

# The Freethinker

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## MODERN MIRACLES.

Ye too, believers of incredible creeds,  
Whose faith enshrines the monster which it breeds;  
Who, bolder e'en than Nimrod, think to rise,  
By nonsense heap'd on nonsense, to the skies;  
Ye shall have miracles, ay, sound ones too,  
Seen, heard, attested, everthing—but true.

T. MOORE, *Veiled Prophet.*

To those who believe in miracles nothing ought to be plainer than that they could and should occur to-day. Deity is not generally supposed to have died, or even to have retired from business. Being the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, a few miracles ought to be always on tap for the confusion if not the conversion of infidels. If miracles are proof of the truth of Christianity they are fully more required here and now than in Palestine eighteen centuries ago. The necessity for God manifesting his wonder-working power is vastly greater at present than in the days when the sons of the Pharisees cast out Devils (Matt. xii. 27), and Herod himself believed that Jesus Christ was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Matt. xiv. 2). But miracles are like what policemen are reputed to be—always found where not wanted and always absent when required. They cannot be had for love or money in London or Paris, but spring up like mushrooms among the Pyrenees or in the mountainous districts of Italy. Not that your miracle is of a shy and retiring disposition. No, it loves a crowd, but the crowd must be a believing one. It hides from unfaith and investigation. Miracles are always rare among sceptics and abound among believers. This looks like saying they are the offspring of faith. The gospel writers confirm this. The very brethren of Jesus did not believe on him (John vii. 3). In his own country, says Mark (vi. 5) he “could do no mighty work”; while Matthew (xiii. 58) says “he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” One would have thought this want of faith among his own kindred and people was rather a reason for their performance.

The position of your ordinary Protestant on the subject of miracles is usually as illogical as the rest of his creed. He admits that Jesus promised his disciples that they should do greater works than himself; that signs and wonders were to follow believers. Yet he makes miracles cease at some undefined period called the end of the apostolical age; forgetful that the very same testimony which confirms the miracles of the apostolical age confirms those in the subsequent age. Lying Eusebius, upon whom the subsequent history depends, speaks of miraculous occurrences in his own fourth century as well as in the first. As we get nearer our own time there is more and better evidence for the miracles of the Church than for those narrated in the gospels, which were compiled long after the events they narrate. Against most of these there is, moreover, the negative evidence that they are not mentioned in the genuine epistles of Paul—the earliest Christian documents—and are discredited by the Jews among whom they

are said to have taken place. The miracles performed by the holy coat at Trèves and at the shrine of the Virgin at Lourdes have far more numerous and respectable witnesses than those of the gospels. Yet the Protestant accepts the ancient, unattested wonders, and rejects the modern, well-attested ones. Miracles are like port wine—little valued until well crusted with age. It is customary to say the age of miracles is past. How could this be known? If a miracle was ever possible and credible, why should it be impossible and incredible to-day? What we do know is, that they do not occur in our experience; and we have evidence in history, even in the Bible itself, that in the past people were credulous and easily imposed on. The age of miracles has passed, not because they are no longer needed to convince unbelievers; for unbelievers are more numerous and harder to convince than ever; it has passed because the faith necessary to its belief has dwindled. Where the faith exists, there the miracles appear. Those only who believe in the Virgin are blessed with visions of her presence. When people say the age of miracles is dead, they mean that the conviction of the uniformity of law is now so generally established that no educated person supposes that any occurrence, however wonderful, of which he may hear, is to be explained by other than natural causes. Apparent miracles are held to be merely the operation of incompletely ascertained forces of nature.

There is, for instance, some evidence that doctors have seen cases which they regarded as incurable return cured from Lourdes. Here is only another instance of medical fallibility. Many diseases are reported incurable, and perhaps are incurable under ordinary medical treatment, which give way before new surroundings. Fresh mountain air, bathing and excitement, have done much for pilgrims to Lourdes. But after all, the chief ingredient is faith. The confident expectation of a cure is often a real agent in bringing it about. For fancy enters largely into many diseases and their cures. Dr. Armstrong said, “I have cured an aneurism of the heart by a slight purgative, ossification of the heart by a little blue pill, and chronic disease of the brain by a little Epsom salts.” Take up any of the Christian papers; they subsist so largely on the pill and patent medicine advertisements as to confirm Heine’s aphorism, that the chronic state of the believer is one of ill health. Read the testimonials. Here are cases of wonderful cures with full names and addresses, better certificated than any of the miracles either at Lourdes or at Jerusalem. The difficult matter always is to assure ourselves of the trustworthy character of the witnesses. People make mistakes and display bias on the most ordinary topics. Le Sage well said “the marvellous strikes the imagination, and when that has been gained the judgment has not fair play.” It is difficult to assure ourselves any would not deceive, still more so to be certain they could not be deceived. The American summed up the subject pretty well who said he had travelled far and wide, and met many liars and lunatics, but no ghosts or miracles.

When we read of Christ walking on the water, turning water into wine, and casting devils into pigs, we feel like the Irishman, who said of *Gulliver's Travels*, "Well, there were some things in that book he couldn't believe."

So little stock does your ordinary Protestant take in Catholic miracles that, when the *Daily Chronicle* recently thought to emulate its Theosophic boom and enliven the dull season by narrating some wonderful cures at Lourdes, hardly anybody but a few Catholics took the slightest interest. Protestants pretend to believe in miracles that happened a long way off, a good while ago, and recorded by they know not whom; but actual living testimony to modern miracles of a similar kind, at an accessible place, in our own day, is received with a shrug of the shoulders by people in the habit of prayer—that is, who continually ask God to display his power of working miracles. Verily their day is over.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### ERNEST RENAN: A REGRET.

AMONG the regrets so generally felt in the world of literary culture on the death of Ernest Renan, not the least must be that he has passed away leaving his life task unfulfilled. Those who are old enough to recall the sensation produced by the publication of the *Life of Jesus* more than a generation ago must own that the great promise held out by that bold and unconventional treatment of the canonical legends has not been realised.

Here was a young writer, educated for the priesthood, who had dared to take up the Gospels as if they had been recently brought to light from mediæval darkness, and had ventured to construe them after a method of his own, and offer them again to the world in a guise acceptable to a non-miracle loving age. Although of a genius far inferior to that of our Walter Scott, Renan in this respect resembled him: he knew how to recast old stories into most attractive forms.

It was believed at the time that Renan had, however undesignedly, done something to restore a waning belief in the traditions of the Church among certain minds. For great is the glamor of fictional art of what is the fashion to call the realistic kind, even if it be not of the highest. In place of the pallid, distant and awful abstractions of the theologian, there was suddenly revealed to the imagination of the general reader, a Man whose interesting life and whose tragic destiny were presented in an aspect not devoid of plausibility.

There were those who took offence at the calm denial of the supernatural basis of the Church and of the reality of miracles; and those who were shocked at what they might justly stigmatise as gross faults of taste in the treatment of details which had hitherto been almost sacred from the touch of the secular historian. Yet the great flaw in his method of writing Christian story remained undetected and unexposed.

M. Renan made good, by his self-confidence, his industry and persistence, the claim to receive public attention. He produced a series of works on the origins of Christianity and on the Jewish literature. He continued to show the same propensity to lively conjecture, freedom of fancy, and picturesque treatment of his subject; but he did not improve in critical severity; and his works remain rather as the monument of a felicitous writer of French prose than an enduring legacy to the science of the world.

It seems deplorable that so much ability should have been squandered upon an erroneous system of historical composition. What was the error in principle of Ernest Renan? He had been in training for the priesthood. How came it to pass, that when he renounced ecclesiastical life, and resolved to write afresh the Christian story from the standpoint of the

independent man of letters, he made no careful examination of his materials and sources?

The neglect of this primary duty bears witness in its way to the profound stupefaction which has so long beset the learned mind of France and of Germany, to whose scholars M. Renan looked too dependently for guidance. The Christian literature came down to us from the hands of the Christian priesthood, and is still, in a peculiar sense, the possession of the priesthood. The New Testament writings lie embedded, as it were, in a mass of other sacerdotal literature—liturgical, expository, historical.

In point of taste, that is of critical truth, no student ever had the right to take those books from the hands of the clergy, and say, I will interpret them as I please; I will sever them from the assumptions of the symbol on which Christendom rests. The Christian story is essentially a child of the Christian theology; it is the theology under the forms of person, place and time. M. Renan ignored this fundamental principle; and the consequence has been that while he is at variance with the priestly conception of the history of the Church, he has not substituted for it a history which will endure the searching examination and the approving verdict of critical students of letters.

Students of the history of letters since the decay of the Roman empire must pronounce that Renan never showed that he had given adequate attention to a question which lies at the foundation of every Christian literary problem. What was the state of letters at the time of printing and the general revival of letters? What was the state of the copies or fragments of copies of the New Testament brought from the monasteries of the oldest order of Christian clergy? What reason was there, on any ground, to suppose that they had been in existence for more than the immense period of a thousand years? Who laid the foundations of the system of Christian geography and Christian chronology?

Unhappily, so far from addressing himself to the solution of these questions, M. Renan never appeared to be even suspicious of their extreme importance; nor of the analogous problems of the Jewish literature. In a word, he did not grasp the fact, so obvious when clearly stated, that the ecclesiastical books are the production of the Church, that is of the literary priesthood; that unless the history of the priesthood can be discovered, the history of the books cannot be known.

M. Renan was once, no doubt, accustomed to read in the Breviary. If he had thoroughly acquainted himself with the contents and the history of that sacerdotal compilation, he would have gained an insight into the whole structure of that new anniversary religion which succeeded the anniversary religion of old Rome; and he would have been deterred from indulging himself in fantasies on Church story, inconsistent with scientific taste, and from constructing new theological romances on the basis of the old.

Respect for a writer in many respects so admirable and so stimulating should not blind us to the fact that he has not led us on the right path towards the solution of questions beyond measure interesting to all educated persons. The problem, what should intelligent students of history think of Christ and Christianity, awaits still its solution—a solution not far to seek so soon as the true points are found, at which investigation should begin.

E. J.

Buddhism has been violently persecuted at various times and in various countries. It appears never to have dreamed of revenge. It has been faithful to its principle that truth is not to be imposed by violence: that opinion must be free. Its rejection of bloodshed has been absolute. Beside the history of its peaceful progress, the records of Islam and Christianity are black with tyranny and hate.—*Samuel Johnson, "Oriental Religions,"* India, p. 749.

