Typhon, the mourning lasting five days. Isis seeks the mangled remains, finding and burying all but the genitals. By aid of his son Horus, the deliverer and avenger, whose legend is largely a replica of that of Osiris, Typhon is overcome, Osiris raised from the dead and becomes the judge of the quick and the dead. In the story, as given in Plutarch, we may trace the rudiments of organs more fully developed in an earlier form. The legend, in part, was probably invented to account for the customs; thus the story of the parts unfound was to explain the bearing of imitation phalli in the festival and the particular honor paid them, these phalli being originally symbols of fertility and of victory over enemies. The burial of various members was told to explain how numerous places claimed to show the tomb of Osiris. The story of the dying and suffering god was a mystery. Herodotus (bk. ii. 171), speaking of the lake near Sais, says: "On this lake it is that the Egyptians represent by night his sufferings whose name I refrain from mentioning, and this representation they call their Mysteries. I know well the whole course of the proceedings in these ceremonies, but they shall not pass my lips. So too, with regard to the mysteries of Ceres, which the Greeks term "the Thesmophoria." I know them, but I shall not mention them, except so far as may be done without impiety."† To the comparative mythologist, it is evident the mysterious sufferer alluded to was a dying god, or a man who represented him. This feature of Egyptian religion was alluded to by the freethinker Xenophanes, who said to them: "If ye believe them to be gods, why do ye weep for them; if they deserve your lamentations, why repute them to be gods." (Plutarch on Isis and Osiris). Rawlinson says, in his note on the passage cited from Herodotus: "The sufferings and death of Osiris were the great mystery of the Egyptian religion, and some traces of it are perceptible among other people of antiquity." Osiris was the good deity who died, rose again, and judged the dead in the underworld, who attained bliss by becoming Osirified like unto him."‡ This was the Egyptian scheme of salvation. To no mythological hero has the solar theory been more persistently or plausibly applied. It held sway from Macrobius to Renouf. Yet it is only partially true. Osiris absorbs the attributes and myths of Ra the sun, and Horus the light. He becomes the sun of the underworld. But while Ra is primarily solar, Osiris

\* The profoundest mysteries are the simplest. Two of the largest works dealing with the mysteries are the *Anacalypsis*, of Godfrey Higgins, and the *Isis Unveiled*, ascribed to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and founded on the MSS. of the Baron de Palm. The late lamented excellent freethinker, Winwood Reade, also has a learned work, chiefly on Druidical Mysteries, entitled *The Veil of Isis*. All these titles refer to the inscription to Neith, or the Saitic Isis, "I am all that is and has been and shall be, and no man hath lifted my veil." Now Isis represented the female principle, the universal mother, theatrix personifying the menstrual flow, or blood of life. Hence she must always wear her veil, and is the Kosmic Kore, Nature, the ever-virgin mother, the earth-mother, "with beautiful bosomed body full of fruit"; the heaven mother, "clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

† We shall see when we deal with the Eleusinia and Thesmophoria, that these mysteries preserved the same meanings as those of Osiris.

‡ The identification of the dead person with Osiris, is seen on the earliest tombs and in the Ritual of the Dead.

\* See Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, the *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo; Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, bk. xi.; Hermes Trismegistus (tr. by J. D. Chambers, and in French by L. Menard), *Crota Repoa* (Berlin, 1778) and the works of Birch, W. R. Cooper, Gerald Massey, Bonwick, Sharpe, Brugsch, Maspero, Tiele, Renouf, Lefebvre and Erman.

† The ankh, or crux ansata, is found as the sign of life on the tomb of Khufu Ankh, officer of Cheops, B.C. 3733; on the coffin of Men-Kau-Ra (Mykerinos) B.C. 3133, and on the precepts of Ptah-Hotep, the oldest book in the world.

is only secondarily so. Originally he represents fertility, appearing, as Mr. Frazer suggests, as the tree spirit and corn spirit, with a sacrificed pig as part of his ritual. As the fertility of Egypt depends on the inundation of the Nile, he comes to represent humanity. In Egypt the sun does not die in winter, it is therefore as vegetative life his annual death and resurrection was celebrated.\*

The myth of Osiris became not only typical of the daily triumph of the sun over darkness, the annual victory of vivific nature over winter, but of the life-long conflict of humanity with evil. Osiris the Good (Oansé) became the type of ideal humanity, with its sufferings, struggles, temporary defeat and final triumph. The living and the dead were typified in him. The very core of Egyptian religion lay here. As the god of life, conquered by the powers of darkness and death, passed into the underworld, and waged there a triumphant contest with his enemies and rose again with new life and vigor, so with the human spirit. The renewal of life in nature was the pledge of man's immortality. Life and immortality were thus brought to light ages before Christianity. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting was the *credo* of the Egyptians ages before Moses, and the curious thing, if he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, is why in spoiling the Egyptians of certain of their mysteries, he did not also borrow their central doctrine.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

### SUNDAY AND THE CHICAGO EXHIBITION.

Two important events are to take place in Chicago next year, namely, the World's Fair and the holding of an International Congress of Freethinkers. To both these events the American Secular Union is devoting considerable attention, as each of them possesses special features of interest to the Secular party. Our American co-workers announce their intention of inviting to the Congress "delegates from England, France, Germany, and other countries." The assembly will have the best wishes of all English Freethinkers for its success. The great advantages which Chicago will afford in 1893 will thus be used to illustrate the fact that Freethought is confined to no one country, nor limited to any one race, but that both its genius and influence are coeval with emancipated humanity.

In the United States strong efforts are being made by the Sabbatarians, assisted by their orthodox allies in this country, to close the Exhibition on Sundays. Against this puritanical act of bigotry, it is the duty of all Freethinkers to render their active protest. We are glad to see that the friends of a free and rational use of the Sunday will have an opportunity of placing their claims before the proper authorities with a view of checking the attempts of these would-be Sunday monopolists. On October 6 next, Judge Waite, President of the American Secular Union, is to be allowed two hours before the World's Fair Commissioners, in which to state the Secular claims upon the Sunday question. From the well-known ability of the Judge, there can be no doubt that the Freethought position will be judiciously stated and its requirements logically enforced.

It is reported that huge petitions (which, no doubt, were signed principally by women and children at

\* Mr. Andrew Lang brings Osiris into line with savage benefactors as "a culture-hero." But even Mr. Lang, though of the school of "rational Christians," who invent a "real Jesus" out of the ideal Christ, does not pretend that he can reconstruct a real history of Osiris, as modern Christians, knowing nothing of their own myths or their own mysteries, fancy they can reconstruct a real history of Jesus. Such rationalisers are usually the reverse of rational, for they attempt to interpret old legends on nineteenth-century principles, instead of explaining them from the atmosphere of myth and miracle in which they arose.

prayer meetings, Sunday-schools, and other orthodox gatherings) have been forwarded to Chicago from the United Kingdom against the opening of the Exhibition on Sundays. Now, should not the Sunday League of this country at once rebuke such impertinent interference with the liberties of the people by sending counter petitions? If this is done, we venture to say that the National Secular Society of England will be pleased to render the undertaking all possible aid. If, however, the Sunday League decline to take the initiative, perhaps the President of the National Secular Society will arrange to have a special resolution passed at every Branch of the Association, and forwarded to Judge Waite before next October. So thoroughly inconsistent and foreign to the spirit of the age is this Sabbatarian craze, that every legitimate means should be employed to expose its absurdity, and to destroy its evil influence. Let the point at issue be clearly understood. Our contention is not that the Sunday as a day of rest should be abolished, but that it should be freed from all priestly restrictions, and that all classes of persons should have a right to spend the day in a manner which they think most useful to the moral, social, and intellectual welfare of themselves and of the society around them. Against this freedom priests of the various denominations protest, because, of course, it would interfere with the success of their profession. These Sabbatarians allege that a free Sunday would be opposed to the religious, moral, and social welfare of the community. Let us see what force there is in this threefold objection.

The religious aspect of the question has probably most weight with the thoughtless multitude. Sabbatarians appeal to the Old Testament for their authority and justification for keeping "sacred" their Sunday because they well know that the New Testament, which they profess to make the guide of life in other matters, would fail them here. And yet in spite of this, they do not keep the Jewish Sabbath, either as to the day or the mode. The so-called Christian Sunday is a mongrel thing, neither Jewish nor apostolic, and the teaching with regard to it is not capable of being formulated into a consistent scheme. The same commandment which says, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," declares with equal emphasis that "the seventh day is the Sabbath," and yet all Christians pursue their ordinary business occupations on that same seventh day, which the law (said to have been given from Sinai) declared must be kept holy. The excuse about having changed the day is a mere subterfuge, and does not touch the question at issue. For in that very change the law has been disregarded, and all arguments from the Old Testament rendered null and void. The reasons given for the change are neither sound nor satisfactory. The real change took place in the days of Constantine, before which time as every scholar knows, no Christian Sabbath was kept—that is to say as a day of rest. In the first century the Christians probably met for worship on the first day of the week, but the service over, they returned to their ordinary business duties, and those of them who kept the Sabbath at all still obeyed the Jewish law in this respect and rested on the seventh day. The Jewish Sabbath was essentially a day of rest, while the Christian Sunday is a day of church-going. In the fourth commandment rest, and rest only is enjoined, not worship, for that would have been a breach of the enjoined repose. To-day in the churches of Christendom Sunday is the busiest day of all the week. And the clergy, so far from resting, actually work harder on that day than upon any other.

