

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## SPECIAL.

Next week's "Freethinker," dated Sunday, January 1, will be a Double Number, illustrated, price Twopence.

## WHY WAS CHRIST BORN?

WERE a visitor from a distant planet, knowing nothing of this world's religions, to walk about in a Christian country, say in England, on the day of that ancient Pagan festival which is now called Christmas; were he to observe the eating and drinking, dancing and card-playing, and general jollification; he would never suspect that the people around him were celebrating the birthday of their God.

Were the visitor informed of this fact, and resolved to pursue his inquiries, he would discover that the celebrants were, for the most part, as ignorant as stones of the whole matter; that they were, in fact, the dupes of a long train of imposture.

Jesus Christ, whom the Christians worship as God, was not born on the twenty-fifth of December; at least the chances are very much against it. If he ever lived, he must have been born on *some* day; but, in the absence of all positive information on this point, the odds are three hundred and sixty-four to one against any day that is selected being right. The orthodox date is, indeed, quite inconsistent with the Gospel narrative. The birth of Jesus Christ is related to have been proclaimed to shepherds who were watching their flocks by night. This is impossible in Palestine in the depth of winter. The flocks are not pastured out at night until the spring.

Jesus Christ had been dead for generations before his birthday became an object of interest. According to the Acts of the Apostles, it was at Antioch that his followers were first called Christians; yet it was at Antioch that St. Chrysostom said—three hundred and fifty years after the Crucifixion—that they had but lately heard of the twenty-fifth of December as their Savior's birthday.

The twenty-fifth of December was, as we have already said, a Pagan festival. It celebrated the new birth of the sun. The twenty-first of December is the shortest day, and is assigned in the Roman Calendar to St. Thomas, who doubted his Master's resurrection. For three days (as may be seen by the Almanack) the orb of light appears to be stagnant; but the fourth day begins to lengthen, the sun decisively commences another progression, and the Pagans expressed their joy at the auspicious occurrence. This festival was seized upon by the Christian Church; the SUN was turned into the SON: and the Pagans who were weaned or forced into Christianity, under Constantine and his successors, were gratified to learn that the new religion, while it altered their shibboleths, made very little difference with regard to their rites and customs.

But if the day of Jesus Christ's birth is uncertain, the determination of the year is equally difficult. We are informed by the third Gospel that Jesus was born when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. This was at least six years after the commencement of the Christian era. Jewish chronology assigns a much earlier date for the birth of the Nazarene; a point on which the reader may consult the *Jewish Life of Christ*, a remarkable production that should be read by every student of the origins of Christianity.

All this would be discovered by our imaginary visitor from a distant planet. He would also find that the deity of Jesus Christ was never suspected during his lifetime; that the doctrine grew up gradually, with many fluctuations of fortune, in the Christian Church; and that it was only imposed on the whole Christian world after generations of fierce controversy and cruel bloodshed.

Supposing, however, that Jesus Christ *was* God, or part of God, or a messenger from God, we may still ask—Why was he born? What was his object? And how has he carried it out?

Jesus Christ was certainly not born to teach the world anything new in religion, philosophy, or morals. Every good (or bad) text in the Gospels is a repetition of what had been previously uttered. Originality was not one of his characteristics. Even the assertion that he brought immortality to light is false in the light of Jewish doctrine before his birth, and ridiculous in the light of the ancient systems of Egypt and India.

Christ did not come as a man to illuminate the world, but as a god to redeem it. Such is the teaching of orthodox Christianity. But if Christ's object was the world's redemption, his failure is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable."

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the command of Christ to his apostles. He also said, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end." This can only mean that they, or their successors, were to convert the world to Christianity; it must at least mean that they were to preach the gospel to all ears, so that all might have an opportunity of embracing it. But has this been done? After the lapse of nearly two thousand years, more than half of the world's inhabitants have never heard the gospel preached. Only a quarter of the human race are professed Christians, and among *them* how many are *real*? Buddhism, which was founded by a man, includes more millions than Christianity. Nor is there the slightest prospect of further success. The races that stood outside Christianity at first are outside it still. Missionary effort makes no considerable impression on the vast populations of Asia and Africa. The heathen who are converted in distant lands do not equal the number of persons in Christian countries who are either sceptics or indifferent.

Jesus Christ is called the Prince of Peace. Angels sang at his birth of "peace on earth and good-will among men." Surely this was ironical. More blood has been shed in the name of Christ than in the name



of any other deity. It is an indisputable fact, also, that all other differences—racial, political, or social—are aggravated by difference in religion. Englishmen and Irishmen are both Christians, but they worship Christ in different ways, and this diversity is the principal secret of their long antagonism. Had Ireland been Protestant, or England been Catholic, the two nations would have found a speedier way to reconciliation. The last great war in Europe was between Catholic France and Protestant Germany. It was fomented by the Jesuits, who used the Empress Eugenie as their tool. Christ's priests never shrank from crime to win their ends. They have ever been ready to drench the earth with tears or blood to promote the interest of their Church.

Peace was *not* brought by Christ. If it was it ascended with him. He was born at a time of peace, during the reign of the mild and wise Augustus. Less than half a million soldiers sufficed to maintain the peace of that far-stretching empire, and to secure its frontiers against the outer barbarians. At present, in Europe alone, six millions of soldiers grasp arms in readiness for mutual slaughter. At the close of every winter we speculate on war in the spring. After all these centuries of the reign of Christ the military systems of Europe are crushing the nations. Young men spend their days in barracks, two hundred millions are wrung from the people to support armies and navies, and another two hundred millions to pay the interest on national debts.

Peace on earth! The brotherhood of man! Yes, the peace of kings and priests; the brotherhood of Cain and Abel.

Professor Bruce, in his recent volume of *Apologetics*, dwells on the love for the poor and oppressed displayed by the Hebrew prophets, and declares that Christ, as the last and greatest prophet, was to be the best friend of the needy and the desolate. But is this a fact? So far as the poor are concerned, Jesus Christ might as well have remained in heaven. Poverty is a standing curse of Christian societies. Jay Gould died worth twenty millions and his ignominious corpse reposes in a marble-pillared mausoleum. Many of his fellow-citizens die daily from starvation, or the diseases of ill-fed bodies, and are buried out of the way as public nuisances. Dives and Lazarus still live in the same city. The beggar's stomach is as empty, and his sores as painful, as ever; and Dives is never frightened by that little parable about the dry tongue and the missing drop of water. Christ said, "The poor ye have always with you," and the remark was a prophecy. The poor *are* always with us. *They* have not been redeemed. They owe nothing to Christ. He was not born for them.

