

The Free-thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

CLOTTED BOSH.

"A heterogeneous mass of clotted bosh."
—THOMAS CARLYLE.

THE death of Tennyson has called forth a vast deal of nonsense. Much of it is even insincere. The pulpits have spouted cataracts of sentimentality. Some of them have emitted quantities of sheer drivel. A stranger would think we had lost our only poet, and well-nigh our only teacher; whereas, if the truth must be told, we have lost one who was occasionally a great poet, but for the most part a miraculous artist in words. No man in his senses—certainly no man with a spark of judgment—could call Tennyson a profound thinker. Mainly he gave exquisite expression to ideas that floated around him. Nor did he possess a high degree of the creative faculty, such as Shakespeare possessed in inexhaustible abundance. Surely it is possible to admire our dead poet's genius without telling lies over his grave.

Among the pulpit utterances on Tennyson we note the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's as perhaps the very perfection of slobbery incapacity. He appears to be delivering a course of addresses on the poet. The first of these escaped our attention; the second is before us in the supplement to last week's *Methodist Times*. We have read it with great attention and without the slightest profit. Not a sentence or a phrase in it rises above commonplace. That a crowd of people should listen to such stuff on a Sunday afternoon, when they might be taking a walk or enjoying a snooze, is a striking evidence of the degeneration of the human mind, at least in the circles of Methodism.

Mr. Hughes praises Tennyson for "conscientiousness in the use and choice of words." He should have said "the choice and use of words," for *choice* must precede *use* to be of any service. Mr. Hughes says it is of great importance that we should all be as conscientious as Tennyson. He might as well say it is of great importance that we should all be as strong as Sandow.

Let us take a few examples of Mr. Hughes's "conscientiousness." He talks of "shining features" which "lie upon the very surface" of Tennyson's poems. Now features seldom shine, they do not lie, and they must be (not *upon*, but) *at* the surface. Six lines further the shining features change into "shining qualities," as though *features* and *qualities* were synonyms. Mr. Hughes speaks, in the style of a penny-a-liner, of Tennyson's "amazing and unparalleled popular influence." Will he tell us if anything could amaze us *without* being unparalleled? He remarks that Tennyson was "not merely and mainly a poet of the educated classes." He should have said "merely or mainly." He enjoins upon us to "define our terms" and "know the exact meanings of the terms we use"—which is absolute tautology. He says of flirtation—on which he seems an authority—that "I greatly fear, and am morally certain" it is as much perpetrated by

men as by women. But if he fears he cannot be certain, and if he is certain he cannot fear. He calls duelling a form of "insanity and barbarism." But while it may be one or the other, it cannot be both at once. The disjunctive, therefore, not the copulative, is the proper conjunction. Mr. Hughes misspells the name of Spenser, translates *mariage de convenance* as a marriage of convenience, and inserts one of his own inventions in a line of *Locksley Hall*, which runs thus in the Hughes edition of Tennyson—

Puppet to a father's threat and servile to a mother's shrewish tongue.

"Mother's" spoils the line. It is not Tennyson's. Mr. Hughes may claim it—"an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own." It does equal credit to his "conscientiousness" and his ears.

Mr. Hughes's *style* as a critic does not rise to the level of an active contempt. Let us look at his *matter*, and see if it shows any superiority.

"Yet although," Mr. Hughes says, with characteristic elegance—"yet although he wrote so much, Tennyson never wrote a single line that would bring a painful or anxious blush to the cheek of the most innocent or sensitive maiden." What a curious antithesis! Why should a man write impurely for writing much? And is *this* the supreme virtue of a great poet? It might be predicated of Martin Tupper. Milton, on the other hand, must have made many a maiden rosy by his description of Eve's naked loveliness—to say nothing of the scene after the Fall; while Shakespeare must have turned many a maiden cheek scarlet, though we do not believe he ever did the maiden any harm. Tennyson was not as free-spoken as some poets—greater poets than himself. But what does Mr. Hughes mean by his "Christ-like purity"? Is there a reference here to the twelfth verse of the nineteenth chapter of Matthew?

Purity, if properly understood, is undoubtedly a virtue. Mr. Hughes forgets, however, that his eulogy on Tennyson in this respect is a slur upon the Bible. There are things in the Old Testament—not to mention the New Testament—calculated to make "the most innocent or sensitive maiden" vomit; things that might abash a prostitute and make a satyr squeamish. We suggest, therefore, that Mr. Hughes should cease canting about "purity" while he helps to thrust the Bible into the hands of little children.

The reward of Tennyson's purity, according to Mr. Hughes, was that "he was able to understand women." "The English race," exclaims the eulogist, "has never contemplated a nobler or more inspiring womanhood than that which glows on every page of Tennyson." This is the hectic exaggeration in which Mr. Hughes habitually indulges. Tennyson never drew a live woman. Maud is a lay figure, and the heroine of "The Princess" is purely fantastic. George Meredith beats the late Laureate hollow in this respect. He is second only to Shakespeare, who here, as elsewhere, maintains his supremacy.

Mr. Hughes's remarks on *Locksley Hall* are, to use his own expression, amazing. "How terribly," he says, does he [Tennyson] paint the swift degeneration of the faithless Amy." Mr. Hughes forgets—or does he forget—that in the sequel to this poem, entitled *Sixty Years After*, Tennyson unsays all the high-pitched dispraise of Amy and her squire. *Locksley Hall* is a piece of splendid versification, but the hero is a prig, which is a shade worse than a Philistine. Young fellows mouth the poem rapturously; their elders smile at the disguises of egotism.

Loveless marriage was reprobated by Tennyson, and Mr. Hughes goes into ecstasies over the tremendous fact. Like the Psalmist, he is in haste; he cannot point to a poet who ever hinted the dethronement of love.

A choice Hughesean sentence occurs in this connexion. "I very much regret," the preacher says, "that Maud's lover was such a conventional idiot that he should have been guilty of the supreme folly of challenging her brother to a duel." Shade of Lindley Murray, what a sentence! A boy who wrote thus would deserve whipping. And what right, we ask, has a Christian minister to rail at duelling? It was unknown to Greek or Roman society. Indeed, it is merely a form of the Ordeal, which was upheld by Christianity. The duel was originally a direct and solemn appeal to Providence. Only a sceptic has the right to call it a folly.

Enough of Mr. Hughes as a stylist, a critic, and a teacher. What he really shines in is invention. His story of the converted Atheist shoemaker displays a faculty which has no scope in a sermon on Tennyson.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANITY TESTED BY FACTS.

IN an introduction to Mr. Moss's new book on *Christianity and Evolution* I have said that what people want to know is whether the old beliefs in which they have been nurtured are true or not. The many other questions with which clericals in general, and Christian advocates in particular, concern themselves are beside the issue. Christianity is claimed to be a divine revelation. The proof that it is so should be as clear as the sun in midday. Facts on every side should speak trumpet-tongued in attestation of the God-given faith. Let us see if they do so.

Considered as a dogmatic system, Christianity is founded on the Fall of Man. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive, says Paul. Without the Fall no redemption and no redeemer would be necessary. But where is the evidence of the Fall? Trace humanity back as far as we can, and we find it more barbarous. There are no facts to show any such place as Eden, or any such state of innocency as is supposed to have resided there. The facts tend in an opposite direction. The earth's own record shows that death was in the world long before the first man trod its surface. The serpent, too, crawled as it now does long ere the days of Adam, and had no more speaking apparatus then than now. The story of the Fall being a fable, it follows that the scheme of redemption founded thereon is a fiction.

From what does Christianity redeem us? Certainly not from the alleged consequences of the Fall. The soil still produces thorns and thistles. Women still bear their children in pain; men still have to live by work. The condition of mankind, so far as it relates to toil, trouble and death, was no whit altered after Christ's advent from what it was before. Nay, to this day the worst evils which afflict mankind—

disease, war, oppression, poverty, drunkenness, and prostitution—are as rife as ever. I for one look on dogmatic Christianity, centering as it strives to do man's regard on another world, as the great obstacle to improvement. Christianity has never made a single grain of corn to grow, and but for science would have left us in a state of savage superstition. What is the state of the world after eighteen centuries of this divine religion? Each Christian nation is armed to the teeth against every other Christian nation, and the mass of the people are still ground down in poverty and misery. As far as numbers are considered, science has enabled a large increase of population to subsist; but this, in the view of dogmatic Christianity, only means an increase in the number of sinners doomed to divine wrath, so that even here there is no improvement through Christianity. Those, indeed, who allow that the just heathen were saved before Christ, must admit that the advent of Christianity, with its message "He that believeth not shall be damned," only increased the population of hell. For the fact remains that the mass of the world is still heathen. Christianity was not only rejected by the Jews, to whom it was first sent, but is still rejected by the largest proportion of the earth's inhabitants.

Then are the wonderful events said to have accompanied the advent of Christ worthy of credence? What testimony is sufficient to establish that Mary was with child of the Holy Ghost? Who wrote the books? No one knows. Whence did the writers obtain their information? All is conjecture. There is nothing worthy the name of evidence that any of the wonderful events said to have occurred in Palestine long ago really happened. But Jesus promised that his disciples should work greater miracles than himself. This should be capable of demonstration. He declared there were specific signs which should follow believers. "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 16, 17). What believers are content to stand by these declarations and test their powers?

In the fifth chapter of the general epistle of St. James we read: "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elder of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick." There is one sect of persons who follow the divine prescription in case of illness. They are known as the Peculiar People. Again and again they have been prosecuted and punished by professed Christians for obeying what they believe to be the divine directions. The law with magistrates and jury tacitly confess that the promise that the prayer of faith shall save the sick is a delusion. Jesus goes further than James, for he says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that, believing, ye shall receive." How many have been deluded by these promises? What millions of vain prayers have been expended in helpless inefficacy to supplant natural law. The assurance, "Ask and it shall be given you" when brought to the test of fact turns out to be simply untrue.

There are other specific declarations of Jesus Christ which time has sufficiently refuted. He declared he would return in the lifetime of his own generation, and that there were those standing around him, who should not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Century after century has passed, generation has followed after generation to the silent tomb—yet Christians still look forward to the long-delayed but ever-expected second coming. Are we not justified in saying that, tested by facts, Christianity is nothing better than a delusion?

J. M. WHEELER.

THE CHURCHES AND THE WORKING CLASSES.

