

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

HAPPY IN HELL.

PROFESSOR ST. GEORGE MIVART is a very useful man to the Jesuits. He plays the jackal to their lion; or, it might be said, the cat to their monkey. Some time ago he argued that Catholicism and Darwinism were in the happiest agreement; that the Catholic Church was not committed, like the Protestant Church, to a cast-iron theory of Inspiration; and that he was quite prepared to find that all the real Word of God in the Bible might be printed in a very small book and easily carried in a waistcoat pocket. That article appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*. In the current number of the same review Mr. Mivart has another theological article on "Happiness in Hell." He says he took advice before writing it, so he speaks with permission, it not with authority. Such an article, being a kind of feeler, was better as the work of a layman. If it did not answer, the Church was not committed; if it did answer, the Church's professional penmen could follow it up with something more decisive.

Professor Mivart perceives, like the Bishop of Chester, that Christianity *must* alter its teaching with respect to Hell, or lose its hold on the educated, the thoughtful, and the humane. "Not a few persons," he says, "have abandoned Christianity on account of this dogma." The "more highly evolved moral perceptions" of to-day are "shocked beyond expression at the doctrine that countless multitudes of mankind will burn for ever in hell fire, out of which there is no possible redemption." Father Pinamonti's *Hell Open to Christians* is stigmatised as "repulsive," and its pictures as "revolting." Yet it is issued "with authority," and Mr. Mivart falls short of the truth in admitting it has never "incurred any condemnation." This little fact seems a barrier to his attempt at proving that the Catholic Church is not committed to the doctrine of a hell of real fire and everlasting agony.

"Abandon all hope, ye who enter here" wrote Dante over his Inferno, and Mr. Mivart allows that "the words truly express what was the almost universal belief of Christians for many centuries." That belief flourished under the wing of an infallible Church; and now Mr. Mivart, a member of this same infallible Church, comes forward to declare that the belief was a mistake. Nevertheless, he argues, the clergy of former times did right to preach hell hot and strong, stuff it with fire, and keep it burning for ever. They had coarse and ignorant people to deal with, and were obliged to use realistic language. Besides, it was necessary to exaggerate, in order to bring out the infinite contrast between heaven and hell, the elect and the reprobates, the saved and the damned. Mr. Mivart maintains, therefore, that the old representation of hell "has not caused the least practical error or misled anyone by one jot or tittle"—which is as bold, or, as some would say, as impudent a statement as could be well conceived.

Briefly stated, Mr. Mivart's contention is that the fire of hell is figurative. The pains of damnation, even in the case of the worst of sinners, have not

been liberally described by Popes and Councils. "What is meant by the expression 'hell fire' has never been defined," says Mr. Mivart. Perhaps not. There are some things which, for practical purposes, do not need definition, and *fire* is one of them. Nor is it greatly to the purpose to say that "Saint Augustine distinctly declares our ignorance about it." Saint Augustine was not God Almighty. Ample set-offs to this Father may be found in the pages of Dr. Pusey's *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* Besides, if fire does not mean fire, if torment does not mean torment, and everlasting does not mean everlasting, perhaps hell does not mean hell; in which case, it is a waste of time to argue about details, when the whole establishment, to use a Shakespearian epithet, is simply "tropical."

"Some positive suffering," thinks Mr. Mivart, "will never cease for those who have voluntarily and deliberately cast away from them their supreme beatitude." Do you want to know what this positive suffering is? Well, wait till you get there. All in good time. Whatever it is the "unbelievers" will get their share of it. The editor of the *Freethinker* may look out for a double dose. Professor Huxley will not escape. He is an aggressive Agnostic; one of those persons who, in the graceful language of Mivartian civility, do not "possess even a rudiment of humility or aspiration after goodness." "Surely," exclaims our new Guide to Hell, "surely if there is a sin which, on merely Theistic principles, merits the severest pains of hell, it is the authorship of an irreligious book." Which leads us in turn to exclaim, "Surely, yea thrice surely, will hell never be wholly abolished or deprived of its last torture-chamber, while Christians require a painful place for those who boldly differ from them." Mr. Mivart, it is true, confesses that "those who are disturbed and distressed by difficulties about hell include many among the best of mankind." But they must not write irreligious books on the subject. They must wait, in patience and meekness, until Mr. Mivart gives them satisfaction.

Let us now summarise Mr. Mivart's position. Universalism, or the final restitution of all men, he rejects as "utterly irreconcilable with Catholic doctrine." Those who are saved go to heaven—after various delays in purgatory—and enjoy the Beatific Vision for ever. Those who are lost go to hell and remain there for all eternity. They lose the Beatific Vision, and that is their chief punishment. But hell is not a really dreadful place—except, of course, for the writers of irreligious books. It may have its equator, and perhaps its poles; but between them are vast regions of temperate climate and grateful soil. The inhabitants are in a kind of harmony with their environment. They are even under a law of evolution, and "the existence of the damned is one of progress and gradual amelioration." We suppose it may be said, in the words of Napoleon, that the road is open to talent; and enterprising "damned ones" may cry with truth—"Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

Hell must be regarded as a most desirable place. Mr. Mivart knows all about it, and we have his authority for saying it is "an abode of happiness transcending all our most vivid anticipations, so that man's natural capacity for happiness is there gratified to the very utmost." And this is hell! Well, as the old lady said, who would have thought it? Verily the bannystone has all turned to treacle.

arious! is it not? While the Protestants are discussing whether hell-fire is actual fire, and whether sinners are roasted for everlasting or only for eternity, in steps a Catholic and declares that hell is a first-class sanitarium, far superior to the east-end of London, better than Bournemouth, and ahead of Naples and Mentone. "Be happy in heaven," he cries, "and if you won't, why, damn you, be happy in hell."

But before we leave Mr. Mivart we have a parting word to say. He admits the comparative novelty of his view of hell. "Our age," he says, "has developed not only a great regard for human life, but also for the sufferings of the brute creation." This has led to a moral revolt against the old doctrine of eternal torment, and the Church is under the necessity of presenting the idea of hell in a fresh and less revolting fashion. Precisely so. It is not theology which purifies humanity, but humanity which purifies theology. Man civilises himself first, and his gods afterwards, and the priest walks at the tail of the procession.

G. W. FOOTE.

TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY.

THE Freethinker is often upbraided with seeking to take away the Christian's consolation. Persons who will not defend the truth of Christianity, who, in fact, have no belief in virgin mothers or redemption through blood, yet think no item of religion should be attacked as at least it may serve as a crutch for cripples. But what if the persons are only kept cripples by their crutches? The gospel, as we are so often told, is good news. To oppressed, downtrodden slaves without hope on earth, to hear of mansions in the sky, the inheritance of those who suffer and endure here below, may indeed seem good news. But what if the expectation is a delusion which serves to rivet the slave's present chains? What if belief in the fortune to come prevents working for independence now? What if trust in God undermines self-reliance? And that this is so will, we think, appear certain to any student of history or human nature. Mr. W. R. Greg observed with much truth: "If we had looked upon this earth as our only scene, it is doubtful if we should so long have tolerated its more monstrous anomalies and more curable evils. But it is easier to look to a future paradise than to strive to make one upon earth; and the depreciating and hollow language of preachers has played into the hands both of the insincerity and the indolence of man."

The consolations of religion are much exaggerated. What mother who has prayed and agonised in vain hopes to save her child is really content with the thought that God has taken it away, and that, at a totally different age, and under unknown conditions, she may rejoin her beloved? She knows, too, they may be eternally separated, and that the lot of one or the other, or of both, may be unending misery. The mind fortunately refuses to dwell on this aspect of affairs, and Christian consolation resolves itself into looking only at the brighter state of things, and fancying that one's own self and those one loves are to become inheritors of eternal glory. But this fancy is no part of the doctrines of Christianity. Those doctrines are too horrible and absurd for actual belief. Its salvation is only to be secured through the vicarious atonement of an innocent person, the person exacting the suffering of his innocent Son being the Almighty

Father, whose Son is as old as himself, and who but for this would condemn all to eternal punishment. Is it good news to know we are under such unjust and malignant rule as this? Is it good news to our Church dignitaries to know that a rich man has as much chance of going to heaven as a camel has of getting through the eye of a needle? Is it good news when Christ says he came not to send peace on earth, but a sword—"to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against the mother?" Is it good news to learn that there is a Devil who goes about seeking whom he may devour? that demons may be lurking everywhere to tempt us to sin and eternal misery, and that the Devil is the prince of this world (John xii. 21), and can work miracles (Rev. xiii. 14), and even transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14)? Is it good news to learn there is a God who has power over us as the potter over his clay, making some to honor and some to dishonor (Rom. ix. 21), who may visit the minutest infraction of his law with direful punishment, while all reward is a pure matter of grace? What tidings of comfort and joy to know that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36), described as the great and terrible day of the Lord, when he will be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. i. 8)? What a consolation to know that "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," that when men have done all those things which are commanded, they are still "unprofitable servants" (Luke xvii. 7-10), and that no virtues can assure their salvation? Indeed, the more they attend to their worldly duties, the less likely are they to make their calling and election sure.

All for sin cannot atone;

Thou must save, and thou alone.

Consider the case of the poet Cowper. Amiable, talented, fitted to shine in society, his Christian fervor rendered him a recluse, even a religious maniac. He could not delude himself with the Christian's usual consolation that he personally was saved and hell only existed for vague "other people." His very ideal of goodness made him sensitive of his own imperfections. He knew that Christ had said "Many are called and few chosen"; that "wide is the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." Believing his doom to be everlasting damnation, life became unendurable, and in frequently attempting suicide and ever fearing it as only precipitating his doom, the last years of the poet's life present a terrible picture of what Christianity can do for the best of its votaries.