From a moral point of view, it cannot be shown that the countries where Sabbatarianism is carried out with all its puritanical stringency, are more moral than lands where social recreation is tolerated on that day. On the contrary, Glasgow is well known

to be one of the most drunken cities in the world, and yet here Sabbatarianism reigns supreme. Men to be moral must be physically healthy, have sound minds in sound bodies, and this condition can the better be obtained by inhaling pure country air, and indulging in some kind of recreation after the week's toil is over. We do not object to orthodox believers spending the day according to their own taste. If they wish to sit in sackcloth and ashes, by all means let them do so. But we protest against their enforcing their crotchets upon us, or upon others who do not accept their dogmas. There is a tendency here towards a state of clerical despotism almost as bad as the priestly power of Rome, which in the past played such havoc with human liberty and the rights of man.

Regarded socially, Sunday is the only day on which many of the poor can visit their friends and relations, inhale the fresh air of the country, enrich their minds by studying objects of interest in museums, or picture galleries, and thus secure to themselves that recreation which is essential to health. But then there steps in between them and the objects of their lawful desires a set of bigoted clerics with a keen eye to their own interest, who, with a cant cry of a "Thus saith the Lord," hurl anathemas at those who dare to use their own judgment as to how they shall spend their time on any particular day. And not content with this, efforts are made to enact laws which shall bind hand and foot all who differ from their opinions or who elect to think for themselves on such matters as concern the welfare of humanity. This, however, will not be endured, for the days of priestly authority are numbered. The real value of Sunday consists in the use which is made of it. A day of gloom and melancholy can never be conducive to the well-being of men. Let us have mirth and joy and harmless recreation, and we will hail the Sunday as a delight. But a puritanical Sabbath devoted to funereal solemnity and spiritual—not to say spirituous—consolations (?) we will protest against to the utmost of our power. The day was made for man, according to an authority which Christians will hardly dispute, and man must be allowed to adapt it to his own wants, desires, and the necessities of his nature. This will make Sunday sacred in a higher sense than the priestly one, and in a nobler way than orthodoxy ever dreamed of.

CHARLES WATTS.

## HOW CHRISTIANS LOVE THE NEGRO.

[CONCLUDED.]

One wonders how Christians, who cannot tolerate association with "niggers" on earth, will manage when they get to heaven. Will there be separate quarters there? Will the Ethiopian have changed his skin before he arrives at the pearly gates? Or will he be relegated to a sort of celestial "back-town," as he is located in an earthly one in some of the American cities? Will the boasted "universal brotherhood" of man, spoken of by the psalm-singing, straight-haired fraternity, include "niggers" in the realms of the New Jerusalem or exclude them as on earth? But probably Christians will not be so particular up there as they are down here. If they can tolerate Lazarus with his sore legs, they may surely put up with the odoriferous "nigger." In either case, Abraham would have a bosomful, and the arms of Jesus be anything but a desirable place of abode. Perhaps, though, they have a supply of celestial plasters and ointment for Lazarus's legs and a stock of celestial disinfectants for those who are apt to be a trifle "gamey."

On certain eventful occasions white Christians are willing to "receive" a representative of the colored Churches—possibly are good enough to listen to a sermon from him, and are always pleased to have him

entertain them with his experiences of slave life and sing a few camp-meeting songs. It amuses them, and they imagine they have done their Christian duty to their black brother and given practical demonstration of the beautiful Christian virtue of universal brotherhood. Then exit the nigger for twelve months.

The present writer was in Ohio some years ago. One day a Christian minister was dining at the same boarding-house, and during a conversation, expressed his conviction that the "niggers," as he termed them, were better off in slavery. As this Christian sentiment was uttered in the presence of a sensitive colored girl, who was waiting on the Christian "gentleman," the beautiful and Christian character of the remark was, as I afterwards learnt, duly appreciated. Many years ago the Good Templars, who exclude Atheists from their membership, and who open all their meetings with Christian prayer, split in two on the question of allowing negroes to enter the order. In one, at any rate, it not in all of the American states, the law prohibits the intermarriage of blacks and whites. In Ohio the penalty imposed on a white man marrying a woman of color is, if I remember rightly, twelve months' imprisonment and a hundred dollars fine. If Mr. Celestine Edwards married an English wife and took her over to the States, I question if there exists a Christian hotel-keeper, from New York to San Francisco, of any Christian standing and respectability who would take them in, or any circle of Christian society that would not look down with loathing and contempt on the Christian Mrs. Edwards. Such is the force of Christian public opinion, that a respectable colored girl would not be seen walking with a white man. What, then, would the Christian public think of a white girl walking with a black man? Even that refined exponent of muscular Christianity, Mr. John L. Sullivan (who some time ago gave a boxing exhibition in New York on behalf of a Catholic church), would not lower himself to meet a negro in the prize ring. Even he must draw the line somewhere, and he draws it at the black man.

On the other hand, leading English Freethinkers (whom the "negro lecturer" is never tired of misrepresenting, and about whom lies fall from his lips as water rolls off a duck's back) are willing to meet him on public platforms as if he were a "white man" in a figurative as well as in a literal sense.

Let Mr. Edwards remember that some of the best friends the negro ever had were infidels and Atheists. Let him remember it, to his shame, when he is trying to paint the characters of great and good men to his ignorant Christian audiences in colors as black as his own skin. Let him remember that, although nature has endowed him with a mental and physical capacity for unblushing offrontery, he yet bears the shape of a man and owes some little respect to his race and species. Let him remember that Abraham Lincoln was an infidel, that Thomas Jefferson was an infidel and an abolitionist, that Benjamin Franklin was an infidel and an abolitionist, that Thomas Paine was an infidel and an abolitionist, that John Stuart Mill was an Atheist and an abolitionist, that Bradlaugh was an Atheist and an abolitionist, that Ingersoll is an Atheist and was an abolitionist, and that infidel France, as Wilberforce said, set Christian England an example in liberating her slaves. Let him remember that Jesus Christ never uttered one word on behalf of the despised black man, never spoke a syllable against slavery, although he lived in the midst of it. He was too busy cursing fig-trees, getting his feet washed, and having his hair oiled. Christ, who was too busy to say anything about the slave trade, could find time to go into the wine trade. Although his powers of debate were so exceptional that he could astonish the doctors at the early age of twelve, he didn't think it worth his while to use those powers on the side of freedom, but could hold a set debate

with the Devil, perched on the pinnacle of the temple like a crow, on the anything but dignified if elevated subject of his divine tumbling abilities. (In any future illustrated edition of Farrar's *Life of Christ* a picture of Jesus and Old Nick, each stuck on a spire of the temple, "arguing the point" in full view of the astonished gaze of the wandering Jews, would relieve the monotony of its pages. The publishers are welcome to this suggestion free of charge.) If the emancipation of the negro had depended on what Jesus said on his behalf, or on what the Christian Church did for him, he would have been writhing under the lash of his Christian "masters" till Christ's second coming. When that will be, the Lord and Prophet Baxter only knows.

H. J.

### MORALS, PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN.

THE course of human history is instructive, and somewhat discouraging. As far back as we are able to trace man, he seems to have had pretty much the same general character as now. He has always been rude, coarse, brutal, shameless, on the one hand; always possessed of kindly feelings, generosity and more or less tractability on the other. In a word, man's bad and good qualities have always been pretty much as they are, this or that virtue or vice being developed to excess at various times and in different tribes or nations.

On the whole, there does not seem to have been much difference in the merit or demerit of human beings from the very beginning until now.

One nation or tribe has made itself remarkable for this virtue or for the other vice; but no nation ever exhibited all the virtues at once in any degree of perfection; nor was any nation ever known that gave itself up to all kinds of vice.

Whatever tends to bind human beings together and to regulate their general intercourse, to preserve and benefit society, must be regarded as moral. Whatever tends to divide and disorganise must be regarded as vice.

Now, few nations or tribes were ever destroyed by vice; and, as human society has continued until now, through all the past ages of the world, we must conclude that morality or virtue has, on the whole, been far more powerful than vice. Men have been for the most part wise enough to understand that society is necessary to their well-being; and they have adopted the give-and-take policy, instead of pushing individuality to the point of dissolving society.

In looking over the past, I confess I do not see any essential difference between the nations, as regards morals. Some have certainly taught morals more plainly and elaborately than others; but in practice they are pretty much alike. I mean this, not that the manners and the customs of nations are the same, but that, if we drew up a balance sheet of virtues and vices in each nation, we should discover that each was about as near bankruptcy as any other. The business has been awfully bungled, and virtues and vices have been so inextricably mixed up together, that it is impossible to audit the accounts.

The wild, rough virtues and vices abound in some lands and times; the soft, effeminate and sneaking ones in others. But who shall say which, on the whole, is the more moral or the more vicious?

There are things in social life for which we have no standard, each tribe and nation setting up their own. Marriage and the family are examples. No one standard has ever prevailed in regulating the sex-relations of mankind. Even to-day we have existing all possible arrangements, from the loosest to the most rigid, from absolute licence to positive celibacy.

I do not propose to discuss this subject now; it is worthy of volumes, and must be more and more fully and honestly dealt with as time proceeds.

In striking the balance of good and evil in each nation, we must be careful not to judge any by or in respect of one vice or one virtue, but all. A nation may be extremely loose in sex matters, and yet be full of humanity, patriotism, justice, and other prime virtues. A nation may be faultless sexually, and yet have very little else to recommend them.

Men may be ready to murder all belonging to other nations, as the Bible Jews were, and yet be distinguished by solid virtues in other departments of life. And, on the other hand, a nation may be too mild and humane to destroy, and yet be shockingly vicious in other respects.

No nation, no man, ever exhibited all the virtues or all the vices. Perfect goodness and perfect vice are equally unknown, equally unattainable. Total depravity and total or perfect holiness are theological fictions, invented and pushed for base ends.