## THE KNOWN AND THE SPECULATIVE.

THOSE who undertake the task of patiently considering the operations of the human mind will doubtless be surprised to discover how very infinitesimal a portion of such operations can be classed among the known. The advocates of popular theories rely too much upon speculation, which they seldom make an effort to verify. This is particularly so with the expounders of the various theologies that have dominated the world. These, of all persons, are the most guilty of representing the speculative as if it were the known, claiming that their teachings are based on fact, whereas their only foundation is mere conjecture. Emerson, in his *Essay on History*, says: "I hold our actual knowledge very cheap. . . . What does history yet record of the metaphysical annals of man? What light does it shed on those mysteries which we hide under the names Death and Immortality?" Despite the fact that upon these subjects actual knowledge is impossible, the teachers of theology pretend to know much of such matters. John Bright once remarked to a Highland minister: "It's odd that a man who knows so little about this world can tell us so much about the next." This was a just rebuke of the orthodox method of confusing speculative notions with verified ideas. Karl Pearson, in his *Grammar of Science*, states: "There are various fields at the present day wherein mankind is ignorant, and the honest course for us is simply to confess our ignorance. . . . Science cannot allow theologian or philosopher, those Portuguese of the intellect, to establish a right to the foreshore of ignorance, and so to hinder the settlement in due time of vast and yet unknown continents of thought." We grant that our knowledge of the many forces in nature is at present small; but it is large compared with what it was, and no doubt it will be larger still in the future if we only devote proper time to the manifold lessons which she is always presenting to earnest students, whose concern it should be to confine their investigations to the knowable—which is the domain of the natural—for to attempt to go beyond this would be to find themselves in quagmires, surrounded by dense fogs, with no light to guide them except the will-o'-the-wisp, of a perverted imagination.

Of course there is a region in which speculation may be accepted, but it must be regarded only as speculation and nothing more. The misfortune is that those who, as a rule indulge in speculation, make their theories do duty as facts. They not only invest their ideas with the importance of legitimate deductions from facts, but give to them the value of the facts themselves. This has ever been an unfortunate method with theologians. When men only talk about matters of which no one can know anything, they are harmless enough as dreamers, but when they endeavor, as many orthodox believers do, to compel others to their way of thinking, resorting sometimes even to persecution to promulgate their idle whims, then they become dangerous and can no longer be regarded with impunity because society has to suffer for their errors. The investing of fanciful beliefs with the authority of knowledge is frequently attended by serious consequences, inasmuch as men's minds are thereby diverted from the real business of life, and their attention is taken from the things we know, and the study of which would prove serviceable to the world. To say such a course is a waste of time would be to treat the matter far too lightly. It is much more than that. It has retarded progress, evoked bitterness of feeling, and fostered a desire for persecution. It has also led to incorrect thinking, to loose reasoning, to the drawing of false conclusions, and to the substitution of imagination for reality.

We do not wish to ignore imagination or to in any way depreciate the important part which it has played in the progressive movements of all ages, but, as

Pearson observes, "Imagination must not replace the reason in the deduction of relation and law from classified facts. . . . The creative imagination has to be a *disciplined* one. It has in the first place to appreciate the whole range of facts, which require to be resumed in a single statement; and then when the law is reached—often by what seems solely the inspired imagination of genius—it must be tested and criticised by its discoverer in every conceivable way, till he is certain that the imagination has not played him false, and that his law is in real agreement with the whole group of phenomena which it resumes. Herein lies the keynote to the scientific use of the imagination." Had this rule been observed in the realms of orthodoxy the great temple of reality would not have been neglected, as it has been, for the field of wild and uncontrolled speculation.

As to the extent of knowledge to be acquired by individuals, that will depend upon the capacity with which they are born, and the physical conditions and mental atmosphere under which they live. These conditions varying in different nations and among different races, it is futile to expect uniformity of thought or of action. Agreement is only possible when the conclusions arrived at are the result of experience and observation, about whose verification there is no doubt. This uniformity, wherever it is found, is scientific, not theological. When ministers and others talk of the supernatural, they indulge in speculation, not in facts capable of being demonstrated. Hence we find such a diversity of opinion among theologians as to the nature of the supposed supernatural. John Wilson, M.A., in his *Thoughts on Science*, observes: "Science appeals to facts to verify it. This, theology cannot do. From the nature of the case, experience is excluded. All our experience is confined to facts as they affect our states of consciousness. What lies beyond these states is, and must remain, a mere assumption only." If then there be a sphere where the alleged supernatural plays a part, and exercises any control, it must be in some remote region, of which we have, and can have, no positive knowledge; and the forces in operation must be other than those with which we are conversant upon this earth. Science leaves to the theologian all useless speculations regarding such a region, contenting herself with reminding him that he is, in all such discussions, travelling outside the domain of facts into a province which should be left to poets and dreamers, and which belongs solely to the imagination. Besides, if the supernatural exist, and we ever learn of it, it must reveal itself through nature, for in no other way can it reach us so as to produce any impression upon the human mind. But if it does come through nature, then how can it be distinguished from the phenomena of nature? It would be quite impossible to differentiate between them.

Limited as our knowledge undoubtedly is, experience and demonstration have enabled us to know that the speculations of theology are not based on facts; that its teachings have proved injurious to the best interests of society, and that the sooner the superstition which it fosters is destroyed the better it will be for the welfare of the human race. We know that science does not attribute natural effects to any supernatural cause, but that in nature are to be found the potency which produces all the results recognised by the human mind. We have learnt that the method of science in working out any hypothesis is to relinquish all false positions, and to discard all discovered errors. To apply this method, however, to theological studies would in all probability produce a revolution in the realms of thought, the magnitude of which no man can foresee. If the greatest thing in nature is man, and the greatest thing in man is mind, the greatest mind will be that which discovers the best and the most effective means

of increasing the sum of human happiness, augmenting the store of practical knowledge, and extending the glory of mental freedom, and thus aid in protecting mankind from the snares of theology and the perplexities of orthodoxy.

CHARLES WATTS.

### A BLAST AGAINST BRADLAUGH.

MRS. BESANT'S recent eulogy of Charles Bradlaugh has excited the indignation of the *Christian Commonwealth*. It tells her that "a woman who extols Blavatsky in incoherent rhapsodies" cannot expect to find respect for her "estimate of Bradlaugh." This is a point with which we need not concern ourselves. Our object is to criticise our contemporary's judgment on the late leader of organised English Freethought. It admits, in a grudging fashion, that he "fulfilled some useful political functions," but it denies him any kind of greatness, and roundly asserts that if Charles Bradlaugh was "one of the greatest of the world's heroes, the world is in a very poor plight." Criticism of this assertion would be a waste of time; it is a sort of thing easily uttered by impudence in an editorial chair, within reach of a dictionary. Let us come to details. Our contemporary declares that "heroism is a high spiritual quality of character," and that "Bradlaugh systematically and uniformly spurned and detested all spirituality of thought, opinion and sentiment." Now the word "spirituality" is employed here in a double sense—unless the sentence is a sheer falsehood. In the first instance it means aspiration, imagination and humanity. That seems pretty certain; otherwise our contemporary only affirms that an Atheist cannot be a hero; which is both begging the question, and quite inconsistent with the facts of history. In the second instance "spirituality" is used as synonymous with *supernaturalism*. This was certainly opposed by Charles Bradlaugh; and therein he was at one with some of the men who have made a supreme mark on modern civilisation. Therein, also, he was at one with the greatest man of antiquity; with the mighty Julius Cæsar, the "foremost man of all this world."

If "spirituality" is used in a supernatural sense, Charles Bradlaugh was unspiritual. But that is only saying that he was an Atheist. If "spirituality" is used in a natural sense, he was far from unspiritual. Assuredly he did not indulge in unction, cant, and sentimentality; but he worked for lofty aims, with a noble sense of that sacred principle which we call "humanity."

Mr. Bradlaugh's published debates are described as "monuments of his abject materialism." Now the adjective is abusive, and the substantive is false. Mr. Bradlaugh, we believe, never called himself a Materialist, and never allowed others to call him so without correction. He was a Monist. So was Spinoza, and who will venture to call his philosophy "abject"?

Finally, the *Christian Commonwealth* describes "Bradlaugh" as "the most inveterate enemy in his day of the deepest faith and loftiest hope of the human heart." Words, words, words! Our contemporary simply means that he was not a Christian. Well, John Morley is not a Christian, and he was lately eulogised by our contemporary. John Morley, no less than Charles Bradlaugh, has an intellectual scorn of the Christian's "deepest faith" and a moral scorn of his "loftiest hope." For the *faith* is in incredibilities, and the *hope* is in selfishness beyond the tomb. Charles Bradlaugh had a different faith and hope; a faith in science and reason, a hope for the wide and durable growth of human welfare and dignity. This may seem

very "abject" to the *Christian Commonwealth*, but it forgets that the epithet might be retorted. People who live in very thin glass-houses should refrain from throwing stones. G. W. FOOTE.

### A POSITIVIST ON AN AGNOSTIC.

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON reviews Professor Huxley's *Essays upon some Controverted Questions* in the October number of the *Fortnightly Review*. His article is a vivacious performance, though somewhat too lengthy. With respect to Agnosticism "as it deals with theology and metaphysics on the negative side," Mr. Harrison is in agreement with Professor Huxley. He has words of praise even for the Professor's onslaught on Christian superstitions.

"The crushing and braying in a mortar of Biblical geology, Mosaic cosmogony, Gospel miracles, mediæval superstition, clerical arrogance, casuistical unverity, and orthodox muddledom, is most diverting and highly instructive. Some may think that the untying of this knot was hardly worth the intervention of Mr. Huxley's superior powers. And some may doubt if it were worth while to make mincemeat of such poor old idols. But perhaps the work has still to be done. The hold upon the public mind of venerable superstitions must be shaken. And the fact that bishops, statesmen, Church congresses, eminent Catholics, principals and other dignitaries, should stake the future of Christianity upon some cosmical myth or the illegality of a herd of swine, is conclusive proof that these incredible delusions still have to be pricked. The pricking of these mythic bubbles and illicit swine is a very amusing business. And many readers will find it as pleasant a pastime as it evidently was to Mr. Huxley."

Mr. Harrison is good enough to say that no one living has a finer command of nervous English than Professor Huxley. "Of old," he says, "we were colleagues in the Metaphysical Society, where to hear Mr. Huxley bait a theologian, or prick a metaphysical bubble, was more exciting than a bull-fight."

Professor Huxley, however, appears to have misrepresented Mr. Harrison, who devotes many pages to his own justification. He denies that Positivism is in any way inimical to Science; he denies that Positivism is Comtism; he clears himself from the charge of "adoration" and "dogmatism," and altogether makes a very successful personal reply. But personal matters, however interesting, are not too edifying. We therefore turn to Mr. Harrison's attack on current Agnosticism as a pretence to be anything more than a negative attitude towards a hasty anthropomorphism.