Of course, some may find tidings of comfort and joy in the gospel. Such exhortations as those to take no thought for the morrow, and let the dead bury the dead, may exactly suit the reckless, callous, and lazy. But what would be the result if the whole community were to take as their examples the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field? The doctrine, "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on one cheek turn to him the other also. And if any take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also," might be tidings of comfort and joy to thieves and oppressors, but it has never been found to work in every-day life. The injunction, "Give to every man that asketh of thee," may seem glorious to mendicants, but those who acted up to it would soon be beggars themselves. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for the powers that be are ordained of God," is a genuine gospel for tyrants. Then doubtless Christianity has tidings of great joy to the criminal. The murderer knows that he has but to

place his faith in Jesus and his seat in paradise will be assured—

For while the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.

And there is more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE BISHOP OF CHESTER'S HERESY.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE Bishop's reference to his predecessors in the various Churches, who, he alleges, formed wrong conceptions of the character of their God, reminds us that the road to a certain place is said to be paved with good intentions. He states that they erred from "the best of motives," for "out of honest fear and reverence . . . they sought by preaching an endless and a hopeless hell to people heaven." This teaching Dr. Jayne considers is false and too shocking to be preached by those who profess to believe in a religion of love. But surely he must remember that this very doctrine is being taught from most orthodox pulpits to-day, and that the very Church which he is paid to serve teaches it in one of its authoritative creeds. For therein we read, "They that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." And in the "Thirty-nine Articles" we are assured that this creed "may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." The Bishop discards this doctrine. If, therefore, his Church is teaching "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," what will be his fate in "the world to come"? Will he deserve to be among those to whom Christ is to say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels"?

Dr. Jayne observes that one of the special services for Christians to perform at the present time is "to clear the revealed character of God from some of those accretions which disfigure its beauty." God is then described as "a God of justice; and justice, to speak simply, means fair play"; therefore, could we not trust our destiny to him? Certainly, if the evidence of the existence of a God of justice and fair play and unbounded love could be proved, we may risk, if it be necessary, our destiny in his hands. But how are we to be assured of the existence of such a being? The Bishop admits that the assurance is not manifested in nature, and certainly it cannot be found in the Bible. Where, in the whole of God's biography, which is said to have been written under his direction, did he show any sense of "fair play"? In vain do we look, from the introduction of Adam to the crucifixion of Christ, for any "fair play" upon the part of the Christian Deity? To "clear his character" from the blemishes given to it by the Bible would be a great undertaking, and one, we venture to say, that will not be accomplished during the present generation.

Two things deserve consideration in connection with this new demand made upon the servants of the Lord to "clear his character." If all that is recorded of him in the Old and New Testaments except his "fair play" is to be discarded, there will not be sufficient left of his doings to furnish the Bishop with materials for a dozen sermons. Besides, if God's character could be cleared, what about the sufferings of the millions of poor mothers who have suffered so severely in consequence of his cruel injunction, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"? Where is the "justice" or the "fair play" in this inhuman and despotic command? To make the

giving birth of children, which should be the most beautiful and unalloyed incident in the drama of life, the occasion of intense pain—and that not through any fault of the poor victims—is nothing less than malignant injustice. And then, to ordain that a husband should "rule over" a wife is to favor domestic slavery and injustice, making the woman a degraded menial to the passion and caprice of man.

Further, is it possible to "clear the character" of Jehovah from the serious charge that according to the Bible, he, having created man and woman, doomed them and their posterity to trials, dangers, and misery of the severest and most hateful kind. This God, as Colonel Ingersoll truly says, prepared a home for his children—first a garden in which they should be tempted and from which they should be driven; then a world filled with briars and thorns and wild and poisonous beasts—a world in which the air should be filled with the enemies of human life—a world in which disease should be contagious, and in which it was impossible to tell, except by actual experiment, the poisonous from the nutritious. And these children were allowed to live in ignorance and fear—to have false ideas of this good and loving God—ideas so false that they made of him a fiend—ideas so false that they sacrificed their wives and babes to appease his imaginary wrath. And this God gave to different nations different ideas of himself, knowing that in consequence of that these nations would meet upon countless fields of battle, and drain each other's veins. Would it not have been better had the world been so that parents would transmit only their virtues—only their perfections, physical and mental—allowing their diseases and their vices to perish with them?

Take God's dealings towards his "chosen people." His character in these transactions will require considerable "clearing" before it is free from what must be regarded as being highly reprehensible. He made the Jews a special nation, and gave them a reckless and blood-thirsty man as their ruler. And these people were from the day, when (as it is said) Miriam celebrated in song their safe passage through the Red Sea to the time that the sun was darkened at the crucifixion, the destroyers of human life, and the instruments of God's wrath on their neighbors, and yet they were blamed by this "God of love" for not slaying their fellow-beings. Saul, one of their kings, had his kingdom taken from him because after a war which had produced much carnage he omitted to tear to pieces Agag, his royal captive. Samuel, however, God's priest and prophet, supplied his place and "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord." God, we are told, is impartial, yet he made the Jews "to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." And the Bible history of these God-favored people, is a history of crime and bloodshed from beginning to end. They rob and kill from their first foundation as a nation to the cessation of their national existence; for when they found themselves compressed within, and coerced by the strength of the Roman Empire, and could no longer make war upon men, they crucified a part of God himself. Then we have the Christian Deity appearing "on earth in the form of a man, born of a man, found in a stable, driven about by these very Jews from place to place, having nowhere to lay his head, scourged, tried, and condemned to death for disturbing the public tranquillity, expiring on the cross and being entombed in a sepulchre." This is the "revealed" character of the God whom we are asked to adore as our "Heavenly Father."

As the Bishop has undertaken "to clear the revealed character of God," perhaps he will direct his attention to the following "revealed" blots upon the reputation of his Deity, recorded among the "indisputable truths of Scripture." He deceives his

own prophet (Ezek. xiv. 9); he puts "a lying spirit into the mouth of all these thy prophets" (1 Kings xxii. 20); he rewards Jehu for the killing of human beings (2 Kings x. 30); he hardens people's hearts that he might "destroy them utterly" (Joshua xi. 20); he prescribes death for blasphemy (Lev. xxiv. 16); he will not allow a bastard to enter into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. xxiii. 2); nor will he permit a man who has a flat nose, or one who is blind or lame, or who is a dwarf "to offer the bread of his God" (Lev. xxi. 17-21); he orders the killing of brothers and neighbors, and the slaying of women and children, while maids are to be kept alive for the basest of purposes (Ex. xxxii. 27, and Num. xxxi. 17, 18); he raised people up for the purpose of cutting them off "from the earth" (Ex. ix. 15, 16); he favors adultery (2 Sam. xii. 11); and he causes people to practise cannibalism (Jer. xii. 9). These are some of the blots that Dr. Jayne has to remove from the character of his God before we should be inclined to trust our destiny in his hands. Such things as are here ascribed to God would not be recognised by human law as being "just and fair," and we fail to see "that what is wrong in humanity may be right in divinity."

Of course it is possible that a richly-endowed Bishop who has an interest in the Church will be unable to see "divine" things as worldly people view them. Still, we venture to suggest that the Bishop of Chester should add another bold effort to his already numerous heretical acts, and throw aside entirely theological faith, and, with the aid of his cultivated reason, seek to clear the path of man from the superstitious obstacles to human improvements—leaving God, if he can, to take care of himself.

CHARLES WATTS.

WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

(Continued from page 773.)

LET us pause for a moment to see how Science, having grown to manhood in spite of the murderous hostility of the Church, has completely subverted the ideas that were the very foundation of Christianity. The notion that God was solely concerned with the salvation or perdition of the inhabitants of this little planet was connected with, and supported by, the belief that this world is the centre of the universe, and that all the other heavenly bodies existed for its advantage. That belief is for ever annihilated, and with it the religious conception it countenanced and cherished. The notion of the world's antiquity, based upon the Bible genealogies from Adam to Christ, is dwarfed and made ridiculous by the discovery that the world has existed for myriads of ages, and man himself for a period immensely greater than the orthodox chronology of six thousand years. But the most terrible blow at the Genesiac theory has been struck by Darwinism. It is now certain that Adam was not the first man; nay, that there never *was* a first man. Man is not a special creation, but the highest product of a long process of evolution. The story of the Fall, therefore, is only a piece of ancient mythology. Man is not a fallen creature, but a risen organism. He did not degenerate from a paradisaical condition; he was not cursed by God; he did not need an atonement. Thus the historic doctrine of Christian salvation is deprived of its basis and meaning. Man did not die in Adam, and cannot live again in Christ. The salvation which was proffered to the world was founded upon a complete misunderstanding of its history, its nature, and its necessities.

Seeing, then, how fantastic is the *religious* salvation of Christianity, let us pursue our inquiry into the character of its *natural* salvation. Let us see, that is, in what respect it has aided or hindered the political and social progress of Europe.

It has already been shown that Christianity opposed liberty of thought and the advance of science, and did not befriend the education of the masses of the people. We shall now see that its political and social influence has always been conservative, and never progressive.

Misty-minded sentimentalists affect to regard Jesus Christ as the most illustrious of democrats. It is difficult, however, to find the slightest justification of this view. He himself paid tribute to the Roman tax-gatherer, and taught "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." His language to his disciples was that of a would-be tyrant, as the word was understood in the vocabulary of the free people of Greece. He promised them that when he came into his kingdom they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It was a promise as magnificent, and as empty, as Don Quixote's promise of a governorship to Sancho Panza. Nevertheless, as we may presume it was made in good faith, it must be held to indicate something very different from a republican sentiment.

Simon Peter enjoins us to "Fear God and honor the King"—quite irrespective of his deserts. "Let every soul," says Paul, "be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." He adds that whoever resists any established authority "shall receive unto themselves damnation." According to tradition this was uttered in the reign of the cruel and detestable Nero, who would have been a greater scourge than he was if the Romans had not acted on other maxims than Paul's, and forcibly terminated his sanguinary career.