THE various religious denominations have recently been manifesting considerable anxiety for what they term the welfare of the working classes. No sooner had the clergy and laymen of the Established Church at Folkestone sent forth their lamentations about the "falling off of the toiling classes from the places of worship," than the Nonconformists assembled in Bradford, and there sought to discover the reason why working men take so little interest as they do in pulpit utterances, and finally, the Church of Scotland has been holding special commissions in various places to inquire why the poor remain from Church. In each instance the Christians assembled were very desirous of letting it be known that they were exceedingly concerned as to the future of the artizan portion of the community.

Why is it that we have this newly-developed Christian regard for the working classes? Are we to accept it as an indication that the Churches recognise that they have lost the sympathy of the general masses of society? To us this falling off of Church attendance has long been evident, but theologians have been very slow in publicly acknowledging the fact. This sudden manifestation of interest for working men comes very late in the day. When trades combinations were deemed illegal, and when struggles for fair wages were attended with denunciations and sometimes imprisonment, both the churches and chapels were dumb; but now, when the sons of labor are coming to the front and vindicating their rights and judiciously exercising their power, the Church authorities are making desperate bids for their patronage and support. It is a repetition of the old story; the Church has always been either an active opponent or a silent looker-on while the struggles for social and political reforms were taking place, but now the victories have been gained, the Churches desire it to be thought that they are on the winning side, and they are striving to share the glory of the triumphs. When they see that the stream can no longer be stopped in its course, they resolve to float with it as a means of preserving their own safety. Sagacious Churches!

At the late Bradford Conference there was no Major Edwards present to enliven the proceedings with "Ta-ra-ra," etc., but as a substitute Mr Keir Hardie threw a bombshell into the pious camp by declaring that "Christianity had died, and that he was glad of it." True, the gentleman alleged that he referred to "the Christianity of the schools." This, however, was only adding a little sugar to lessen the bitter taste of the pill which he had administered to the orthodox gathering. It would be news to learn that any other Christianity exists at the present day than that of "the schools." If the faith associated with the name of Christ were originally a living principle, it has long ceased to be so, for we only know of it as it is represented in our midst by the several Christian schools. Whether fortunately or otherwise, it is a fact that while we have a superabundance of churchism, we have little or no Christism in modern times. For many generations past the teachings ascribed to Jesus have exercised no active influence on the moral actions of mankind. In the domain of science, in the field of politics, in our national scheme of education, and even in the Churches, Christ's alleged injunctions are practically unheeded. If, therefore, the "Christianity of the schools" is dead, the Christian faith is no longer an active factor in the regulation of daily life. "That it should come to this," is not surprising to those who can judge fairly of the nature of New Testament teachings. If Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world," he indicated in these words the incompatibility of his system with

the requirements of mundane existence. And no doubt this was seen by at least one of the speakers at the Bradford Conference, one who appeared to have fairly grasped the situation for he pointed out the danger that would befall the Churches if they fostered the considerations of social and political questions. Such studies, the revered gentleman thought, would divert people's attention from "spiritual matters" and induce them to neglect heaven for earth. Probably he was right in this particular, for sensible people as a rule concern themselves mostly with what affects their secular welfare.

The Rev. J. Guinness Rogers preached a sermon the other day on "the attitude of the Churches towards the laboring classes as raised at the recent Church Congress and at the Congregational Union meetings at Bradford." The preacher frankly stated that his Church had nothing to do with social or political subjects. "Ministers," said he, "had not the kind of training that prepared them to deal with these questions"; their business was "to help men to live the life of Christ." This candid avowal confirms what we have frequently urged, namely, that Christianity is not concerned in inculcating the secular duties of existence, and that its consistent exponents are incompetent to instruct their followers upon the many topics that pertain to their welfare as citizens. And could we expect aught else when the New Testament, their supreme authority, so far from teaching practical science, philosophy, or education, enjoins the most absurd injunctions, and counsels the very conduct that would, if accepted and acted upon, prevent personal improvement and retard general progress? What, for instance, could be more opposed to all earthly advancement than to regulate human conduct by the belief that the world should be considered only as being of secondary importance, therefore that we are to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"; that we are to "Seek first the kingdom of God," etc., and the necessities of life "shall be added unto you." "The Divine Word" proclaims, "The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." It teaches that poverty is preferable to riches, that non-resistance to evil is a virtue, and that faith in the unknowable is of greater importance than a knowledge of the knowable, for, says the Bible, it is no profit to a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Surely such teachings as these can be of no real value to men and women who are compelled, if they would make the best of life, to regard this world as of supreme importance, to recognise poverty as a terrible misfortune, and to be impressed with the fact that their salvation depends upon their recognising wisdom and its just application as being of far greater service than all the faith taught by theology and enforced by priestcraft.

It would be well if churches and chapels were put to better uses than they are at present. They should be made "houses of men," instead of being looked upon as "houses of God." A Baptist thinks it a great improvement to convert a circus into a chapel, a Secularist would consider that turning the latter into a hall for the teaching of science would be a much superior transformation. Mr. G. J. Holyoake was once permitted to speak in a Unitarian pulpit on the condition that he would offer up a prayer before he commenced his lecture. He complied with the condition, and informed the Almighty that he was not expected to interfere with the speaker's discourse. There is no lack of intellectual purposes to which those public places, that are now shut up six days out of seven, could be devoted. Let all churches and chapels be thrown open to the public for the study of questions bearing upon the social and national life of the people. At present two subjects mainly engage the attention of church-going folks—the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Temperance. Without disputing the supposed necessity of the

former and the certain value of the latter, there remains the important fact that besides these questions there are innumerable subjects of interest and service to the working classes. Instead of perplexing people as to how they should die, let them be reminded how to live in the fullest and happiest sense. When a true knowledge of life has been acquired, no attention need be given to the speculations of death.

If the clergy and the ministry of the different denominations really desire to benefit the working classes, they should be told by these exponents of the Churches, what is to be done to remove the many forms of existing injustice, and to do away with the evil arising from the want of the necessaries of life which desolates so many homes. The working classes to-day are more thoughtful and discriminating than were their predecessors. They are tired of hearing of the theological stories of the origin of sin, the depraved nature of man, Salvation through the cross, the ways of a Devil, and the horrors of hell. These old fictions no longer interest intelligent working men. They want to hear about the world that is, not to be worried about a future existence of which no one knows anything; they desire to have placed before them modern truths, not ancient guesses, to learn what can be understood and not to be continually bewildered by inexplicable mysteries. The working classes are becoming more than ever self-reliant, and conscious of ethical culture, moral courage, and the necessity of working out their own regeneration.

CHARLES WATTS.

SENECA ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

(Translated by J. Fitzgerald, M.A.)

I HAVE visited that most worthy man Bassus Aufidius, burdened with years and struggling against age. The burden is now greater than can be borne: old age has come upon him with all its great weight. As you know, he has ever been feeble and consumptive; long has he saved his physical powers from breaking down, or, to speak more truly, ordered them fitly. But evidently they have failed. As in a ship that has sprung a leak, we can stop one chink or two; but when she has begun to gape in many places, there is no help for the crazy hulk; so in the body stricken with age the debility can in a measure be endured and relieved; but when, as in a tottering house, every joint is spreading, and while you are mending one, another gapes wider, why then you must look about you and see how you may escape.

But mentally our good Bassus is still vigorous. That is the gift of Philosophy; Philosophy gives a man a high spirit whatever his bodily habit, makes him glad and cheerful in the face of death, never losing courage though rest of all. The skilled mariner navigates his ship though his sail be rent in two, and though he lose all the rigging, still does he make shift with what is left him to pursue his course. So with our Bassus, and he regards his own end with the same countenance, with the same emotion, as though he were contemplating, with something more than tranquillity, another's death. A great thing this, Lucilius, and worthy of long study, namely, that a man quit life with tranquil spirit when that inevitable moment comes.

Other modes of dying admit glimmerings of hope; a disease will cease, a conflagration will be put out, a house falls, but the inmates are set down unhurt; people have been cast ashore safe and sound by the same wave that seemed to swallow them up; the soldier withholds from the fatal stroke the sword that is descending on the neck of the doomed foeman; but he has naught to hope for, whom old age is conducting to the grave. No stay is entered against

that doom. In no other mode of death do men die so painlessly nor so lingeringly. Our dear Bassus seems to me, as it were, to attend his own obsequies, to perform the last rites, to live as though outliving himself, to bear like a sage the loss of himself. For he discourses much of death, and is ever intent on impressing on our minds the thought that if there is aught unpleasant or aught redoubtable in this business, that is the fault of the one who dies, not of death; and that in dying there is no more unpleasantness than there is after death. He is as much a fool who fears what he is not going to suffer as he who fears what he is not going to feel. Does anyone think that that which makes us insensible to all things is itself felt? Therefore, says Bassus, death is so far beyond all manner of ill that it is even beyond all fear of ill.

All this I know has oft been said and oft will be said; but it has never so deeply impressed me when read in books or when spoken by men who, in the absence of fear, declare that nothing is to be feared. But this man's word had very great weight with me when he spoke of death as near. And here I will say for myself that I believe a man is more courageous when he is face to face with death than when he sees death approaching; for even the ignorant when confronted by death take courage and give up the thought of escaping from what is inevitable. Thus a gladiator that all through a fight has been an arrant coward, presents his throat to his adversary. But when death is not present, but only coming, a man needs enduring firmness of will—which is a rare quality, found only in the wise. Therefore I listened with delight as he declared what he thought of death, and told, as from nearer inspection, what manner of thing it is. Were one to come to life again and to affirm, from experience, that there is in death naught that is evil, he would, I daresay, be of greater authority with you: but of the disquiet that the approach of death brings you will best learn from those who have been in death's presence, who have both seen it coming and given it entrance. Among these you may number Bassus, and Bassus says that a man is as much a fool who fears death as is he who fears old age; for even as age follows youth, so death follows age. Not to be willing to die is to be unwilling to live, for life is given us subject to limitation by death: to that limit we are ever advancing. Hence to fear death is foolish: what is fixed and certain is looked for; what is doubtful is feared. Death imposes a necessity that is impartial and inevitable. Who can grumble at being subject to a condition from which nobody is exempt? Equality is the better half of equity.