I am not going to insinuate that Christian morals are all bad, or the Pagan all good. This I will say, that the prime Christian morals are the very worst of vices, while the good ones of that system have been borrowed, or, to speak more correctly, are the heirloom of mankind at large handed down from the remotest ages.

I am not charging Christians with being the originators of the vices called virtues, but I deal with them as I find them.

But before pointing out those, let me call attention to one important point. There never was a tribe or nation but what forbade theft, murder, treachery, falsehood, cowardice, adultery. In one word, no society could exist without the social virtues. Even a pirate crew, or a band of brigands, or a den of priests must have faith in each other; and very often are as true to each other as any people in the world. They may not respect each other, or even themselves, but mutual interest will keep them together and preserve the balance of the community. Rob Roy and his raiders were as moral amongst themselves as any army could be. They preyed upon others only.

This is morality all the world over; and it is only in advanced society that men come to realise the fact that outsiders and foreigners have rights as well as members of their own community. But that is a pitch of perfection not yet attained in practice, though glimpsed in theory. The self-defending sentiments will separate nations, and even provoke them to war.

The chief Christian virtues, in theory at least, are renunciation of self, renunciation of the State, renunciation of the family and all relatives, absolute voluntary poverty, non-resistance, and, above all, trust for everything in another, not in oneself.

And I maintain that all these so-called virtues are the worst of vices. Why should a man renounce himself? If it is real, it leaves a man without any manhood, a thing of no use to anyone; a lump of rubbish fit only to be buried out of sight. A man who renounces himself or his own claims is a nobody, nor can you interest him in anything. Self is the basis and the centre of all good actions and feelings. When self is pushed to selfishness, it becomes a detestable vice; but no self at all is as bad in one direction as all self is in the other. The proper thing is to maintain a balance between self and society; then a man can secure his rights while doing his duty.

Of course, the Christian does not renounce self in reality, but in theory. He gives himself away for a consideration; he gives up all in hope of a hundred-fold here and eternal life hereafter. Jesus, the Christian's highest theoretical ideal, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne

of God" (Hebrews xii. 2). "Great is your reward in heaven," said Jesus; and his followers bargain with him—"So much suffering, so much reward." They think the terms satisfactory, enter into the compact, and barter away the present for the future. That is business, but not real self-renunciation. Besides, it is an extremely low view to take of morals, the lowest possible.

And that leads me to remark that public spirit is unknown to the real Christian. He has no regard for man as man; if he loves his neighbor at all, it is in obedience to a command from headquarters, and in hope of a reward, or in fear of punishment if he does not obey.

This is a principle that turns all the Christian graces and virtues into vices. A Christian is not a good neighbor because a neighborly spirit possesses him, but simply to secure the smile and the favor of an almighty tyrant.

Christianity teaches us to renounce the State. All countries and peoples are to be one. The Christian State is in heaven, not here; they are not to mind earthly things, for their State, society, nation, politics, are all in heaven.

Christianity nowhere suggests the virtue of patriotism; the very reverse. Christ warned his followers to flee to the mountains as soon as the hostile armies appeared (Matt. xxiv. 16-21).

In truth, if we love our neighbors as ourselves; if we must turn the other cheek; if we must give our cloak to him who demands our coat; if we are forbidden to take thought for the morrow, why, then patriotism is impossible. Thus Christianity destroys both the foundation of all morality by destroying self, and destroys patriotism by fusing all countries and nations into one, and leaving the meek man a prey to all the rest.

Christianity also destroys the family. Christ called off his disciples from their family obligations; and never showed the least respect for his own. Indeed, he scolded his mother, and made brothers—and slaves—of his disciples. Worse still, he will have no disciple who does not hate father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, children, and his own life also (Luke xiv. 26). Here is absolute destruction of all domestic life and virtue, as far as a ferocious command could accomplish it.

Absolute poverty is another Christian virtue! But worse than all is that absolute dependence upon another inculcated throughout Christendom—trust in a Savior—the most damning doctrine ever thought or believed. Christendom has abounded, through all its centuries, with imbeciles and helpless muffs. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. It is only gradually that we are climbing up to better things. The fear to think, the fear of doing, lest it should endanger the soul, has prevailed over the common sense of myriads and produced the most deplorable results. The best Christian is out to nurse, a poor paltry baby, with no thought, no will of his own, and never happy except when lapped in the pleasing fiction of salvation through another's deeds and merits. Christ and all the saints and intercessors of the Churches are a huge curse that have corrupted, pauperised, and enslaved the nations more than all else.

The Pagans were infinitely better than all this. Virtue is strength, not weakness, not meekness. Virtue is manliness and self-reliance, strength of character, individuality. The weak man, who is poor in spirit, has no real virtue. The worm that allows itself to be scourged and mocked and crucified is absolutely contemptible, if he can help it. Pagan virtue was of that manly kind that would not brook a wrong, that would not perpetrate one. Self-reliance, patriotism, public spirit, were Pagan virtues; and we must recover them before we can flourish. Self-reliance, self-salvation, is the doctrine of Pagandom; and these virtues, downtrodden though

they have been so long, must emerge into daylight and be reinstated in their office. The Christian virtues must be stamped out as the worst of vices.

To show that Christians are a bad lot, I call attention to their confessions. The Catholic Church finds the confessional as necessary as a dispensary. There are so many sins and sinners about.

The Protestants are no better. They are continually saying that they are miserable offenders and that there is no health abiding in them. They openly and roundly declare that they are totally corrupt—almost boast of it, and say that their "righteousness is as filthy rags." What must their sins be?

The Pagan world had and still has its faults. But it never fell into wholesale cant as the Christian nations have done. They never made a virtue of persecution or resorted to wholesale cruelty to stamp out wrong opinions! The Christians have done little else.

And when did the Pagan world produce a crop of such men as Larkin or a villain equal to Deeming?

The Pagans did not send their worst criminals to glory, and declare that over such there was more joy amongst the angels than over ninety-nine just persons! No; Pagan morals did not descend to *that level*, bad as they were.

Yes, reader, we must set Christianity as the curse of nations; and we must gather up all the best virtues of the Pagan world, especially the personal independence of our own Pagan forefathers; and by developing and practising these, gradually raise the world out of the Slough of Despond in which Christianity has plunged it.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

## ACID DROPS.

Mr. Nix has been to Epsom again, evangelising on the racecourse. According to his own account he has been very successful, but his converts are all nameless, and the whole business is extremely vague. But the money spent on it is a solid reality. The *Methodist Times* calls the question of finances "all-important," and we are far from quarrelling with the description. Another gentleman, in the same paper, wants the modest sum of £10,000 to evangelise Paris. When he gets it, he expects the Gospel will go "like flames of fire." Whether the Gospel goes that way or not, no doubt the money will.

The *Methodist Times* has a front article on Open-air Preaching, which would gladden the heart of George Standring, who is always strong on the policy of outdoor Freethought lectures. "Jesus Christ," says our pious contemporary, "preached in the open air more frequently than anywhere else." John Wesley indulged in "field" preaching summer and winter. Therefore all good Wesleyans should do ditto. For our part, we should like to see them at it. We should especially like to see them crossing swords with open-air "infidel" lecturers. But we cannot expect to behold the great spectacle which the *M. T.* imagines:—"All the preachers of religion in England, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the most obscure Salvationist," going "forth in a body, accompanied by their congregations, to proclaim in streets and lanes and fields the all-embracing love of God." We doubt if the game would answer. The dwellers in "lanes" might find the love of God too "all embracing" if preached by a gentleman with £15,000 a year.

Religious journals yield plenty of small, silly, sentimental writing, which is no doubt thought poetical, or at least unctuous. One of them, in reviewing a book by Miss Rossetti, says it is not for those who want to know the number of the Beast, but "only for those who love the dawn and the dew and the beauties of the onyx stone." Gods, angels, men, and fishes! what a category! The same reviewer bursts out about "harpers harping with their harps." What does a harper play upon but a harp, and what does he do but harping?

A religious paper says "it is a great moral crisis." *What is it?* Why the question whether the Chicago Exhibition shall

be opened on Sunday. If it be opened it will be a formidable rival to the gospel-shops. A "great moral crisis" indeed!

During the recent great fire at Moscow the clergy of a neighboring church went through the streets in procession, bearing sacred images and relics, singing penitential psalms, and supplicating the Almighty to stay the ravages of the flames. The only answer of "the Almighty" was to let the fire go on burning furiously all the evening. More than a hundred houses were destroyed. Let us pray!

Three churches in Spain were struck by lightning on Sunday. At a place called Melias the church was crowded with worshippers hearing Mass, of whom ten were killed on the spot and twenty-eight injured. Five people were killed at Mucientes and several injured. The third church attacked was the famous cathedral at Burgos, which is unprovided with a lightning conductor. This is really tempting Providence.

At Gratz, a thunderbolt struck a cottage near Thormanern. A peasant, his wife and six children, were all killed. The cottage was set on fire by the lightning, and when the neighbors arrived they only heard a few groans. The charred remains were afterwards found grouped round the table, and it is thought that they must have been engaged in prayer for protection from the fury of the storm.

After all the squabbles and fighting between Protestants and Catholics to christianise the natives of Uganda, it has been resolved by the British East African Company to abandon that territory, which is in a state of anarchy, and may be taken over by the Government. The Church Missionary Society subscribed £26,000 to settle Protestant missionaries there, and the result has been something like civil war.

Religion rules the roost at Delagoa Bay. According to the *Cape Times*, a man was stopped by a policeman for whistling on Sunday. "Religious enthusiasm reached such a pitch last year (for one day) that these people had a Judas Iscariot rigged up on board a ship and hauled him up to the yardarm by a rope; then, when he had been sufficiently strangled, they let him down on deck. There they thrashed him and threw him into the sea, thinking they had done a very pious action."