Professor Sewell, who once filled the chair of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, in a work of considerable ability, entitled *Christian Politics*, quotes many other texts from the New Testament in corroboration of Paul's teaching. He then declares that "It is idle, and worse than idle, to attempt to restrict and explain away this positive command. And the Christian Church has always upheld it in its full extent. *With one uniform unhesitating voice it has proclaimed the duty of passive obedience.*"

There is no disputing Professor Sewell's dictum on this point. He spoke as a Churchman, not as a sceptic; he knew the history of Christianity, and was competent to pronounce an authoritative judgment.

Gibbon had previously remarked, in his sarcastic way, that it was this feature of Christianity which attracted the admiration of Constantine. "The throne of the emperors," he wrote, "would be established on a fixed and permanent basis if all their subjects, embracing the Christian religion, should learn to suffer and obey."

The doctrine of passive obedience is strongly enforced in the sermon "Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion" at the end of the *Book of Homilies*, which, according to the thirty-fifth Article of the Church of England, is full of "a godly and wholesome doctrine," and is therein appointed "to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people."

The first rebel, according to this Homily, was Satan himself, who was expelled from heaven. "We shall find," it says, "in very many and almost infinite places, as well of the Old Testament as of the New, that kings and princes, as well the evil as the good, do reign by God's ordinance, and that subjects are bounden to obey them." "A rebel," it declares, "is worse than the worst prince, and rebellion worse than the worst government." And in proof of this doctrine it cites many passages of scripture, and many illustrations from Bible history.

The universality of Christian teaching on this subject is strikingly exhibited in the *History of Passive Obedience Since the Reformation*, dated Amsterdam,

1689. It is a rare and curious book, written with energy and great learning. The author ransacks the theological literature of two centuries, and shows that the doctors of all schools, including the Puritans, upheld the doctrine of passive obedience, and the absolute unlawfulness, nay, the heinous sin, of rebelling against any prince, however weak, vicious, cruel, or despotic.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

NATURAL LAW.

"Who suspends one law of nature, suspends them all."

—L. FEUERBACH.

A LARGE number of educated persons write about the "laws of nature" without understanding the scientific meaning of the phrase. Thus I found only a short time ago a learned writer in the *Daily Telegraph* making the strangely unscientific statement that "laws of nature" imply a lawgiver. The same idea was expressed by the poet thus:

The laws of Nature are but Thine,
For Nature! who is she?

A name—the name that men assign
To thy sole alchemy.

Dr. Sexton, however, is too well read in scientific subjects to misunderstand the meaning of the term "natural law"; indeed he endeavors to show that he understands the meaning of the words more fully than his opponents. He says: "We hear much talk of natural law. But this is another of those terms which is so often used in both a loose and an ambiguous sense. The words 'laws of nature' hang most glibly on the lips of those who hardly know the meaning of the expression. Such people speak of laws as though they were powers, forces, and even entities, whereas they are nothing more than observed orders of sequence. A law of nature is not an entity, neither is it a power; it can do nothing whatever. It is simply a mode of action of a force that lies behind it—that is all, and hence must not be referred to as though it were capable of producing results."*

Dr. Sexton is quite right when he says that what are called the laws of nature, are merely the observed order of phenomena. To acknowledge, however, that bodies move according to a well-ascertained and definite order, is not equivalent to the declaration that there is anything or anybody behind these material forces directing and arranging their movements. To say that because I have the power to write this article that therefore there is a God behind matter prompting me to do it, and actually supplying the ideas which enable me to perform the task, would be scarcely regarded as logical even by Theists, who would probably attribute the force which enables me to do such work to an evil agency.

Now the Atheist says that matter possesses certain properties, and moves by virtue of these inherent qualities. As the naturalist, Moleschott, says: "Force is not an impelling God, not an essence separate from the material substratum of things. A force not united to matter, but floating freely above it, is an idle conception. Nitrogen, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, sulphur, and phosphorus possess these inherent qualities from eternity."

Professor Büchner puts the case thus: "No force without matter—no matter without force! Neither can be thought of *per se*; separated, they become empty abstractions. Imagine matter without force, and the minute particles of which a body consists without that system of mutual attraction and repulsion which holds them together and gives form and shape to the body; imagine the molecular forces of cohesion and affinity removed, what then would be the consequence? The matter must instantly break up into a shapeless nothing."† Chemistry, moreover,

demonstrates that matter and force are alike indestructible; and that which cannot be destroyed it seems reasonable to believe could never have begun to be. Matter, therefore, the materialist holds to be eternal. Shakespeare put the materialistic position in the mouth of Hamlet:

Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

O that that earth which keeps the world in awe

Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw.

Not a single atom of matter is ever lost in the universe. There is change, constant, endless, but no loss. "It is the great merit of modern chemistry to have proved in the most convincing manner," says Büchner,* "that the uninterrupted change of matter which we daily witness, the origin and decay of organic forms and tissues, do not arise, as was hitherto believed, from new materials, but that this change is nothing else but the constant and continuous metamorphosis of the same elementary principles, the quantity and quality of which ever is, and ever remains, the same."

And what is true of matter is true also of force; it is as indestructible, imperishable, and immortal as matter. Our daily experience assures us that no motion or change can take place without producing an endless succession of changes throughout the universe. And if matter and force are indestructible and eternal, it follows that what are called the laws of nature are immutable also, and act of necessity, without the guidance of any intelligence being behind them. "The law of nature is a stringent expression of necessity," said Moleschott; and the proper understanding of this fact does away once and for all with belief in miracles, and with a belief in an over-ruling providence.

In fact, science has gradually dissipated the childish beliefs of mankind. Science explains nature; science has snatched thunder and lightning from the hands of the gods; science has explained the causes of earthquakes and volcanos; in fact, science has revealed that all the phenomena of the universe are due to natural causes; and thus that the occupation of the gods, like Othello's, is gone for ever.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

KISSING THE BOOK.

"Take off your glove," said the Registrar to a witness at the last sitting of the Rye County Court, and the witness was about to obey when Judge Martineau made the most sensible remark that it was unnecessary; accordingly, the witness was sworn with the Testament in a gloved hand, and, incredible as it may seem, the judge was not conveyed from the court a corpse. Surely No. 1 of the triune mixture must have turned over a new leaf and become merciful, since he failed to visit his wrath upon the impious judge. But what an abominable farce this book-kissing is, and how utterly out of keeping with the civilisation of the nineteenth century. Looking at it from all points of view, it can only be defined as ridiculous, uncleanly, and unhealthy. Even a Christian cannot make any defence for it, since his own guide? to that land where "white wings never grow weary," tells him most emphatically not to do it. A Christian was telling us a short time ago, that to do away with the custom would be the means of causing a loss of all reverence in our law courts, and courts of justice, and since then we have been vainly trying to understand just how it can be that kissing the book inspires reverence. We have watched witnesses do the kissing and afterwards pour out a stream of lies, and have wondered if this is reverence. We ourselves have kissed both the Bible and the *Freethinker* but without any effect beyond the feeling that out of the two the truthful *Freethinker* would be more likely to inspire one with the desire to speak the truth, than would the book of falsehood and immorality. Reverence, indeed! As if any rational being could feel more reverent after kissing the dirty cover of a book. We cannot understand,

* *Theistic Problems*, p. 23.

† *Force and Matter*, p. 75.

* *Force and Matter*, p. 85.

however, from whence the Christians get their notion that God will give greater punishment to a man who lies after having kissed a book, than one who lies without so doing; but he is really such a funny God that we cannot expect to understand these things until the heavenly oculist bestows upon us the eye of faith. Christians may express any opinion they please upon the reverence (!), but we have noticed time after time that those who kiss the holy cover most fervently tell the most falsehoods. It is absolutely useless to swear any witness. If a man determines to speak the truth, he will do so; and if he determines to emulate poor old Ananias, no amount of book-kissing will prevent him. But such a one lays himself open to a prosecution for perjury! Of course he does; but he knows that nothing is more unlikely than that the authorities will take proceedings. If the matter is reasoned out, it amounts to this—A man is charged with an offence which he has committed; if he tells the truth, man will punish him; but if he utters falsehoods, he may get off, although he knows that God will punish him. So, in many cases he lies, preferring the chance of a hotter oven in hell to that of fourteen days' hard, with a greater prospect of joining in an everlasting sing-song with a lamb as chairman. As we have said before, too, both health and cleanliness are opposed to the continuance of the absurdity; and, to avoid the chance of catching any disease, many people merely make a pretence of kissing God (for "the word is God"). What witness can possibly tell from what disease the previous one may have been suffering; and what, in the time of an epidemic, can be more likely to spread it? No matter from what point we regard it, it cannot be denied that the time has come when the command to kiss the book and swear, *a la* police and county courts, that one will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, s'wap-y' God, should be abolished.

LUX.

THE CHURCH AND THE PANAMA SCANDAL.

An article in the *Eclair* gives some curious details as to the relations of the clergy with the Panama Company. The Vatican dealt largely in Panama shares during Mgr. Folchi's disastrous administration of the Papal Treasury. At one period that ecclesiastical financier received 100 francs commission on every 500 francs' worth of stock he bought on account of the Vatican, and the agents who counselled him in his operations also touched large commissions from the company. Monsignore Folchi appears to have had doubts once, and began to sell out. Another financial Monsignore received 12,000 francs for inducing him to desist. Journals were started in France for circulation among the clergy, and one of them offered a commission of 25 francs on every share that a curé could prevail upon his parishioners to buy. There are about eighty diocesan journals in France called *La Semaine Religieuse*, usually edited by the private secretary of the bishop. They are read by all the clergy, and by many among their flocks. A financial genius offered to contribute a weekly money article to each, and instead of requiring payment for his work, was willing to pay 500f. a year to every journal which accepted his article. Sixty-four of them did so, and the benevolent journalist represented to the company that he was the representative of all the *Semaines Religieuses* in France, and in ten years made more than 600,000 francs in commissions on shares bought by confiding country curés and peasants, who thought that advice emanating from the diocesan journal could not be unsound. An official of the company once said, "I shall be obliged to receive the members of the clergy through a special secretary." They did not come to buy, but to ask for commissions. Preceptors preponderated among them. They received commissions for advising Monsieur or Madame who had entrusted their children's education to them to invest in Panama stock.