But there is no need to make a defence of Nature, for she has imposed on us no other law than her own. Whatever she makes she unmakes; whatever she unmakes she makes anew. But now if it be any man's lot to be gently ushered out of life, not suddenly flung out, verily that man should give thanks to all the gods for that after being sated he now finds needed and grateful repose. You find some men desiring death, desiring it indeed more earnestly than others pray for life. I know not which gives us more courage—he who calls death out, or he who awaits him with cheerful countenance and tranquil mind. For the one sometimes acts in a frenzy and in sudden passion; the other's mind is composed and his judgment deliberate. A man will meet death, enraged against death; but no one meets death cheerfully unless he has long been in readiness for it.

I therefore confess that I have visited this dear friend often for sundry reasons to see whether I should find him always the same, and whether his vigor of mind was impaired equally with his physical strength; but his mental powers became greater, just as we see an expression of gladness in the countenance of a charioteer as he approaches the winning post in the seventh stage of the race. Bassus said that

in the first place he hoped there is no suffering when a man draws the last breath, though if there were, there is one small consolation, viz., that the suffering is brief, for that great suffering is of long continuance. And however that might be, even while body and soul were sundering, if that involved torture, he would find comfort in the thought that this suffering once overpast he cannot suffer any more. But that he had no doubt that in the aged the vital principle is at their lips and departs from the body without much ado. A fire, says he, that has seized a great quantity of material has to be put out with water, and sometimes by tearing down a burning building; but a fire that lacks fuel dies out of its own accord.

I like to listen to these discourses, Lucilius, not because they possess any novelty, but because I feel as though I were brought into contact with the actual facts of the case. Ah, but have I not seen many a one snap the thread of life? That I have indeed; yet of more weight with me is the example of those who go to death without any hatred of life, and who permit rather than compel death to enter. And the anguish of fear that we suffer when we believe death to be nigh comes through our own contrivance, says Bassus, how much nearer to us are other causes that give us no alarm. A man is threatened with death by an enemy, but he is carried off with a bit of indigestion. If we will but examine the causes of our fears, we shall find that some of them are real, others imaginary. It is not death we fear, but the thinking of death; for between us and death the distance is always the same, and hence, if death is to be feared, then it is to be feared always; for what time is there that is exempt from death? But I have reason to fear that these long letters will be as hateful to you as death, so here I make an end. But do you meditate ever on death, that so you may never have a fear of it.

—*Twentieth Century.*

WITCHCRAFT IN RUSSIA.

A few days ago eleven persons were charged before the Criminal Court at Moscow with the murder of an old woman in the village of Snamenskoe. Darya Vasilieva, a destitute widow, aged 75, besought alms from a neighbor, Lukeria Ivanovna, who alleges that whilst her son was handing bread to the mendicant, the latter cast upon her an "evil and vicious glance." Some few hours later Lukeria was seized with an epileptic fit, and on regaining consciousness swore that her distemper was the result of the old woman's witchery. This allegation was readily accepted by the villagers, who next day subjected the reputed witch to an old-fashioned test. A horse-collar was placed over the neck of Lukeria, and the old woman forcibly brought into her presence, when the former had another epileptic seizure, or, more probably, an attack of hysteria, genuine or simulated. This was proof positive of the poor creature's diabolical possession, and she was thereupon dragged by the hair into the roadway and maltreated in a most shockingly cruel manner, two of her most active and brutal assailants being the village elder and the village scribe. The victim was left for dead, but, subsequently showing signs of life, she was carried by a second mob of the villagers into a bye lane and beaten to death. All the prisoners stoutly maintained their right to kill a witch. Five of them were sentenced to the loss of civil rights and to four years' hard labor, and the rest to two months' imprisonment each.—*Daily News.*

N O W.

There is no after life for blighted roses,
No place to finish interrupted songs,
No heaven where a gracious god reposes,
No one or here or there to right our wrongs.

Ah! then, seize swift your sword, shout battle-cry,
And, if they lay you low and if you die,
Why, I will still wage war with savage spear,
Nor spend one idle moment by your bier.

—*Liberty.*

MIRIAM DANIELL.

DR. SEXTON ON GOD.

DR. GEORGE SEXTON was once a Freethought lecturer—at least a rationalist who spoke from the Freethought platform against the alleged divine inspiration of the Bible and orthodox conceptions of the deity. In the course of time, however, he developed into a spiritist, and perceiving rightly that Christianity was a spiritualistic religion, the learned doctor quickly found his way back to the orthodox fold. He has since lectured for various Christian bodies; and it is only just to say that whatever cause Dr. Sexton has espoused, of whatever principles he has become the exponent, he has always displayed the highest intellectual qualities, the greatest courtesy towards opponents, and argued his case with rare skill—always endeavoring, I verily believe, to fairly represent the views of his opponents, while urging the strongest objections to them. An able reasoner, an accomplished scholar, a ready wit, and a powerful dialectician, it is a pleasure on all occasions for the Freethought advocate to meet such an antagonist as Dr. Sexton, and break a lance with him on the points of difference between the Freethinker and the Christian. Dr. Sexton, when a Freethinker, wrote some able pamphlets by way of criticism of the Bible; since he has reverted to the old faith, like his late friend Thomas Cooper, he has never attempted to answer his old arguments, but has contented himself with writing works in defence of his new views.

One of these works I have now before me. It is entitled *Theistic Problems*, and consists of five essays of various titles, dealing with the problem of the existence of God and his alleged relationship to man. A great French writer once described theology as a dark continent,* in which the traveller was sure to lose himself. Dr. Sexton goes to the other extreme, and affirms that "theology is as much a science as geology or chemistry." This is how he argues the case. "The existence of God," he says, "is as clear an induction from observed and recorded facts as the Copernician system of astronomy, the evidence upon which both are received being of precisely the same character. The Baconian principle of induction which has furnished us with the true scientific method, consists in collecting all the facts that have any bearing on the subject, bringing these together, arranging and classifying them so that they no longer stand out in disjointed isolation, but form one grand whole. This done, a law is inferred which shall cover the whole ground occupied by all the facts, and with which each one shall be in harmony."

From this it is clear that Dr. Sexton thinks that all observed phenomena are so many links in the chain of evidence that lead irresistibly to the belief in the existence of God. But what God? we may ask. The God of the Bible? Dr. Sexton does not say so. Indeed, he gives a definition of his deity, which precludes the possibility of the existence of the anthropomorphic God of the Bible. By God Dr. Sexton says he means "the one unconditioned, absolute, and infinite existence, whose divine wisdom planned, and whose almighty power created, the material universe and all that it contains." This definition, it will be observed, begs the whole question in dispute; for Dr. Sexton admits that Atheists and Theists are agreed that there is one infinite and eternal existence,† and the real dispute between them is as to the nature of this existence.

Dr. Sexton, however, finds himself in this position. Although professing to believe in one Infinite Being, he argues for two existence—one infinite (God) and the other finite (the material universe). The Atheist—or as I prefer to call him the "Naturalist"—is more logical. He is a Monist. He believes in one existence only, of which all phenomena are modes. In his endeavors to demonstrate the existence of an infinite and eternal God, plus nature, Dr. Sexton is confronted with difficulties at every turn. His God is everywhere; although the material universe is somewhere when according to Dr. Sexton no room exists for it, unless he argues that two distinct existences can occupy the same place at the same time. This, however, Dr. Sexton does not do; he therefore places himself in the position of one who argues for a limited material universe and an unlimited Deity at the same time, which is an obvious absurdity. Nor is this all. Dr. Sexton goes further and adopts

* *Curé Meslier*, "Bon Sens," supposed to be by Baron D'Holbach.

† *Theistic Problems*, p. 7.

the unfortunate mode of reasoning which he and other Theists attribute to Atheists. He affirms that "the material universe is conditioned and limited, and cannot therefore either in its parts or as a whole, constitute the absolute and unconditioned one." But how does he know that the material universe is limited? Has he penetrated nature's heights or fathomed her depths? Has he been able to discover the exact spot where the material universe ceases and his "unconditioned existence" begins? If not, is it not the height of presumption on Dr. Sexton's part to affirm that the material universe is conditioned and limited? "All the facts of nature with which we are familiar," says Dr. Sexton—indeed, all those of which we are capable of conceiving in matter—are interdependent, limited by and limiting each other. They constitute, in fact, what we call phenomena, a word which of itself, as every Greek scholar knows, means an appearance, and sustaining a relation to that which is substantial by underlying. Does Dr. Sexton mean that he knows of underlying phenomena, differing in substance from what he calls the material universe?

Observe what the learned doctor says on this point: "When, therefore, we think of phenomena, we are compelled by a stern necessity of the laws of thought to think of something upon which these phenomena depend and to which they owe their origin." But if we admit that there is an underlying *noumenon*—an unknown permanent something from which phenomena result—it does not follow that this unknown something is the God for whose existence Dr. Sexton contends. For all he knows to the contrary, the unknown substance may be a part of the "one unconditioned and infinite universe" which Dr. Sexton says the Atheist is bound to demonstrate. As a matter of argument the Atheist has to demonstrate nothing of the kind. So long as he can show that Dr. Sexton's God cannot be infinite—and if he can point to one place from which such a deity is admittedly absent—Dr. Sexton's Theism, from an argumentative standpoint, must fail. What Theists may have faith enough to believe concerning the existence of deity is, however, quite another matter. It is what they can prove that we have to deal with.

Dr. Sexton then proceeds to argue that "force and motion are absolutely distinct"; that "force not being in matter must be sought for in mind and in mind alone."† But what does Dr. Sexton mean by "mind"? Does he mean intelligence, the same in kind only different in degree from the intelligence of man, or any other intelligent creature? And if so, does he know of any intelligence, any mind as an entity, existing by itself, apart from organised beings? And if so, where? An "infinite mind" as the author of the "material universe" may appear reasonable enough to Dr. Sexton, but to the rationalist it is nothing less than a contradiction in terms, an absurdity and impossibility.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

CREEDS.

They build the mind a wall around,
And raise a despot's throne within.
They call the prison "holy ground,"
And all without, a waste of sin.
And thus with blinded eyes, they hold
All error safe within the gates;
While truth, with all her leaves unrolled,
Expectant, but excluded, waits.

ORTHODOXY.

If on the battle field of good and evil
The damned are many, the redeemed but few;
In the great struggle between God and Devil,
The Devil is the stronger of the two.