That good old Knight of the Umbrella, the Duke of Cambridge, presided at the annual meeting of the Gordon Boys' Home subscribers. "In mentioning the fact," the *Star* reports, "that many of the children had no religion, the Duke observed that a country without a religion was a very unfortunate country." We should think so, indeed. A country without a religion would never enjoy the blessing of keeping royal paupers. It would never have the glorious privilege of paying several thousands a year to a fat old German Englishman, who might, or might not, be worth thirty shillings a week in the open market. Oh yes, a country without a religion is a very unfortunate country. Very.

The Archbishop of York has been preaching at Newcastle, and his platitudinous exhortations, couched in cultured language, are reported in the *Daily Chronicle*. His first sermon was at St. Nicholas's Cathedral Church, on the occasion of a new peal of bells being "dedicated" to the service of the Lord, and the terror of all sick people within half a mile. Of course the Archbishop's sermon referred to these costly nuisances. He hoped the sound of the bells would be a call to the house of prayer, as though such a summons were needed in an age when clocks are on every mantelpiece and stare you in the face in nearly every street. Like a true archiepiscopal slunkey, also, he looked forward to the bells ringing out "peals of thankfulness on the jubilee of a sovereign" or "muffled peals on the death of a young prince," though the "muffled peals" would be far more appropriate over the sordid misery and squalid poverty of thousands of working people in the back streets and slums of Newcastle.

"There is nothing aimless or purposeless in the creation of God," said his Grace of York. Well now, we should like him to tell us the aim and purpose of two things—bugs and archbishops. Bugs don't seem of any use, and they cost a lot in

bug-powder. Archbishops don't seem of any use either, and they cost from ten to fifteen thousand a year.

From the sweet security of £10,000 a year, payable quarterly with the regularity of clock-work, the Archbishop talked of the great "goodness of God," and how he had "adorned the world with sights which charm the eye" and "sounds which delight the ear." Did he mean crocodiles, cobras, adders, and such "critters"? Or the roar of lions and the scream of jackals? Or, coming nearer home, did he mean ragged beggars, hunger-pinched children, and hard-faced unsexed women? Did he mean the strains of Booth's bands, the bray of street-corner preachers, or the anything but "swear not at all" language of Christians as they perambulate our thoroughfares?

The Archbishop of York's other sermon was in behalf of the Additional Curates' Society. It was a trade sermon. He said "there was really no want of clergy, but a great want of stipends." Heaps of men were eager to enter the ministry, but they were deterred when "the prospects of remuneration were so uncertain." Of course they are. The ministry, like law and physic, is a profession in which men engage for bread and cheese, and as many other good things as they can add thereto. If there were any special "holiness" in the business, any burning desire to "save souls," the Archbishop would sacrifice three-fourths of his salary, and set up 75 additional curates at £100 a year each. He would still have £2,500 a year for himself. What does an honest man want with more? What does he want with so much?

The belief in witchcraft still survives in Somerset, as appeared from an inquest on a young woman held at Lufton, near Yeovil. The parents agreed the girl suffered from a bad wish, and this belief was shared by the herbalist who attended the deceased. He said, "It was in the Bible, but it was a pity it should be so."

On the west coast of Sumatra tigers are said to have killed last year sixteen travellers. The natives, from superstitious motives, dare not attack the tigers. When one was carried away out of an armed party his companions prayed to the tiger for mercy, and made no attempt to rescue. This is a good deal like the orthodox Christian attitude in face of the evils in nature.

A letter from Mr. F. A. Channing to the *Daily News*, shows how the Conscience Clause was regarded at Kingstead, Northamptonshire. The children of Nonconformist parents withdrawn from religious instruction, attended regularly and were marked on the register as in time, but were punished by being put at the bottom of the class on the plea that they were late. Attention having been directed to this iniquitous state of affairs, the vicar was told by the Education Department that the practice was a violation of the Conscience Clause, which, if persisted in, would cause the grant to be withheld. But bigoted teachers can find other means of making little heretics feel their crime in not taking the regulation dose of religion.

Some people and their money are soon parted. "A," who is "A1" of the species, has been advertising in the *Liverpool Daily Mercury*:—"Christian Advice implored. Psalm cxlx., verse 82." The verse reads, "Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" Does the advertiser want a blind man's raised Bible? Or is it a new form of the pious cadging lay? If so, the advertiser may find "comfort" in the truth of Carlyle's dictum about the population of Great Britain.

Mr. Logan should see what can be done for the Bristol and Clifton Branch of the Young Woman's Christian Association. After an existence of thirty-two years, we hear it is winding up in consequence of low finances. The landlord won't reduce the rent, and the subscribers won't shell out any more money.

At Rochford Petty Sessions two enterprising gentlemen named Thomas Smith and Henry Duggan were sentenced to fourteen days' hard labor for stealing shirts from a shop. The police superintendent said they came from Booth's Colony at Hadleigh.

A minister of the unbecoming name of Gentle, at Salem, Ohio, is in jail, narrowly escaping lynching *en route*. He pleads guilty to an outrageous assault upon a twelve-year-old girl. By their fruits ye shall know God's agents.

At St. Ives, Hunts, they raffle for Bibles once a year, in accordance with a will dated 1675. It was universally believed in the good old Bible days that God directed the throw of the dice or the chances of sortilege. As Solomon, or the writer of Proverbs xvi. 33, says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Gambling was formerly under the sanction of religion. Even the apostles cast lots as to who should be the successor of Judas Iscariot (Acts i. 26).

Mr. Waugh and the Bishop of Chester should tell us what they think of the Rev. Samuel Barnes, of East Dulwich. This man of God had a mare suffering from incurable lameness; she appeared unable to put one hoof upon the ground. He had been spoken to about her condition, but he said the mare was his, and he should do as he liked with her. The magistrate, however, at the Lambeth Police-court, is of a different opinion, and has fined the tender-hearted sky-pilot £5 and £5 5s. costs.

The Rev. B. Houchen is one of "the great unpaid" at Swaffham. No doubt he remembers that the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. But such vagabondage is not to be encouraged nowadays. Accordingly the reverend "justice" sends a poor widow to gaol for seven days for being unable to pay for a bed and sleeping in a sandpit.

The *Chicago Sunday Tribune* devotes ten columns to an exposure of Christ Schweinfurth, his "Heaven" near Rockford, and his "Holy Ghost children," whom one George Ostrander, an apostate angel, says are the Messiah's own, begotten of certain married virgins who have taken up their abode in heaven. Schweinfurth wished his apostles to be eunuchs, which, he said, was the true interpretation of the divine rite of circumcision. George Ostrander, however, did not feel called to the apostleship and ran away from heaven.

Christ don't turn up so frequently in Europe nowadays. But they swarm in America. The latest has appeared in Mexico. He is a priest, who claims to be Christ, and he is heading a revolt against the Mexican government. If he fails, he'll get executed; if he wins, his trouble will begin. Nobody knows what a bad time J. C. would have had if Pilate had not stopped his career.

The Government have had to send troops to arrest him, and drive away his fanatical and armed followers. If he does not take care he will have an opportunity of founding his new religion by getting killed, and rising again on the third day.

Mr. Millard B. Jones, of New York, says there would be good feeling between the Chinese and Americans but for the missionaries, who are "not a credit to the American people." As a rule, he says, there is ground for their being hated and despised. "A great many of those who profess to teach Christianity are leading immoral lives."

"Renewed outrages upon European missionaries in China" are reported from Shanghai. These gentry are always getting into trouble. Why don't they stop at home and look after "the heathen" in England? Simply because the clerical market here is overstocked. Missionary Societies are aided-emigration agencies, to keep down overcrowding in the clerical profession.

James Grant, in his *Romance of War*, mentions that in 1706 St. Antony was formally enlisted in the Portuguese army, and in the same year received the rank of captain, so rapid was his promotion. His image was clad in successive uniforms, and he was carried at the head of the army. Awful was the consternation and indignation when a cannon ball took off his head. Of course he was decreed a pension, which his priests received for many a day.

In the town of—on Saturday night, as the Salvationists were taking the collection, a boy threw a button into the circle. The captain, who had long hair, thinking to have a laugh at the boy's expense, picked up the button, and

coming forward to the boy said—"Here is your change." The boy, who was a bit of a wag, replied—"Oh, keep the change, and get your hair cut."

A large number of Mormons are leaving Salt Lake to settle in Mexico, where they have acquired a large territory, on which they may carry out the divine institution of polygamy after the fashion of the old favorites of God.

The Jewish Church is threatened with a disruption. The educated English congregations in the West End want to dispense with some of the old ritual, but the orthodox and mostly foreign congregations of the East End are vehemently opposed.

Prince Bismarck has delivered his soul on the subject of Sunday labor. He thinks the law prohibiting it vexatious in the extreme, and says when he is riding about and notices a laborer cultivating his land on Sunday, "I shall not see him," for he says the effect of telling him he must not work on Sunday would only be misery and discontent.

Thomas Gibbon, a Manchester street preacher, went to convert the heathen at Colne. Being chaffed by some youths, he lost his temper like Elisha, and instead of calling up a couple of bears he played the bear himself. First he struck a man, and then he wrestled with a constable, severely biting the officer's hand in the struggle. The cannibal evangelist is now doing a month.

Many queer quotations are made from the Bible. A London Board school boy, aged ten, gained a prize from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He said, in his little essay, that biting off fox terriers' tails was "a disgusting and barbarous practice." "Moreover," he said, "it is opposed to the Bible, which says, 'What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.'" That boy should be trained for the pulpit.