—Echo.

OBITUARY.

Died, at Jarrow, William Lennon, of Hebburn Colliery, aged 48. Mr. Lennon was a member of the local Secular Society, and by his own request the Secular Burial Service was used by Mr. W. Carter at his funeral last Sunday. He was a good Freethinker, and left many friends as well as a devoted wife and children.

ACID DROPS.

The Council of the Evangelical Alliance has issued the program for the annual Week of Prayer, which lasts from the first to the eighth of January. This is very considerate. The Almighty will have time to get ready.

"The spread of Popery," says a Christian contemporary, "is creating great consternation in the Church of England." Nor is this the worst, for "a Rationalist school has sprung up in the High Church circle," of which the Rev. Charles Gore is the leader. Verily the last days are at hand. No wonder the second-advent people have been holding a successful Conference at Liverpool. The world may soon expect to hear Gabriel's trumpet and see the descent of J. C.

When J. C. does come (by the way, he is awfully behind date) he will have to make a great many descents to be seen by all the world's inhabitants. Whenever he drops down one half the world will be in darkness, and the other half couldn't see him alight. His landing could only be witnessed within a very limited region. However, the affair would soon be well advertised. No doubt the telegraph was invented for this very purpose.

Most of the earth's surface is water. What would happen, then, if J. C. dropped down into the middle of the Atlantic or the Pacific? He would probably go to the bottom, unless he performed his old trick of walking on the ocean waves.

Niggers and Roman Catholics in some parts of the United States were terribly alarmed by the report that the earth was going to collide with the recent comet. They had lots of services and big prayer-meeting, and some of the weakest-headed went mad on the spot. Of course the earth is all right, and the net result is an increase in the statistics of lunacy.

The *Christian Commonwealth*, in reference to this matter, says that "when danger is impending even the careless fly to religion for help"—and don't get it. But in this case it was not the careless, but the pious, who asked for help against the comet. Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and Freethinkers kept cool. They know too much about prayers and comets to trouble about them.

Newman Hall is very fond of his mother's Bible. He locks it up in a safe when he goes away from home for a few days—we suppose lest another Christian should steal it.

Professor Davison, of Handsworth College, has been proceeded against for heresy, and tried by the Wesleyan Theological Institution Committee, who have unanimously acquitted him. They declare there is no reason to believe his teaching will "unsettle the minds of careful students of the Sacred Scriptures." Professor Davison, in their opinion, has expressed "no sympathy whatever with the extreme school of Higher Critics." Which means, we take it, that he only teaches the students as much of the results of Continental criticism as can be no longer tabooed. Still, Professor Davison's heresy is enough to raise Mr. Gladstone's hair. He accepts the composite authorship and late date of the Pentateuch, rejects the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, and generally treats the Old Testament books as a bull treats the contents of a china-shop.

The Meath election petition has resulted in the unseating of the anti-Parnellite member. It was conclusively shown by the evidence of Parnellite witnesses, and also by the evidence of the priests themselves, that spiritual intimidation of voters had been carried to the highest degree. And this was not simply winked at, but positively applauded, by T. D. Sullivan and Tim Healey, who, in this respect at any rate, are proving themselves the worst enemies of their country.

Father McDonnell inquired of one Parnellite, "Whom are you going to vote for, Darby?" "Mr. Dalton," replied Darby. "Then you will go to hell," said Father McDonnell. "Then, if I do," said Darby, "I will have comrades."

Bravo, Darby! But he yields the palm to Mrs. M'Kenna. Her husband, John M'Kenna, was bewildered. The priest told him to vote for the anti-Parnellite candidate, and his wife told him to vote for the other gentleman. After the

confession the priest said to him, "Now we can say what we like, and no one will be the wiser. What are you going to do with your vote—are you going to give it to me?" This seriously affected him, though he gave no promise. When he returned home, his wife wormed out of him the details of his conversation with the priest. "Have you promised him your vote?" says she. "I have not," said he. "If you had," said she, "you might never face me again." Brave Mrs. M'Kenna! It is satisfactory to know that John voted *her* way, and left the priest in the lurch. A few thousand such mothers in Ireland would be a tremendous blessing.

Writing to the Catholic Bishop of Northampton, the Pope hopes that "the noble English nation may return to the embrace of the mother that first bore it to Christ." Surely the expression of this hope is very ill-timed. The Pope forgets that Englishmen have just been studying the Meath election.

Emperor William takes a great interest in the Society which distributes Bibles among the soldiers in the German army. He regards the Bible as a precious book. It is quite conceivable that, some day, it may be the most precious of his remaining possessions.

The latest successful American Salvation song has a chorus which runs:

I'll plunge into the Savior's blood
Another dip, another dip,
Another dip will do me good,
I'll have another dip.

Religious mania drove George P. Longford mad. He thought he had been forsaken by his God, and sent to Farringdon-street for a revolver with which he shot himself dead. Had he called at Stonecutter-street in time he might have found a cure for his mania.

The fisherman's calling is one of vicissitude, and from the days of the apostles they have usually been addicted to superstition. A resident in Fraserburgh communicates to the *Aberdeen Daily Free Press* some of the peculiar beliefs of the fishermen of that district. At the beginning of the herring season the crew all try to seize the herring first on board, to see if it be male or female. If it be a male, their fishing may be expected to be a poor one; if a female, a good one. Sometimes, however, the skipper secures it and hides it away, salting it, and laying it past for the season. The boat must not be turned against the sun. Certain animals considered of ill-omen must not be spoken of in the boat, and ministers in this respect occupy the same place as rabbits, hares, and pigs.

"Learner" wrote to the *Independent*, asking if it was really possible to conduct business on purely Christian lines and make a fortune. Some answer Yes, without indicating how the commercial man is to obey the injunction to give to him that asketh, and others say the object is an unworthy one. The joke of the business is that the sky-pilots declaim against the pursuit of vain wealth as a hindrance to the Christian life, etc., while grabbing all they can.

Tibet, as the most inaccessible country in the world, is said to be the seat of the Mahatmas. Well, Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop, the famous traveller, tells us, in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, that the Tibetans wash but once a year, and, except at festivals, never change their clothes until they begin to drop off. "They hate brain work, and sometimes say, 'We're as stupid as oxen,' in which they do not exaggerate." But perhaps these are the necessary conditions for the attainment of Mahatmahood.

JESUS THE SAVIOR.

There must be here some little blunder;
What has he saved us from, I wonder?
Say from what evil, of what kind,
Whether of body or of mind?
Since all our evils are the same
Now as they were before he came.

The Sultan of Turkey is said to have been much affronted by the offer of a New York millionaire to give him a hundred million of dollars if he would become a Christian. He should

take it as evidence that Mohammedanism is worth just so much more than Christianity.

In an article on Church Extension, the *Independent* says: "The majority of our churches are getting poorer; their contributions are falling off." It sadly confesses that unless it can make up for its losses in the county by gains in large towns, "our doom is sealed."

At Burnley the Church does not disdain aid from the nigger minstrel troupes, and the papers speak of two hours and a half of fun provided by the Rev. A. B. Edlestone for the benefit of a church fund.

The Deptford Christian Defence Association—whatever it is—has a high sense of its own importance. It has arranged for a lecture by some one on "Infidelity Challenged" (*sic*) on Sunday, Dec. 11, and it invites the President of the National Secular Society to come and defend his principles. It also sends a number of ungrammatical propositions for a set debate. Mr. Foote has replied that he is himself lecturing on Sunday, Dec. 11, and on all other Sundays; further, that he does not issue nor accept "challenges."

"His tender mercies are over all his works"—The terrible earthquake at San Salvador has nearly destroyed a whole city, including a cathedral. One third of the island of Cochaquita was split off from the rest and sank out of sight.

According to the *British Weekly*, Dr. Pentecost, the American preacher, who has been invited to succeed Dr. Donald Fraser at Marylebone Presbyterian Church, has stipulated for an income of £1,500, with house rent-free. If he accepts the "call"—and he looks like doing it—he will have the largest stipend paid to any Presbyterian minister in England.

Put this side by side with the reports of the unemployed agitation in London, and see what a noble thing Christianity is when worked out thoroughly. Thousands of men are out of work, and their families in want of bread. That is one picture. Now look on the other picture. A servant of Jesus Christ, who said "blessed be ye poor" and "woe unto you rich," stipulates for £1,500 a year before he begins business.

What a change since the first Pentecost, after which, we suppose, the Yankee preacher is named. At that time the preachers of the Gospel were horribly poor. Soon afterwards, however, they bagged some well-to-do supporters, and burked a couple of them for a lack in straightforward liberality. Since then the gospel business has improved. Yes, it is a leap from Peter's "silver and gold have I none" to Dr. Pentecost's £30 a week.

The Tabernacle split is not yet healed, judging by a circular sent to the friends and supporters of the Pastors' College, which states it is a slur on that institution, and is an ungracious return for the hundreds of thousands of pounds contributed, to let it go forth to the world that the college has not, during its whole career, turned out a man competent to take charge of the Metropolitan Tabernacle; neither that such a man can be found within the Baptist denomination in England or America; but that we must needs send for an *infant sprinkler*.