"Agnosticism is not a patent medicine on which Mr. Huxley has a royalty; but it suits me perfectly to adopt his version. But then I would point out what a limited field this Huxleian Agnosticism covers; how essentially negative, jejune, and provisional a resting-place it is in the wide field covered by the eternal problems of religion, philosophy, morality, and psychology. Preachers, moralists, philosophers, poets, educators, men, women and children, parents and kinsfolk, those who are trying to comfort, those who are seeking to amend, those who mourn, and those who fear—all around us are ever crying out: What is the relation of Man to the Author of the world? Is there, or is there not a moral Providence on earth? Is there a supreme power here; is it good, is it wise, is it loving, or is it indifferent to man and alien to man? Have I an immortal soul and what becomes of it when I die? Does right conduct on earth concern any Unseen Power at all: will our good or bad done in the flesh be counted to any of us beyond the earthly life? These questions are being asked in public and in secret, hour by hour, by all our fellow-beings, often with tears and groans and agonies of hope, fear, and yearning. And the one answer of the Agnostic is, 'I have no evidence on the subject, and I believe nothing of which I have no evidence.'"

The vanquisher of theologians, Mr. Harrison says, is expected to have "something positive to supply as well as something negative to destroy." Men and

women ask for something more than an "exhausted receiver."

Professor Huxley himself, as Mr. Harrison reads him, appears to recognise this; the following passage being cited in proof from his volume.

"That a man should determine to devote himself to the service of humanity—including intellectual and moral self-culture under that name: that this should be, in the proper sense of the word, his religion—is not only an intelligible, but, I think, a laudable resolution. *And I am greatly disposed to believe that it is the only religion which will prove itself to be unassailably acceptable so long as the human race endures.*"

Mr. Harrison says that this is all the Positivists ask or profess, and he slyly claims the Professor as a rudimentary Positivist.

The Religion of Humanity, according to Mr. Harrison, is precisely what Professor Huxley wants to make him perfect. But the great Agnostic will have none of it. He rather sneers at Humanity, as a general term for rogues, fools, and mediocrities. Mr. Harrison replies that Positivists look upon Humanity in the abstract. Love, virtue, and happiness are not things. In the same way, Humanity is a conception; an ideal of the distinctive qualities that elevate man above the beasts. Altogether the quarrel is a pretty one, but we rather sympathise with Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Harrison and Professor Huxley are at one as to Mr. Spencer's "Unknowable"—which is the great ghost of all theologies and metaphysics. Mr. Conway has well said that the creation of the "Unknowable" was the worst day's work Mr. Spencer ever did. It has set hundreds of fools gabbling and looking the unutterable. Our philosophy of life—our religion, if you like to call it so—must be based upon the known; and something like the Religion of Humanity may spring as a phoenix from the ashes of supernatural faiths.

#### SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LATE THOMAS COOPER AT COVENTRY.

MR. G. J. HOLYOAKE, in his kindly notice of Thomas Cooper, maintained, in opposition to views expressed in another journal by "Anthony Collins," that he (Thomas Cooper) was for some time a pronounced sceptic to revealed religion. It perhaps escaped his recollection that Thomas Cooper on one occasion announced himself as a Secularist. This was, I believe, soon after or about the time of the Cowper-street debate. My own knowledge of Thomas Cooper as a reader of the *Plain Speaker* and his own journal, and conversations with him when he visited Coventry, about 1847 to 1850, confirms me in the opinion that Mr. Holyoake is right. His orations published in the *Reasoner* about that time had made his name and fame familiar to a few readers of that paper in the old city in the former year, and had created a desire to hear the able, but at one time rash, old Chartist, who had cooled down then somewhat to the light of reason, but with some of his old fire remaining; and the old municipal building, St. Mary's Hall, then almost the only eligible building for lectures in Coventry, was, after some difficulty, obtained for an oration on "Civilisation: Past, Present, and Future." Most of the old Socialists and some of the Chartists listened with great pleasure to this oration, and Thomas Cooper was delighted to have an opportunity of speaking in this grand old hall. Though this and subsequent orations delivered in this hall were more literary than theological, yet, not only what was said, but by what was left unsaid, the effect was distinctly Secularistic; and one young man, brought up as a Roman Catholic, was led by thoughts suggested by the first lecture to renounce that faith, and incurred a great amount of domestic persecution in his own family in consequence.

On a subsequent occasion, when Thomas Cooper delivered orations on Milton and Burns, and had to spend a day in Coventry, an excursion to Kenilworth and Warwick Castles was arranged with him, and the writer, with some friends—alas! with one exception no more—went with him, and an exceedingly pleasant day was spent; and after dinner

at Warwick, Cooper favored us by singing "The Woodman" and minstrel songs, the music to which had come to him with the words, and were arranged afterwards by Miss Dobson Collet. What, however, gave me the most pleasure and created a belief in the soundness of his political ideas was his oration on "Cromwell and the Commonwealth," which was much more sensible than Carlyle's *Life and Letters* subsequently conveyed to the writer.

After his so-called re-conversion, one or two visits were paid to Coventry, and appeared almost farcical in some respects. He soon renounced, with his freethinking ideas, his practice of asking for questions or discussions after his "talks," as he then preferred to call them, and I think to his essential pedagogical nature these were always rather distasteful. If his object was to gain cash, or "filthy lucre" as it is sometimes called—and surely it is filthy if obtained by unworthy means—he made a mistake in not joining a sect. So far as I could learn from him, he was more inclined to Baptism, and his preaching seemed a mongrel faith between that and Methodism. Any way, the Baptists seemed to give him more countenance than any other sect. One of his sermons or "talks" at Whitefriars-lane Baptist Chapel here was attended by a friend, and in this Cooper endeavored to explain the Gadarene miracle of casting out devils, somewhat after this fashion. "I believe in Devils," at which some of the congregation said "Hear, hear." "And in dirty devils too," said Thomas Cooper; at which the assembled congregation again responded "Hear, hear." "And pigs would be a proper receptacle for such devils," again responded Cooper. The utter childishness of such an explanation of a difficult passage of scripture from Cooper seemed to me inexplicable, after reading Strauss' work as translated by George Eliot and reprinted in Cooper's own journal, and, after his orations on Paine and other eminent Freethinkers,\* it seems like a dog returning to his vomit. Other circumstances convinced me that, however sincere might be Thomas Cooper's re-conversion, he could give no intelligible reason for the change. One endeavor will suffice to show the pedagogism of his mind, and how he seemed to misapprehend the real argument lying behind mere verbal controversy. He was endeavoring to show that Owen's doctrine of the formation of character was wrong, and that man was not the creature of circumstances. And in doing so, he said circumstance was compounded of two words, circum and stance, or something surrounding a thing. But then there was the man himself which was not taken into account. This was very disingenuous, as Owen had expressly referred to the organism both mental and physical, so that Cooper's was a mere quibble. On one occasion, soon after his re-conversion, in the house of a mutual friend in Coventry, when the late Charles Bray was also present, the conversation turned upon the improbabilities of a future life—Bray said, "if on the whole it was best for him to live again, he should desire to do so but not otherwise." When Thomas Cooper almost indignantly exclaimed, "it is for myself I wish to live, and I cannot be so indifferent about it." I noticed too that in opposition to the practice of most of the Secularists who invited him here in his unconverted days he smoked his churchwarden and drank his glass of brandy and water almost defiantly; whereas, when converted, he smoked cigars only in public company, and said, with a sly wink to one of us, "You see I must now avoid the appearance of evil." He also said, after his re-conversion, I must have mistaken him for Robert Cooper, as he had never lectured on heretical subjects in the provinces. This was utterly untrue so far as I was concerned; and the merit claimed was, at least in my eyes, a demerit; for Freethinking lectures paid worst in the provinces, and had to be carried on often at some peril to life and limb, and scarcely ever with any profit. My deliberate opinion is that if the Freethinkers of his day had done their duty and had given a reasonable measure of support to Thomas Cooper, he would never have deserted them or their cause; so that his fault of desertion, if true, reflects to some extent upon the Freethinkers as a body, who have not as a rule given that support to their advocates which should have placed them in comfortable circumstances, out of the fear of want; and Thomas Cooper, unlike Thomas Paine, could not bear up against ingratitude and neglect, though

\* His Oration on Paine in the *Reasoner* was every bit as eulogistic and very much upon the lines of the *Life of the great Republican and Freethinker* just published.

he could admire these qualities in others. It might be said that his long incarceration in Stafford Gaol gives the lie to this; but if what is related of him is true, there was not much of patient martyrdom even there. All, however, who have hearts to feel must sympathise with him, and his great poem testifies to his great abilities and untiring industry, and his last days should have been made pleasanter by those for whom he wrote and suffered, whatever might be his eccentricities of thought and feeling, or the declensions to which his mind was subject. Nobody likes a renegade, but he who has once struggled for a cause is better than one who has either opposed it or has been always indifferent. C. S.

#### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly Executive meeting was held at the Hall of Science, Sept. 28, 1892; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. Charles Watts, V. Roger, R. O. Smith, George Standing, J. M. Wheeler, W. Reynolds, A. B. Moss, J. Brumage, R. Forder, T. Parris, G. J. Warren, C. J. Hunt, E. Bater, C. Quinton, H. Courtney, E. Larkin, T. Gorniot, J. Samson, C. Ivatts, W. Heard, W. H. Baker, W. Heaford, R. Killick, Mrs. T. Smith, and E. M. Vance (Sec.)

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, also minutes of Organisation Committee. A letter was read from the West Ham Branch, stating that at a general meeting of the members, it had been resolved to "sever their connection with the N.S.S." Mr. Ivatts (M.C. for the Branch) was invited to give an explanation, but was unable to do so, not having been present at the meeting. He dissented, however, from the action of the Branch. The President called attention to the fact that the Executive had not been informed that any dissatisfaction existed; the secretary had applied for further particulars, but had not received them; the Branch secretary had also been informed that such proceedings were unconstitutional. He would attend any meeting called by the Branch, and failing that, intended to call a meeting of the members of the N.S.S. in the locality, appoint officers, and carry on the work of the Branch. Proposed by Mr. Standing, seconded by Mr. Killick, "That the President's action be endorsed"; carried.—As requested by Mr. Wheeler's notice of motion, the secretary produced a catalogue of books which were the property of the N.S.S.—On the motion of Mr. Moss, seconded by Mr. Wheeler, it was resolved "that Mr. Leon Furnémont represent the Society at the Madrid Congress, and that we contribute fifty francs towards the delegate's expenses." Mr. Heaford proposed, and Mr. Parris seconded, "That Mr. Foote be asked to write a paper to be translated to the Congress"; carried.