Peace has not come, poverty has not gone; the people still suffer, and are still cheated with "kingdom-come." Christ was not born to redeem us in this world. Oh, they say, he will redeem us in the next world. He was born to lead us to heaven and save us from hell. But if he cannot help us *here*, how will he help us *there*? Let the truth be told—He is a failure. As a god he is contemptible. He came to this world to no purpose. It would have been better if he had left us Home Rulers to manage our own affairs. Jehovah was a curse to the Jews, and Christ has been a curse to Christendom. We at least are not grateful to him. We hope he will soon go the way of other gods into oblivion. We believe he is going there rapidly. He is perishing because he is being found out. His pretensions are belied by the history of eighteen hundred years. He was born once, but it was a mistake. All he has now to do is to die.

G. W. FOOTE.

## THE GOD OF CHRISTMAS.

TO-DAY'S ancient festival has not the slightest connection with the birthday of Jesus, the Jewish carpenter's wife's son, for of that day, or even that year, knoweth no man. But with the nativity of Christ the God, the dayspring from on high, who walks on the waters, restores dead vegetation to life, and turns water into wine; the veritable light of the world, to whom be power and glory evermore, its connection is both intimate and permanent. No less a person than Sir Isaac Newton\* saw and pointed out that all the principal feasts of the Christian Calendar have an astronomical basis. His Protestantism prevented the great astronomer from drawing the inevitable inference. For Protestantism, in lopping off the most corrupt and Pagan excrescences from Christianity, has thereby obscured its origin. To those who study its history, rites, dogmas and fables in the light of comparative religion it is manifest that Christianity embodied much of ancient Pagan worship, especially in its dominant solar and reproductive elements.

Christmas was not instituted to celebrate the birth of Jesus in Palestine at a time when shepherds could not watch their flocks by night, but Christ was said to have been born about the time of the winter solstice, because this was the old Pagan season for celebrating the rebirth of the Sun. The shortest day, when savage man might almost doubt whether warmth, light, and vegetation would return, is naturally dedicated to doubting Thomas. The longest night, as Brady in his *Olavis Calendaria* tells us, was held in particular veneration, and considered to have produced all the others, as well as the days; whence they termed it *Mother Night*, and calculated their years as beginning from thence; holding a festival in honor of Thor, one of their greatest and most powerful deities, in whom, as they believed, was vested the supreme command of the Elements; and praying for a favorable year and fruitful seasons." In the Roman Calendar the winter solstice was dated the 25th of December. The previous week was celebrated the Saturnalia, or Feast of Time, when presents were interchanged between friends; all classes were devoted to mirth and feasting, slaves enjoyed liberty, and wore caps as badges of freedom; wax tapers were lighted in the temples, and all sorts of jollity prevailed.

The accessories of Christmas sufficiently show its Pagan origin and meaning. The mince pies and puddings were of old a veritable Pagan sacrament, the partaker entering into veritable communion with the elements. The evergreens, like the child-god, symbolise the continuance and renewal of nature's life from year to year, the power of the returning sun to clothe the earth anew in green, and bring once more flower and fruit, the berry and ripe corn. Carols were formerly sung to the holly, as still to the Christ child. The Christmas tree is probably a survival of the extensive tree worship of our Pagan forefathers. The tree was the symbol of all vegetative life, and, as Mr. Grant Allen has suggested, its cultus may be connected with ancestor worship from the fact of trees often springing out of graves of the buried dead. Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, has shown the connection between certain Christmas customs and the worship of the corn spirit and that of vegetative life. In short, it is admitted by Christians themselves that their chief festival is largely founded upon Paganism. And this is indeed true of every item of their religion. It is just because of its Pagan spirit that Freethinkers can heartily join in its celebration. The God of Christmas is no emaciated, melancholy man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, but a jolly, rotund, rubicund old boy, bent on enjoying the good things of this life.

\* See his chapter "Of the Time of the Birth and Passion of Our Savior" in his *Dissertation on the Prophecies of Daniel*.



His coming announces that the light of the world, though shortened, is not withdrawn; that vegetation, though dead, will rise again from the tomb; that, amid cold and darkness, there may be found a season of gladness, sociability, delight. Let us drink his jolly good health.

J. M. WHEELER.

### OUR NATIONAL FEAST.

THERE is nothing more dear to the Anglo-Saxon race than home, and nothing tends more to adorn that home with peace, love and happiness than the ever-pleasing associations connected with Christmas. Such pleasures possess a unique charm for most people, and prove, for a period at least, a sure antidote to that gloom and melancholy which alas! too frequently shadow life. Generosity at this season is indulged in to a greater extent than at any other time of the year, and miserly indeed is that man considered who, having the means, refuses to yield to the impulse of benevolence.

For countless generations strange legends and wild stories have been prominent features of the December festival. Of course our national poet, whose marvellous genius seldom allowed him to overlook anything, puts the following legendary remarks into the mouth of Marcellus in the play of *Hamlet*:

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes,  
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,  
This bird of dawning singeth all night long:  
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;  
The nights are wholesome: then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, nor witch have power to charm,  
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

It is at this "hallowed time" that families in one accord meet around the festive table; the sun sinks early in the West, the fires burn brightly, lights are turned on, the flowing bowl is introduced, and then the revelry begins. The scientist puts his diagrams aside and has his fossils decked with evergreens, the philosopher quits his studies, the tradesman closes his ledger, and all for the time being yield to the fascinations of the occasion and drink health and prosperity to one and all. Even the demure and stately lady submits with a blush to the usual ceremony of the mistletoe, and general hilarity, however shocking to pious feelings, exerts its prerogative and its absolute sway. It is at this merry period that strife is forgotten, wrongs are forgiven, class distinctions are ignored, high and low, rich and poor, mingle together and share the joys of the festive season. The hungry are fed, the sorrow-stricken are radiated with smiles, and the New Testament assurance "Blessed are they that mourn," and "Woe unto you that are full and unto you that laugh" is referred back to the committee for future consideration. The sedate Quaker who ventures among the boys is reminded by certain tugs at the tails of his coat that after all there's "room for mirth and trifling here." The parish curate, too, inspired by the surrounding influence, is induced to sing:

I'll kiss my maiden's lips divine  
And drink the best of Rhenish wine;  
And when the foaming glass I tope  
I'll fancy that I am the Pope.

And thus Our National Feast goes on, until "the knell of parting day" is heard, when all have to resume their usual positions and avocations and continue to play their respective parts in the stern battle of life.