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. Forster will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. Keir Hardie still inveighs against the churches for turning their backs on Christ. It is Mr. Hardie's opinion that Christ did not teach his disciples to pray for some beautiful life in some problematical world beyond the grave, but to pray for the things of this life, "give us this day our daily bread," etc. Mr. Hardie forgets the text, "Great is your reward in heaven." He also forgets, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth." It won't do to reply that Christ was a vegetarian.

Mr. Keir Hardie, while he is about it, should tell us what is gained by *praying* for daily bread. *Praying* for it seems far more profitable. It often brings the bread well buttered on both sides.

Mr. Ben Tillett is like Mr. Keir Hardie; not like to like, however, but like in difference. Mr. Tillett stands up for the Church of England as "democratic"—which is a strange epithet. He says it is taking the lead in social problems. A mad world, my masters! Ben may live to be a bishop.

The Rev. Dr. Pierson is back again at Spurgeon's Tabernacle. His re-appearance led to a row. Two members of the congregation had to be ejected, and were subsequently brought before a magistrate. Dr. Pierson begged the congregation to devote themselves to the task of saving souls; if they did so, they would "make it hot for the devil in London this winter." Probably the devil is not much alarmed.

"Christianity," says the *Christian Commonwealth*, "does not seem to be doing the work which the Bible would lead us to expect. Millions of people are serving the devil, with churches and missions swarming in their midst." Our contemporary thinks there is something wrong. It fancies the Sunday-school system is "very largely a failure." Yes, and the Church system too. Preaching against "the devil" is like tickling an elephant with a feather.

Bishop Ryle, of Liverpool, is a clergyman of the good old school. He should really be taken round on exhibition. He confesses to a belief in the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. He believes that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. He also believes that "all the wonderful events related in these books did actually take place, such as the Fall, the Flood, the dispersion after the building of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the subsequent facts and miracles recorded in Exodus." This is quite refreshing. Bishop Ryle beats Mr. Gladstone. Verily, we have not found such faith—no, not in Anglo-Israel.

Mrs. Besant claims Jesus Christ as a Mahatma. A Christian journal says this is flattery and blasphemy. We think it is sheer nonsense. Poor J. C. ! the Theosophists are upon thee. This is the most unkindest cut of all. What an awful descent—from an incarnate God to a travelling trickster!

"I believe in fun," says Talmage. He also believes in everlasting hell. You are a funny man, Mr. Talmage.

The *Christian World* complains of the Socialist Mayor of St. Denis, who is alleged to have forbidden priests to accompany funeral processions in their surplices. We should call this an act of intolerance, but we have heard so many false charges against French Freethinkers that we decline to credit fresh ones without adequate proof. When the facts are disclosed it always turns out that the Catholic priests enjoy the same rights as their fellow citizens.

Evidently Freethinkers in France, so far from having things their own way, have not yet got common justice. At the Assize Court, Rheims, M. Vernouille, member of a Free-thought League, was fined 500 francs for refusing to take the oath as a jurymen in consequence of his non-belief in God. At the evening sitting he was again called upon, and again refused, and this time was fined 1,000 francs. We trust the severity of the bigoted magistrate will lead to an alteration in the law, which has been several times proposed in the Chamber of Deputies.

Commissioner Cadman, of the S. A., thinks ordinary people are not sufficiently pestered with circulars, and asked 100 firms each to employ a hundred men for the purpose. He offers to do it for 12s. 6d. a week each, by which we expect the S. A. would get a profit. That large trading concern knows more about uniting the worship of God and Mammon, than ever they did in Palestine.

Under the head of "The Booth Commission: a Challenge" the *St. James's Gazette* throws out hints about the "General" being involved in the bankruptcy of a certain printing-house. It is insinuated that Booth has advanced this house a considerable sum of money. But this cannot be true. So good a man as "General" Booth would never play ducks and drakes with trust money.

Dean Hole, in his just published *Memories*, tells how a friend in Worcestershire was visiting his parishioners, when one of them, an old woman, informed him that since they met "she'd gone through a sight o' trouble. Her sister was dead, and there wor a worse job than that; the pig died all of a sudden, but it pleased the Lord to tak' 'im, and they mun bow, they mun bow." Then the poor old lady brightened up and said, "But there's one thing, Mestur Allen, as I can say, and ought to say: the Lord's been pratty well on my side this winter for greens." Some may be surprized to hear that this woman meant to be, and was, sincerely religious.

Speaking at the annual reunion of the local Nonconformist Association, in the Town Hall, Portsmouth, the Rev. W. J. Dawson said that "there were three things which an Agnostic propaganda could not do—it could not make a missionary, could not build an orphanage, and could not make a collection." This is reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph*. On the same page we see the acknowledgment of a Hospital Sunday collection by the Portsmouth Branch of the National Secular Society. Try again, Mr. Dawson.

Since the confirmation by the Privy Council of the Lambeth verdict in the Bishop of Lincoln's case, hatred, envy, and malice have been conspicuously in evidence between the High Church (now going in more strongly than ever for ritual and the holy eucharist) and the Low Church, which declares the mass to be blasphemous and an idolatry—nothing being of efficacy in religion but the atoning blood of Jesus. As the author of the *Yahoo* wrote—

'Tis strange such hellish wrath should rise
In heavenly saints of kingdom come;
While one gang "Hocus-Pocus" cries,
The other bawls for "Fee-Faw-Fum."

The Congregationalists prayed at the Memorial Hall from eleven o'clock in the morning till five in the evening for the conversion of London. The prayers are as likely to be efficacious as the efforts of the Jesuits to hypnotise Free-thought advocates.

Lord Mayor Knill being a Catholic, Mr. Beaufoy Moore, President of the Anti-Popery Association, wrote to the Chief Commissioner of the City Police to permit two cars to follow in the wake of the Lord Mayor's show, one illustrative of the means adopted by the Church to convert heretics, the other emblematical of the triumphs of Protestantism over the tyranny of Rome. The request was, of course, refused.

At Cowpen, as elsewhere, the clerical and sectarian party opposed free education and interrupted Mr. McIntosh, who proposed it. These gentry get on the School Boards for the sake of thwarting their work and driving children into the denominational schools.

This is what the *Daily News* says of Christianity as it existed in the palmy days before heresy appeared: "The corruption was incredible. It was gross as a mountain, open, palpable. Mother Church, having all her children in obedience, no longer scrupled to throw all the proprieties to the wind, before their eyes. The sale of indulgences and of pardons went on in the very market-place. The villain with a long purse might buy himself annuities in Paradise. He had only to lay aside a certain percentage of the wages of sin to secure peace in this world, and hope for the next. Vice became its own insurer, and saved the heavy premium of repentance and remorse."

Pilgrimages to Jerusalem are to be the order of the day now the railway takes you from Jaffa to the Holy City in three hours. The Catholics are getting up a big affair, headed by the Duke of Norfolk, to take place next February. Interested French speculators are supposed to be at the bottom of these pilgrimages, the final effect of which will be to rub all the gilt off the gingerbread of Jerusalem the Golden.

Dr. Stuhlmann, formerly with Emin Pasha, has been to Uganda. He says the religious feuds which break out there remind one of mediæval times.

A Christian Evidence lecturer, speaking at St. Paul's School, Hammersmith, referred to the famous Christ passage in Josephus. Mr. Goodrich replied that the passage was a forgery, and cited the authority of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which is in the local Free Library. Thereupon the Rev. Prebendary Snowden, who was in the chair, jumped up, and declared that the passage in the *Encyclopædia* "ought to be torn out." This Snowden is chairman of the Library Committee, and Mr. Goodrich is watching over the *Encyclopædia* to see it does not suffer an act of vandalism.

A story is told of the Rev. John McNeill, that he was once called in to minister to a dying person. The old man felt it his duty to compliment the minister, and said, "Weel, sir, I may say that although your no verra eedifying yer often daevertin."

The Bishop of Lincoln, the *Globe* says, in his charge to the clergy at Spalding, said the great hindrance to religion at the present time was indifference. This he attributed in part to more positive unbelief, and in part to the attractive discoveries of natural science and the application of those discoveries. The world had also many new and attractive forms of pleasure. Really the Bishop of Lincoln is quite a philosopher. He appears to understand that the more this life is made worth living the less men care about the "hereafter." Religion lives upon human misery.

The editor of the *Modern Review*, writing on the subject of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, points out the difficulty of getting at high-class offenders. After considerable trouble and expense one clerical personage, who had charge of a "home" supported by voluntary contributions, was convicted of cruelty to children, the details of which are sickening to read, and a fine of £400 was thought a sufficient punishment.

The Rev. A. Mitchell, vicar of Sheriff Hales, Newport, Salop, has been accused in a public meeting of making remarks from the pulpit that were unjust, uncharitable, and untrue, and has been called upon to withdraw in the pulpit his offensive remarks.

The Jews have been cruelly persecuted at Jassy, Moldavia, being evicted wholesale. The religious animosity and race intolerance, which is so strongly exhibited in their own sacred books, follows them everywhere like a curse.

The Rev. W. Hubbard, Congregational pastor of Ipswich, has spoken out well in favor of Sunday opening of public libraries; but his remarks show he expects to thereby incur the reprobation of the rigidly righteous.

The Rev. S. Bott, vicar of St. Jude's, Kensal-green, lives on the sunny side of the hedge. His vicarage is the finest house in the immediate neighborhood. No wonder he regrets that "the subscriptions from the congregation show a decrease." "Fancy," the vicar exclaims, "fancy men, in good work, with small families, giving sixpence!" If this means sixpence a week, as we presume, the Rev. S. Bott is a man of great expectations. Sixpence a week from all the working-men in England would be a nice plum for the Church—something like £20,000,000 a year. Parson Bott, as William Cobbett would say, has great powers of face.

Under the heading "A New Religious Inquisition" the *Newcastle Leader* tells of the house-to-house visitation established at Bradford by the Rev. T. Law. Everybody is asked if they go to church, and if they send their children to Sunday-school, etc. The number who told them to mind their own business is not recorded.

A crop of pious yarns is springing up in the wake of the Thirsk catastrophe. Here is one of the tallest. A young gentleman of Darlington, well-educated, very sceptical, and almost an Atheist, was going to travel by the doomed train. Something warned him not to go. He picked up a volume of Carlyle's *Frederick*, and lighted upon a passage comparing life to a journey in a train. Then the warning grew stronger, and he went to bed. Next day he heard of the accident, and now he is a changed man, believing in the providence of God.