The President asked if the Executive were prepared to deal with a matter remitted to them by the Conference. The Bradlaugh Memorial Fund was placed absolutely under their control, with the exception of about £50, ordered by subscribers to stand over on the terms of the previous resolution. The subscribers who had given no instructions might be regarded as satisfied with the Executive's judgment, whatever it might be. Proposed by Mr. Forder, seconded by Mr. Roger, "That the balance of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, now in the hands of the trustees, be forthwith dealt with as follows: The amount ordered by subscribers to stand over in the terms of the previous resolution shall still remain in the bank; and the remainder shall be invested by the N.S.S. in shares in the National Secular Hall Society." Mr. Hunt moved, as an amendment, "That the matter be deferred until next month"; this was seconded by Mr. Samson, and on being put to the meeting six voted for it. The resolution was then put and carried by sixteen to six.

Messrs. J. M. Wheeler, J. H. Ellis, and V. Roger were re-appointed as a committee to examine and interview applicants for diplomas. Other business was referred to the Organisation Committee, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE (Sec.)

#### 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.

## ACID DROPS.

Last Sunday the London pulpits, and probably most of the provincial ones, were in full blast over the death of Tennyson. He was universally lauded as a thorough Christian. The preachers forgot to state that his Christianity was of a vague character, nearly approaching to Pantheism. He rejected the doctrine of hell fire, which is one of the clearest of New Testament teachings. As a Universalist, he sang of "the one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves."

Archdeacon Farrar took the opportunity to pour forth streams of his cloying rhetoric. He also took the opportunity to puff himself. He could not let the occasion pass without informing his congregation that Tennyson used to send him presentation copies of "all his immortal poems"; also that he had heard many of the said poems read by Tennyson before they were printed; further that he had often visited Tennyson "at both of his beautiful homes." But this self-puffery was not enough. "It will always," he exclaimed, "be to me a source of heartfelt gratitude that God has granted me to know something in private life of nearly all the best and greatest of the English thinkers of this age, as well as of some in America and other lands." Verily the Archdeacon is quite a cosmopolitan James.

One part of Archdeacon Farrar's sermon is worth a special notice. "Many a time," he said, "the poets have been champions of freedom, of truth, of righteousness, when the pulpits and the so-called Church organs have been silent or adverse, or friends of moral oppression and moral wrong, or have only uttered words of moral seesaw, of virulent malice, or of torpid conventionality."

The Church Congress this year began with something very like a fight, and seems to have ended in a fizzle. The anti-Ritualists attacked the Ritualist procession, and tore down their banner of the virgin and child amid a fierce struggle. There was a smart controversy between the clergy and doctors on the subject of vivisection; but since the death of Tennyson the papers have taken little notice of the parsons' palaver.

The Church Congress was welcomed at Folkestone by a Nonconformist minister, the Rev. A. J. Palmer, who represented the Nonconformists of the district. Mr. Palmer and his dissenting brethren have forgotten history, or they choose to bury it, in presence of the scepticism which threatens all forms of Christianity. Most of Mr. Palmer's speech was "high falutin'," but one point of it we heartily endorse. "England," he said "is our joint inheritance; very little have any of us done to make it what it is." That's true, anyhow. Priests and ministers *have* done very little to make England what it is; on the contrary, they have done their worst, like the black gentry of other countries in their several spheres, to keep her back in the march of civilisation.

Some dreadful nonsense was talked at the Church Congress on the subject of religious education. The parsons bewailed the fact that a completely secular system of national education had been established in France. The Rev. T. H. Gill, who spoke from "long experience" as an Anglican chaplain in Paris, said that the younger generation was growing up as thoroughly pagan as the boys and girls of old Rome. Secularists themselves, said Parson Gill, are alarmed at the godlessness of the masses. Well now, that is news. We invite Parson Gill to give us his authority. *Who* are the Secularists that are alarmed at the spread of Secularism? We are anxious to catch sight of such curiosities.

The London *Globe* declares that if voluntary schools are abolished in England, "we shall soon cease to have any definite religious instruction at all"—at all. How shocking! Still, we dare say England will survive it, if the *Globe* doesn't.

It is astonishing how long it takes some minions of the law to begin administering an Act of Parliament which they dislike. Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act is still flouted in our "courts of justice." On Friday, Oct. 7, Mr. H. M. Toward, of 1 Deacon-street, Walworth-road, was summoned as a juryman in the court of Coroner Wyatt, where, in sheer defiance of the law, he was refused his right to affirm, told

he was "without conscience or sense," and kept uselessly waiting for an hour and twenty minutes. Mr. Toward should not have waited. The coroner had no right to detain him, without expressly saying he was wanted for another inquest. Mr. Toward should have quietly said, "If I am not to serve as a juror, I am not a witness, and I respectfully say that I shall leave the court." Then he should have walked out, leaving the coroner to stop him by force if he pleased. An arrest would have furnished ground for an action.

Coroner Wyatt is in the service of the London County Council. We advise Mr. Toward to appeal to his local member on the Council, and get the question raised at a Council meeting. If this cannot be done, the coroner may be admonished *sub rosa* and be thus induced to keep his insolence to himself. If he feels pious and ill tempered, he should kick his own gate for five minutes, and not insult the public who pay him his wages.

The Pope has again enjoined the faithful not to vote at the Italian elections. This is not to show the poverty of the land. Were there any chance of making a Catholic Parliamentary Party in Italy, as in Germany, be sure it would be eagerly embraced. But when a plebiscite on the question of the temporal power of the Pope was taken, it was negatived by about 20,000 to every one of the Papal voters even in the Papal States themselves. The position of the Catholics in France, Italy, and Germany should be instructive to Protestants. In Germany, where Protestantism prevails and the Emperor announces that the Fatherland is based on religion, the Catholics can bring back the Jesuits and sway the political see-saw pretty much as they please by holding together. But in so-called Catholic Italy and France, where Freethought has thoroughly undermined the entire principles of Catholicism, it can make no political headway whatever.

Storms and floods have spoiled the ungathered harvests in Scotland, Ireland, and some parts of England. We wonder if the farmers offer harvest thanksgivings to the ruler of the skies.

God's tender mercies are over all his works. Heavy floods in Cheshire and North Wales have wrought much mischief. "It is pitiable," the *Daily News* says, "to see dead cattle thrown up by the waters, corn in the field and in stacks soddened and rendered useless; potatoes and turnips covered by a foot of water, and rotting."

Some hours after reading this we saw the notice of a Thanksgiving Service outside a chapel in North London. The notice was surmounted by a *straw*—which, we suppose, they were going to thank Providence for.

Less than a fifth of the adult population of London attend church. Mr. D. L. Moody and Father Ignatius have both come to revive very different phases of religion in London. But they are listened to mainly by curiosity-mongers, and London still remains unregenerate. Indeed, there are those who think a redeemer begotten of a ghost and born of a virgin will never do it any good.

The *Bristol Mercury* has printed several letters on Christianity and Freethought since Mr. Foote's recent visit. One of these was from Mr. Logan, who spoke of Mr. Foote having challenged him to a written debate. This is a great piece of nonsense. Mr. Foote does not issue challenges. What he did was simply this. As we were unfortunately not able to secure a verbatim report of the platform debate, Mr. Foote stated that he was quite willing to have a written debate with Mr. Logan, either in the *Freethinker* or otherwise. The *Mercury* inserts a reply to Mr. Logan, in which Mr. Foote contradicts some of Mr. Logan's statements, and concludes as follows:—"Let me now state publicly that I am quite ready to discuss with Mr. Logan, in writing, the simple, unobscurable question, 'Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead?'—although, by the way, as Mr. Logan admits, there are thousands of professed Christians who 'do not believe in the bodily resurrection of their Lord,' it would seem that he should settle the matter with them before debating again with Freethinkers. I am also willing to discuss with him, in writing or on the platform, the general truth and value of Christianity; or the relative merits of Christianity and Secularism; or the philosophy of Theism as opposed to the Atheism which so excites

his horror. In the case of a platform debate the conditions could be settled, as before, by a joint committee. In the case of a written debate, our copy could be printed and published by a respectable firm; or it could be printed at our joint expense, each taking half the total number of copies; or I will publish it myself, and either send Mr. Logan half the edition or pay him half the profits. If there is any honest and satisfactory alternative, I am prepared to accept it. But it must be distinctly understood that I am a poor man, with many obligations, and no income beyond what I earn from day to day; and that I cannot possibly forego any small profit that may arise from the publication of my own writing, which in such a case must necessarily cost me a good deal of time and labor. If Mr. Logan is more fortunately situated, he is free to dispose of his share of the profit as he pleases."

One charitable correspondent in the *Mercury*, a person called Hillman, says that Mr. Foote advocates Secularism for money. Well, Mr. Foote gives his whole time to the cause, and he must live somehow. Mr. Logan gives his time to the Christian cause, and he lives by it. Where is the difference? Is it not simply this? Mr. Logan has a stipend, free from all anxiety; while Mr. Foote has only a precarious income, consisting of what he earns from day to day.

The noble Hillman hopes Mr. Logan will "take care in future that no money goes into the pockets of these men." He forgets that the proceeds of the Logan-Foote debate, amounting to over £40, were paid over to the Children's Hospital. All Mr. Foote received was his expenses. The joint committee saw the injustice of expecting Mr. Foote to leave his home and work for two days, travel to Bristol, and pay his hotel bill, while Mr. Logan had only to walk from his own house to St. James's Hall. It is all very well to say, "Let the Secularists pay their man's expenses." Why should they pay when the Christians are put to no expense?

Mr. Foote does too much work for nothing already. He does not mean to kill himself to oblige Christian bigots. A written debate will cost him time and labor, that must be withdrawn from other work, and he positively declines to do it for nothing. He has yet to learn that ministers who write books instruct their publishers to send the profits to the nearest hospital. One man should only be expected to give one man's share in the way of charity.

Mary Kilmarton, a widow at Mossbank, Wednes, died last Sunday in the act of prayer. Another dreadful warning.

The Christian doctrine of Baptism was carried out to the full by a priest at Megantu near Quebec, who upon a woman dying in labor, ordered her to be cut open with a razor and the child's head sprinkled with holy water. Both were buried next day.

A gardener at Loches, near Dundee, named David Cameron, committed suicide while suffering from religious mania. Religion is like rum, very soothing if you take it in extreme moderation, but an overdose is terrible.