Now what is the meaning of this festivity? Why is it that we have this brief cessation from the troubles and anxieties of existence, and this annual display of jolity and generosity? Surely it cannot be because a "king was born" who was not a king, or that "a new religion" appeared which was not new in any

sense whatever. Christians allege that these supposed events were the origin of Christmas. But probably the real cause, so far as the present generation is concerned, is that "It was my father's custom, and so it shall be mine." Customs, and particularly agreeable ones, ever grow. It is unnecessary here to produce historical facts for the purpose of showing that the keeping of Christmas as a religious festival is of purely Pagan origin. In past years ample evidence has been given in this journal by Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Foote to prove that the 25th of December was the day assigned to celebrate the birth of numerous alleged Saviors long anterior to the birth of Christ. To us it seems paradoxical for a day to be selected for the birth of a King and Savior when the year is dying and nature sleeps. Still, a good feast can be enjoyed and a period of happiness appreciated, come when they will. Emerson was so struck with this trait in our national character that he believed if the old island were burnt up, we should assemble on the cinders, and hold a dinner party if only to celebrate the event.

It is a bitter satire for Christian millionaires to direct the decoration of their mansions with the emblems of the dark-minded heathen and to join in the chorus of, "We are all born equal, friends; We are all born free." Susan Coolidge sums up Christmas celebrations thus:

We ring the bells and we raise the strain,  
We hang a garland everywhere,  
And bid the taper twinkle fair,  
And feast and frolic—and then we go  
Back to the same old lives again.

The Christian poet seeks to direct our thoughts to the songs of the angels, the march of the wise men, and the setting star whose reflection may be seen in the well at Bethlehem by poetic and virgin minds. The preacher sees in December 25th the glory of divinity, a proof in history of the truth of his faith; and he considers that it furnishes him with a theme that gives the thought that bursts forth into song—

A something that shall yet inspire  
Myriads of souls unborn with fire.

To the Secularist and to the Freethinker Christmas comes only as a holiday, a relief from many of the cares of life. They can indulge in an innocent joke and sing a song on Christ's birthday as well as on their own. They may see in the birth of most children a new fountain that may purify the stream of life, which has been too frequently polluted by the orthodox doctrines of the Fall of Man and the depravity of humanity. We must not, however, at this season become too serious, or we may be induced to inquire how Christians can be so fond of removing the pangs of hunger and the gloom of sadness when Jesus pronounced the victims of those unfortunate conditions as being "Blessed." We may also be inclined to ask how is it possible for Christians to be happy and festive, and to rejoice that Jesus was born into a world of sin and misery, and that he left it full of suffering and want, without furnishing a remedy to remove these evils of Christian civilisation? Those who have to bear "The whips and scorn of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely," or who have "To grunt and sweat, under a weary life," can see no cause for joy in the birth of one who utterly failed to relieve the world of its greatest afflictions. It is unfortunately too true that at the present time, when happiness and abundance should brighten every home, misery, poverty and starvation mar our National Feast and prevent the enjoyment of that peace and comfort which the boasted "glad tidings" of the gospel have failed to secure.

Still, while wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas, we may also compliment Christians that for one day at least in the year they do not allow themselves to be seriously affected by the thought that their



master was "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief." It is well that their solemn faces should bear a modified smile, if only for a short time. Is it, however, too much to hope that "Peace and goodwill" will yet be deemed by Christians as something more than a mere sentiment? Is not such a state much more to be desired for all mankind than only for the special benefit of the elect? It will be a turning point in Christian history when believers give up considering only the interest of their party, and when they direct their attention to the welfare of the human family in general. The god of battles has been worshipped long enough. What we require is a Prince of Peace in our midst, if he be one who is capable of establishing plenty, harmony, and goodwill on earth. It is indeed sad to know that the Galilean Prince has failed to do this during the two thousand years that he is said to have reigned in Christendom. But, let the dead past bury its dead, and let preaching give way to practice, and, in the words of one who has recently gone from us, let Christians above all their merry Christmas chimes—

Ring in the valiant man and free;

Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CHARLES WATTS.

### THE STAR OF THE EAST.

Ye little twinkling stars that shine so bright  
In full ethereal glory all the night,  
Pray tell us, if ye can, which was the star  
That led the magi from their homes afar.

—A. J. WALLER.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE following is the true gospel according to the prophet Amos, the manuscript of which has been examined and certified by duly qualified experts to be in the handwriting of the said prophet—the said MSS. being now open for inspection by all unbelieving Christians, at the office of the *Freethinker* every Sunday until further notice.

Verse 1.—Now it came to pass one winter's night, in the year of grace eighteen hundred and ninety-two, that the prophet Amos attended a political banquet and fared sumptuously on the fat of the land.

2 And when he was well filled he gave heed to some political speeches of a depressing character, which made him yawn and doze so that he was pleased when the hour for his departure came.

3 And behold, when he retired to rest his sleep was disturbed, and he moaned and groaned so strangely that the fair prophetess, who lay beside him, said within herself, Surely the holy spirit is upon him and he dreameth a dream.

4 And when the prophet Amos arose in the morning his wife, the prophetess, spoke unto him and said, Tell me, I pray you, the dream that you dreamed last night; for your face was lit up with a divine expression, and you gave utterance to strange sounds which were doubtless meant to convey a miraculous message.

5 But the prophet pondered for a moment, and then, placing his hands gently upon his knees, opened his mouth and said,

THE DREAM which I dreamt last night was indeed strange, but not stranger than many others which are to be found in the various gospels that have been given for the misunderstanding and bamboozling of mankind. I dreamt, indeed, that as I came away from the meeting last night a friend tapped me gently on the shoulder and, looking up into the heavens, exclaimed, Behold the star!

"What star?" said I. "That one which shines so conspicuously in the heavens; I think it is called Mars. Let us follow it, for I verily believe that some good omen it doth portend to the children of Israel." And so we fixed our gaze upon the star, and followed it

street by street until we arrived at the East-end—Whitechapel it is called—and then behold the star stayed dead still over a little shanty called "The Pig and Whistle"; and when we had reached the house, my friend remarked that this was the abode of old Joe Davidson, the Whitechapel carpenter; let us knock and "inquire within," he said, and ascertain the meaning of this "knowing star" which halts in its celestial journey in such an extraordinary manner. But when we had examined the door thereof, behold we could find no knocker and no bell, but only a latch.

"Strange," said my friend, "that in the East we find so many evidences of old-world customs. Why, even here we have a primitive door, and we have merely to press the latch thereof to enable us to walk in." Without further ceremony my friend opened the door and we walked in. When we had rested a while we were taken into a little room, where lay a young woman who had that day given birth to a child. On the following day we were introduced to the babe—a nice, bright-looking little Jew-boy, whom the father said was to be called Joshua, because it was predicted that his name should become famous in the land of his birth.

When we had each made the boy a present of all the coppers we had about us, we shook hands with the old man, kissed the bald head of the child, and said a few encouraging words to the mother, we made our departure; and as we turned into the Mile-end-road, lo and behold I slipped on some orange peel that lay on the pavement, and fell on my head with tremendous force; and then—why then, my dear prophetess, I awoke.