Christians resent the introduction of Mary Magdalene into opera. Yet they will flock to Covent Garden to hear Isidore de Lara's new opera, "La Luce dell'Asia" (The Light of Asia), in which the Buddha's temptation and self-renunciation are musically rendered. Yet Buddha appeals to more devotees, and that more deeply, than ever did Jehovah.

Our heavenly Father has manifested himself in flood and fire at Titaville and Oil City, Pennsylvania, where hundreds of houses have been destroyed, and women and children caught by the rushing torrent, and either drowned or burned alive in the flaming oil which was floating on the water.

The Rev. F. D. Cremer, rector of Keighley, has addressed a letter to the chairman of the Keighley School Board, lamenting that, owing to the insufficient religious teaching in Board Schools, "the future men and women of Keighley are being robbed of their Christian inheritance." How subtly self-interest works. The parson is concerned with his own inheritance and that of his tribe, but identifies the clerical interests with those of the children, who he knows unless they have their daily drill in religious twaddle will be lost sheep as far as the Church is concerned.

Two poor cottagers looking into a country church, just as the minister was giving out his text, "A light to lighten the Gentiles" etc. Come along," said the one to the other, "I told you it was for the Gentlefolks, we have nothing to do with it; hear what he says, A light to lighten the Gentlefolks." Are there not heathens in Albion as well as in Ohwyhee?

#### HOW TO HELP US.

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



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 19, Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham: at 11, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; at 3, "After Death—What?"; at 7, "Is there a God?"

June 26, Hall of Science.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—June 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, Birmingham; 14, Liverpool; 21, Manchester; 28, Grimsby. Sept. 3 and 4, Rushden; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science. October 2, Hall of Science; 9 and 16, Birmingham; 23, Glasgow; 25 and 26, Belfast; 30, Edinburgh. Nov. 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield; 27, Hall of Science. Dec. 4, Hall of Science; 11, Manchester; 18 and 25, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

Quiz.—The cutting raises a question which is fully dealt with in *Bible Studies* by J. M. Wheeler, a book which is just being issued from our publishing office.—The Spurgeon joke reached us before. Thanks all the same.

W. EVANS.—See paragraph.

F. E. L.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

H. D. CLEAL.—Address: Joseph Synes, *Liberator* office, 456 Bourke-street, Melbourne, Australia.

H. ROTHERA.—The quotation you send us does not exhaust the subject. If frozen water were not lighter than unfrozen water, there would be no ice on the surface at all; which puts an end to the gentleman's fine argument. Besides it is an absurdity to judge of the wisdom and goodness of the supposed Creator by one isolated fact. Logic requires a broader survey. For the present, take an opposite illustration. A healthy man goes near a smallpox patient; by no chance does the presence of the healthy man cure the sick man, but the sick man may give the healthy man the smallpox and kill him. Where is the wisdom, and where the goodness, in that?

J. READ.—See "Acid Drops."

NEWCASTLE FRIEND.—We have heard the same from other sources. Some unscrupulous persons (we have their names) circulated a report among the delegates, who were very foolish to listen to surreptitious scandal, that the alteration in the Secretaryship was a dodge to bring Mr. Forder back to his old post. You ask us if there is the slightest truth in the report. We reply that Mr. Forder has his publishing business to look after; that he has no such intention as was attributed to him; and that, if he had, neither the President nor any member of the Organisation Committee would entertain the idea for a single moment. It is a penalty of the President's position that he has to listen to such malignant nonsense.

RON MAHON.—The correction shall be made.

W. TREVOR.—(1) Dean Stanley did not believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, but he accepted it in the main as God's Word. (2) The Messiah the Jews expected was simply one to restore the Hebrew Monarchy, and rule the Gentiles from Jerusalem. (3) "Original sin" is derived from the teaching of Paul. Jesus said nothing about Adam and the Fall.

Dr. B.—Thanks for your interesting letter. We value your good opinion. The articles on "Will Christ Save Us?" will be reprinted, after revision and amplification, in pamphlet form. Mr. Foote will probably, before long, make a collection of his best *Freethinker* articles for separate publication. He is in the best of health. With regard to the cuttings, see "Acid Drops."

G. J. WARREN, 20 Rhodeswell-road, London, E., thanks the friends who have sent him parcels of literature for distribution at open-air meetings. He is open to receive more.

C. BROOKS.—The clergy are always behind the age intellectually. To use Ingersoll's language, they are of those who "stand with their backs to the sunrise, worshipping the night." Thanks for your good wishes.

UNKNOWN.—The *Morning Leader's* story of Sarah Bernhardt and Gounod—in which the "divine Sarah" exclaims to the pious composer "*Monsieur je suis Athée*," (Sir, I am an Atheist)—appeared in the *Freethinker* two or three years ago.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) There is no allusion to Moses in the semi-historical books of Samuel and Kings. (2) Max Müller says that educated and intelligent Jews have regarded the Pentateuch as the five books about Moses, not the five books written by Moses. (3) The "days" in Genesis always meant days until science showed the absurdity of such chronology. See Mr. Foote's *Creation Story*. (4) Philo never mentions Jesus Christ or his followers. There was a Greek word, something like Christians, meaning "good people" in use before the time of Jesus.

JUPITER.—Sorry we cannot entertain the notion at present.

A. WADE.—We cannot answer your first question. Mr. Foote has never debated with David King, and could not, therefore have failed to "come on" the last night.

T. HERRING.—See "Sugar Plums."

W. T. LEEKEY.—Glad to hear of the good meetings at the Midland Arches and Regent's Park, and of the successful lectures of Messrs. Cohen, Haslam and Rowney.

W. M. KNOX.—No room this week. In our next.

E. J. WOOLLEN.—Pleased to hear of Mr. Watts's successful meetings at Sheffield. As the circus is not to be pulled down yet, Mr. Foote will give you another date shortly.

JAMES WILSON.—You are surely mistaken. We do not recollect the expression of any such opinion in the *Freethinker*. General physiology should be taught in our schools. When sexual physiology should be taught is a more difficult question, on which we have no intention to dogmatise. And now let us advise you to get rid of the notion that ignorance is innocence.

S. M. W. ELLIOTT.—(1) Pleased to hear from you. We should be glad to see a Branch established at Tunbridge Wells. Somebody, however, must be ready to take the lead on the spot before the Executive can do anything from London. Is such a man to be found? (2) Dr. Allinson is a Vice-President of the N.S.S. We believe, like you, that he is doing a great deal of good. Medicine, as well as other things, becomes a mere mystery and craft without innovators and revolutionists, and a perpetual appeal to fact and common sense.

G. FAULKNER.—See "Sugar Plums." Every candidate in the kingdom should be questioned as to his attitude towards Liberty of Bequest and the Blasphemy Laws.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.

PAPEES RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Flaming Sword—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—Clarion—Watts's Literary Guide—Echo—Church Reformer—Southend Standard—Star—Modern Thought—Weekly Recorder—Chicago Tribune—Francisco Call—Natal Mercury—Durham Weekly News—Bradford Weekly News—Leeds Daily News—Liberator—Open Court—Tribune—Freidenker—Freethinker's Magazine—Adelaide Advertiser—Evening News and Post.

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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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 lectured at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. His subject was "Is Unbelief a Sin?" The lecture was very warmly applauded. Mr. Touzeau Parris took the chair, and made a strong appeal on behalf of the Hall of Science scheme. On the previous Sunday evening, one gentleman gave £10 for ten shares in Mr. Parris's name, and another gentleman a donation of £5, which will be held in shares by the N.S.S.

This evening (June 19) the Hall of Science platform will be occupied by Mr. G. J. Holyoake. We hope the veteran will have a good meeting. His subject is "The Form that Religion takes on the Eve of a General Election."

During the next week or so every Freethinker who means to support the Hall of Science scheme should apply for shares, and some who have taken shares may see their way to take more. Calls can only be made a half-a-crown at a time per share, with two months' notice. This makes it impossible to get in the required capital by Midsummer, unless a very large number of shareholders are enrolled. Perhaps there are some shareholders who can pay up their shares in full, or something in advance of their calls. If they can do so they will greatly assist the directors, who are under contract to take possession on June 24. Fortunately they have an alternative arrangement with the vendor, by which they are enabled to pay

less than the £2,000 at first contemplated—leaving, of course, a larger portion of the purchase money to be paid hereafter. Applications for shares are coming in steadily, and no doubt the stream will continue. Still, we should like to see it quickened during the next ten days. Those who help promptly help most efficiently, for in these cases it is always the first steps that are the most difficult.

This Hall of Science scheme is the biggest, financially speaking, our party has ever attempted. Up to the present the success is gratifying. We do not expect to triumph immediately. Rome was not built in a day, and a comparatively poor party cannot raise thousands of pounds in a few months. But a good beginning is something, and there is time before us to complete the enterprise. By and by, as support is forthcoming, we hope to see a first-rate Institute in Old-street, which will be a substantial memorial to Charles Bradlaugh. As soon as the Directors take possession the Freethought party will be apprised of what is intended to be done in the immediate future.

We find, after all, that news of the N.S.S. Conference *did* reach London. There was a paragraph in the *Chronicle*, and another in the *Morning Leader*, which gave the number of new Branches and new members during the year. There was also a good paragraph in the *North London Weekly Recorder*. Evidently the old silence of the press is breaking down.

Mr. Daniel Baker, of Birmingham, was unable to attend the Newcastle Conference, but he has calculated that his expenses, if he had gone, would have been two guineas, and he has sent a cheque for that amount to the Benevolent Fund. This is an excellent example, which we should like to see extensively imitated.