South American religion seems in nearly as backward a state as European faith when Christianity was unquestioned. A Peruvian priest had, in accordance with the divine injunction in Exodus, an Indian girl burnt at the stake as a witch. He has, however, himself been sentenced to death for the offence, so that even in Peru the authority of Moses is not unquestioned.

Church and State are in conflict in Hungary. The question of the christening of the children of mixed marriages has for long excited contention, and the government wisely think of following other nations in having civil marriages. The church is strongly opposed of course, knowing its perquisites will diminish, and an arrogant ecclesiastical memorandum has been published, which is characterised as a direct offence to the Crown. Under the plea of putting God before man, the church is always ready to forward its own claims at the expense of secular welfare.

Russia and the Papal See, are also at loggerheads, the Czar wishing the whole of his people in Poland, to belong to the Orthodox Greek Church. The Pope refuses to come to terms. It would never do for him to openly desert

the Catholics of Poland and withdraw their bishops to please the Czar.

In Japan a Moon Temple is ascended by a flight of 250 stone steps. At a festival recently an intoxicated devotee rolled down them and took with him some thirty others, five of whom were killed.

The *Christian World* takes Dr. Marshall Randles to task for denying that there are contradictions and discrepancies in the Old Testament narrative. It tells him plainly that "the contradictions and discrepancies do exist, and are not to be explained except by being admitted." Our pious contemporary is nearly as bad as Thomas Paine.

Renan's death gives the religious papers an opportunity of airing their criticism. The *Christian Commonwealth* says "he was among the foremost in the ranks of philologists, historians, and essayists." But he had too much audacity with his elegance. He was "the Mephistopheles of modern culture." "He could salute the Christ of history with a series of kisses while betraying the personality of the Savior to the scornful ridicule of the flippant and frivolous." He was even "not ashamed to compare David to a bandit, and Isaiah to a sandwich-man." He had a "sardonic contempt for the sacred mysteries of life and death." All which means that Renan was not a ponderous Philistine fit to edit a Nonconformist journal.

Mr. Rider Haggard, the novelist, crams his books with fighting and slaughter. We are not surprised, therefore, to find he is a good Christian, ready to read the lessons in the parish church at Ditchingham.

Bishop Murray, of the Isle of Man, gave a Nonconformist minister a "lift" in driving from Ramsey to Peel. This is gravely reported in a Christian paper as something noteworthy. What a state then is Christian charity in after eighteen hundred years!

Dr. S. V. Clevenger, M.D., writes, in the *Open Court*, that in youth he was taught that epidemics were punishments for irreligion. He has since learned that ignorance and so-called religion are mainly responsible. Oriental pilgrimages to Mecca and the Ganges are largely the causes of the spread of cholera. In these "holy" spots the multitudes of devout swarm and reek; the filthy "holy" wells from which they drink, and in the waters of which they bathe (not wash, for that would be irreligious), have accumulated ages of defilement. Dr. Shakespeare says it would require two soldiers to each pilgrim to preserve order and cleanliness and induce observance of the most ordinary decency or precautions against the spread of all sorts of diseases that are fostered by filth.

These epidemics brought westward find lodging ground among the dirty and superstitious fanatics of Russia, Italy or Spain, but the thoughtful races, who regard cleanliness more than godliness, are the breakwaters against which the storms of pestilence rage in vain.

Bishop Moorhouse recently presided at a meeting of the Social Questions Union in the Manchester Town Hall. One of the speakers, a Mr. Meacham, produced a record of shareholders in brewery companies, which included thirteen magistrates. A person in the audience shouted, "How many parsons are on?" "Twenty-three," was the reply; "nineteen of them with livings and houses!"

People who read the Bible, and know nothing else about ancient history, think that the Jews were the chief nation, and that other nations only existed in subordination to their interests. But all this is very absurd to better instructed persons. Professor Bennett, speaking at New College on "The Significance of Old Testament Archaeology," observed [we quote from a Christian paper] that—"We could see now the grandeur, the culture, the power, of the great empires of Egypt and Assyria, and the political insignificance of Israel became accordingly clear. To the Assyrian and the Egyptian the Jewish nation seemed to be very common clay indeed."

The Evangelical Alliance has been holding a Conference in Dundee. One of the speakers, the Rev. John Watson, of Liverpool, admitted that the proletariat were alien from the

Church. He deplored it, but they had reason for thinking that the Church was not with them. She had sided with capital and respectability. The Church in the past days should have given her hand to the working-men, as she would now do *when they were able to take care of themselves.*

Mr. Watson appears to forget that the Church always acts in that way. She patronises no party, and no reform, until it is able to take care of itself. She comes in at the eleventh hour. When the clock strikes twelve, however, she generally claims to have done the whole job herself.

Mr. A. Russell Webb, United States Consul at the Philippine Islands, has resigned his berth to devote himself to preaching Mohammedanism. He has studied the Koran with the result of becoming a fervent convert to Islam, to which faith he dedicates the remainder of his life, intending henceforward to propagate Mahommedanism among his own countrymen.

The Dublin *Figaro*, writing on the Ethical movement, remarks that the Dublin Society has been working rather to "shake religious convictions than to deepen moral enthusiasm." Stuff and nonsense! You cannot (in the long run) shake religious convictions without deepening moral enthusiasm; or even deepen moral enthusiasm without shaking religious convictions.

Our Dublin contemporary thinks the shaking of religious convictions is "wanton and reprehensible." Indeed! Is it so if the convictions are *false*? Our Dublin contemporary may reply that they are *true*. But that is the very point at issue.

The *Figaro*, in talking about "degrading" the Ethical movement "to the level of Secularism," is indulging in silly prejudice. No movement could be *degraded* by being brought to the level of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Robert Ingersoll.

The pious Christian Emperor William starting horsemen on a race in which twenty-six horses have been killed is a fine spectacle to those who talk of the improvement Christianity has made on ancient Pagan cruelty.

The first important Christian writer on medicine, the *Hospital* says, was Actius of Amida, who flourished in the sixth century. One of his recipes for extracting a bone from the throat is peculiar. "Bid the patient attend to you, and say 'Bone (or whatever it is), come forth like as Christ brought Lazarus from the tomb and Jonah from the whale.' Then take him by the throat, and say, 'Blasius, martyr and servant of Christ, saith, Either come up or go down.'" Elsewhere this Christian physician describes anointment, and says that during its preparation it is necessary to repeat continually, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob give efficacy to this salve."

*L'Eclair*, of Paris, makes a sensational column about the British proposal to purchase the Holy Sepulchre, following the *Standard* in the mistake that it is the traditional site that is in question. It wonders what the deuce the English want with the Holy Sepulchre. Will it be "un bar?" or only "une station de plus pour l'agence Cook?" (*sic.*) Our contemporary means another station for Cook's tourists. But French people can never spell English names that are continually before their eyes. *L'Eclair* winds up with the exclamation: "The locomotive at Jerusalem! The Holy Sepulchre an English property! Decidedly the old faith is called upon to witness, in our days, very singular spectacles."

Monsignor Gaume, late Protonotary Apostolic, was the author of a work on Holy Water. What he had to say about it was backed up by Church authority. No one but a heretic, therefore, can doubt that Holy Water is a wonderful liquid. Before a priest consecrates it, it is like other water from the same tap; but afterwards, although science cannot detect the change, it possesses miraculous properties. Monsignor Gaume assures us that it remits venial sins; it ensures health; it causes the Devil to fly from us; and it drives away plagues and epidemics. What a pity it has not been tried at Hamburgh! And how absurd it is for Catholic countries to establish a quarantine. All they need to do is to sprinkle their frontiers with Holy Water.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, October 16, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—11.15, "The Doom of the Church of England" at 7.15, Lord Tennyson: his Poetry and his Message to the Age."  
Wednesday, Oct. 19, Hall of Science, Old-street:—8.15, "The Philosophy of Atheism."

October 23, Newcastle; 26, Spennymoor; 27, Blyth; 28, Ebchester; 29, Bolden Colliery; 30, South Shields.

Nov. 6, Camberwell; 13 and 20, Hall of Science; 27, Manchester.

Dec. 4, Grimsby; 11 and 18, Hall of Science, London.

January 1, Birmingham; 8, Leicester.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—October 16, Birmingham; 18, Dundee; 19, 20 and 21, Aberdeen; 23, Glasgow; 25 and 26, Belfast; 30, Edinburgh. Nov. 8, Chester; 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield; 27, Hall of Science, London. 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.

ANONYMOUS correspondents are with all due respect informed that their letters go unread into the waste-basket. We look at the tops and bottoms of letters first. It saves us a deal of time.

M. CAMDEN.—The book you refer to is probably the one issued from the New York *Truthseeker* office. Mr. Forder could doubtless supply you with a copy. Apply to him direct, at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

ENQUIRER.—We believe Mr. William Morris, the Socialist poet, is a Freethinker. As much may be inferred from passages in his charming *News from Nowhere*. He is certainly a man of genius.

J. CARTWRIGHT.—Maclaine's edition of Mosheim is not to be recommended. Murdock's is vastly superior. Mosheim's important Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians before the time of Constantine the Great—a work highly praised by Gibbon—was translated by R. S. Vidal. It has long been out of print, but secondhand copies are sometimes obtainable.

H. GUTHRIE.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraph. Mr. Laing's books are not sent to us for review. His publishers seem to think his heresy too respectable for the *Freethinker*.

G. HILL.—(1) Pleased to hear from one who for three years has taken several copies of the *Freethinker* and given them to friends. While the boycott by newsagents continues this is one of the best ways of promoting our circulation. (2) The copy may be useful.

EMANUEL HOPES.—We don't deal with politics, but as you are a member of the N.S.S., besides being a municipal reformer of twenty-five years' standing, we wish you success at North Kensington.

H. M. TOWARD.—You have no legal redress. The chief officers in law courts can be insolent with impunity. Freethinkers should act on the instructions in Mr. Bradlaugh's "Right to Affirm," printed in the N.S.S. *Almanack*.

W. WATSON.—We are obliged to you for your letter; but as the West Ham business seems a very complicated one, as to which there is much mutual contradiction, we shall not give any space for retrospective discussion. We prefer to look forward, and "Let the dead past bury its dead." Probably you will agree that this is, after all, the best course to adopt.

G. MACREADY.—Mr. Foote could scarcely come himself to Northampton to lecture in such a small hall; but your letter will be considered at the next meeting of the Organisation Committee, and another lecturer may be found for you. Northampton Liberalism must be of a bastard character if decent halls cannot be obtained for Freethought lectures.