#### CHAPTER II.

DREAM THE SECOND.—And when I had dosed again for a while, I turned over on to my back, and behold, I soon began to dream again; and in my dream I saw strange visions. I saw young Joshua Davidson, grown to manhood, working at his bench as a carpenter. I saw him in the evening preaching to his Jewish brethren; but he preached a strange doctrine, which few could understand and fewer put into practice.

Then when winter came on I saw that he joined a motley army of "unemployed" and carried a red flag, and proclaimed the near approach of a social revolution, whereat his Jewish friends were very indignant and remonstrated with him. He denounced employers, and said that poverty was the sure road to heaven. I saw him on the Sabbath in the synagogue, and I heard him proclaim, before the whole assembly, that the Jewish scriptures were a fraud and a folly, a sham and a delusion. I saw him brought for this offence before the high priest and congregation, and solemnly anathematised with all the holy anathemas wherewith Joshua anathematised Jericho, and the maledictions wherewith Elisha cursed the children, and all the maledictions written in the Book of the Law. I heard the priest curse him "That every night he'd dream of the Devil and wake in a fright." I heard him cursed in all the strange languages of the Jewish people. I heard them curse him in eating, curse him in drinking, curse him in sleeping, curse him in winking and snoozing.

Never was heard such a terrible curse,  
But what gave rise to no little surprise,  
Nobody seemed one penny the worse.

Young Joshua smiled the smile of contempt.

After this I saw Joshua leading a crusade against vice and immorality. But one day, when he was holding forth to a large congregation of Gentiles, a disreputable-looking fellow came upon the platform and asked Joshua how he could dare to instruct people in morality when he himself was the illegitimate son of a Jewish priest, and not the son of old Joe Davidson at all.



Young Joshua sprang upon his assailant with the ferocity of a tiger, and would have rent him in pieces; but several friends interposed and drew him away. Then I saw him at a Trafalgar Square meeting, and I heard him denounce all forms of government as an organised tyranny, the reigning monarch as an impostor. He went on to affirm that he was the true king, and if the people would enlist under his banner he would undertake to make short work of the existing monarchy and its servile government. One of the inspectors of police on duty was about to arrest him for sedition, but the superintendent said that Joshua was perfectly harmless, and an arrest would only result in giving him increased notoriety.

Anon I saw Joshua grown to middle age; he had sobered down a little in temperament and had become an advocate of Freethought. But there was the same extravagance of expression, the same earnest enthusiasm that made him a source of perpetual anxiety to his opponents from the beginning of his public career.

"I saw him next at St. Paul's, and in the midst of the service he rose and said that priests had befooled the world too long with their false religion, with its absurd stories of gods and devils, heavens and hells, and that the day of reckoning for these false teachers was at hand. I saw him finally, when he was arrested, take a revolver from his pocket, and, placing it to his head, blow out his desperate — Bang! bang! bang! My goodness, dear, what was that?"

"Only someone knocking at the door." "Thank goodness! Yes, my fair prophetess, and it was such knocking as that that woke me out of my second dream."

Such, then, is the Gospel that may now be seen at the office of the *Freethinker*, and that hereafter will be known as the Gospel according to the Prophet.

A. B. MOSS.

#### CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRISTIANS.

BY CHARLES C. CATTELL.

[CONTINUED.]

REV. D.—You make large pretensions of enlightenment, and seem to think we take in all sorts of nonsense.

F.—Well, one thing you can't deny; you pretend to believe in an infallible, unchanging book, written in *mutable* languages and in different ages. You can scarcely read Chaucer now.

D.—That's an old superstition.

F.—But men have been imprisoned and burnt for disbelieving it by your ancestors.

D.—Are your freethinking ancestors free from all faults—perfect?

F.—Free from forming an impossible creed, an unbelievable faith, and then persecuting others who refused to accept such.

D.—What do you fellows mean by "impossible"? How do you know what is or is not possible?

F.—As to what "you fellows mean," I'll answer for myself. When I say miracles are impossible, I only mean you can't work one, and don't know anybody that can or ever did.

D.—That's merely Tom Paine over again.

F.—That may be, but I don't know that his being called "Tom" is less vulgar than my speaking of "Jack" the Baptist.

D.—But why call him "Jack"?

F.—To show my contempt for him as a vulgar and inferior creature. Is that your reason?

D.—No, merely custom and familiarity; but, as you put it, I think Thomas would have been better.

F.—It would have been truthful.

D.—I think Paine and Voltaire, although mistaken, were good men, so I have no contempt for them.

F.—I know the clergy insult us by calling us names, but I am pleased to find you above such conduct. But tell me, what is your real reason for advocating Christianity?

D.—Well, I teach my folks as much as they can *bear*; but, like Paine, I believe in God and hope for a future state.

F.—Then you think it best to take the name?

D.—Yes, I look upon it as a kind of life assurance. If my church and schools *should* be burnt down—which God forbid!—they can be rebuilt again by the funds of the society.

F.—But that does not meet our case. We want an assurance against *eternal* fire, which involves a big subscription on doubtful directors' credit and doubtful investment.

D.—Oh, that's all old theological bogey rubbish, like the other doctrines taught about the fall and all the rest of it. The only thing you have to do is justice, loving mercy, and walk humbly with God.

F.—To use an ancient phrase, "Thou almost persuadedest me to be a Christian."

D.—Follow your highest light, your matured thought, wherever it leads you.

F.—Amen!

QUAKERESS.—My son tells me thou dost not believe in our God, the loving father of all.

F.—I do not believe in the God who drowned *all* his children, and then put his own son—his only beloved son—to death.

Q.—Thou hast been brought up in the Church of England, our Edward tells me.

F.—That is so, madam—the Church that imprisoned you Quakers by the thousand, although they professed to believe in the only true God.

Q.—They were wicked persecutors, who knew not what spirit they were of.

F.—There can be no doubt about their persecuting spirit, about the only spirit common to all Christians, save and except those organised by George Fox, whose prison I visited at Scarborough last summer.

Q.—I am pleased to learn thou seekest for truth, and if thou forsakest all wrong thoughts taught thee, and sittest still, God will come unto thee, for it is written, "I will draw nigh unto thee."

F.—You will excuse me, madam, but I have been sitting still a quarter of an hour, and do not think God is coming this afternoon; so I will, with your permission, join Edward in the garden.

EDWARD.—Has mother brought you to a knowledge of the truth? There's a box of cigars and some Bass; you must want a change. But we must stay in the garden and be peripatetic philosophers, for our folks are *anti*-everything.

F.—No, they are not; they are *for* liberty and education, and to the latter I attribute your ability to instruct me in Latin, Greek, and English, for which I am ever grateful.

REV. DR. H.—Thought I would call on my way, on the ground of old acquaintance.

F.—Have not seen you since you passed Queen's College. What degree did you obtain?