Who is this Darlington young man? We are not told. Whom did he tell the tale to? Again we are not told. He is anonymous, and so is the recipient of his confidence. That is the usual characteristic of such fables. At the very utmost you read of Mr. Dash, living in Dash-street, Dash town; until you are tempted to exclaim "Dash it!"

By the way, if this Darlington young gentleman is anything but a pious fancy, he must have a good conceit of himself to believe that Providence gave him a warning, and let all the other people go to their fate. The impudent vanity of the supposition is prodigious.

More nonsense about this Thirsk disaster appears in that pious Tory organ, the *Newcastle Journal*. After referring to the knocking-about of the Pullman car it says: "Yet with an intervention of Providence—for it could have been nothing else—not one of its occupants sustained any serious injury." This is nearly as good as the remark of the French lady, that God would think twice before damning a person of quality. Providence, it appears, looked after the Pullman car, which was occupied by the wealthier passengers. At the same time Providence allowed a poor child to be roasted to death under the engine. Bah! It is enough to make a sensible man sick.

W. R. Bradlaugh, the evangelist, has been to Chatham. Before leaving he made some remarks, which are reported in the local *Standard*, on Mr. Foote's recent lecture there on "After Death—What?" This person was good enough to say that Mr. Foote got the Freethinkers' money at Chatham, and that was all he wanted. After this brilliant witticism, it is surprising to find him declaring he would not meet Mr. Foote on a public platform because "it is not logic but wit that tells" there. He offers, however, to debate with Mr. Foote through the columns of the *Freethinker*. Very likely! But we are not sure that his letters would be very good copy. The last communication we received from W. R. Bradlaugh was inserted in the *Freethinker*. It was a lawyer's letter, threatening us with a libel action if we did not pay him three guineas and his solicitor's costs. We did not pay; we invited him to come on; and he thought discretion the better part of valor. He prefers to vapor at a distance.

Mr. Percy Fitzgerald tells, without giving names, a Gladstone anecdote in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. At a breakfast party the statesman solemnly told a Catholic priest he had seen in Italy a table of indulgences which offered a remission of a thousand years for payment of a franc. "What do you say to that?" "What do I say?" said the *padre* gaily; "why, I say it was dirt cheap! What more would you want for your money?" The roar of laughter at this unexpected sally may be imagined. But the comic contrast was the face of the great man, who still continued solemn. For him it was too serious a thing for jesting.

The *Daily News* has had some correspondence on "Malapropisms." Several old friends turn up from our profane joke column. Thus we have the timid housemaid who answered the bishops inquiry as to who posted the letters, "The Lord, my boy"; the person who put local demon for *locum tenens*, and the other who spoke of the Reversed Version of the Bible.

Many instances might have been supplied of scriptural blunders, as of the curate who said not a tit or a jottle should pass away, the one who said Christ gave sight to the duff and hearing to the dem, and he who declared that immediately the cock wept, Peter went out and crew bitterly. Such errors as speaking of Mount Calvary and the book of Revelations, are of constant occurrence.

One of the best misreadings of scripture was that uttered by a candidate for an episcopal seat. "He that desireth the

office of a bishop desireth a good thing." Most of them desire to stick to it as long as possible. Over half a dozen of our bishops are absolutely incapacitated for work from old age and infirmity, but they hold on to the salaries till the Lord himself deems it time to remove them.

Lady Burton is a good Catholic, and makes out that her wandering husband died in the true faith. She, however, tells a story of him which hardly fits in with his supposed final orthodoxy. On board a Nile steamer he was introduced to a Catholic archbishop. Referring to some apes running up the rigging, the prelate said, "There are some of your ancestors." Sir Richard twirled his moustache, and said, with his slow drawl: "Well, my lord, I at least have made a little progress; but what about your lordship, who is descended from the angels?"

A Vienna lad of eighteen, named Wittman, a carpenter's apprentice, murdered his master's daughter Rosa, a girl of sixteen. His intention was to commit suicide afterwards, but he explains that he felt afraid to do so because he had not been to confession since he committed the crime. What a splendid tribute to the moral value of religion—especially the Catholic species!

Buck Wilkerson, a mulatto, who shot his wife, eloped with his stepdaughter, and killed one of his pursuers, was hanged at Belton, Texas. He ascended the gallows with a firm step, singing, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." We do not envy Jesus his predilections.

Black Death has followed cholera in Turkestan. At Askabad it killed 1,303 persons in six days. This is the plague which decimated Europe in the Middle Ages, when people relied on prayer to the saints instead of sanitation.

In Oaxaco, one of the southern provinces of Mexico, fifty persons have lost their lives through the river Solda overflowing its banks, and hundreds have been rendered homeless. The Lord is always giving evidence of his loving kindness.

A telegram from Columbia, South Carolina, reports: "The house of Josh Matthews, near Claremont, Sumpter County, was burned yesterday with his four little children, who were locked in the dwelling while the father and mother attended a religious service."

Dr. Parker is a good hand at advertising himself. Every now and then he sends a mad communication to the papers. People who read it cannot make head or tail of it. They ask each other what on earth it means. Nobody knows. But what does that matter? Dr. Parker gets talked about, and that is what he wants.

The latest effusion of the City Temple oracle is a note in the *Idler* on smoking. Dr. Parker calls it "an invention of the devil." He says it is "the pastime of perdition." Nay, he condemns it as "atheistical, agnostical, and infinitely detestable."

It is a growing passion among the sky-pilots to call everything they dislike "atheistical." Only last week we took Canon Wilberforce to task for putting vivisection to the credit of "materialism." Dr. Parker is simply clowning. He knows very well that Tennyson was an inveterate smoker; Carlyle also smoked like a furnace; and both of them wrote against Atheism.

Smoking may be a very bad habit, but Dr. Parker's arguments against it are only worthy of a gospel-shop, where reasoning is not expected. He remarks, with an air of triumph, that "no dog smokes." True, and no dog eats celery or preaches sermons. "No intelligent person," says Parker, "ever put a cigar into his mouth." We leave him to settle that with Hugh Price Hughes.

This is "General" Booth's eulogy of himself, says *Tit-Bits*: "I have been to the looking-glass again and again; I have scanned my features and tried to notice my bearing, and I think that my personal appearance, my demeanor, and my conversation generally, are eminently calculated to create confidence." This is worthy of Uriah Heap, Mr. Pecksniff, and Mr. Micawber rolled into one.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Nov. 13, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.; at 11.15, "Mr. Chamberlain's Labor Program"; at 7, "Was Shakespeare a Christian?"

Thursday, Nov. 17, Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington; at 8, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

Nov. 20, Hall of Science; 27, Manchester.

Dec. 1, Islington; 4, Grimsby; 11 and 18, Hall of Science.

January 1, Birmingham; 8, Leicester; 15 and 22, Hall of Science; 29, Bristol.

February 5, Hull.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Nov. 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield; 27, Hall of Science, London. Dec. 4, Hall of Science; 11, Manchester; 18, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

R. WALLIS.—A promise is not a prophecy. Consult a dictionary.

R. E. HOLDING.—Thanks. See paragraph.

A. CROSS.—Mr. Foote would have replied by letter, but you omitted to give your address. He did not know of the incident until you apprised him of it. Certainly he will look into the matter. Thanks for your good wishes.

M. HANCOCK.—Thanks for cuttings.

ANONYMOUS correspondents are once more warned that their letters cannot be answered. This rule is absolute.

D. HUGHES.—Glad to hear that Mr. Stanley Jones gave great satisfaction at Swansea. There should be a good active Branch in the town.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges—H. M. Ridgway, 5s.

S. GOLDSTEIN.—The Amazon is far larger than the Nile. The Mississippi is the longest.

YOUNG RECRUIT.—We are obliged. See paragraph.

O. JENSEN.—Noticed in "Acid Drops."

J. WATSON.—Will use if possible.

J. BOWEY.—Sale's *Koran* can be bought almost anywhere for two or three shillings. The *Rig Veda* is a very expensive book. The part translation in "Sacred Books of the East" is issued at 12s. 6d. per volume.

W. SIMONS.—In our next.

B. T. MUNTIN.—We hope we have your name properly. Thanks for the hint, though it was needless. See paragraph re Mr. Goodrich.

J. GRAHAM (Wigan).—Mr. Foote will offer you a date as soon as possible.

J. BANNER.—Not without merit, but the versification is defective.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.—Shall appear.

T. T. P. (Bucharest).—Thanks for the reference. We will see to the matter.

J. B. GRUTE.—Mr. Foote does not publish his lectures. Sorry to hear that the death of your wife prevented you from hearing him at Bristol. He hopes to visit Plymouth in February or March.

S. M. ROTH.—We are not responsible for statements that advertisers make about their own wares. If you furnish us with a case of *fraud*, it will be quite another matter. Advertising without puffing is rare nowadays. You shouldn't read advertisements as literature. On the other hand, if you like to advertise pills to stop earthquakes, we shall give you space at the usual rate.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND:—A. Marsh, per G. J. Holyoake (second subscription), £5; Young Recruit, 2s. 6d.; W. Lamb, 5s.; J. Crabtree, 2s. 6d.; G. W. B., 1s. 3d.

C. W. HECKETHORN.—We have read the enclosures with some pleasure and approval. We cannot help remarking, however, that you are still in the metaphysical stage—the ghost of the theological stage. Having read all the metaphysical books extant, that are considered of any value, we have come to the conclusion that the writers were spinners of intellectual cobwebs; although, we cheerfully admit, they said many true and beautiful things by the way. Poets, after all, beat the metaphysicians hollow. There is more psychology in Shakespeare than in all the metaphysical tribe.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S SPECIAL FUND.—We have received:—J. Burch, 2s. 6d.; S. Holmes, £1.; D. Woodhouse, £1 1s.

B. INGHAM.—Always pleased to see your handwriting.

S. W. WALKER.—It is to be hoped that the Newcastle Freethinkers will give a hearty support to the Branch during the winter.

C. E.—We were never able to admire Tennyson's lines—
"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

It involves a misuse of the word "faith." The "one" referred to in the other passage is probably Henry Hallam.