Dr. Pierson, who is now preaching at Spurgeon's Tabernacle, believes in immediate answers to prayer. He says that in 1876 he was pastor to a wealthy congregation and preached in "one of the most elegant edifices in America." But somehow he didn't reach the people. One night he spoke of this, and said that perhaps their superb church repelled the poor, who felt themselves unwelcome. Then they prayed to God, and while they were praying the church began to burn. It was laid in ruins, and Dr. Pierson regards the incident as an act of providence. This is all very well—in its way. But was the church insured? And if yes, wasn't that immediate answer to prayer a little rough on the Insurance Company?

In our issue for Nov. 6, we gave an account of "Morocco men of God," which illustrated how saints grew, and thrived on the credulity of the people. A story in the papers of an Italian hermit, shows that very similar method

are employed in Christian lands. On the hills above Castellamare, Naples, an ex-soldier has gained the reputation of a saint by living in a cell with pictures of the Madonna and a crucifix. The rustic population flock to him and give him alms, to get from him the winning numbers of the Lotto. Probably the early Jewish prophets were of a similar breed, for when Saul went to look for his father's lost asses, he resorted with a present to the seer or prophet.

They are taking very active steps in Russia to convert the Jews. The method is a thorough one. All the Jews who won't be converted are ruined and starved. This is what the Christians in those parts call *persuasion*. They remind us of the butcher who persuaded the sheep to enter the slaughter-house. Both the sheep's ears came off, and nearly all his wool, but he was *persuaded* at last.

The lives of the four or five millions of Jews who remain in Russia and Russian Poland are daily becoming more and more a misery to them from the uncertainty when they may be thrown into prison or compelled to leave their homes. Yet this and worse is the treatment that has been meted out through ages by Christians to the race from whom they have derived both their God and Savior.

In North Central China there is an alarming plague of wolves, which in one village carried off eleven persons within seven days. Most of the victims were children. The wolves roam in open daylight, boldly entering villages and carrying off helpless little ones. One even entered a hut and snatched a little child from his father's arms. Such is nature as made by the beneficent Father who cares just as much for wolves as for children. It is only man, who, by his own unaided efforts, has won the earth for himself, contending against the ravenous appetites of other animals.

"Why is the fire of Christian faith so low amongst the Maori people in my diocese?" was the question recently put by the Bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand. Tangata Maori replied that the Maoris found Christians did not follow their own faith, and says, "We might fairly ask him to tell us first why the fire of faith burns so low among his own people."

Tangata Maori thus concludes a letter to the papers upon the subject: "I sometimes think, sir, that my children would have had a better chance of developing into honorable men and women, and would have had a better prospect of happiness when the time comes for them to enter the unseen world and meet their maker if, like the first Maori king (Potatau), I had refused to make an open profession of your Pakeha religion till, as he said, 'you had settled amongst yourselves what your religion really is.' Better, I think, the real belief in the unseen spiritual world, which sustained my forefathers, than the make-believe which the Pakeha people have asked us to substitute for it."

The *Presbyterian Review* calls the Jabbernaole Bible thumper, the "phosphorescent, incandescent, iridescent, but not always luciferous Talmage."

Archbishop Vaughan has permitted remission from their parochial duties to priests engaged in promoting Catholicism in the public press. This evidence that the enemy knows the power of the press, should stir Freethinkers to also use it as far as possible.

Jay Gould, the American millionaire, is dead. He left about 60,000,000 dollars behind him. His whole life was spent in acquiring wealth—generally other people's. Still, he was a Christian; he went to church, and sometimes walked round with the plate. We don't know whether he took a commission on the collection.

Moody has been on the "Spree." This is the name of an Atlantic steamer—a German one. Moody was going back to New York. On the way the tail end of the "Spree's" main shaft broke, making a big, dangerous hole in the stern. Strict discipline and untiring exertion saved the ship, and eventually she was towed into harbor by a steamer of the Beaver Line. Moody, of course, presided over a thanksgiving service. He is in the religious line of business, and must bring in his God when he can; although it is easy to calculate how much Moody's God would have done for the "Spree" if her captain

and crew had not been up to the mark, and if the friendly "Lake Huron" had not come to her relief.

Canon Talbot is lecturing on Christian evidences at Pelton Fell Institute, Chester-le-Street. He permits questions, and has been severely heckled by the local Secularists. Challenged to a set debate, he declined on the ground that a pit-village audience could not judge of the merits of the dispute. He seems to think them capable only of estimating one side of the question.

The *Staffordshire Sentinel* warns the people of that district against a young man of respectable appearance who leaves religious tracts to distribute, and pretends to be the advance agent of his father's evangelical travelling van, under which pretence he has done a deal of swindling.

At the last meeting of the Society of Historical Theology, as reported in the *Academy*, Mr. O. F. Conybeare read a paper on the comparison of the Holy Ghost to a dove. He pointed out that the dove was the recognised symbol of the divine Spirit or Logos in the allegorising theology of the Alexandrine Jews, and cited in proof of this a number of passages from Philo Judæus. Mr. Conybeare then argued that what was originally a metaphor got inserted into the Gospel narrative as an historical fact. This is a very interesting piece of criticism, and the principle it involves might be carried very much further. It is becoming more and more evident that nearly all the Gospel history is ancient mythology and symbolism hardened into matter of fact for the multitude.

Fitzgerald Molloy has been writing a lot of rubbish on astrology in a London evening paper. It is really strange at this time of day—or it would be strange if it were not for the spread of Theosophy—to hear an educated man gravely talking about a child's destiny being decided by planetary conjunctions at its birth. One would imagine that a child was born about twice a week on this planet, whereas thousands are born every day; and those who are born on the same day have all sorts of different destinies. Mr. Molloy should read St. Augustin's *Confessions*, and see how this great divine reasoned himself out of astrology. He noted the case of Jacob and Esau, who were twins, conceived and born together; yet how different were their characters and their careers. It may, of course, be objected that they were legendary persons; but that does not destroy the force of the illustration, which only presents in a striking way what is a matter of common experience.

Mr. Molloy is good enough to inform us, from some occult sources of information, that "it was not a star moving through the heavens which led the wise men from the East to the stable of Bethlehem; but their knowledge of astrology, which foretold the birth of Christ and the country where they would find him." Mr. Molloy forgets that the Star of Bethlehem did move through the heavens, that the wise men did follow it, and that it rested at last over the very house where little Jesus was lying. At least this is what the Gospel says. Not that we believe it; only we are not going to believe Mr. Molloy in preference to the evangelist.

It would be well for Mr. Molloy to state how the wise men (in his version of the story) calculated which Jewish baby born that particular night was the Messiah. Supposing that Palestine contained 3,000,000 inhabitants, there would be at least 2,000 births per week, or 300 per day. How did the wise men ascertain by astrology which of the 300 babies, or which of the 150 male babies, was the one indicated by the "planetary aspect" which covered them all?

A religious newspaper has half a column under the head of "Sham Christianity." We did not know there was any other sort.

A wife had suffered untold cruelties at the hands of a barbarous husband, and in self-defence she "took the law on him"; but just before the trial she relented and told the judge she wished to leave the punishment and the case to God. "I regret," my good woman," replied the great official, "that we cannot do that; the case is far too important."

School-teacher—"Can any one of the class explain to me why the way of the transgressor is so hard?" Miss Semolina Wishing-Gate—"Because it's travelled so much."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Dec. 11, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.; at 11.15, "The Problem of the Unemployed"; at 7, "Christianity at the Bar: a Reply to Professor Bruce."

Monday, Dec. 12, Co-operative Hall, Carr-street, Ipswich; at 8, "Secularism Superior to Christianity, as an Intellectual Light and a Moral Guide."

Dec. 18, Hall of Science.

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

February 5, Hull; 12 and 19, Hall of Science.

March 5, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Dec. 11, Manchester; 18, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

T. S. NEWTON, W. WHITCHER, AND O. FEATHERSTONE.—Thanks for your appreciation and good wishes. We war against *all* forms of superstition. Some persons appear to think that so long as Christianity is attacked it does not matter if the wildest metaphysical and theological fancies are entertained. We are of a different opinion. We would not lift a finger against Christianity merely to make room for a rival absurdity.

STANLEY JONES.—Your list arrived on Wednesday morning, when the *Freethinker* was going to press, and could not be inserted last week. There is a standing notice that matter for the current week's issue must reach us not later than Tuesday morning.

J. BADLY.—Your lecture notice arrived late on Tuesday, and was also addressed to Mr. Forder's office. It did not reach us till late on Wednesday morning. We mention this so that the Leeds friends may understand the exclusion.

J. W. ELSWORTH.—We have no intention of printing the verses as a tract. You can get some done by a local printer if you wish to distribute copies in that form.

F. GILL.—Profane jokes always welcome.

EGYPT.—Mr. Foote wrote you a private letter, and hopes you received it.

A. W. L.—Under consideration.

T. M. HEADLEY.—We know absolutely nothing of the "Mr. Julian Mason, formerly an infidel lecturer," who is addressing meetings at Yarmouth. We advise you to ask him for particulars. When and where did he lecture? And what Society did he belong to?

E. J. CLARKE, writing from one of her Majesty's ships, thanks Mr. George Anderson for his welcome parcel of Freethought literature.

F. PLASKITT.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. H. MARRS.—See paragraph.

H. JYON.—We hope there will be a good party to greet Mr. Judge. He has been very helpful to the movement in Leeds.

C. LEWIS.—Such correspondence in the local press is of great advantage.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S SPECIAL FUND.—E. J. Clarke, 2s.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND:—C. Lewis, 2s.