H.—Only the holy hands of the bishop on my head, making me "Rev."

F.—And a minister of a Church you denounced when you lectured with me as unscriptural and unreasonable.

H.—But my opinions are modified now.

F.—Yes. I see you preach to-day with a *collection* for the famine, instead of prayers for "our daily bread."

H.—Of course we must use the *means* as well as prayer.

F.—I see you no more than I depend on "the prayer of faith" or the miraculous supply of loaves and fishes—*when they are wanted*.

H.—I see you still persist in your old objections.

F.—Yes. I have not turned liar or hypocrite yet.

H.—Is that intended for me?

F.—I did not invite you, and you need not call again. You know it's all stuff and nonsense; that you are preaching to get a name for your rich wife and be "respectable."

H.—Well, you know—call a dog a bad name, and you may as well hang him.

F.—Go your own way and I'll go mine. Good-bye. By the bye, I read your sermon on the explosion, in



which you say fourteen of the girls were "providentially saved" and in the hospital.

H.—Yes, bless the Lord, that is so.

F.—But the other seventeen were "destroyed providentially" beyond recognition.

H.—You seem dissatisfied with all I say and do now.

F.—Yes, because you *know better*.

H.—You know the French proverb?

F.—Yes; but I don't "evilly think." I truthfully think that if "providence" did the one it did the other. You can't separate the two and take the half that suits you. Ta-ta!

C.—Since our last debates I have taken B.A. and am made F.C.S.

F.—I understand the examination at L.U. is more exacting and severe than at O. or C.

C.—Yes. I wish you would go up.

F.—That's impossible, owing to several causes.

C.—But it would give you more importance in the eyes of the world.

F.—That may be, but I must make a shift with my knowledge without the "degrees." But I suppose you will not care to meet me now you are B.A.?

C.—You have upset me enough. I have abandoned the R.C. Church, in which I was trained.

F.—But surely you will be happier outside.

C.—I hope so; but I am writing a *Refutation of Atheism*, which, by permission, I am to inscribe to the Bishop of P——, the Protestant luminary.

F.—How are you going to accomplish that little undertaking?

C.—I am demonstrating the existence of God geometrically, and want your opinion before I send it in for the approval of the bishop.

(To be continued.)

## ACID DROPS.

Mr. Wyke Bayliss once came under the lash of James Thomson ("B.V."). The castigation was administered in the *Secularist*, which Mr. Foote was editing, in 1876. Under the heading of "An Inspired Critic on Shelley," Thomson wrote a brief article on Mr. Wyke Bayliss, in which every sentence was full of Swiftian satire. It seems, however, that Mr. Wyke Bayliss has not profited by the lesson. He is still living, and as foolish as ever. He is president of the Royal Society of British Artists, and as such he finds his opinions taken with ludicrous seriousness. The newspapers have reported his recent lecture on "The Authenticity of the Commonly Received Portrait of Christ" in which he argues that the portrait of Jesus affected by Christian artists is a real likeness of the Prophet of Nazareth.

One thing is clearly overlooked by Mr. Bayliss. Jesus was a Jew. Now the Christian painters never give him a single Jewish feature. They neglect the Semitic type altogether, and depict what pleases the taste of Europeans.

Mr. Bayliss traces back the typical Christ to the Roman catacombs, which, by the way, are a great distance from Palestine. He says that the early portrait of "our Lord as the Good Shepherd" is mentioned by Tertullian; and as Tertullian "lived and wrote about the middle of the second century," this brings us to the Apostolic age, and it is "quite certain that St. John, St. Peter, and St. Paul would never have sanctioned the perpetuation in the churches of a likeness they did not recognise to be true."

The chronology of Mr. Bayliss is wrong. Tertullian was not writing in the middle of the second century. They say he was born then, and it is not recorded that he wrote in his cradle. Further, there is not the slightest evidence that John or Peter was ever in Rome. Paul seems to have been there, but he never saw Jesus in the flesh. Finally, the man who talks about Christian "churches" (as an architect or an artist) in the days of the apostles is hopelessly ignorant of the early history of the Church. Mr. Wyke Bayliss has a good deal to learn, and he should learn it before he lectures again on this "interesting subject."

It may be observed that the Christian artists have created an ideal Christ, which they have imposed on the world as a

real likeness. In the same way, the writers of the first two centuries made up an ideal Christ, and this the Church has imposed on the world as a real likeness. Both facts, taken together, will produce a greater effect on candid minds than Mr. Wyke Bayliss's lecture.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is indignant at Mr. St. George Mivart's article on "Happiness in Hell." It doesn't believe there is anything of the sort there. It accuses Mr. Mivart of "jugglery" and of "caring more for the Romish faith than for morals and truth."

"The Bible reader and believer," says our indignant contemporary, "will be not hoodwinked." They are all hoodwinked.

Miss Willard, the American temperance lady who is now in England, being interviewed by a Christian journal, said, "It is very well for Colonel Ingersoll, our brilliant American infidel, to say, 'Let us take one world at a time,' but when some loved voice," etc., etc. We need not write it all. Our readers have heard it a hundred times. It may be pretty, but it is sentimentalism, and Colonel Ingersoll wants women as well as men to adopt a robuster tone.

"The healing evangelist" is at work in a certain part of North America. According to the *Montreal Witness*, he has cured deaf people by touching them, and so effectually that they can hear whispers eighteen feet away. Paralytics and rheumatic persons run and jump, crooked fingers are straightened, the dumb are made to speak, and neuralgia disappears instantaneously. Jesus Christ wasn't such a great wonder after all.

Professor Briggs, of New York, is being tried by his Presbytery for heresy, and the case is longer than that of the Tichborne claimant. If cases are tried in that way at the "bar of God," the Day of Judgment will last billions of years. The prosecution has put in as evidence the whole of the Bible, the entire standards of the Presbyterian Church, and all the works of Dr. Briggs. What a rare old trial it will be!

The Dean of Bristol, preaching at the Bristol Royal Infirmary Chapel, gave utterance to the usual charitable gibe—"Atheists never built such institutions." Are, then, Atheists such a numerous and wealthy body that they can be expected to build and endow hospitals everywhere? To our certain knowledge they do support them, and that is a sufficient answer to Dr. Pigou.

Hugh Price Hughes, much as he said he admired the episcopate, has virtually given up the idea of reunion between Methodists and the Church of England. This, however, as the *Church Times* points out, is rather because the modern Methodists have gone beyond the footsteps of Wesley, who was quite a High Churchman, particularly strong on the real presence, as witness his hymn:

Now on the Sacred Table laid  
Thy flesh becomes our Food;  
Thy life is to our souls conveyed  
In Sacramental Blood.