JOSEPHUS.—Mr. Forder can supply copies of the debate between Messrs. Cohen and Hotherington.—You must be

very soft to think Mr. Foote is going to pay half the cost of a hall and advertising out of his own pocket, and let all the proceeds of a debate go to a local charity. It is an idiotic proposal, and only made to avoid discussion. That is always the object of those who dictate the conditions beforehand. As for the black champion spoiling Mr. Foote's audiences by following him about, you may take our word for it that Mr. Foote is quite easy on that score. A good advertisement does no man an injury; quite the reverse.—By the way, your black friend, who is going to "dog Mr. Foote's steps" gave out at South Shields that Mr. Foote was following *him*. Of course he knew it was a falsehood. Mr. Foote's engagements are made independently of black or white Christians, and generally announced a long while beforehand in the *Freethinker*.

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—Froidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Flaming Sword—Secular Thought—Modern Thought—Twentieth Century—Fur Unsere Jugend—Freethinker's Magazine—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—Clarion—Church Reformer—Ironclad Age—Independent Pulpit—La Vérité Philosophique—Echo—Watts's Literary Guide—Freedom—Cosmopolitan—Star—Boston Evening Record—St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat—Rocheater Standard—Reading Observer—Morpeth Herald—Freethought Messenger—Cheltenham Examiner—Newcastle Leader.

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.

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.

TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

You are hereby appealed to on behalf of the Society's funds. During the past year or two they have been heavily drained by the expenses of fresh propaganda and increased organisation. The old income of the Society is not equal to the new scale of work; and we must either diminish our expenditure, and with it our successful activity, or obtain a larger measure of financial support. Being naturally loth to let the work suffer, the Executive has desired me to issue this appeal, which it is hoped will elicit a generous response. We wish to raise £200 immediately, so that we may enter upon the winter campaign with energy and assurance. Any subscription you may kindly forward will be acknowledged according to your directions, in the *Freethought* journals; and also, if requested, by post.

Yours very truly,

G. W. FOOTE,

October, 1892.

President.

P.S.—Subscriptions can be forwarded to me, at 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C.; to Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the treasurer, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E.; to Mr. R. Forder, hon. secretary; or to Miss E. M. Vance, assistant secretary, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE N.S.S.

SPECIAL FUND.—S. Stalder, 10s.; T. Noble, 1s.; John and James, £1; Miss Sergeant, 2s.; S. J. Peterson, 9s. 6d.; M. Christopher, 2s.; D. Young, 2s. 6d.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—M. Christopher, 1s.; Alpha (2nd sub) 1s. I also beg to acknowledge useful box of cast-off clothing, boots and books from "Winter."

E. M. VANCE, Assistant-Sec.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Since the winter season opened the circulation of the *Freethinker* has been steadily improving. The improvement is not very rapid, but it is encouraging. If our friends will continue to put pressure on newsagents in the ways we have frequently indicated the improvement will certainly increase. It is the prejudice and bigotry of the trade that is our chief hindrance. If bare justice were done to the *Freethinker*, its circulation would soon double or even treble. Thousands of subscribers are lost to us by the difficulty of obtaining the paper. Wherever it has a chance it finds a ready sale.

We beg very earnestly to press the National Secular Society's Special Fund upon the attention of well-to-do Freethinkers. There is now a most excellent machinery for organisation and propaganda, and the work throughout the country would be immensely furthered if the central Executive had greater means at its command. Money has always been forthcoming for a good fight, but we cannot always be engaged in life-or-death struggles. Secularists must learn to support their cause liberally in more prosaic conditions. Earnest men and women in the party are ready to do any amount of work if financial help to defray unavoidable expenses is accorded by those who are able to give it. Many are able, and we hope they also have the will.

Camberwell Secular Hall was crowded on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote had a most enthusiastic reception. Mr. Angus Thomas, who presided, made an excellent appeal on behalf of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, the collection for which realised £2 11s. 4d.—which, with 11s. 4d. collected in the morning, makes £3 2s. 8d. altogether for a deserving object. A good many tickets were sold for the London Freethinkers' Ball on Wednesday, November 30. If other London Branches will do their duty in this respect, we shall have a fine gathering at the Hall of Science on that evening, and a substantial surplus for the London Secular Federation.

The Camberwell Branch holds a Dramatic Class on Monday evenings at 8.30. Budding genius is warmly invited. The Science Classes, conducted by Mr. Coppock (a most able and efficient teacher) are now open for the winter season, and there is room for more pupils.

Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (Nov. 13) and next Sunday. His morning subject to-day is "Mr. Chamberlain's Labor Program"—admission free. His evening lecture is on the question "Was Shakespeare a Christian?" The lecture will be illustrated by extensive references to the poet's writings. It should be attractive to Christians as well as to Freethinkers.

On Sunday last, a meeting of local Freethinkers was held at the residence of Mr. Arthur Guest, Milner Lodge, Waterloo Terrace, Upper-street, Islington, for the purpose of considering the advisability of forming a Branch of the N.S.S. Among those present, were several old and valued workers in the cause; and the secretary of the London Secular Federation was in attendance. Mr. Harry Baker was in the chair, and explained the objects of the meeting; and after some discussion and consideration of details, it was decided that (subject to the approval of the Executive) an organisation be formed to be called the Islington Branch of the N.S.S. Mr. Arthur Guest was elected secretary and treasurer *pro tem*; and was deputed to attend the Executive for the purpose of obtaining sanction from that body for the new undertaking. Thirteen gentlemen were enrolled as members, and it was agreed to support, as far as possible, the L.S.F. in the work of Free Lectures which have been arranged at Wellington Hall.

Local Freethinkers are informed that another meeting will be held on Sunday at 3.30, at Milner Lodge, Islington, and it is hoped to secure a good attendance.

Freethinkers in the neighborhood of Islington should try to bring Christians to the course of Free Lectures at Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street. Mr. Foote opens the course next Thursday evening (Nov. 17), and closes it on Dec. 8. The two intervening lectures are to be delivered by Mr. Touzeau Parris and Mrs. Thornton Smith.

The Finsbury Park Branch has had a highly successful season. From March to October sixty-five outdoor lectures have been delivered and a number of new members made. The secretary, Mr. H. Clifton, has been indefatigable in working for the Branch, and Miss Robins deserves special mention for her ever-ready assistance.

The Leyton Branch will have a social gathering on Thursday evening, November 17, at the Workmen's Institute, High-street, Walthamstow. The tickets are sixpence each, or reserved seats one shilling. The program of the entertainment looks attractive anyhow. No doubt there will be a large assembly.

The London Hall of Science library will be closed for a month for recataloguing. All who have books out should return them immediately.

Mr. George Standing has issued, at sixpence, large sized cards, with tasteful ornamental borders, enclosing the motto from Thomas Paine, "The world is my country, mankind my brethren, and to do good is my religion." The cards are handsomely got-up, and suitable for framing for the Secular Society or the home.

The Newcastle Branch was unable to bring about the projected debate on Spiritualism between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. Morse. A Christian gentleman has, however, promised to lecture for the Branch on Sunday, Nov. 27. Discussion will be allowed, of course, and there should be a large attendance of members and friends. We should also be glad to hear of a better attendance on ordinary Sunday evenings. The presence of members is necessary to encourage the committee in their labors.

Colonel Ingersoll has delivered a new and brilliant oration on Voltaire. It occupied two hours and a half, and was listened to by six thousand people. We have reprinted it from an American paper, word for word, with all the punctuations of laughter and applause. The pamphlet is now ready for sale, price threepence. It should have a wide circulation in England.

The election of George Meredith as president of the Society of Authors in place of the late Lord Tennyson, has given general satisfaction in the world of letters.

A Catholic doctor, writing to the *Christian World*, says "my experience leads me to believe that religious dogmas have very little to do with moral conduct." "Some of my best and noblest friends," he adds, "are Agnostics, if not actually Atheists."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly Executive meeting, held at the Hall of Science Nov. 1, the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. R. O. Smith, G. Standing, Thornton Smith, E. Truelove, J. M. Wheeler, W. H. Reynolds, J. E. Brumage, G. J. Warren, C. J. Hunt, E. Bate, H. Courtney, J. Potter, T. Gorniot, J. Samson, W. Heard, B. Wherle, W. Heaford, R. Killick, and E. M. Vance, sec.

Minutes of previous meeting and minutes of Organisation Committee read and confirmed. The secretary read a letter from the Finsbury Branch objecting, in consequence of the proximity, to the formation of a Branch at the Hall of Science, and it was resolved to note the objection.

A letter, previously published, from Mr. J. F. Haines to the Council, was also read and ordered to be entered on the minutes; and the resignation of Mr. J. Harrison Ellis as vice-president was accepted with regret.

An application to dissolve the Ball's Pond Branch was considered and granted.

The President reported, as the result of two meetings of the West Ham Branch, that the resolution of Sept. 18 had been rescinded, and a resolution was passed according support to the Branch.

Other matters were considered and business remitted to the Organisation Committee, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, Assiat. Sec.

A FREETHINKER'S FUNERAL.

LAST week we published an obituary notice of Mr. W. Marshall, of Brighton, with a brief report of the addresses by the Rev. Alfred Hood and Mr. G. J. Holyoake. Mr. Holyoake has kindly furnished us with a fuller report of these addresses, which we have pleasure in presenting to our readers.

MR. HOOD'S ADDRESS.

We have met to pay respect and honor to one now passed away, and whose life we knew to be all-worthy. Life to all is a mystery; in our entrance into it and in our exit it is mysterious, and throughout its course a scene of labor and turmoil; yet there cometh a time when the laborer hath rest. Our friend's life was passed in simplicity, honor, and uprightness of purpose. So many temptations beset each in this life that honor is due to those who have lived their lives in an honorable and consistent manner, not only to benefit themselves, but to help all with whom they live and come in contact to do their duty. Our friend's religious opinions and my own were unlike in many respects and alike in others; for religion is now passing through various stages. Religion passes through three stages. In the first, man sought to serve God by gifts and sacrifices; the second formulated cults, or cliques of thought; the third stage formulated creeds. Herbert Spencer says at one time men were unanimous in thought because they were alike ignorant. A time is coming when men will be unanimous in thought through wisdom and knowledge, their creed being love and uprightness. Religion will then be the greatest benefactor to all men, and humanity be wise in this one creed. To our friend, character was more than creed; and towards this development of religion we men and women now living must do our duty, and in our turn help forward the principles of love and truth.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S ADDRESS.