MISOTHEOS.—(1) We are sorry to hear that Cambridge newsagents will not sell the *Freethinker*. No doubt it would be difficult to establish a Branch of the N.S.S. there, but if the attempt is made the Executive will render assistance. Seven members are required to start with. A meeting could then be called, and someone might come down from London. (2) Mr. Croom Robertson was editor of *Mind*. He resigned a year or so before his death.

S. SHUFFLEBOTHAM.—The Bishop of Manchester knows nothing personally, we believe, about Thomas Cooper. It is natural on your part to wish that Bishops would confine themselves to the truth; but if they did so their range would be very limited.

A. B.—We do not intend to notice it. The President does not discuss with individual members except at the Conference. Executive meetings are the place for settling matters of business; not the streets or the press.

W. WOODLAND.—It is only a branch of Prophet Baxter's business, and hardly worth a special notice.

OLD DAVID WOFFENDEN, of Huddersfield, has joined the majority. His obituary will be found in another column. Huddersfield friends will please note that Freethought literature is now supplied by the Branch secretary.

R. TABRUM.—Thanks. See notice of the old veteran elsewhere. STANLEY JONES.—We are sorry you thought the paragraph prejudicial. It was not meant to be so. Harry Long is not what you imagine. He is the laughing-stock of the Glasgow Secularists. We wish you a foeman worthy of your steel.

H. COURTNEY.—We wish the West London Branch continued success.

J. CLOSE.—All right.

QUIZ.—A first edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* is rarely met with. You might get a copy by advertising for it. The price could hardly be predicted.

WILL any friend kindly oblige by presiding at the piano at the Battersea Secular Hall occasionally on Sunday or Tuesday evenings. Address—Mrs. Fisher, 48 Park-grove; or at the hall.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Flaming Sword—Secular Thought—Modern Thought—Twentieth Century—Correspondens blatt des Deutschen Freidenker Bundes—Für Unsere Jugend—Freethinker's Magazine—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—Clarion—Church Reformer—Ironclad Age—Independent Pulpit—La Vérité Philosophique—Echo—Northampton Daily Reporter—Freethought Messenger—Cottage Gardener—Reading Observer—Bristol Mercury—Midland Evening News—Eastern Province Herald—Le Petit Journal—L'Illustration—L'Echo du Semaine—Alliance News.

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

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

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

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

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's lecture on Ernest Renan drew a fine audience to the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. The lecturer gave what seemed to be an interesting account of Renan's life and writings, and especially of his attitude on the chief questions of theology. This evening (Oct. 16) Mr. Foote will again set aside the subject on the monthly bill, and discourse on "Lord Tennyson: his Poetry and his Message to the Age." After the clamor of the pulpits it is well to have the dead poet considered from a Freethinker's point of view; and as Mr. Foote will give several selections from Tennyson, it will be a good opportunity for Secularists to bring their orthodox friends to the Hall of Science.

Last Sunday morning's audience at the London Hall of Science was an extremely good one. Mr. Foote lectured on "The French Republic: 1792—1892." This morning (Oct. 16) he occupies the platform again, his subject being "The Doom of the State Church." The admission to these Sunday morning lectures is free.

Previous to his evening lecture at Baskerville Hall last Sunday, Mr. Charles Watts paid a glowing tribute to the memory of Ernest Renan. Although differing from him in many of his theological opinions, Mr. Watts pointed out how this great Freethought philosopher lived a pure and useful life and died a serene death without being afflicted with any of the absurd fancies of the orthodox faith.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway is reviving the old spirit at South-place Chapel—the resort of well-to-do "advanced" people who are a "cut above" the Hall of Science. Last Sunday morning he discoursed to a crowded congregation (we suppose that is the right word) on Ernest Renan, whom he treated as one of the most remarkable of those who in our time had fought for freedom of thought. Mr. Conway's peroration is described as very eloquent.

The London Secular Federation, we regret to say, is far from adequately supported by the Freethinkers of the

metropolis. One reason, perhaps, is they are not quite aware of the necessities of the case. The Federation is a union, within the N.S.S., of all our London Branches for general purposes. The work it does is over and above that of the individual Branches. A first-rate organisation has been created, and all that is now required is *financial support*, which should be furnished by the well-to-do Freethinkers in London, many of whom are not attached to any Branch.

One of the best and most fruitful parts of the Federation's work has been the courses of free week-night lectures in various parts of London. At the last meeting of the Council it was resolved to arrange for fresh courses during the winter at Islington, Hammersmith, Battersea, East London, and Leyton. This cannot be done, however, without financial aid, especially as the Federation is already in debt. We strongly appeal, therefore, to London Freethinkers who can possibly afford it to send subscriptions to Mr. R. O. Smith, the honorary treasurer, 142 Old-street, E.C.; or direct to ourselves. Every subscription will be acknowledged in these columns.

To the Freethinkers who will do nothing for Freethought, who will neither share the work nor contribute to its expenses, we say plainly that they might just as well belong to the other side. Some of them, perhaps, have not had the matter brought home to them before. In that case, they have now an opportunity of doing themselves justice.

The Westminster Branch has decided to resume indoor work at the Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street, but the meetings will be fortnightly instead of weekly. A social gathering will also be held on the first Monday in every month.

The Leyton Branch has tried in vain to obtain a hall for Sunday evening lectures. Christian bigotry is too strong in the neighborhood. The Workmen's Hall has therefore been engaged again for Thursday evening lectures during the winter. We hope the local Freethinkers will all support the Branch.

The West London Branch commenced its indoor season on Thursday evening at the Hammersmith Club. Mr. Touzeau Parris lectured on "Jesus Christ; neither God nor Man." He is popular in the district, and the hall was crowded. Invitations had been seen sent to local champions of Christianity, but they did not respond; the only opponent being a poor C.E.S. man. Mr. Heaford lectures on October 20, his subject being "Religion and Insanity." Mr. Engstrom should send a competent man to represent one of these items.

Mr. J. W. Cott, of Bradford, took eighteen dozen copies of the *Freethinker* a fortnight ago. He had 130 copies distributed after Dr. Harrison's lecture at Farsley Church School. The rest were sold by twenty newsboys in the Bradford streets. This should lead to an increase of our circulation there.

The Nottingham Branch opened its winter session on Sunday with a lecture by Mr. James Hooper. After the lecture, arrangements were made for a Sunday class for children, to open to-day (Oct. 16); also for a Debating Class, which was opened last Tuesday with an essay by the new secretary, Mr. W. D. McSiccar. There is every prospect of a good winter's work being done by the Nottingham Branch if the members only pull together.

The North Eastern Secular Federation has decided to engage Mr. Charles Watts for a lecturing tour early in the new year. The annual social gathering is to be held at Newcastle on Boxing Day. It is also intended to organise a series of Freethought demonstrations in the country districts.

Freethinkers in and around Ipswich, desirous of seeing an active propaganda in the district, are requested to communicate with Mr. A. Scopes, 14 Queen-street, Ipswich. There ought to be a large and flourishing Branch of the N.S.S. in the locality, and a few stirring lectures would serve to bring our principles before the people. Mr. Foote and Mr. Forder are willing to run down and start the Branch at a public meeting.

Mr. Sam Standing sends us the second number of his *Freethought Messenger*. It is lively but chaotic. Our friend hardly does justice to himself. Probably he will do better when, as he hopes, his little venture takes up a securer position in the new year. Meanwhile we wish Mr. Standing all success in his spirited effort to organise Secularism more thoroughly in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The new hall of the Chatham Branch was well filled on the occasion of Mr. Foote's recent visit. His lecture on "After Death—What?" was followed with the keenest interest and very warmly applauded. Mr. Foote was assured by Mr. Thompson and other leading workers that the Branch is making gradual but sure progress. Fresh members are being enrolled, the ordinary meetings are better attended, and the general organisation of the Branch is steadily improving.

The Sunday Lecture Society (London) begins its winter's business at St. George's Hall, Langham-place, on Sunday afternoon, October 23, when a lecture will be delivered by Dr. Andrew Wilson.

Mr. Joseph Symes, in the Aug. 27 number of the *Liberator*, just to hand, notices Mr. Wheeler's *Bible Studies*. The essays, he says, are worthy of Mr. Wheeler's pen. "The more widely this volume is circulated and studied," Mr. Symes adds, "the better for Freethought and the world."

Mr. Symes tells a story of his recent lecturing at Lithgow. They couldn't charge for admission, but they made a collection. The mayor of Lithgow, who was present in the afternoon, said he wouldn't give to the collection; he would sooner give Joseph six months. However, the mayor came again in the evening, and *did* give to the collection. Probably he had discovered in the interval that Joseph was not such a bad fellow as he thought.

Our old friend (though he isn't so very old in age), Mr. W. W. Collins, appears to be getting on famously at Sydney. The *Liberator* reports that he lectured to a very large audience on "Pioneers in the Realms of Thought," the lecture being illustrated with limelight views of Matthew Arnold, Auguste Comte, Jeremy Bentham, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, and others.

The Sydney Society's secretary, Mr. A. D. Maclaren, announces "a continued and substantial increase in our membership." He adds that the result of Mr. Collins's return to Sydney "has exceeded the expectations of our most sanguine members."

The new Freethought Federation of America, a distinct organisation from the American Secular Union, which has its headquarters at Chicago, will radiate from New York, where its secretary, Mr. J. R. Charlesworth, resides. Its president is Mr. S. P. Putnam, of California, and its treasurer, G. L. Robertson, 345 W. Randolph-street, Chicago.

A Congress of Freethinkers has been held at Lyons. Citizen Schacre from Paris was present. Resolutions were passed in favor of complete separation of Church and State, and of confining State offices to those who have received State education.

*De Dageraad* for October opens with an article on Modern Prostitution, by A. H. Gerhard. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis and J. G. ten Bokkel write on Science and Character, and J. v. d'Ende gives his usual Universal Review, and continues the translation of Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe*.

We made a slight mistake in one of last week's "Sugar Plums." The dancing class which is being organised at the London Hall of Science by the manager, Mr. Anderson, under the Club committee's directions, is for members of the N.S.S. and their families—not their friends. The class is to be strictly select. Mr. Anderson has several names already, and will be happy to receive more immediately.

The Directors of the National Secular Hall Society, at their last meeting, resolved that when the front portion of the London Hall of Science premises is rebuilt, it shall be conspicuously notified on the street-frontage that the place is dedicated to the memory of Charles Bradlaugh.

## WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

*(Continued from page 610.)*

With respect to education, as in the case of every other element of progress, we shall of course be met with the hackneyed objection that *Christ* has not opposed it. The crime will be laid to the charge of the Christian priesthood. Be it so. We must then ask if there is anything in the teaching of *Christ* in favor of education. Where is it to be found, even by the fondest partiality? *Jesus* himself, in all probability, was but poorly instructed. His disciples belonged to the ignorant and unlettered classes. Nor is it likely that he ever conceived the value of any other education than the reading of the Jewish Scriptures. The curriculum of the great schools of Greece and Rome would have astonished him; he might even have regarded it as a waste of time, or a wicked self-assertion of the human intellect.

Cardinal Newman has said that Christianity was always a learned religion. In a certain sense this is true, though purely accidental. A kind of learning was needed by Jerome, who translated the Old Testament into Latin; a higher learning was required when the Greek of the New Testament became practically a dead tongue; and a still higher learning when the Bible and the Fathers were minutely discussed by the opposed schools of Protestant and Catholic divinity. Giants of such learning arose in this mighty contest. But it must be admitted that their learning was entirely subsidiary to theological disputes. We have already observed that it was confined to the clergy; we must now add that it was not very profitable, except in a quite indirect way, to the general civilisation of Europe.

The vital spring of modern civilisation is science; the study of nature and of human nature. Shakespeare was as much a scientist as Newton. We must never narrow science down to the investigation of physical phenomena. Psychology and sociology are as noble and fruitful as astronomy and chemistry. It must be admitted, however, that the study of physical science gives power and precision to our study of mental science; accuracy in objective investigation must, in the main, precede accuracy in subjective investigation; and as physics precede biology, so biology must precede sociology.

The methods and conclusions of physical science are therefore indispensable, apart altogether from their practical value in providing the material basis of civilisation. Let us inquire then, what is the relation of Christianity to this requisite of all real and durable progress.

We shall pass by the fatuous argument that Christianity is a friend to science because many eminent men of science have been Christians. Suffice it to say that they were not produced by Christianity. They were born and reared in Christian countries, and hence they became Christians. Men of genius have arisen in all civilisations. They were the gift of Nature to the human race. Scientists, artists, poets, historians, and philosophers, were *born* with genius; they were *taught* to be Christians, Mohammedans, Jews, Brahmans, or Buddhists. Genius belongs to no creed; it belongs to Humanity.

Should it be argued that the fact of men of science having been professed Christians shows that there is no real opposition between science and Christianity, we should reply that this is taking a very narrow view of the situation. The real questions to be considered are these; first, is there anything in Christianity calculated to make it hostile to science; secondly, has it displayed hostility to science through its chief teachers and great organisations?

There is something in Christianity calculated to make it hostile to science. Its sacred books are defaced by a puerile cosmogony, and a vast number of physical absurdities; while its whole atmosphere, in the New as well as in the Old Testament, is in the highest degree unscientific.

The Bible gives a false account of the origin of the world; a foolish account of the origin of man; a ridiculous account of the origin of language. It tells us of a universal flood

which never happened. And all these falsities are bound up with essential doctrines, such as the fall of man and the atonement of *Christ*; with important moral teachings and social regulations. It was therefore inevitable that the Church, deeming itself the divinely appointed guardian of Revelation, should oppose such sciences as astronomy, geology, and biology, which could not *add* to the authority of the Scripture, but might very easily *weaken* it. Falsehood was in possession, and truth was an exile or a prisoner.

Even the science of medicine was hated and oppressed. It was seen to be in opposition to the New Testament theory that disease is spiritual—which is still the current theory among savages. Medical men saw that disease is material. Hence the proverb "Among three Doctors two Atheists."

Christianity has been called by Cardinal Newman "a religion supernatural, and almost scenic." It is miraculous from beginning to end. Setting aside the extravagances of the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are replete with prodigies. Scarcely anything is natural. Not only is the career of *Jesus* entirely superhuman; his very disciples suspend the laws of nature at their pleasure; they miraculously heal the sick and raise the very dead.

A history so marvellous fed the superstition of the multitude, confirmed their credulous habit of mind, and prejudiced them against a more scientific conception of nature. It also compelled the Church to oppose the spread of rational investigation. The spirit of science and the spirit of Christianity were mutually antagonistic. A conflict between them was inevitable. The natural and the miraculous could not dwell together in peace. The conquests of the one were necessarily at the expense of the other. This was instinctively felt by the Church, which could not help acting as the bitter enemy of Science.

Accordingly we find that the splendid remains of ancient science were speedily destroyed. The work of demolition was almost completed within a century after the conversion of Constantine. Hypatia was murdered by Christian monks at Alexandria. The magnificent Museum of that city was also reduced to ruins, and its superb Library was burnt to ashes or scattered to the winds. Astronomy, physics, geography, optics, physiology, botany, and mechanics were annihilated. Before another century had elapsed they were utterly forgotten. Cosmas Indicopleustes, a Christian topographer, gravely taught that the earth was not round, but a quadrangular plane, enclosed by mountains on which the sky rests; that night was caused by a northern mountain intercepting the rays of the sun; that the earth leans towards the south, so that the Euphrates and Tigris, which run southward, have a rapid current, while the Nile has a slow current because it runs uphill!

Science simply ceased to exist in Christendom, and it did not revive for hundreds of years; not, in fact, until Christian torches were lit at Mohammedan fire. The light of Alexandrian science was followed by the long darkness of Christian superstition. "Looking at the history of science," says Dr. Tylor, "for eighteen hundred years after this flourishing time, though some progress was made, it was not what might have been expected, and on the whole things went wrong."

*Things went wrong.* Yes, and Christianity was the principal cause of the mischief. There is no clearer fact in the course of human history. And it is equally clear that when Science reappeared in Europe, after an absence of a thousand years, the Church once more attacked it with tiger-like ferocity.

Astronomy was the first object of the Church's wrath. It gave the lie to the Bible theory of the earth being the centre of the universe; the sun, moon, and stars merely existing to give it illumination, or to decorate the sky. It opened up vistas of time and space in which the Christian ideas of the universe were lost like drops of water in the ocean. Further, by diminishing the relative importance of this world, it tended to discredit the notion that God was chiefly occupied with the sins, the repentances, and the destiny of mankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

*(To be continued.)*

The *Liberator* of Aug. 27 gives Mr. Maclaren's address at the Shelley Centenary Celebration at Sydney, and reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on Shelley from our columns.

## BOOK CHAT.

Mrs. Ritchie tells a good Tennyson story in her new volume, *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning*. The poet was one day walking in Covent-garden, when he was stopped by a rough-looking man, who held out his hand and said: "You're Mr. Tennyson. Look here, sir, here am I. I've been drunk for six days out of the seven, but if you will shake me by the hand, I'm damned if I ever get drunk again."

Dr. Boyd ("A. K. H. B.") has just published the second volume of his *Twenty-five Years at St. Andrew's*. Some of his clerical anecdotes are very interesting. When he was in his Edinburgh parish, many years ago, Dr. Boyd said to a neighboring minister, "It is very sad that that poor woman is to be hanged." "No," said the other, "it is not a bit sadder that a woman should be hanged than a man. God will damn a woman just as soon as a man; and therefore in what you are saying you are accusing God, and going against the Standards of the Kirk."

This leads Dr. Boyd to another story of a "bigot who went to New England seeking freedom of worship": "He preached to his unhappy congregation that he had satisfied himself that just one in each seven hundred and seventy-seven of the human race should be saved at last. Coming out, he found the congregation gathered under a tree in high debate. They had calculated that if the case were so, exactly three souls in the parish would end well; and the question in debate was, Who these three should be? They stated their perplexity to that preacher of despair; and mentioned a good many names which had been suggested. But a fine effect was produced upon the mind of that ferocious fatalist by the fact that not one individual had mentioned his."

William Reeves, of 185 Fleet-street, issues as No. XI. of the Bellamy Library (1s) a series of articles entitled *Politics for the People*, by J. Morrison Davidson, the well-known Radical journalist. The articles are for the most part reprints of contributions to the *Daily Chronicle*, *Star*, *Weekly Times and Echo*, and *Reynolds's Paper*. They are all written with clearness and vigor. In his opening "Democrat's Address," Mr. Davidson puts forward as his goal the British Republic, Federal, Social, and Democratic; the federation of the English-speaking races, and the parliament of men the federation of the world. The series embrace a variety of topics, from the G.O.M. to Free Rails. Even the subject of Cremation is made to take a political bearing, and Mr. Davidson advocates fire funerals because by cremation "the rapacity of the lord of the soil is completely checkmated."

The *Agnostic Annual* for 1893 (London: Watts and Co.; 6d.) is an excellent publication. Mr. Leslie Stephen fills the place of honor with an article on "The Moral Sanction." It is written with his usual clearness and ability. Our readers will be interested by the following passage on future punishment: "Theologians have a sanction which is at once intrinsic and extrinsic—namely, hell-fire. This is extrinsic in the sense that the motive—fear of everlasting pain—is not a truly moral motive, any more than the fear of the gallows. But it is intrinsic in the sense that an omnipotent being might, of course, determine that a penalty which in its nature is accidental should as a matter of fact always follow. Though it would not be a truly good action to be sober for fear of being burnt for a few million years, it would no doubt be a strong inducement to an external sobriety. I might still love my drink, but the knowledge of the unpleasant consequences would prevent me from drinking. The objection to this sanction is, first, that there is no reason to believe in it; and, secondly, that, if we believe in it, we have practically to choose between making God a tyrant, who, as judge, inflicts the most monstrous penalties for actions which, as creator, he has made inevitable; or making God a bully who uses threats which he will never carry out, and an unjust judge who can be induced to relent by the use of certain bribes to his vanity or of proper court influence."

Mr. Stephen is followed by Amos Waters, who writes on "Reverent Agnosticism." It is in some respects a brilliant article; but why *Reverent*? Dr. Momerie's article on "Dogmatism in Theology" may astonish the very orthodox; it is, however, very jejune to Freethinkers, who are as sick of Theology as Dr. Momerie is of Dogmatism. Mr. Samuel Laing contributes an interesting and useful article on "Ser-

mons on the Mount." C. E. Plumptre deals with the duty of letting children grow up without the pressure of religious authority. There are other articles by Dr. Bithell, F. Millar, L. Armstrong, and Charles Watts, who writes on "The Blight of Superstition." Special mention should be made of Mr. Edward Clodd's article on "Anthropology and Orthodoxy." Poetry is represented by Gerald Massey, W. S. Ross, and G. H. Martin.

Setting aside Mr. Leslie Stephen's article, which would hardly be out of place in any liberal publication, it seems to us that these Agnostic writers have really but one common bond—namely, opposition to Christianity. We do not say this in disparagement, but merely in a spirit of impartial observation.