"A Canadian Priest," writing in the *Church Times*, says: "In one town in the West of England I know of vicarages not one of which lies within the bounds of its parish. They are all in the 'swell' end of the town. They are also excellently adapted for afternoon drawing-room teas and parties, and much pains are devoted to the condition of the tennis lawn." Nothing uncommon about this; but it says, as plainly as Cardinal Bembo is said to have observed, "What an excellent fable this one of Jesus Christ has been for us."

The *Literary Churchman* is defunct. Churchmen are becoming less literary than ever, and the attempt to improve them only results in loss and failure.

Father Ignatius doesn't seem to have gone over to Rome. The newspapers have misrepresented him. He has been preaching at Brighton lately, and charging the Rev. C. Gore, the editor of *Lux Mundi*, with "using his solemn position as a clergyman to open the fortress of the Church to her enemies." Father Ignatius promises to go to Oxford and get up a "downright row" on the subject. We hope he will.



J. Grinstead, of Bristol, is a funny man. He did not hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Why I am an Atheist," but he replies to it in the *Messenger*. Every now and then he declares that "Mr. Foote said" so and so. How does he know what Mr. Foote said? As a matter of fact, Mr. Grinstead is wrong in three-fourths of what he puts into Mr. Foote's mouth. Next time he undertakes to answer a lecture he should go and hear it first.

The Rev. J. Jones, Calvinistic Methodist minister of Machnylleth, Montgomeryshire, committed suicide after hearing the result of the Montgomery Boroughs election petition.

The *Canada Review*, as well as a French paper published in Montreal, have been excommunicated for their strictures on the immorality of priests.

The Panama prosecutions recall attention to the previous great French financial collapse, in which also the Church was deeply interested. This was the Catholic Union Générale, founded by M. E. Boncourt, who got several influential prelates to call on the Catholic world to promote a great financial undertaking to bring the monetary world out of the control of Jews into the hands of the faithful. The Union Générale collapsed in 1882, bringing down many dupes among the children of the Church, and the founder was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

*Truth* says: "I commented last week upon the fact that the town nurse at Stamford has been dismissed from her situation solely because she has become a Roman Catholic. It seems that there has been a similar manifestation of bigotry and intolerance in the neighboring city of Peterborough, where the managers of the District Nursing Association have sent away their nurse, also because she has joined the Roman Catholic Church. In this case, however, the nurse has been no loser, as the managers of the Royal Jubilee Institute have obtained for her an excellent situation at Camberwell."

Missionary enterprise is taking fresh forms, and some of them will astonish the Christians who have hitherto had a monopoly of the business. Mr. Webb, late United States Consul at Manilla, threw up his appointment some time ago to engage in the work of converting his countrymen to Islamism. The Mohammedan merchants in India are subscribing liberally, and Mr. Webb will labor in America by means of tracts, lectures, a newspaper, and a fresh translation of the Koran.

About a month ago all the small towns in the Russian province of Simferopol were officially declared to be no longer towns, but villages. The reason for this measure is now apparent; it is the commencement of the expulsion of the Jews, who are not permitted to reside in villages.

The Rev. Barnard J. Snell says, "Christ is God made easy." This means the old one is hard and needs an intercessor. So the Catholics say Mary is Christ made easy, and the priest is Mary, her Son and his Father all put together, and made easy.

The mortality from wild beasts and snake bites in India last year was greater than ever, amounting to no less than 24,300 deaths; 21,389 being from snake bites. Snakes being regarded with a superstitious feeling, greatly contributes to their preservation. Human credulity makes a divine providence for the snakes.

Gloomy prospects again arise in India in consequence of the absence or deficiency of the usual November rainfall. God Almighty has so much to do looking after his poor Jews, he cannot be expected to show much care for these heathens.

A subscription is being got up for the victims of the Liberator Building Society. The honorary secretary, *pro tem*, is the Rev. J. Stockwell Watts. "To me as a Christian minister," he says, "the cruellest feature of the whole business is that their precious hard-earned savings were drawn into these rotten concerns by the professedly good names and Christian reputations associated with them."

Talmage's Tabernacle is reported to be in the hands of the bailiffs. An execution was put in for an unpaid decorator's

bill of 1,200 dollars. So the papers say, though it looks very odd, for Talmage could easily pay that little bill himself out of his big income.

Rather a good story is told of a music-hall singer now deceased, who, though an ignorant man, concealed the fact when on the stage by exhibiting a large amount of "cheek" and *sang froid*. He made it his business to sing impromptu verses on any word or subject that the audience might select. One evening, in reply to his usual request, the word "heterogeneous" was shouted to him, and he was taken quite aback, being in perfect ignorance of its meaning. However, not meaning to "give himself away," he promptly advanced to the footlights and said, "Ladies and gentleman, as someone has taken a word out of the Bible, I must respectfully decline to make a verse on it, as all Scripture subjects are barred." This fairly brought down the house. There were absolutely no flies upon that singer.

The Rev. George Birch-Reynardson, rector of Eastling, Faversham, died recently at the age of eighty. He kept out of heaven as long as he could, And for a very good reason. He has left £123,000. Blessed be ye poor!

Sir R. Owen, who has expired at the great age of 89, was rather an investigator than a scientific philosopher. His researches did much to furnish evidence of the probability of the doctrine of evolution, but he was too much wedded to his own pet theory of Archetypes to renounce it for the new doctrine.

The projected debate at Spennymoor between Mr. Foote and the Rev. W. W. Howard does not seem likely to take place. There is a serious hitch in the negotiations. The subject Mr. Howard offered to discuss was "Has Man a Soul?"—the title of one of his lectures. Having to open the debate, Mr. Howard drew up the proposition he would maintain on the first evening. Mr. Howard, of course, had the right to word it as he pleased. But Mr. Howard and his committee do not recognise a similar right on Mr. Foote's side. They have actually drawn up and sent him a proposition of their own, and asked him whether he will maintain that. Mr. Foote has replied that he will not have his proposition edited by his opponents. He will conduct his case in his own way. Mr. Howard's committee are informed that they misunderstand their proper function. "The notion," Mr. Foote concludes, "that Mr. Howard should draw up his own proposition and mine too, is not likely to commend itself to honest-minded persons on either side of the controversy."

Mrs. Besant's name looks strange on a playbill. A spectral supernatural drama, entitled "The Red Barn," is being performed at the Prince's Theatre, Landport, and beneath the announcement is "Mrs. Besant's explanation of ghosts." The explanation, of course, is Theosophic. It is a case of "astral vibrations." Mystery, thy name is—well, at present, it is Mrs. Besant.

The Church Association at Brighton is fighting the English Church Union. "Fraud," "malice," and kindred words are flying about freely. How these Christians love one another! The cream of the joke is that each section claims credit for all the greatness of England.