Some words of honor and regard are due to the memory of our lost friend. I have known few men in whom zeal and judgment were so wisely combined. His convictions were not held as ornaments of opinion as most men hold conviction. With Mr. Marshall conviction meant a duty to be performed, and he was not deterred by any consequence or inconvenience in performing it. Indeed, it seemed to me that the pleasure of furthering what he thought right rendered him insensible to inconvenience, and that he would have suffered in his own esteem had he neglected to do what he could in promoting the success of what he believed to be just principle. In Edinburgh the Rev. Mr. Cranbrook had no more assiduous and friendly helper than he. In the same spirit he attended the Rev. Alfred Hood's services in Brighton because he thought he found there the widest freedom for promoting human progress. In the Co-operative Stores we had none more wise, more consistent and persistent supporters than Mr. and Mrs. Marshall. They understood the French saying that everyone present at a public or business meeting "assists" at it. A great English poet has expressed the same idea in his famous line, "They also serve who only stand and wait." In the early days of a rising cause the man who makes one of a crowd at the door contributes to the public knowledge and to outside interest in questions of neighborly and common advantage. Mr. Marshall was always in the front if a principle needed to be vindicated, and he was content to be in the crowd if others would go forward. Anyhow, he was at hand and could always be counted upon. Once convinced that a question was useful and ought to be advanced, he stood by it, he never distrusted, and he never deserted it. We shall see his tall, picturesque form no more, but his example and his trusty comradeship will not soon die out of our memory. He trusted in truth; it was his pride in his life and his peace in death, and will be his justification at any tribunal he may find hereafter, where good faith, good intent, and sincerity are respected. We may say to the visitor at his grave—

Honest men you seldom meet—
Here lies one beneath your feet;
Let it to the world be known
You are one who reads this stone.

THE CLERICAL MIND.

DR. PIERSON is installed in his comfortable berth at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and has given his congregation and (through the press) the public a sample of his method of thought. In his inaugural sermon on Sunday last he repudiated rhetoric, logic, poetry, and philosophy, saying he would "rather drop dead" there and then than preach with "any dependence" on these necessities of any public speaker who would be worth hearing. Note, he did not scorn sensationalism—he could hardly do so in the sentence which was such a glaring example of it. In parenthesis—not but that he would find it hard to beat one utterance of his predecessor which I heard on the occasion of my only visit to the Tabernacle. After giving his version of the gospel, Mr. Spurgeon said, "If that is not the gospel, I am a damned man." That was a Tabernacle oath. Rendered into London vernacular, it would be, "I'm damned if that ain't the gospel."

That Dr. Pierson holds logic in contempt he need hardly tell us—his language abundantly displays the fact. Does he also flout veracity when he says he does not place *any* dependence on rhetoric? Will he solemnly declare that he never reconstructs a sentence in his notes; never selects one expression rather than another because of its euphony or in view of effect? He believed, he said, that he should enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost, yet he "depended on the prayers" of his flock to make his ministry a blessing, and their wants would guide him in the message which he would preach. Where, I would ask, does the Holy Ghost come in if he (she or it) does not direct the message; its nature, on the contrary, depending on the tastes of the congregation and its blessing on their prayers? I don't impugn his worldly wisdom in preaching to the gallery.

He "supposed there had been more of the spirit of prayer in that great congregation during the last thirty years than in any other congregation on earth" (shade of Barnum!) "and that there had been more of the Gospel of Christ preached in its purity there than within the four walls of any other building in the United Kingdom." This was perhaps a salve thrown to any who may have been hurt by the doctor's covert fling at the late pastor in his declaration of independence of rhetoric, poetry, and so on. With regard, however, to the "spirit of prayer" which the new pastor says the Tabernacle folk possessed in such a special degree, I should like to ascertain if this spirit has been maintained in its over-proof condition since the death of the man whose expected recovery through the instrumentality of prayer was to make such a mighty boom in the practice of that function. It is of no consequence, we may take it, for Dr. Pierson is "assured that the whole of the Godhead is behind them," so they are sure to get pushed on. Some pastorates, perhaps, have only two-thirds—some, mayhap, but one-third or triple-bodied God at their back, while the Tabernacle has all there is to have—the whole—Jehovah, Son, and Company.

Here let me beg those who may read this not to send Mr. Pierson a copy of this number of *Freethinker*, for one of the judgments which he has in reserve may be meted upon me for my criticism. Let me explain. At Mr. Pierson's introduction to a prayer-meeting, a stickler for baptism by immersion, who doubted the former's orthodoxy, created an uproar, and was hauled out by the police. The offended Pierson subsequently warned him, and many others who might be tempted to oppose his enjoyment of his situation and its plump salary, of what might befall them, by relating that on a similar occasion in America, a man who had offended after the manner of the ejected one, suddenly fell dead. Not that the worthy doctor intended this to apply to "anything connected with the Tabernacle." Oh, dear no; "God forbid that he should do so." Still there was the fact for them to consider and tremble over. However, "nobody seemed one penny the worse," and I believe the disturber is still alive.

At that prayer-meeting Dr. Pierson told the people "he had come amongst them in fulfilment of a divine commission. Whatsoever the Lord said to him he would declare, *whether for good or evil*; and he trusted that what he so declared would be received meekly and in faith." What impudence and arrogance! The other and unsuccessful candidate for the post no doubt on his part believes *he* has a divine commission for it, and under these circumstances who could decide which is the Lord's elect? And what sort of men and women must they be who accept "meekly" everything a man says

on the strength of his bare word that he has it straight from God?

For Dr. Pierson's sake, should he chance on this article, I will add that his mind is not unique: intolerance, illogicality, and immodesty are marks of the species of the mind clerical. Only the other day Mr. Talmage cursed (in anticipation) with paralysis the person who might dare to do a certain act of which Talmage disapproved. What I marvel at is that, in this end of the nineteenth century, people can be found to bow and cringe before such unblushing humbugs.

A. GUEST.

A REMARKABLE DREAM.

DEAR SIR,—I indite you a letter in verse,
But don't think it rhyme without reason,
For I mean in my letter a dream to rehearse,
Which occurred in the Gooseberry season.
Methought that some Jesuit attended the place
Where you gave a most able oration;
And for nearly an hour stared you full in the face,
Whilst you lectured on Hell and Damnation.
His eyes were so wild, and his glance was so fixed,
That a spell you appeared to be under.
The chairman observed you became rather mixed,
And the audience sat gaping in wonder.
All your Freethought opinions seemed suddenly fled—
You no longer the Lord did assail,
But snuffled as though you'd a cold in the head,
Saying, "Friends, Jonah swallowed the whale."
Then you further declared the rib story was true
(As true as the gospel, you stated).
Mr. Wheeler was present and looked rather blue,
Whilst he whispered, "Good God! he's elated."
But still you went on, never caring a jot;
Said the plagues you believed all the seven;
Then, suddenly weeping, cried out "Good old Lot!
I hope I may meet you in heaven."
The hearers looked scared, and were rising to go
When you came to a brief peroration—
Exclaiming, "I'm off, friends, to kiss the Pope's toe,
And you go your ways to damnation."

Now my dream I'll explain: A strange lecture I read,
Which a lady well known did deliver.
Now this and some pork, that I ate going to bed,
Had affected my brain, I consider.
For I read that the Jesuits occult power possessed,
And attended the halls of Truthseekers,
Where they sat unbeknown and as Freethinkers dressed,
Hypnotised all the dangerous speakers;
They made them believe whatsoever they willed
By aid of black magic and scheming.
With this pack of nonsense my mind was so filled,
That I guess it accounts for the dreaming.

SAM SODDY.

The Methodist chapel at Britannia, Bacup, has been consumed by fire from the Lord. The worst for the trustees is they are insufficiently insured.

The *Flaming Sword*, the organ of the Koreschans, who hold that we live on the inside of a concave globe, finds that the moon has round tires, and adduces Isaiah iii. 18 in support. That passage, however, only alludes to feminine ornaments, of which, in the East, the moon has always been a characteristic one.

A clergyman at Cambridge preached a sermon, which one of his auditors commended. "Yes," said the gentleman to whom it was mentioned, "it was a good sermon, but he stole it." This was told to the preacher. He resented it, and called on the gentleman to retract what he had said. "I am not," replied the aggressor, "very apt to retract my words but in this instance I will. I said you had stolen the sermon; I find I was wrong; for on returning home, and referring to the book whence I thought it was taken, I found it there."

"There is nothing about an infidel," says Sam Jones "but his mouth, and when I meet one I wash his mouth and then I have him washed." Sam Jones is an American revivalist, who addresses big audiences and makes a good living at the business. Christianity is running to seed in the land of the Stars and Stripes.

Sam Jones says there is "some sense in Bob Ingersoll." We condole with the Colonel in his affliction.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. A. B. Moss has published through Watts and Co. a neat volume entitled *Christianity and Evolution*, with a brief, pregnant Introduction by Mr. J. M. Wheeler. This is decidedly the best of Mr. Moss's productions. It is painstaking, lucid, and on the whole accurate; though leaving a little too much, perhaps, on sceptical or semi-sceptical authorities. Dr. Lamson, for instance, is almost exclusively relied upon in the chapter on the Evolution of the Christian Trinity. Now Dr. Lamson is bent on proving the orthodoxy of Unitarianism. There is a great deal to be said on the Trinitarian side; indeed it has been said, and Mr. Moss may find it in Waterland, Burton, etc. For the rest, we may confidently recommend Mr. Moss's new volume to the young Freethought student; it gives an excellent bird's-eye view of the case against Christian supernaturalism.

Prof. Huxley appears, we think for the first time, as a poet in the *Nineteenth Century*, where he joins others in celebrating Tennyson. Two lines are at least worthy of preservation:

The thought-worn chieftains of the mind,
Headservants of the human kind.

Sir F. Pollock, who was personally acquainted with Renan, eulogises him in the *Nineteenth Century* no less as a talker than a writer. He esteems him essentially "an humanist," nearer to a Greek philosopher than any one else. Gabriel Monod, in the *Contemporary Review*, writes of him from the Liberal Protestant standpoint, but regards him as "one of the greatest writers of all time." As a set-off, R. Holt Hutton criticises severely Renan's attitude towards Christianity in the *National Review*. He holds that, in seeking to reduce Christianity to mere morality and human sentiment, Renan was compelled to eliminate its very essence, which is and has been supernaturalism.

The Youth of Frederick the Great, by E. Lavissee, of which a translation by S. L. Simeon has been published by Bentley, shows that the freethinking monarch and friend of Voltaire had to undergo a harsh discipline, in which Bible, prayers, and conformity to the will of God were prominent features.