A. C. S.—May be useful.

J. E. MANZIES.—See paragraph. Lecture Notices must be written on separate slips of paper.

H. COURTNEY.—Hope to find room.

JERICHO.—Sorry to hear you sometimes receive your copy of the *Freethinker* in a dilapidated condition. It must be the fault of the post-office.

F. EVANS.—You will receive a form by post.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Flaming Sword—Secular Thought—Modern Thought—Twentieth Century—Für 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—Shafts—Luton Times—Kettering Guardian—Kensington News—Kent Messenger—Moralist—Staffordshire Sentinel—Eastern Province Herald—West Yorkshire Pioneer—Jarrow Guardian—Manchester Guardian.

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.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention. **CORRESPONDENCE** should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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

SPECIAL.

CHRISTIAN bigotry has burst into fresh life at Portsmouth. On Sunday morning Mr. Snell, of London, went to the Wellington Hall, occupied by the local Branch of the National Secular Society, for the purpose of lecturing. He found there a sergeant, a detective, and some policemen, who said they had been sent by Chief Constable Crosser, on behalf of the Watch Committee, to prevent the meetings from being held; though it does not appear that they had power to do so. They threatened that if money were taken at the door the conveners of the meeting would be prosecuted under the foolish old Act of George III. Mr. Snell consulted with the Branch Committee, and it was decided to let the audience in free and make a collection. In the haste of the moment this was the wisest thing to do. Mr. Snell has sent me an excellent account of what occurred, and a supplementary letter has reached me from the Branch, which asks me, as President, for my advice in the matter. "There are plenty of our members," Mr. Jannaway says, "who are willing to fight the battle."

Wellington Hall has a six-days license for music and dancing. This is apparently the ground on which the bigots of the Watch Committee feel safe in moving.

The Portsmouth Branch must not go into a fight without a plan, without resources, and without a prospect of some advantage to the cause. My advice will be in the Branch secretary's hands before Sunday (Dec. 18).

Meanwhile it may be noted that the Branch has for years charged for admission at the doors. Hitherto it has never been molested, and no complaint has ever been made. The Branch has lately advertised its meetings in the same column as the churches and chapels, and this may have given offence to the Christians.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. W. Heaford kindly took Mr. Foote's place at Grimsby on Sunday, and delivered three lectures which gave great satisfaction. Mr. Foote had a cold, which was hardly a positive illness, but it affected his voice, and he thought it best to keep out of danger.

What in Christian circles is a very important book will be dealt with by Mr. Foote this evening (Dec. 11) at the London Hall of Science. It is the third volume of the "International Theological Library," the first volume of which was Canon Driver's remarkable *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. The third volume is by Dr. A. B. Bruce, Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Free Church College, Glasgow. It is entitled *Apologetics: or Christianity Defensively Stated*. Long and eulogistic reviews of Professor Bruce's work have appeared in the religious press. It will doubtless interest the Freethinkers of London to hear what the Christianity of to-day has to say for itself through one of its ablest spokesmen, and to hear an "infidel leader's" reply. Mr. Foote's lecture is announced as "Christianity at the Bar."

Mr. Charles Watts had two capital audiences again last Sunday at the London Hall of Science. Prior to the evening lecture Mrs. Watts delighted the meeting with two readings, a scene from "The Love Chase" and the "Old Maid's Story." Mr. Watts lectures three times to-day (Dec. 11) in the Secular Hall, Manchester.

London Freethinkers will please note that the Hall of Science will be closed for lectures on Sunday, Dec. 25, which is Christmas Day. On Wednesday evening, Dec. 28, the hall will be open from 8 till 11 for a conversazione, to which the President of the National Secular Society invites the members to meet him and his colleagues of the Executive. There will of course be no charge for admission. It is to be a sort of "at home," with a little good music and one or two good readings at intervals. Every member of the N.S.S. will be heartily welcomed.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Soirée and Ball was a very successful gathering, and must have yielded a welcome profit for the Secular Federation. Dancing went on in the large hall, and an entertainment in the minor hall, which Miss Vance and Mr. Ward had tastefully arranged for dramatic and other purposes. Everybody seemed well pleased with the evening's recreation. Messrs. Foote, Watts, Moss, Hunt, Heaford, Standing, R. O. Smith, W. H. Reynolds, and several other well-known Freethinkers were present.

Some time ago the Rev. C. Fleming Williams delivered an interesting discourse at the London Hall of Science. Mr. Foote, who was present, offered a brief criticism; and a suggestion was made that the matter in discussion should be more fully threshed out on a future occasion. Mr. George Standing, who induced Mr. Williams to deliver the discourse, has acted as negotiator. For a time nothing could be done in consequence of the County Council elections, and since then the state of Mr. Williams's health (we regret to say) has necessitated his taking a long holiday. He has, however, arranged with Mr. Standing to meet Mr. Foote at the Hall of Science on Friday, January 20. The subject for consideration will be "Christian Views of Man and Methods of Progress," and the admission will be free—only a collection will be made to defray the unavoidable expenses of the meeting.

The discussion between Mr. Williams and Mr. Foote will be perfectly friendly and very informal. It is not so much to be an "encounter" as an exchange of opinions. Each speaker will interrupt the other when he pleases, and ask for explanations, or for anything he desires to know. Such a mode of discussion, of course, would not always be possible. It could only be carried out where the speakers entirely respect each other, and are merely anxious to have their differences fairly ventilated.

Freethinkers should purchase their copies of the National Secular Society's *Almanack* for 1893 without unnecessary delay. Hitherto a good many persons have waited two or three months before ordering a copy. We hope they will be less tardy in future. The sooner the *Almanack* is sold out the sooner the Society will have back for other use the money it has invested in the publication.

The National Secular Society's friends should see if they cannot make it a Christmas present this year. We don't propose a self-denial week, but we do suggest that something should be set apart for disinterested purposes. Up to the present the Special Fund has only been moderately subscribed to. A great deal is still needed to make up the £200 asked for, and certainly needed. If a thousand friends would devote a Christmas shilling or two to this Fund, a hundred a little more, and a score or so a guinea apiece, we should begin the new year with a lighter heart.

Renan's will is a brief document and runs as follows: "I constitute Cornélie Scheffer, my wife, my universal legatee, in remembrance of our lively affection. I feel assured, in doing so, that I express the will of my children, being certain that whilst they have their mother no question of interests can arise between them. Executed and written by my hand, in sound health, bodily and mental, at Paris, the 4th of November, 1888.—E. RENAN."

This is interesting and beautiful. It shows the Christians how a great Freethinker may cultivate the noblest domestic

sentiments. Renan's wit was distasteful to the Philistines, who were therefore sceptical as to his "moral character." But everything shows that he lived a pure, laborious life; that he had no mean ambitions, no craving for wealth or power; that he was true to his principles and himself; and that he found his sweetest and surest reward in the love and respect of those who were most closely bound to him by the ties of nature.

The Camberwell Branch has arranged to have a social party on Sunday, Jan. 8, for the benefit of the funds of the London Secular Federation. Tea will be provided at 6, and a first-class entertainment will begin at 7, after which there will be a little dancing. The tickets are to be only ninepence each, and at this price there should be a big gathering from all the London Branches.

The Leyton Branch recently held its annual meeting. During the year sixty lectures have been delivered from its platform. It has had an uphill battle, but is ready to meet a fresh year's work with hope and energy.

Mr. John Judge, for some time secretary of the Leeds Branch, has had to remove to Leicester. He visits Leeds on Sunday next (Dec. 18), when the local Secularists will present him with a testimonial. The function will take place at Crampton's Temperance Hotel, Briggate. The tickets, including tea, are 1s. 6d, and can be obtained of H. Lyon, 17 St. James-street.

Mr. S. P. Putnam, president of the Freethought Federation of America, has had a two days' set debate at Golden Pond with the Rev. J. N. Hall, editor of the *Baptist Gleaner*, on the subject of the Inspiration of the Bible and the Comparative Morality of Freethought and Christianity. The debate is to be published in pamphlet form.

The subject "Is Christianity a Failure?" was broached at the Y.M.C.A., Hawes, and Mr. J. Routh contended with some force for the affirmative, his arguments being fairly reported in the *West Yorkshire Pioneer*.

The *Malthusian* for December, a copy of which we have received for notice, gives, from the *Encyclopédie Contemporaine*, an interesting account of Madame Huot, who is described as a pessimist and nirvanist, and whose discourses on Neo-Malthusianism, appear to have made a great sensation in Paris.

M. F. Ferrer, who went to the Madrid International Freethought Congress as representative of *La Vérité Philosophique*, gives his opinion that although the 600 delegates present represented not political revolutionaries, but *bona fide* Freethought societies, the government was apprehensive that the Congress would aid the republican movement led by Senor Ruiz Zorilla, a well-known Freethinker, who with his partisans scrupulously abstained from having anything to do with the Conference.

La Vérité Philosophique improves in interest. The December number has several able attacks on various items of superstition. We hope our contemporary will have an improved circulation during the coming year.

Goody-goody *Great Thoughts* for Dec. 10 gives a portrait of the bad young man, Heinrich Heine. The notice, written by Leily Elsner, is fortunately without any of the religiosity which disfigures most of the contributions to this otherwise estimable periodical.

We have just issued from our publishing office two essays by Shelley, with other matter, under the title of *Life, Death, and Immortality*. The pamphlet will be interesting to Freethinkers, and should if possible be circulated among Christians. The price is twopence.

Mr. J. E. Menzies has been carrying on the work of our movement for some time at Hetton-le-hole. He is now attempting to start a Branch of the N.S.S. If he does so we hope it will be supported by the local Freethinkers. Mr. Stanley Jones is delivering three lectures there to-day (Dec. 11) in the Miners' Hall.