This is what goes on in a Christian church eighteen hundred years after Christ came to save the world. The vicar of Radford, the Rev. S. Thelwall, has a quarrel with his Bishop—the one who reigns at Worcester. The reverend gentleman seems to be a decisive Low Churchman. Anyhow he removed certain ornaments from his church altar. "Worcester" ordered him to replace them. This he did on Sunday last. Parson Thelwall brought them out of the vestry and flung them contemptuously on the altar. Then he mounted the pulpit, but agitation brought his sermon to an end abruptly. What a trumpery business! Such a fuss about brass candlesticks! One would think the world had no important problems to solve.

There is a flutter in Catholic circles. Dr. William Sullivan, one of the most eloquent Catholic preachers in England, who always drew crowded congregations in London, has seceded from his Church, and married a wealthy lady of Kensington. Dr. Sullivan has not gone over to Protestantism. We hear



that in a private letter to his friends he says he has lost all faith in the Old Testament, in consequence of the destructive results of modern criticism, and he has therefore forsaken orthodox Christianity. Dr. Sullivan's secession is a bad set-off to Dr. Vaughan's new cardinalship.

The Nonconformist ministerial market is said to be dreadfully overstocked. Vacant churches, offering only small salaries, find numerous applicants. The demand is limited, and the supply practically unlimited, for the qualification for a sky-pilot amounts to a mere nothing.

Edith, a five-year-old, has just had a baby brother, whom mamma declared, in answer to Miss Inquisitive, came from heaven. "Well, baby," said Edith, "how was Dod when you left?"

Here is an advertisement from the *Times*, which shows that the "sale of souls" flourishes as vigorously as ever.

CHURCH PREFERMENT.—A valuable LIVING for sale in the suburbs of London. Sale urgent. Prospect of early possession. [This delicately means that the possessor is dying, or will be induced to depart.] Net income £900. Light work. The best society. Practically no poor. Beautiful modern church. Apply to —  
The agent who inserts this advertisement knows well what the average sky-pilot wants—a good screw, the best society, and "practically no poor."

The capture of the Socialist movement by the clericals is going on swimmingly. Mr. F. W. Jowett, a Fabian, who has been elected on the Bradford County Council, attended a recent meeting in Brownroyd Congregational Church, and declared that no reform could be enduring which had not religion in it. Mr. Keir Hardie preached two sermons in the same church. As usual, he talked about the Christianity of Christ. Mr. Hardie would do well to consider our recent article on that subject, with special reference to himself.

The *Hongkong Telegraph* says the whole of the troubles in China have been caused by unwarranted missionary interference and aggression. It declares: "These foreign missionary societies are the curse of foreign enterprise in the Middle Kingdom; they do absolutely no good, they have never done any work of a substantial or permanent character in religious reformation, and it is notorious that they have been at the bottom of almost every difficulty the treaty Powers have had with China." It adds: "The missionary fraud is about played out in China."

Chicago claims to have now on exhibition the skin of the serpent that tempted Eve. It is said that St. Louis, in order to get ahead of her rival in enterprise, will soon advertise on exhibition the Eve that was tempted by the serpent that owned the skin now to be seen in Chicago.

It was probably only after the Jews were out of Palestine that they depicted it as a land flowing with milk and honey. Treeless, stony, and barren is the report of all modern travellers not under the glamor of the holy land. The villages are little better than mud-huts, and Jerusalem itself is dirty and squalid. The new railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem may improve matters, but the credulity of pilgrims is still likely to remain the chief source of income.

A certain Christian Evidence lecturer has been holding forth lately at Walthamstow. His supporters cried out that the Secularists would not meet him in debate. One of the said Secularists challenged him to hold a set discussion. This he accepted, but he has since instructed a friend to write that the vicar of Walthamstow will not let him debate. The Christian Evidence Society does not like that method of meeting "infidels." Of course not. But why does it let its agents go about boasting that Secularists are afraid to meet them?

We have a special word for Mr. Engstrom. This gentleman, when he comes to Secular meetings, which he does occasionally, speaks as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. You would think he loved every Secularist in the place, and would not say anything naughty about an opponent for the world. He cultivates a painfully kind manner—and overdoes it. So much for Mr. Engstrom inside a Secular hall. Outside it he is a different person, or rather the same person in a different rôle. He employs a lot of fellows who, as he knows very well, spend more than half their time in

libelling Freethinkers; and he is cheek-by-jowl at present with a Christy Minstrel Christian who goes about the country declaring that Atheism teaches, and Atheists practise, promiscuous sexual intercourse. Yet Mr. Engstrom wonders how it is that Secularists don't admire and love him. Such a good man, you know!

"I think, Mrs. Hendricks," said the minister, good-humoredly, "that you better let Bobby have another piece of pie. He has been such a good boy and was very attentive in church this morning. What do you say, Bobby?" "I say 'amen,'" replied Bobby, and of course he got the pie.

A comical story comes from America. In a certain menagerie a big German who applied for a job was told to clean out the lions' and tigers' cages. Shortly afterwards the manager was horrified to see him in a cage with five savage lions. The man was sweeping away with a broom, and the lions were crouching in a corner. They were evidently flabbergasted by the fellow's cheek. When he wanted to sweep their corner he turned them out with the broom. Of course we don't say the story is true. We merely give it for what it is worth. But it illustrates a great truth. Cheek goes a long way. Priests know nothing about the next life, but they take up the business as coolly as that German, and the people are overawed like the lions in the corner.

### SHILLING WEEK.

MISSING-WORD competitions have shown the nimbleness of shillings. Hundreds of thousands of them have been flying about lately. The people who despatched them were all trying to make "a pile" at each other's expense. Now it occurs to us that a good many persons, though not hundreds of thousands, may be ready to devote a shilling to a worthier object. We therefore propose to start a Shilling Week, from the first to the eighth of January. During that period we invite the readers of the *Freethinker* to set aside one shilling—or more if they are able and disposed—and forward it to us for the benefit of Secularism. Most of them will never miss the amount. A shilling is not much, but a quantity of shillings will be very useful to our movement.

We want our readers to send their shillings (or more) during Shilling Week—not before and not after. Every sender's name shall be printed in the *Freethinker* for January 15, which is published on January 12.

Now for the disposition of the money. We propose to divide it as follows:—two-thirds for the National Secular Society's Special Fund, and one-third for the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund. Both funds have a strong claim on the Secular party.

Should any readers wish the whole of their shilling (or more) to go to the one fund or the other, they can say so, and their money shall be put in a separate list.

Nothing of this sort has ever been attempted in Secular history. We don't know how far it will succeed. Still, it is worth a trial. We do not, like General Booth, ask our readers to deny themselves the necessaries or the comforts of life. We simply ask those who can afford it—and there must be many—to mark the first week in the new year by a little gift to the cause for which heroes have given their liberty, their worldly welfare, and even their lives. A little gift from a large number of readers will gratify the one who makes this appeal, and who has some right to make it; and it will put fresh heart into all who are carrying on the active work of Freethought in England.