Mr. Charles Watts's excellent article on the Sunday opening of the Chicago Exhibition will show our American friends that the question, to which they justly attach great importance, is not lost sight of on this side of the "herring pond." English Freethinkers are proud of the stand their American brethren are taking in this matter. They may be defeated, for Sabbatarianism is still very strong, but a good fight now will pave the way for a future victory.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts' three lectures at Sheffield last Sunday were decidedly successful. In the morning and afternoon a thousand persons were present at each meeting, and Mr. Woollen informs us that at the evening lecture nearly two thousand attended. The large audiences gave Mr. Watts a warm reception, and most enthusiastically cheered his exposure of the inactivity of the Christian Evidence Society, and the fallacies of its colored champion. Considerable discussion followed each lecture, and the sale of the *Freethinker* and general Freethought literature was exceedingly good.

Mr. Watts writes to say that he was very pleased at the excellent arrangements made by Mr. Woollen, assisted by the other members of the local Branch of the N.S.S., at each of his lectures on Sunday. Mr. Woollen spares no labor or expense to secure success, and the large gatherings at the circus at both Mr. Foote's and Mr. Watts' lectures prove that his efforts were not in vain. We congratulate our Sheffield friends upon their renewed energy and business-like activity.

Mr. Watts is very active just now in the political field. During the last two weeks he has addressed several meetings in Birmingham on "The Coming Election," and he is engaged to give five more addresses upon the same topic before the end of June. Last Tuesday he concluded his debate with the Rev. Dr. McCann, and to-day (Sunday, June 19) he lectures three times in Bristol.

Mr. Tonzeau Parris lectures three times to-day (June 19) in the Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool. His subjects are interesting, and we hope our colleague will have good meetings and a hearty reception.

The Battersea Branch holds its quarterly tea and soirée next Sunday, June 26, at 5.30, tickets 6d. All Freethinkers in South-west London should buy a ticket and support the Branch, as it is greatly in need of funds. Members' quarterly

meeting at 3.30 for election of officers and other important business.

Leeds friends are requested to assemble in strength and in good time near the Band Stand on Woodhouse Moor to form a ring round the platform and secure an orderly meeting. If the pro-Christian element resort to riotous behavior, they may find that such conduct renders them liable to lawful punishment and the stigma which attends it. The lecture by Mr. Fisher is to begin at 7 prompt.

A special important meeting of the Nottingham Branch will be held to-day (June 19) at the Secular Hall, Beck-street, at 7 prompt. All members are urgently requested to attend.

Owing to the changed weather, the Glasgow Branch did not go on excursion last Sunday. The party is to meet to-day (June 19)—weather permitting, we presume—at 10.30 a.m. on the south side of Jamaica-bridge. Return fare to Gleniffer Braes, 1s. 6d.

The Bradford Branch's excursion to Morecambe comes off to-day (June 19). The train starts at 6.20 a.m., not 8.20 as stated last week.

Mr. Sam Standing gave open-air lectures at Rochdale on Sunday to very large audiences, and gave satisfaction in answering the many questions put to him. He goes there again next Thursday (June 23) to debate with any Christian put forward to meet him. If there is no debate he will lecture in the Town Hall-square at 7.

Messrs. Hemingway and Willock are issuing from their Freethought Publishing Depot, 106 Oxford-street, Manchester, a series of "Manchester Tracts for the Times." The first is *Christ on the Labor Question*, by Sam Standing. It should do good in a city where the Labor Question is a burning one.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* for June gives a capital reproduction of the photograph of Miss Susan Wixon, authoress of *When Womanhood Awakes* and for many years editor of the "Children's Corner" in the *Truthseeker* of New York. Mr. T. B. Wakeman contributes an excellent paper on "The Higher Criticism," Miss Bisbee writes on "The Sunday—Past, Present and Future," and Mr. Benwell on "The Religion of Evolution a Philosophy of Life." Altogether the June number of the *Freethinkers' Magazine* is a good one.

Dr. Felix L. Oswald contributes to *Open Court* a capital paper on "Dead-Letter Dogmas," in which he shows how creeds and their names live on, while the prevailing practice has come to imply not only a modification but an absolute antithesis of the creed. If, he says, a pious Hindoo should devote his holidays to lectures on the duty of sparing the lives of all fellow-creatures, and divide his week-days between the slaughter-house work and hunting, the incongruity could not be more glaring than the practical comments of Christians on Christianity. "'Take no thought for the morrow,' 'provide neither gold nor silver,' 'neither have two coats apiece,' are precepts endorsed by Sunday-school teachers who make the accumulation of wealth, nay of excessive and superfluous wealth, the object of a restless pursuit, and who would promptly agree to take the risk of passing the needle's eye of the heavenly kingdom with a hundred camel-load of coin." As to what the religion of to-day really is, Dr. Oswald answers in the words of Ibrahim Pasha: "As to the creeds of these western Giaours, accounts differ, and all that can be said with certainty is that it has changed."

The Hibbert Lectures this year have been on Judaism, dealt with by Mr. Claude Montefiore. The lecturer is a Jew, though not an orthodox one, for he gives up the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He, however, defends Judaism from those who seek to extol her daughter, Christianity, at the expense of the mother faith. Two defects he allows in Judaism, "its deep-seated particularism and the puerility of great sections of the ceremonial law." Yet both of these are claimed to be God-given in the Bible. These defects, Mr. Montefiore thinks, are not inherent in Judaism, which may yet burst the bonds of legalism and particularism. But can it do so without discarding all pretence to revelation and resting on the mere ground of Theism?

Lady Florence Dixie, writing in the *Welsh Review* on Woman and the Coming Revolution, says: "There are few sources more to blame for woman's degradation and subjection than the Church. It, more strongly than any other source, has preached woman's subjection. There never was a religion more opposed to woman's freedom than the Christian, and yet Christ was woman's true friend and advocate; but Christianity is a burlesque nowadays of the religion of Christ. In Christ we saw a poor, humble, charitable man, who preaching, practised what he preached; in the archbishops and bishops we see sleek, fat, well-fed potentates. What humbug the whole thing is; and by such fat magnates as these are women ruled! If it were not so sad it would be ludicrous." That Christ was woman's true friend and advocate Lady Florence Dixie has probably heard, and repeats without evidence, or she, like others, might derive it from her own fertile imagination, for certainly it cannot be easily gathered from the gospels.

*Bible Studies* is the title of a book that will be issued from our publishing office next week. It is a collection of some of the most valuable articles written by Mr. J. M. Wheeler. All of them have been revised, some considerably amplified, and others nearly re-written. The first essay on Phallic Worship among the Jews deals very fully with a curious subject, and is illustrated with striking woodcuts. The other papers are interesting as well as instructive. Mr. Foote has written a brief Preface, expressing his sense of the value of Mr. Wheeler's book, which should be in the library of every Freethinker who wants to understand the Bible.

The continuation of Mr. Foote's essay on "*Will Christ Save Us?*" stands over in consequence of the pressure of other matter. A fresh instalment will appear next week.

Mr. S. M. Peacock got Mr. Grice, a working man, appointed on the committee to examine the Board School children in religious instruction. Mr. Grice is a Spiritualist, but not a bigot. He found much to disapprove, and he has related his experiences at a public meeting. He passed some severe strictures on the stories taught to the children, and declared that the object of the Church party was simply to teach sectarian doctrines. There was a warm discussion after Mr. Grice's speech, and the meeting broke up in some disorder; but the ventilation of this matter will do good to the cause of Secular Education.

Sir James M. Carmichael, Liberal candidate for the St. Rollox division of Glasgow, writing to Mr. G. Faulkner, expresses himself in favor of the Liberty of Bquest Bill and against the Blasphemy Laws. "Conviction by coercion," he says, "is not worth having."

Mr. Foote's statement as to the Blasphemy Laws and the way in which they oppress and hamper the Freethought party—drawn up at the request of the N.S.S. Executive—is in the printer's hands, and will be ready for circulation in a few days. It includes a list of questions to be put to parliamentary candidates. Freethinkers requiring copies for use during the approaching elections should apply at once, stating how many they require, to Mr. Stanley Jones, sec., 28 Stone-cutter-street, London, E.C.

#### OBITUARY.

W. B. Smart, the gallant fireman, who lost his life in suppressing the conflagration at Hargrave-park-road, Upper Holloway, was a member of the Bethnal Green Branch of the National Secular Society. He was universally respected. A comrade, in the *Star*, said, "A better man God never put breath in." His parents agreed to have a Secular burial, and, at the request of the Branch, Mr. Foote consented to speak at the grave. The funeral will be reported in our next issue.

**NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION PROPAGANDIST FUND.**—Sunderland Branch, £1; Mr. Elcoat, 10s. Further subscriptions are urgently needed.—JOSEPH BROWN, 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

**NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE MALTHUSIAN DEFENCE FUND.**—M. J. W. Mein, 1s.; T. B., 6d.; H. B. W., 6d.; J. S., 1s.; J. P., 6d.; B. Hankey, 6d.; J. Stett, 3d.; B. Dawson, 1s.; W. Woodhall, 6d. Per Mr. Forder: A. Tarn, 10s.; E. May, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Hundly, 1s. 6d. The above has been handed over to Mr. Loader.—JOSEPH BROWN, 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

#### WHAT IS A FREETHINKER?

AN answer to this question may appropriately occupy the pages of a journal bearing the title, more especially as the enemy generally gives a description of him as far off the real thing as his ingenuity can put it. My friend the late George Dawson related that he saw a picture in Normandy underwritten "Freethinker." It represented a half-dressed man in an attic. Everything in the room was upside down; the clock was on the bed and the pillow on the mantel-shelf. All this confusion was ascribed to the Freethinker, but, Dawson said, "it was only in the artist who drew the picture." Men's views change, and the words expressing them change in their meaning when applied to new facts and circumstances. But freethinking is the name of a method, a mode of exercising our intellectual faculties, and not the conclusions arrived at.