The cremation movement is making gradual headway. We see that the remains of a lady member of one of the most influential Jewish families around Manchester were cremated on Thursday, Dec. 1, at the Manchester Crematorium, in the presence of a numerous body of mourners. There were also present, Chancellor R. C. Christie, M.A., vice-president of the Crematorium; Mr. Henry Simon, chairman of the Board; Mr. F. Smallman, one of the directors; and Mr. J. H. Simpson, the secretary. When the Jews begin to patronise cremation we are at the beginning of the end of earth-burial.

On Monday evening Mr. Foote lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Carr-street, Ipswich, on "Secularism Superior to Christianity." Mr. Robert Forder will accompany Mr. Foote and take the chair. After the lecture and any discussion an Ipswich Branch of the N.S.S. will be formally inaugurated. We hope this will be the beginning of an active Freethought propaganda in the Eastern Counties.

The *Freethinker* for the Christmas week will probably be a double number (price twopence) containing a quantity of seasonable reading matter and some good illustrations. A more definite announcement will be made in our next issue.

RENAN'S PHILOSOPHY.

BY DR. FELIX L. OSWALD.

[CONCLUDED.]

ETHICAL idealism, as opposed to the cash-register type of utilitarian morals, had no stauncher defender than Ernest Renan. Like Marcus Aurelius, he held that the sense of duty should contrive to dispense not only with the hope of reward, but even with the hope of escaping downright ingratitude.

"Men who devote their lives to the service of Truth must be prepared to face the risk of having to work for a small rate of direct wages. Nations, too, which work out social and religious problems in their own bosoms become almost always politically weak. Every country which dreams of a kingdom of God, or lives for grand, general ideas, and pursues a work of general interest, sacrifices through the same its individual destiny, enfeebles and destroys its role as a terrestrial country. One can never set oneself on fire with impunity."

He then adds:

"And yet, I wish to God that I could have succeeded in making it clear that there is in the pure cultivation of human faculties, and of the divine objects which they attain, a religion as sweet, as rich in delights as the most venerable forms of worship."

A passage which deserves to be inscribed on the title-page of every work devoted to the reconciliation of religion and science.

"Woe be to them who are at ease," says Carlyle, "because," comments Renan:

"The aim of humanity is not repose, but moral and intellectual perfection. How can people talk of taking their ease when they have the infinite to traverse and the perfect to reach? Mankind will repose only when it has reached perfection. It would be too strange if a few profane persons could, from motives of dollars and cents or personal interest, arrest the progress of the mind, the true religious problem. The most dangerous state for humanity would be that in which the majority, finding itself quite at ease and not wishing to be disturbed, should retain its repose at the costs of thought and of an oppressed minority. When that occurred, the only safety would be in the moral instincts of human nature, which no doubt would not be found wanting."

Nor does Renan shrink from the logical consequences of that theory in its application to religious problems. Colonel Ingersoll's remark that "an honest God is the noblest work of man," is said to have cost him the nomination for the governorship of Illinois; yet that proposition is merely an epigrammatical variation of Renan's prediction that

"And having organised humanity, human reason will one day proceed to organise God" (*The Future of Science*, p. 81).

And again:

"It is a bold thing to assign limits to the reforming power

of human reason, or to reject no matter what attempt on the plea that it is without precedent. Every reform was characterised by the same defect originally, and, besides, those who prefer that reproach do so nearly always because they have not a sufficiently extensive idea of the various forms of human society and human history. In the East, thousands of people die of starvation or of wretchedness without ever having thought of revolting against the established powers. In Europe, rather than die of hunger, a man thinks it better to snatch up a rifle. . . . The greater or lesser extent of a people's belief in fate is a test of their rank in civilisation. The Cossack blames no one for being knouted; it is his fate. The Turkish rajah bears no one a grudge for the burdens imposed upon him; it is his fate. The poverty-stricken Englishman nurses no grievance; if he starves to death it is the decree of fate. The Frenchman revolts if he suspects that his misery is the consequence of a social organisation capable of being reformed."

Yet Renan was very far from being a "Chauvinist." The cause of truth is dearer to him than the cause of France, and on occasions he takes the risk of treating his countrymen to decidedly severe moral and political lectures.

"In reflecting on the decay of the scientific spirit," he says, "it seems to me that the small importance attached among us to higher education, and the total want of institutions corresponding to the German universities, is one of its principal causes. And how can one help regretting at the same time the deplorable nullity to which the provinces seem condemned for want of local literary movements and institutions, when we come to consider that every small town in the Italy of the sixteenth century had its master painter and master musician, and that every town of 5,000 inhabitants in Germany is a literary centre, with a printing press devoted to works of science, a library, and often a university. When we consider all this we feel grieved at the want of initiative of a great country reduced to a slavish imitation of her capital. The distinction between Parisian good taste and provincial bad taste is the consequence of the same intellectual organisation; but it so happens that this distinction is as hurtful to the capital as to the provinces; it invests the question of taste with an exaggerated importance. All this is a proof of the somewhat melancholy fact that art, science, and literature do not flourish among us in consequence of an innate and spontaneous need, as in ancient Greece or in mediæval Italy, for with us, in the absence of stimulation from without, there is no production.

"Our morbid dread of pedantry explains why certain sciences are held back by a kind of shamefacedness and hardly dare to assert themselves openly. We are so terribly afraid of ridicule that everything which can possibly lend itself to a semblance of it arouses our suspicion, and the most worthy things by incidental associations may lay themselves open to it. The term pedantry, which, if not clearly defined, may be so mischievously applied, and which, with the unthinking is almost synonymous with everything relating to serious and scientific inquiry, has in this way become a scarecrow to subtle and refined intellects, who have often preferred to remain superficial rather than lay themselves open to a frivolous and absurd attack."

"Hope," says George Sand, "is the faith of this century," and Ernest Renan exalts that faith to the dignity of an intellectual religion.

"Many of my readers," he says, "may feel surprised at the frequency of my appeals to the future. Yet the only means of understanding and justifying the modern spirit is to look upon it as a necessary stage towards the perfect—in other words, toward the future. And this appeal is not the mere act of a blind faith falling back upon the unknown. It is the legitimate result emanating from the whole of the history of the human intellect. Let those take heart who dread to see the effects of the human mind stifled by material pre-occupations. Intellectual culture, speculative research, science and philosophy, possess the best of all possible guarantees—I mean the needs of human nature itself. Man will never live by bread alone. The disinterested pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good is as imperative a want to him as the need of satisfying his hunger and his thirst."—*Open Court*.

It is said that Job never lost his patience. This warrants the inference that he never undertook to explain a football game to a woman.

CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRISTIANS.

BY CHARLES C. CATTELL.

Christian.—Are you an Atheist?

Freethinker.—I never call myself by that name, but others do.

C.—Mr. H. denies that there is a God, and says you do also.

F.—Any God that has been affirmed, I may have denied; that is, I may have questioned what has been affirmed *about* God by someone else.

C.—I don't want any get out. Do you believe in a supreme power?

F.—Tell me what you mean by "supreme."

C.—Do you believe there is one above all?

F.—No, nor you either.

C.—I know there *must be* one above all—like at T.'s works—a head.

F.—Words have meanings, and "all" includes every-one; so that "above all" there cannot be any other "one." For instance, if "all" the people in the world were *in* this room, no "one" could be "above" them, on the roof.

C.—That's an absurd illustration of the great being who presides over the universe and fills all space.

F.—Now we have two more words. What is a "great being" and "universe"?

C.—Everybody knows.

F.—But as you are not "everybody," what do you know?

C.—I know what the Bible teaches me—that there is a God, and that he created the universe.

F.—You believe that all things came from nothing.

C.—I believe that everything is the effect of a cause, and that cause is the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.

F.—Is God the effect of a cause?

C.—What an absurd question about the First Cause of all that is.

F.—You affirmed that "everything" was an *effect*, and I also that God exists. If that is true, he must be caused, if he is and is any part of "everything."

C.—God is not a *thing*; he is a *spirit*.

F.—What is that?

C.—God the Father of all, who reveals himself in his Word.

F.—Then I may take it that, although "everything is the effect of a cause," God is not an effect—that is, he exists without any cause at all?

C.—Certainly. God is an eternal, almighty spirit.

F.—Do you not see that that is a *flat contradiction* of your first statement?

C.—No, I do not.

F.—Have you ever studied logic?

C.—No; logic has nothing to do with it. We take God's holy word for our guide, not human systems of logic.

F.—But you started this conversation with some object, did you not? Explain.

C.—Yes; I should like you to come back to the "faith once delivered to the saints," as you might do some good to the world then. All great men have believed in Christianity.

F.—I know more than you can tell me on both these subjects. Have you ever heard that Darwin was a "great man"?

C.—Yes; he was a great scientific man, who was buried in Westminster Abbey some years ago.

F.—Have you ever read his works?

C.—No; after attending to my business, with all its cares, I've no time.

F.—Well, what should you think of *my opinion* about your business, of which I am almost entirely ignorant?

C.—Nothing at all.

F.—That is just what I think of your's about all great men. I may just mention that Darwin did *not*, after full inquiry, believe in Christianity, or in the Creation. How now?

C.—I never heard of that, but if he did not, he is only *one* against all the world.

F.—That is by no means the case; but if it were true, this can be said: *he was one of the most competent weighers of evidence that ever lived.*

C.—That don't matter to me, if *all* scientific men rejected the Bible, because they only use their reason, which is by the fall of man corrupted, and no certain guide, while the writers of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

F.—If you believe anything you must do so by your *reason*. If I put all you say into Latin, can you read it?

C.—No; I have not studied languages.

F.—Then, although what you have said is true "done into Latin," you would not understand it.

C.—I have told you so.

F.—Then, if you could not understand it in that language, you could not believe it.

C.—No; I should want it translated.

F.—Then the Gospels in Greek you could not believe?

C.—We have translations of them.