*Ghosts and their Modern Worshippers*, by "Philosophus," is a threepenny pamphlet published by Simpkin and Co. It is extremely sensible, and contains some very just remarks on hallucinations. The writer is quite up to date. He draws attention to the "ascetic practices required by Theosophy for the purpose of obtaining interviews with the Mahatmas." We believe "Philosophus" is a doctor.

The Humanitarian League issue through Beeves (London) its fifth tract, price twopence. It is entitled *Behind the Scenes in Slaughter-Houses*. The writer is H. F. Lester. Like all the publications of this League, it deserves a wide circulation. Mr. Lester looks forward to universal vegetarianism; meanwhile he calls for much-needed reforms in our slaughter-houses. Lovers of steaks and chops—and they are very numerous—should not be indifferent to the sufferings of the distant relatives that furnish them with their meals.

## SONNET ON PAINE.

LET all admire that great immortal Paine  
Whose pen restored to man the right of thought  
Downtrodden by that spider-craft which wrought  
Its webs for pow'r and dens for pious gain.  
Let all admire that name which ne'er was bought  
To write for king or cunning priesthood's reign  
Or help a tyrant or a thief to work  
His deadly plots upon the helpless wean;  
Whose manly duty ne'er was known to shirk  
Nor courage sink when threat'ning danger came  
To make him leave this lovely world behind,  
Destroyed by creeds, among the stars of fame.  
To thee, O Paine, our thanks are due for freeing the human  
mind,  
And kindling a flame of light in man where all was blank or  
blind.  
ETHICUS.

## OBITUARY.

David Woffenden, the old Freethought newsagent, of Huddersfield, has gone to his last rest. He had reached the age of seventy-nine. David was true Yorkshire; strong, stiff, and individual. His figure used to be familiar at Freethought meetings in the district, and he sold Freethought literature in the days of difficulty and danger. He was a devoted follower of Charles Bradlaugh, and during his last days he frequently said he wanted to be buried like his dead leader. To his wife he said "Ye munna let any parson come to ma graveside." The *Huddersfield Examiner* and the *Borough Advertiser* regretfully chronicle old David's death, and pay a respectful tribute to his memory. The *Advertiser* recalls how Charles Bradlaugh, after entering Parliament, and going to Huddersfield, did not accept the hospitality of his new friends, but "preferred the humble roof and plain dinner of his simple but faithful adherent David Woffenden."

*Modern Thought*, which has changed its address to Foras-road, Byculla, Bombay, reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on "Pagan Baptism." It has a review of Mr. Wheeler's *Bible Studies*, in which it says: "Some of these are awkward subjects to deal with, owing to the difficulties in which they are involved, but it is pleasing to note that Mr. Wheeler has performed his task ably and satisfactorily. Of course this was to be expected from one who is a diligent and careful student of such literature. We have much pleasure in recommending this volume to our readers as a reliable presentation of the subject with which it deals—a subject with which Freethinkers should be acquainted."

## WHAT TO DO WITH BAD MEAT.

"Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien; for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God."—DEUT. XIV. 21.

Now, Israelites, a word with you  
Respecting your—ahem!—*menu*.  
"Any abominable thing"  
You must not to your table bring,  
One course alone is open, then,—  
To utilise the alien.

All luxuries the land affords  
Are yours who *only* are the Lord's;  
For *you*, Jehovah's pleasure wills  
"The cattle on a thousand hills;"  
Another diet waits the men  
Who strangers are and alien.

"For ye are holy." I confess  
That this is the "true inwardness"  
Of the whole matter. Therefore, friends,  
With things defunct and odds and ends  
(Like ancient products of the hen)  
'Tis yours to *sell* the alien.

Give, then (to recapitulate),  
Or sell to those "without the gate,"  
Your stock that dies of epizoo—  
The offal needn't trouble *you*;  
Predestined 'tis for other men—  
The stranger and the alien.

ANDREW W. HERDMAN.

## PROFANE JOKES.

Jews keep on their hats during service because they know one another's little ways.

What does B.C. mean? Pupil—"Before Creation" And A.D.? "After the deluge."

"My young friend," he said solemnly, "do you ever attend a place of worship?" "Yes, sir, regularly every Sunday night," replied the youth. "I'm on my way to see her now."

Minister, meeting a small boy on Sunday afternoon carrying a string of fish—"Johnny, Johnny, do these belong to you?" Johnny—"Yes, sir; you see that's what they got for chasin' worms on Sunday."

A small boy began his regular prayer in the regular way:—"Now—I—lay—me," and there he stuck fast. "Down," said his mother, prompting. Whereupon Johnny set off again with great alacrity and fluency, "Down came a blackbird and nipped off her nose."

The anniversary of Parnell's death was celebrated impressively at Dublin. The procession to his grave was a remarkable one, and testified to his hold on the heart of the Irish people. Parnellism, in the best sense, is far from dead in Ireland. Politically we have no concern with it; in another respect we are very much concerned with it, as it means anti-clericalism and open warfare with the dominion of the Irish priesthood.

*Reynolds's Newspaper* is becoming advanced in religion as well as in politics. Referring to Thomas Paine, it says that he argued about the Bible by "the light of reason and his common sense." The Old Testament, it adds, is "a book gradually, but quietly, being abandoned by the Christian sects. Its childish legends, its permitted cruelties, its lusts, its unscientific errors, are too much for the modern world to stomach."

Miss Julia Wedgwood, in an article on "The Message of Israel" in the *October Contemporary Review*, strikes us as beating the bush a deal without ever starting the hare. She says, for instance, of the Bible: "We are free to recognise the errors, of every kind, which belongs to this as to every other work of man, free to discern in it, for the first time, that which is truly the work of God. When everything in the Bible was called Divine, nothing was seen as Divine; the human and Divine appear and vanish together. We are free to condemn the errors of man, and therefore to accept the revelations of God." But she gives no hint how we are to distinguish the revelations from the errors, or why God allowed both to be bound up in one volume and all taken for so many years as divine revelation.

## 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.]  
Secretaries may send in a month's list of lectures in advance.

## LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Dr. T. R. Allinson, "Our Health, and how to keep it" (3d. and 6d.); social gathering after the lecture. Tuesday at 8, dancing. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class. Friday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Facts of Evolution" (2d. and 4d.)

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Richard Carlile and the Free Press." Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class (astronomy). Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class on "Spencer's Ethics." Saturday at 8, free concert for members and friends.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 4.30, quarterly meeting; 6, tea; 7, entertainment (members 6d., friends 9d.)

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "The Doom of the Church of England" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7.15, G. W. Foote, "Lord Tennyson: his Poetry and his Message to the Age" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "The Philosophy of Atheism" (3d., 6d., and 1s.)

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, W. Heaford, "Religion and Insanity."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Mystery of Evil Unveiled" (3d., 6d., and 1s., members half-price).

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street: Thursday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Meaning of Secularism."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, G. Shambrook, "A Farewell Address."

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

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, H. Snell, "The French Revolution and Freethought—I."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, J. Rowney, "The Resurrection"; 3.30, J. Fagan, "Is there a God?"

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. Heaford will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, W. Heaford will lecture.

Kilburn—High-road (corner of Priory Park-road): 6, J. Fagan, "Belief, Disbelief, and Unbelief."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Popular Reasons for Believing in Christianity."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Fall of Man and the Atonement."

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

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Charles Watts, 11, "Cromwell and the Commonwealth"; 7, "Theosophy from a Secularist Standpoint."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: Sam Standing, 3, "God's Holy Angels"; 6.30, "The Labor Question."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 7, readings and recitations.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, J. J. Taylor, "The History of the Christian Devil"; 7, J. N. Armstrong, "A Dinner Party in Ancient Egypt" (illustrated by lantern); singing by the choir after evening lecture.

Derby—20 Newland-street: 7, adjourned members' quarterly meeting and social gathering.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, P. Shaughnessy, "The Existence of God"; 2.30, J. D. Crawford, M.A., "Charles Darwin: Vegetable Mould and Earthworms"; 6.30, "Tennyson: his Life and Writings."

Glasgow—St. Rollox Eclectic Society, Toynbee Hall, Parson-street: Tuesday at 8, Mr. Shaw, "The Lords."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: Monday at 7.45, Stanley Jones, "The Soul Idea and Immortality."

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall, Northumberland-street: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "The Life and Teachings of Giordano Bruno"; 3, "What is Theosophy?"; 6.30, "Crucified Saviors."

Leeds—Crampton's Temperance Hotel, Briggate: 7.30, J. Greevz Fisher, "Marriage."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 3, philosophy class, "Bain's *Mind and Body*"; 7, Mr. Booth, "Theosophy."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: James Hooper, 3, "The Book of Common Prayer"; 6.30, "Freethought Heroes."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, G. Selkirk, "Divine Inspiration."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 3, children's meeting; 7, Mr. McSicar, "When Heaven and Earth pass away—What?" Tuesday at 8, debating society.

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 6, committee meeting; 7, Mr. Freake, "God in the Dock."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Stanley Jones, 11, "Was Christ the Son of God?"; 3, "Creation and the Fall of Man"; 7, "Is there Evidence of the Existence of God?"

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, Mr. Reynolds, "The Independent Labor Party; its Aims and Objects."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, music and lecture.

Wolverhampton—People's Coffee Tavern, Bilston-street: 6.30, social evening.

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Oct. 16, Milton Hall; 23, Hall of Science; 30, Sheffield. Nov. 6, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Oct. 16, m., Camberwell; e., Lambeth; 23, Chatham; 30, e., Camberwell. Nov. 13, e., Camberwell; 20, e., Lambeth; 27, e., Libra Hall. Dec. 11, Camberwell; 18 Libra Hall.

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Oct. 16, a., Hammersmith; 23, m., Westminster; e., Lambeth; 30, m., Mile End Waste; a., Finsbury Park; e., Edmonton. Nov. 13, e., Edmonton; 20, Manchester; 27, Lambeth.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Oct. 13, Walthamstow; 14, Battersea; 16, m., Mile End; e., Edmonton; 20, Walthamstow; 21, Battersea; 23, m., Hyde Park; a., Victoria Park; e., Libra Hall; 27, Walthamstow; 28, Battersea; 30, m., Camberwell; e., Libra Hall.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—Oct. 16, m., Victoria Park; 23, m., Finsbury Park; 30, m., Bethnal Green.

STANLEY JONES, 23 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Oct. 16, Sheffield; 18, Cheltenham; 23, Bristol; 30, Cardiff. Nov. 3, Swansea; 6, Liverpool; 13, Manchester; 14, Pendlebury.

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