The term Freethinker will never fairly represent other than one who thinks *without any restriction* by any authority, whether it be king, priest, book, or Church. Of course the thinker is restricted by his capacity and the facts by which he is surrounded. Thinking is not measured, it is not lawless, and no system of psychology that states that it is, is worth the paper on which it is written. All thinking is controlled by nature and by logic. The Freethinker, in exercising the faculty that has to do with thought, subjects it to no other laws but those of nature and logic. What others may have said, he considers, examines—does not accept because it has been said. A Freethinker is one who pursues this method of thinking, and his conclusions are such as the facts and his reasoning upon them lead to. It is difficult to imagine any other kind of thinker besides the one who freely doubts, examines, and inquires in all directions without care for or fear of consequences.

In days gone by, Freethinkers were called loose-thinkers; but in spite of that they are not *tied* thinkers, except to the rules of logic and the principles of true reasoning, which is controlled only by evidence. To be a *free*-thinker, custom, fashion, the chatter of the schools, the babble of the pulpit, the screams of fanatics—all these must be ignored. Hence, not only intelligence, but courage and daring are essential to the formation of a Freethinker. Freethinker implies intelligence, nobility of mind, fearless liberty of thought. Our old Saxon word "free" means not under vassalage—not ruled by arbitrary power. A free people means a people under a government of their own choice, appointed and controlled by themselves.

Theologians sometimes refer to this definition as though we meant a reckless gang of robbers. It is no longer the Church that makes definitions or does all the thinking in this country. The law of thinking implies an intellectual process; the law of the Church is no thinking allowed other than our thinking—you are only free to think on the condition that you come to our conclusion—agree with us at the finish. But the days of its rule are numbered—its authority is vanishing. The monopoly of thinking is broken up, in spite of the fact that the establishment of free trade in thinking on religion was denounced as being as inimical to souls as free trade in corn to farmers and landlords.

The name Freethinker has never possessed enough power to alarm some people; hence the additions of the names "Infidel" and "Atheist," both of which must be Freethinkers, although the terms are not strictly convertible. All Atheists are Freethinkers, but all Freethinkers are not Atheists. But mad theologians cannot stoop to rational and truthful distinctions essential to a clear understanding. The last thing they think of is taking a man's own definition of what he is. They choose such epithets as they think will give the Freethinker the most objectionable appearance in the eyes of his fellows, who do not happen to know

anything about him. Only recently some person in London, named Mitchell, wrote to a local paper informing the ignoramuses of the *aliases* of Secularism—"Infidelity" and "Atheism." Scarecrows like these are almost played out; the average citizen walks right up to them, and finds only old coats hung on sticks!

I remember the time when even a pious Unitarian was described as some animal whose habits and peculiarities were unknown, and therefore to be approached by all prudent people with caution. People who believed in God and hoped for a future state, as many Freethinkers did in the past, come down to us labelled "Atheists"—a name so generally applied that a Frenchman wrote a dictionary filled with persons bearing the title. It is the most popular of all the marks of opprobrium ever invented, and by which Christians themselves were first denounced before they so denounced each other and their opponents. Freethinkers who were Deists received the title "Atheist" from Theists—the peculiarity of such a performance being very striking when we remember that the real difference consisted in the fact of (Deist meant God and Theist meant God) one being derived from Latin and the other from Greek.

We cannot, then, too often repeat, so as to render misrepresentation *unjustifiable*, what we mean by what we call ourselves and wish to be known by. Moreover, for the benefit of liars and slanderers, be it said that the name we choose is not to hide or disguise our opinions.

A Freethinker is one who follows reason and experience regardless of consequences to preconceived opinions, and accepts or rejects opinions on religion on the same ground, as opinions on all other subjects. This may be sufficiently clear to all who care to understand it; others must shift for themselves. The Freethinker is the apostle of freedom, and whatever promotes it; he cherishes whatever obstructs it, he would sweep away.

Whatever conclusions he adopts they are such as may be arrived at after the freest and fairest discussion, no matter what name they may obtain among the enemies of scepticism and free-inquiry—the pioneers of *all* truth. The Freethinker looks on freedom and truth as of higher value than all else in the world. To him, freedom is the breath of life, the parent of joy, of comfort, and of happiness; that which gives the flower of human life its lustre and perfume. As regards the nature of the conclusions arrived at, and the opinions adopted by Freethinkers, uniformity does not prevail, nor is it likely to, except on questions that can be referred to science, ascertained facts, or admit of demonstration. After all, uniformity is not in all cases desirable. It is possible that the landscape would not be improved by the abolition of hills and valleys. Our capacities, ages, and circumstances vary, our knowledge and experience are not alike, our ability to observe and infer is not equally bestowed by nature or acquired by education. Hence our divisions, and perhaps our healthy state of mind.

There is a tendency, the result of freethought, to confine our attention to what we know, and to rely only on probable truth. This will probably be the outcome of freethought on all questions that can engage the attention of the human mind. Our creed will be necessarily short, but it will be all the more easily remembered, and its great distinguishing feature will be one not common to any outside our ranks, whether ancient or modern, it will be easily *understood* by everybody.

CHARLES C. CATTELL.

Mr. Simpson: "Rastus, do you ever read the Bible?"  
 'Rastus: "Yes, sah; I done read it cler froo to fin' out wedder it tol' of de cullud gem'men." Mr. Simpson: "Indeed! Well, did you find an instance?" 'Rastus: "Yes, sah; I done diskiwver w'ere it tell ob Ebon Ezer."

### "GOD IS LOVE."

In yonder room a fair girl's form  
 Lies stilled. Death's chill and blasting storm  
 Hath froze the heart. A mother sighs,  
 Weeps o'er those ghastly, fireless eyes.  
 Her quiv'ring breath, to realms above,  
 Is fitly wafting "God is Love."

A child, barefooted in the street,  
 Stands shiv'ring in the blinding sleet.  
 Rags his robe. Face pinched and pale.  
 His birthright want. His sad, sad tale  
 Of woe, a Satan's heart would move.  
 Interpreted, it's "God is Love."

The battlefield bestrewn with dead  
 And wounded men. Fair green dyed red.  
 Deep groans, wild agonising cries,  
 Rush to the cold and heartless skies.  
 From blighted homes, with notes of dove,  
 Soars Happy-Landward, "God is Love."

A true, a loving heart is wrecked  
 By one whose outer smile bedecked,  
 And hid, the heartless man. He won,  
 Then tossed aside. He, once her sun,  
 Shines not. Bespoiled, her love's fair grove  
 Heartrent, she sigheth, "God is Love."

A haggard form in yonder bed,  
 To hellish agony lies wed.  
 His world, the bed wherein he lies.  
 A ceiling white, his azure skies.  
 Groans, his sweet hymns to "One above."  
 Ah! truly, truly, "God is Love."

God's image, Man, seems scarce at best  
 When reason, by some cause oppressed  
 Takes flight, and leaves a babbling fool;  
 A raving brute, born brutes to rule.  
 The Man below, the Brutes above,  
 Most surely proves that "God is Love."

Yon red brick Hall for those oppressed  
 By God's kind hand. A home of rest  
 For suffering men. There Death's high priest,  
 Disease, gloats o'er his bloody feast.  
 Pain! why should'st thou so freely rove?  
 The Demon answers "God is Love."

The death-bed, struggling, long-drawn sighs,  
 The quiv'ring limbs, the fading eyes.  
 Heart-rending scene. Death grimly mocks  
 The yearning hearts, and firmly locks  
 His arms around, then looks above,  
 And grinning, whispers "God is Love."

VULTURE.

### LIBERTY OF BEQUEST AND THE COMING ELECTION.

THE Liberty of Bequest Committee have been making persistent efforts to secure the introduction of their Bill into Parliament during this session. But, in addition to the difficulties which always attend the promotion of any object favoring the interests of Freethinkers, the Committee have had to contend with the lethargy which afflicts a moribund Parliament, combined with the excessive caution manifested by representatives about to seek re-election. In view of all these obstacles, the Committee had little hope of doing more, this session, than bringing the question of the disabilities of Freethinkers immediately before the Liberal members of Parliament; ascertaining their feeling with regard to it, and their disposition to assist in removing the grievance; and eliciting from the legal gentlemen who sit in the House, and who are known to be in sympathy with Freethought, an expression of opinion on the Bill and on its prospects. This has been done, by personal interviews with all those members likely to approve the Committee's object; and the legal aspect of the question of bequests for Freethought purposes has been made clear. It has also been demonstrated to the Committee's representative who undertook the work of personally waiting upon members of Parliament, that had the Bill been framed one whit more aggressively, or been in the least widened in its scope, it would have received no consideration whatever; for, as it stands, honorable gentlemen are extremely chary of identifying themselves with

the measure, and no one has been found willing to introduce it during this session. In addition, however, to several influential members having promised to back the Bill, the Committee have the assurance of two sitting members that they will introduce it if re-elected. Their reasons for declining to do so in this Parliament were given confidentially, but they are commendable. Earnest and united effort on the part of all Freethinkers throughout the kingdom is now of the utmost importance, and could not fail to effect a speedy removal of their disabilities in the matter of bequests.

The Committee's resources are being employed in ensuring the interrogation of every Parliamentary candidate at the forthcoming General Election on the subject of the "Civil and Religious Liberty Extension Bill." To this end, a copy of the Bill has been sent to every Liberal political organisation in England, with a request for co-operation. This important work can be greatly assisted if every friend of religious liberty will make a point of ensuring that the candidates for his own division have been questioned as to the Bill, and that an answer has been obtained from those gentlemen. No matter if the question has already been put, put it again, the oftener the better.