F.—One thing lies at the foundation of all belief—you *must understand* it, or, like the Latin and Greek mentioned, you could not believe.

C.—We take the Bible and all our doctrines on faith as true.

F.—But not on faith in Greek or Latin, of which you are ignorant.

C.—But I have told you all our doctrines are translated; they are not in dead languages.

F.—But suppose they were in *dead* languages, what faith would you have then?

C.—In that case we should listen to the preachers, as they did in ancient times, and as illiterate people do now at our chapel on Sundays.

F.—But suppose the preachers *spoke* in a *dead* language too?

C.—That's absurd, as we know they don't.

F.—Now, what I want you to do is to treat me as an "illiterate," or as one of "ancient times," and explain your belief to me in the words of *reason* and prove it by *logical* process.

C.—There are plenty of books published to answer all unbelievers.

F.—Then you decline to proceed?

C.—Yes; I can't argue the question with you. You should hear our Dr. D.

F.—Unfortunately, I have been to "hear" him, and found him to be a gigantic windbag. He throws words about in all directions, the sense of which he never defines. Meaning of language is a little matter he overlooks. He reminds me of the fly on the coach-wheel on the high road in summer, which is supposed to say "See what a dust I am making."

C.—All you Freethinkers are prejudiced and bigoted.

F.—Perhaps you may be a little afflicted in that way, as I never saw you at any Freethought lecture.

C.—No, because your lectures are when I am at chapel, just at the same time.

F.—I suppose, if in the week, your business would not allow you?

C.—Certainly not.

F.—Then there is my last little book, which you say you have seen. What about that?

C.—Well, I bought one, and took it home, and opened it where you inquire how many millions of years it was since man was created?

F.—Well, go on. What about that?

C.—I at once closed the book.

F.—Why?

C.—Because it contradicts all I have been taught to believe at the Sunday-school and under Dr. D. at chapel.

F.—But what does that matter, if it is a rational view of the evidence?

C.—It is downright infidelity and Atheism, and you are placing many souls in danger by insinuating doubts into their minds, for which God will hold you responsible.

(To be continued.)

CONTRIBUTIONS TO N.S.S.

SPECIAL FUND.—J. C., 5s.; K. J., 2s. 6d.; F. F. Dowdall, 1s.; O. Anderson, 6s. 6d.; W. J. Weare, 10s.;

BENEVOLENT FUND.—I beg to acknowledge a case of clothing from P. W. Balding, also parcel from Mrs. Mann.

E. M. VANCE, assistant-sec.

CHRIST'S ADVENT.

It is past the time, dear Foote, for my second show below,
And I think I'll do it soon, for up here's extremely slow;
For there's David and old Abe and gang bustling round so
tame,

It makes me use a big, big word it's better not to name—
A word that has a resonance not unlike to dame.

But still, if I perform the trip 'twont be like it was before,
For parables and all such patter would be voted very poor;
And as for my new miracles, why there's Makebelieve and
Snook

Will make me shrink up very small and my Anseridae cook
My little goose, my tiny goose will very quickly cook.

Supposing I arrive quite safe, and commence to make a show,
You'll keep me from the General, who'd want to make me go
Marching up and down the town behind a trumpet or big
drum,

So that he could rake the shekels in—and when the show
was done

My share would be a micro-microscopic little sum.

I could also do my tours by rail and take a ticket on the
hatch,

And by my sleight of hand the booking clerk could often
catch;

My little sermons I could spout at stations where I stopp'd,
And could also do some oratory whilst having something hot—
Something mellow in a glass, and not out of a pot.

Of course there'd be no crucifixion and such pleasant little
treats,

No descending into hell and all those other little feats;
I should like to die quite natural, say on a good goose-
feather bed—

No doubt the editors would be quite jubilant I was dead,
For the profits on their specials would be in metal not like
lead.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE SECULAR
FEDERATION.

THE quarterly Conference was held last Sunday at Bradford,
Mr. J. G. Fisher in the chair. Messrs. Jones and Hemingway,
of Manchester, tendered their resignation of vice-presidents,
and Messrs. J. Umpleby (Blackburn) and A. Butterworth,
(Rochdale) were elected in their stead. After routine
business the following program was agreed upon in place
of that submitted by the Rochdale Branch.

1. Abolition of the oath and substitution of the affirmation
in all cases.
2. Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws and those concerning
Sunday observance.
3. That education in all week-day schools receiving
Government pay, shall be non-religious.
4. Abolition of all workhouse, prison, army, navy, and
other chaplaincies paid for out of the public purse.
5. An extension of the laws facilitating divorce.
6. Repeal of all laws granting to Christian churches,
chapels, schools, and other such buildings, an exemption
from taxation.

SAM STANBING, Organising Secretary.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A SECULAR SICK AND TONTINE SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of Nov. 20 you were good enough to
publish a letter of mine under the above heading, which
resulted in a few applications being sent to me for member-
ship of the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society,
which consequently will be carried on as usual, and ready to
receive many more new members to commence the new year.
Applications should be sent in or made as soon as possible at
my address. The society is registered under the Friendly
Societies Act, has withstood a very fair proportion of sickness
comparative with the small number of members, sustained
one death, and is now about to enter on its seventh year.
These facts, together with the object that it is intended to
bring Freethinkers in closer union with one another, should
ensure for it a large amount of support.—Yours, etc.

WILLIAM SIMONS.

12 Wolsey-road, Mildmay Park, N.

PROFANE JOKES.

A clergyman was giving Ralph a lesson in morals. "Now,"
said the preacher, "what is your duty towards your Christian
neighbor?" Ralph: "To keep your eye on 'im, sir!"

A laundry which stands in the shadow of a church bears
the appropriate legend on its sign-board, "Cleanliness is next
to Godliness."

Some dynamite lay
In a keg one day
Which a man kicked accidentally,
Now he whangs the lyre
Of a celestial choir
In the realms of the sweet subsequently.

Once upon a time the Roman Catholic Archbishop of
Cologne was catechising the children, and asked a boy, "Is
the sacrament of confirmation necessary to salvation?" "No,
your reverence," was the reply, "but when the occasion to
receive it presents itself it should not be missed." "A good
answer, my child," said the prelate; and turning to a little
girl who was near he asked, "Is the sacrament of marriage
necessary to 'salvation?" "No, your reverence, but when
the occasion presents itself it should not be missed."

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,
B. Hyatt, "The Devil a Liar from the Beginning"; preceded by
a dramatic study from *Romeo and Juliet* (2d. and 4d.) Tuesday at
8, dancing. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30,
C. Cohen, "Religion." Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class
(physical geography). Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class on
"Spencer's Ethics." Thursday at 8.30, debate, "Free Land v.
Nationalised Land," opened by R. N. McDougall (L.P.D.L.)
Saturday at 8.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 11, debating class,
I. Blann, "Teachings and Acts of Christ"; 7.30, H. Snell, "The
Old Men of the Sea Church"; preceded by recital of "The Ballad of
Splendid Science."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Waste: 8,
W. Heaford, "Christianity and Secularism."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 6.30, music; 7,
T. Crisfield, "Hypnotism and Suggestion."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.O.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "The
Problem of the Unemployed" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7,
G. W. Foote, "The Trial of Christianity—a Reply to the Rev.
Dr. Bruce" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8.15, C. J. Hunt,
"Gods: Ancient and Modern" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday
at 8, Touzeau Parris, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless—a
Reply to the Rev. Dr. Cook."

Notting Hill Gate—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-
street: 7.30, half-yearly general meeting of West London Branch.
Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7,
Mrs. Louisa Samson, "Social Problems"; preceded by vocal and
instrumental music.

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street: Thursday at 8,
W. Heaford, "The Consolations of Religion" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, A. Guest, "Taking Things for
Granted."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet
and his Koran."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 4, upstairs)
6.30, William Diack, "Natural Genesis" (free).

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street:
A. Lord, 11, "Christianity and Civilisation"; 7, "Christ and his
Teaching."

Blackburn—Spinners' Institute, St. Peter-street: John Tither-
ington, 3, "Christianity, Untrue, Unjust, and Inconsistent";
6.30, "The Decline of Christianity."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 85 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, Arthur
Spencer, "Three Cheers for Gladstone."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 2.30, Mr. Fox,
"The Religion of Socialism."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11,
members' meeting; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, concert
and entertainment.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion
class, impromptu speeches; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "Christianity
in the Nineteenth Century."

Glasgow—St. Rollox Eclectic Society, Toynbee Hall, Parson-
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Disbelieve the Four Gospels"; 3, "The Difficulties of the Bible
Considered"; 7.30, "The Cooling of Hell."

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall, Northumberland-street: Mrs. Thornton Smith, 11, "The Malthusian Question: what is it?"; 3, "Immortality"; 6.30, "Morality."
 Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street; 6.30, extra special meeting of members; 7, Mark Whitehead, "Religion and Custom."
 Ipswich—Co-operative Hall: Monday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Secularism Superior to Christianity as an Intellectual Light and a Moral Guide."
 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, Dr. Power, "The Brain" (with illustrations).
 Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Charles Watts, 11, "Education: Secular and Theological—a Reply to the Bishop of Manchester"; 3, "Theosophy: from a Secular Standpoint"; 6.30, "Christ on the War-Path." Tuesday, debating society, members' meeting.
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, a lecture.
 Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Sam Standing, 11, "Christ on the Labor Question"; 3, "Man's Search for God"; 7, "How St. Paul made Christianity"; tea at 5.
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, entertainment.
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, H. Wotton, "An Essay on Thomas Paine"; 7, G. A. Austin, "Was Christ Divine?"

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 O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Dec. 22, Walthamstow. Jan. 1, m., Battersea.
 C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Dec. 11, Libra Hall; 18, Edmonton.
 S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—Jan. 1, Chatham; 29, Camberwell.
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