CHRISTIAN EPITAPH.

THE following curious epitaph is copied from a tombstone in the churchyard of Crayford, Kent:—

Here lieth the body of Peter Isnell (30 years clerk of this parish.) He lived a pious and mirthful man, and died on his way to church to assist at a wedding, on the 31st day of March, 1811.

Aged 70 years.

The inhabitants of Crayford have raised this stone to his cheerful memory, and as a tribute to his long and faithful services.

The life of this clerk was just three score and ten,
Nearly half of which time he had sung out Amen!
In his youth he was married, like other young men,
But his wife died one day, so he chaunted Amen!
A second he took—she departed—what then?
He married and buried a third with Amen!
Thus his joys and his sorrows were treble; but then
His voice was deep bass as he sung out Amen!
On the horn he could blow as well as most men;
So his horn was exalted in blowing Amen!
But he lost all his wind after three score and ten,
And here with three wives he waits till again
The trumpet shall rouse him to sing out Amen!

Government, like marriage, is a divine, but not a Christian institution. Like marriage, all are entitled to share its blessings. It belongs as much to the infidel and the Atheist as to the Christian. Government has nothing to do with religion any more than it has to do with Oddfellowship or Freemasonry. It simply secures to all their natural rights, or rather, the free exercise of those rights. The government knows, or at least should know, neither Jew nor Christian, but only citizens. The ideal human government would neither oppose nor foster any religion, but simply let such matters alone as entirely outside its sphere.—*American "Sentinel."*

BIBLICAL ODDS AND ENDS.

"Search ye the Scriptures."

According to Mark xvi. 19, Jesus "was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God." This expression need not surprise us when we know God is credited with a nose (Is. xlv. 5), feet (Ezek. iii. 7), and hair (Dan. vii. 9), besides bowels (Jer. iv. 19) and back parts (Exod. xxxiii. 23). These are all said to be metaphorical. But we want to know how, even metaphorically, one person of the Infinite God can be supposed to have sat at the right hand of another person of the same infinite being. If God is everywhere, what is the difference between his right hand and his left?

Was the spirit which led Jesus to be tempted of the Devil (Matt. iv. 1) the Holy Ghost (see James i. 13)? When tempted, why did he not cast the Devil into a pig and drown him, as he did with the devils at Gadara? This would have put an end to the sky-pilot's bogey.

When Jesus said, "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (Luke xi. 19) he virtually admitted that others did miracles beside himself, and that exorcising devils was as common a profession as casting out worms, if not indeed the same.

What impresses in the sayings of Jesus is his astounding cheek. "A greater than Solomon is here" said of himself this pattern of humility (Matt. xii. 42). He appears to cast slurs on the prophets in the declaration, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers" (John x. 8). The real meaning of such passages are brought out by those others in which he says he is the bread of life, and "whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (John vi. 48, 54). No sane men ever uttered such nonsense as this. Such phrases were ascribed to their deity by inventive priests, who administered the sacrament in the old rites of sun-worship.

One of the cleverest feats performed by the Bible heroes must have been the catching of three hundred foxes by Samson and putting firebrands between their tails (Judges xv.) Perhaps, however, they stood to be caught, like the thousand Philistines who were killed with the jawbone of an ass.

MORDECAI MUMPS.

JOHNNY'S OPINION.

Who does not remember the blood-curdling picture in the old Sunday-school books, where the two she bears were devouring the hapless children who had pointed out the excelsior path to Elisha of the high forehead? A few days ago, a bright little boy of four, who, though most carefully guarded, sometimes picks up phrases which are the last his parents would have him hear, saw a company of Salvationists pass him with their beating of drums and their odd attire. He hailed them from the door-steps with, "Pound it harder, Aunt Thump-Thump! Step higher, Uncle Big hat," etc. His grandmother from the country heard, and was horrified. She at once proceeded to teach him a lesson in reverence. "Don't you know, Johnny," she said, "that those people are working for the Lord, just as the prophets used to do in old times. It is wicked to make fun of them. Once some children called out as the prophet Elisha passed: 'Go up, thou bald head!' and God sent two she bears out of the woods, and they ate them all up!" Johnny's eyes grew big, and, bursting into tears, he chilled the pious expectations of his anxious teacher by exclaiming between his sobs: "I—think—it—was—a—d—shame!"

In the Sunday-school.—Teacher—"What did Pharaoh do?" Small Boy (impetuously)—"I know. It busted pa all to sticks last night. I heard him tell Mr. Jones so."

"Willie," said his mother, "when you went to bed last night did you pray that it would be nice and clear to-day?" "Yes," said Willie, "but I've bet my black-handled knife 'gainst Bobby Stapleford's big kite that it's goin to rain."

A preacher, being requested to perform the last sad offices for a young woman at the point of death, pressed her to believe that flesh and blood could not enter the kingdom of heaven. "I am safe," said she; "I am nothing but skin and bone."

MARTIN LUTHER.

Luther is held up as the apostle of freedom and toleration. He had an intense prejudice against the Jews. He said, "In the first place, I would burn every synagogue or school of theirs, and invite Christians to help the flames by throwing in pitch, brimstone and hell-fire if possible. Next I would raze their houses to the ground; to sleep under a shed or stable is good enough for them. I would likewise take away from them their books, prayer-books, and Talmudist writings, and all their Bibles; not a leaf must be left to them. So long as they are with us, or on our soil, they must not be allowed to thank God or pray. They must not mention God's name in the presence of a Christian. But it is better to hunt them out like mad dogs that we may not partake of their sins and damnation." Luther's works, Erlangen edition, xxxii. p. 234, 538, 252, 253 and 259. He said: "We should not suffer the Jews among us; we ought not to eat or drink with them" (Idem). On February 1st, 1546, he wrote to Catharine: "When I shall have finished my principal business, I shall devote my chief energies to the expulsion of the Jews" (De Wette 5, 784, 787.)

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, T. Crisfield, "The Value of Hypnotism" (2d. and 4d.); 9.15, social gathering. Tuesday at 8, dancing. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class (members wanted). Friday at 8, C. Cohen, "Astronomical Science, III.—the Moon" (2d. and 4d.)

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, C. Cohen, "Socrates: his Life and Teachings." Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class (astronomy). Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class on "Spencer's Ethics." Saturday at 8.30, concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11, debating class, A. K. Donald, "The Question of the Unemployed"; 7.30, H. Snell, "Tennyson and Modern Thought."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Waste: 8, W. C. Lyons, "Ancient Science."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 6.30, music; 7, C. J. Hunt, "After Death—What?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Chamberlain's Labor Program" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Was Shakespeare a Christian?" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8.15, W. Heaford, "Consolations of Religion" (free). Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Women and Freethought."

Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: Thursday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

Kentish Town—7 Kentish Town-road: 3, debating class, "Spiritualism."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless."

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street: Thursday at 8, entertainment.

West London Ethical Society, Princes' Hall, Piccadilly: 11.15, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "Is Conscience a Radical or a Conservative Force?"; preceded by instrumental music.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. James, "Lux Mundi."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 4, upstairs): 6.30, debate between James Robb and John Harkiss on "Is there Sufficient Evidence to Prove the Existence of a God?"

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Charles Watts, 11, "Woman: her Social and Political Position"; 7, "In Prayer before God." Monday at 8, in Nelson-street Board School, Charles Watts, "Education, Secular and Theological."

Blackburn—Spinners' Institute, Peter-street: H. Smith, 3, "The Pedigree of the Devil"; 6.30, "Is the Bible Inspired?"

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: O. Trumper, 3, "The Holy Bible"; 6.30, "Who is Right in the Labor Question?"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: J. M. Robertson, 11, "Why Preserve the Monarchy?"; 3, "The Christ Hallucination"; 7, "Morality Without Religion."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' meeting and reading circle; 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, dramatic and musical entertainment.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, R. Laurie, "Jesus, a Study"; 6.30, Zosimus, "The Innocents Abroad" (with lantern illustrations.)

Glasgow—St. Rollox Eclectic Society, Toynbee Hall, Parson-street: Tuesday at 8, Rev. Joseph Deans, "Evolution and Life."

Keighley—Radical Club, Low-street: 6.30, A. B. Wakefield, "The Legal Eight Hours Labor Agitation: its Meaning and Menace."

Leeds—Crampton's Temperance Hotel, Briggate: 7, readings and recitations.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11 Tontine Society; 2.45, Hebrew class; 3.30, philosophy class; 7, A. Theosophist, "Theosophy and Evolution."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road
 All Saints': Stanley Jones, 11, "Is there Evidence of the Existence of God?"; 3, "The Fall of Man"; 6.30, "Is Genesis in Conflict with Science?" Tuesday at 8, debating society, "The New Government and its Program."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, fortnightly meeting of members; 7, G. Selkirk, "The Christian God an Impossibility."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, Mr. Jackson, "Morality"; meeting after lecture re School Board election.

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, mutual improvement class, Mr. Jannaway, "The Solar System"; 6, committee meeting; 7, Mr. Scarrott, a Reading.

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, members' meeting.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, W. R. Stansell, "Secularism in the Churches."

Ulster—Crown Chambers, 64 Royal Avenue, Belfast: 7, H. Gordon, "Dr. Kane on Secularism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Nov. 13, Milton Hall.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Nov. 13, Camberwell 23, Hall of Science; 27, e., Libra Hall. Dec. 4, Portsmouth; 11, Camberwell; 18, Libra Hall.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Dec. 6, Bermondsey Institute; 18, New Brompton.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Nov. 13, e., Edmonton; 20, Manchester; 24, Walthamstow; 27, m., Battersea. Dec. 4, Edmonton; 22, Walthamstow; 29, m., Battersea.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Nov. 11, Battersea; 13, Libra Hall; 18, Battersea; 20, Chatham; 25, Battersea; 27, Birmingham. Dec. 4, m., Battersea; e., Camberwell; 8, Walthamstow; 11, Libra Hall; 18, Edmonton.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—Nov. 20, Edmonton. Jan. 1, Chatham; 29, Camberwell.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Nov. 13 Manchester; 14 Pendlebury; 20, Blackburn; 27, Milton Hall. Dec. 4, Sunderland; 18, South Shields; 25, Edinburgh. Jan. 1, Aberdeen; 8, Glasgow.

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