Copies of the Bill and full information will be gladly forwarded to any reader of this journal who will undertake the urgent work here specified.

The Committee wish to impress on all sections of the Free-thought party the importance of concerted action, the opportunity which the forthcoming elections will present for making their demand well and widely known, and the earnest of success for the measure afforded by the rapid permeation of rational and enlightened ideas through all classes of society. The offices of the Liberty of Bequest Committee are now at 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

#### BOOK CHAT.

*Songs of the Army of the Night*, by Francis Adams (second edition, London: William Reeves), is a little volume of Socialist poems "For the Cause of Labor all over the World." The writer is apparently half-maddened by the evils of society and the miseries of the poor. He hates England, and takes a pessimistic view of her future, at least until she is purged by a revolution of "fire and blood." His heart is in the right place, but his head is too easily turned. It cannot be disputed, however, that he has a poetic gift. His style is terse, and some of the shorter poems have the realistic force of a photograph. But he is most of a poet when he is least in a passion—which is natural. The sonnet on Buddha is really fine; so, in another fashion, is the sonnet to Charles Parnell, though it is eclipsed by a longer and stronger poem on the same subject at the end of the volume. The following is headed "To the Christians":

Take, then, your paltry Christ,  
Your gentleman God,  
We want the carpenter's son,  
With his saw and hod.  
We want the man who loved  
The poor and oppressed,  
Who hated the rich man and king  
And the scribe and the priest.  
We want the Galilean  
Who knew cross and rod.  
It's your "good taste" that prefers  
A bastard God!

This is not Mr. Adams at his best—far from it. But it shows his attitude, which is also shown by a powerful, stinging, and most blasphemously Republican address "To Queen Victoria in England, on her Jubilee Year." The longest and best sustained poem is entitled, "The New Locksley Hall: Forty Years After." It is a fierce onslaught on Tennyson for deserting the people's cause. It shows the writer's strength, but is it not too querulous? Tennyson has given the world the best he had to give. Let us take it and be thankful. The world needs the consolation of beauty as well as the impulse to heroic endeavor.

*Books Condemned to be Burnt*, by James Anson Farrer, forms a notable addition to the Book Lovers' Library, edited by H. B. Wheatley. It is true the bare materials of the volume, so far as it concerns the books burnt in England, are to be found in Hart's *Index Expurgatorius Anglicana*, and for the rest Gabriel Peignot's *Dictionnaire des Principaux Livres Condamnés au Feu*, supplies all necessary information.

But Mr. Farrer has put this material in readable form, and his work, if something far short of a history, may fairly claim to be something less dull than a dictionary.

Such a work has many items of interest for Freethinkers, and these might have been supplemented. Mr. Farrer mentions, for instance, the burning of Servetus together with his books. His *Christianismi Restitutio*, he says, "is said to be the rarest book in the world," though, by the way, there are two copies, one in Paris and the other in Vienna. But he does not mention that an edition of the works of Servetus was printed by Peter Palmer, a London bookseller, in 1723, it is said at the instance of Dr. Mead. Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, ordered the whole impression to be seized, and the copies were either burnt or otherwise destroyed.

Several little slips may be found in Mr. Farrer's book by anyone who has gone carefully over the ground. Thus (p. 13) he ascribes the *Théologie Portative*, attributed to the Abbé Bernier, to "an apostate monk, Dulaurent, who took refuge in Holland to write this and similar works." He means Dulaurens, the editor of *L'Evangile de la Raison*. But the *Théologie Portative* was more probably the work of d'Holbach. A reference to Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* might have set Mr. Farrer right on this and other matters.

Mr. Farrer makes no mention of Wm. Freeke's *Brief but Clear Confutation of the Trinity*, which on Jan. 3, 1693, was ordered by the House of Lords to be burnt by the common hangman, though he mentions the later works of "Translated" Asgill and "Conditional Immortality" Coward. Even in mentioning the last work burnt in England, *The Present Crisis with regard to America Considered*, Feb. 24, 1775, he says, "The fate it met with seems now the only ascertainable fact about it," and has no suspicion that he may have to do with a work by Thomas Paine—a matter surely worth looking into. Taken altogether, however, Mr. Farrer's book is an interesting one, and quite good enough to show us he could write one better.

*An Agnostic View of the Bible*, by S. Laing (London: Watts and Co.; 6d.), hardly bears out its title. Most of the pamphlet is a criticism of Noah's Flood. This was the biggest event in Bible history, after the Creation, but the narrative of it occupies a small space in the Scriptures. Mr. Laing should have given an Agnostic's view of the Bible as a whole, or taken a less comprehensive title. With this reservation the pamphlet is worthy of praise, being written with Mr. Laing's customary force and lucidity.

By the way, why does Mr. Laing refer to the burning of the Alexandrian Library by the Caliph Omar as an established point in history? There is no real proof that any such library existed at that time. The great Library of Alexandria was destroyed by the Christians in the early part of the fifth century. Any subsequent library there is very hypothetical, and the story of the Caliph Omar is as unauthenticated as any of the Bible stories that Mr. Laing rejects.

At the close of this essay, Mr. Laing states his belief that Christianity has been "an important factor in the history of the foremost races and highest civilisations." He also says that "no candid Agnostic can deny" that the European races stand on a higher platform than they would have occupied if they had been converted, by the sword or otherwise, to Mohammedanism. Now we are unable to speak for candid (or uncandid) Agnostics; but, speaking for ourselves, we venture to doubt the accuracy of Mr. Laing's opinion. Mohammedan civilisation was far superior to any in Christendom until the advent of modern science. But it is really idle to call a civilisation either Christian or Mohammedan. Civilisation flows from science and racial aptitudes, and as it advances it compels religion to accommodate itself to the change. Without this *secular* progress, religion always remains stagnant if not retrogressive. Mr. Laing, the Agnostic, like the Christians he writes against, is, we think, simply putting the cart before the horse. On the other hand, he misses an alternative raised by Shelley. What if Christianity had never controlled Europe, and our civilisation had been continued on the best lines of Greece and Rome? Might not the state of Europe have been a vast improvement on what we find existing

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): Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday at 8.15, social gatherings. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class. Thursday at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 6, tea (6d.); 7.30, music; 8, Thomas Crisfield, "The Value of Hypnotism" (with experiments). Saturday at 7.30, dancing.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 5.30, debating class, Mr. Vogel, "The Art of Public Speaking"; 7.30, C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Spiritism."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7.30, G. J. Holyoake, "The Form that Religion takes on the Eve of a General Election."

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7.30, W. J. Ramsey will lecture; special general meeting after the lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, R. Rosetti, "Bible Blunders"; 7, Stanley Jones, "Is there Evidence for the Existence of God?"

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

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, G. Standring, "Morality without Superstition."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Who was Jesus and what did he Teach?"

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

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

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, E. W. Osborn, "A True Life of David"; 3.30, F. Haslam, "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8, a lecture. Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, H. Courtney will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, H. Courtney will lecture.

Kilburn Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 7, Mr. St. John will lecture.

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, T. Thurlow, "Is the Bible a Good Book?"

Lambeth—New Cut (near Victoria Hall): 11.30, C. J. Steinberg, "Christ and Christianity."

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, S. H. Alison, "All about the Devil."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, C. Cohen, "The Devil."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, J. Rowney will lecture.

Plaistow Green: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

Tottenham (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, and 3.15, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, C. J. Steinberg, "Miracles" Thursday at 7.45, C. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: G. W. Foote, 1, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; 3, "After Death—what?"; 7, "Is there a God?"

Derby—Mr. McGuinness's 20 Newland-street: 7, important meeting.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 6 Story-street, Albion-street: 6.30, H. Percy Ward, "God is Love: it is True! a Reply to G. E. C. Naewiger's pamphlet, God is Love: is it True?"

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: Touzeau Parris, 11, "Unsocial Superstitions"; 3, "Butler's Analogy"; an Atheistic Argument"; 7, "Some Glaring Defects of Christianity."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Ruscolme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 6.30, Sam Standring, "The Recent N.S.S. Conference."

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Arms'en, "The French Revolution."

Sheffield Branch members and friends will visit Clifton Park, etc., Rotherham; train leaves Midland station at 2 p.m.

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Derby—Bass's Monument, Market-place: 11, Mr. O Ford "An Hour with Col. Ingersoll."

Hull—Corporation Field: 3, S. Thompson, "Prayer."

Leeds—Woodhouse Moor (near the band-stand): 7, J. Greevz-Fisher, "This World and the Next."

Manchester—Stephenson-square: 11, Sam Standring, "The Presbyterian God." Denmark-road: 3, Sam Standring, "Faith, Hope, and Charity." Monday at 8, Denmark-road, Sam Standring, "The Unjust Steward."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Town Moor (open sports platform): 6.30, a meeting, several speakers; if unfavorable weather, in Eldon Hall.

Morecambe, Bradford: 11, A. B. Wakefield, "Some Historic Characters who were not Christians"; 2.30, John Grange "Does Man Survive Death?"

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LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—June 25, e., Hotspur Club; 28, m., Camberwell. July 3, m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; 10, m., Lambeth; e., Hammersmith; 17 to 31, Holidays. Aug. 7, m., Battersea; a., Finsbury Park; 14, m., Westminster; a., Regent's Park; 21, m., Camberwell; 28, e., Camberwell

O. 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 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 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 19, Manchester; 23, Rochdale. July 3, Blackburn; 10, Salford; 17, Bradford. Aug. 7, Rochdale; 14, Hull.

O. J. STEINBERG, 108 Mile End-road, E.—June 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; July 24, e., Battersea. 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 19, Manchester. July 3, Manchester; 10, Hull; 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.

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

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