G. W. FOOTE.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

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

March 5, Liverpool; 12, Leeds; 19, Hall of Science; 26, Manchester.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—Jan. 1 and 8, Hall of Science, London; 15 and 22, Birmingham; 28, Bolden Colliery; 29, South Shields; 30, North Shields; 31, Ebbwchester. Feb. 3, Blyth; 4, Chester-le-Street; 5, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 12, Liverpool; 19, Leicester; 21, 22, 23, and 24, Sheffield; 26, Birmingham. March 5, Birmingham; 12, Hall of Science, London; 19, Bristol; 26, Glasgow; 27 and 28, Glasgow.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

**J. W. SHERWIN (Ipswich).**—Scratch a Christian and you'll find a bigot. Your letter proves it. When you have read a great deal more, and thought a great deal more, your opinion may be more valuable and your style more gentlemanly.

**E. JACKSON (Brighton).**—Pleased to hear that your newsagent finds a ready sale for the *Freethinker*. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.—The report of Father Ignatius's conversion to Rome does appear to be a newspaper fiction.—If you object to Societies altogether you are right in holding aloof from the N.S.S. Still, union is strength, and it is difficult to see how Freethought can be effectively promoted without some kind of organisation.

**J. G. BARTRAM.**—We are not surprised at Mr. Engstrom's not answering your letter. The C.E.S. neither accepts nor rejects responsibility for the black champion; or rather it does both, at convenience.—The verse has merit, but is too long for insertion. The subject is hardly worth so much space. It is giving him too much honor.

**T. A. L.**—Manifestly the eastward position of the altar in churches and of the priest at the recital of the creeds, etc., is a survival of Pagan sun-worship. In the Egyptian religion a central belief was that as the sun rose again in the east so the dead spirit would renew its life.

**G. NAEWIGER.**—The lady's opinions on Secularism are of no interest to us, and probably of none to our readers.

**II. ATKINSON.**—The matter shall be seen to. Glad to hear you are so delighted with *Comic Sermons*.

**J. G. DOBSON.**—See paragraph.

**G. E. SUMNER.**—Glad to hear you were pleased with Mr. Heaford's lectures at Grimsby. Thanks for subscription. If every member of the N.S.S. would do his best in this way the cause would make more rapid progress.

**T. J. BARTLETT.**—See paragraph.

**J. A. STABBINS.**—Your experience was not uncommon. The discussion allowed after some Christian lectures is apt to be farcical.

**JAMES MAITLAND** is now secretary of the Aberdeen Branch in place of John Harkis resigned.

**J. SCHOFIELD.**—Keir Hardie as a Christian preacher is certainly "a sight for men and gods," and perhaps for another species. The honorable gentleman means to get on, and sees the easiest road. Let him walk it. No one expects him to be a Bradlaugh.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S SPECIAL FUND.**—G. E. Sumner, 10s.; T. Morgan, 1s.; W. Barrow, 1s. 6d.; A. Hope, 2s. 6d.; J. G. Gibson, 1s.; W. Knapp, 1s.; W. P. Redfern, 2s. 6d.; D. Baker, £1 1s.

**J. BARRS.**—Thanks. It will be useful.

**WALSALL.**—You omitted your name, no doubt inadvertently. You had better write to the Secretary of the N.S.S. It seems a case for the Benevolent Fund Committee. Give your own name and address as well as that of the person for whom you appeal.

**W. P. REDFERN.**—Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers* would probably meet your requirements. It was originally issued in sixpenny monthly parts. The price of the bound volume is 7s. 6d. Mr. Wheeler has long been collecting materials for a history of Freethought in England. Some day or other it will doubtless be published.

**W. H. MAAERS.**—See "Acid Drops."

**J. PARTRIDGE.**—Thanks for kind letter. We note the Birmingham Branch's "best wishes for the success of your effort at Portsmouth."

**J. M. WALKER.**—Mr. Foote will offer Newcastle a date as soon as possible. He cannot visit you as frequently as he would like to. He has great respect for the Tyneside Freethinkers.

**J. BADLAY.**—See "Sugar Plums." The other matter shall have attention.

**H. GREENWOOD.**—Mr. Foote has accepted the invitation. Thanks for your appreciation and good wishes.

**JOSEPH BROWN.**—We hope you will have a good party at Newcastle on Boxing Day. Should much like to be with you. Will try to send you some "astral vibrations."

**F. LESTER.**—We will see if we can find space for the poem you refer to.

**W. B. THOMPSON.**—Glad to hear the Chatham Branch is enthusiastic about the Portsmouth case, and will give its fullest support to the defence. If the fight begins in real earnest, we are confident that the Freethought party, from one end of the country to the other, will rally around the standard.

**C. R.**—Your Christian friend is romancing. The date of Jesus Christ's birth is really unknown. It was fixed by the Church as the twenty-fifth of December. This was a Pagan festival, the celebration of the birth of the new year, long before the Christian era. Easter was another Pagan festival—a spring celebration. We have had several articles on both in the *Freethinker*. See also Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*—"A Virgin Mother" and "The Resurrection," and consult the books mentioned in the copious footnotes.

**R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer, London Secular Federation,** acknowledges:—A. J. Marriot, 10s. 6d.; Wood Green Branch, 3s. 6d.

**L. S.**—A paragraph was already in type.

**H. COURTNEY.**—Members of the N.S.S. can bring their families on Dec. 28, but it would be inadvisable to include children. A *Conversazione* is of course only intended for those who are old enough to take part in what is generally meant by "conversation." There will be a Children's Party at the Hall of Science in a few weeks.

**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.

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

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Flaming Sword—Secular Thought—Modern Thought—Twentieth Century—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—Ipswich Journal—Suffolk Chronicle—Bristol Messenger—Bradford Observer—Standard—Wood Green Weekly Herald—Blackburn Times—Melbourne Commonwealth—Northampton Daily Reporter.

**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.

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.

## THE PORTSMOUTH CASE.

ON Friday evening, December 16, I met the members of the Portsmouth Branch. There was a very large attendance, including several ladies. After explaining the law of the case, the various methods of prosecution that might be attempted, and the various ways of meeting the same, I offered to cancel my Birmingham engagement, to go to Portsmouth on Sunday, January 1, and to deliver three lectures in the Wellington Hall—the building to be let to me for the day, in order that the bigots, if they meant business, might find it difficult to leave me out of the prosecution. My offer was unanimously accepted. Mr. Scarrot was appointed chairman for the day, and other members volunteered to take the admission money and collect the tickets. The Portsmouth members rose to the occasion. They were all full of fight, since they were threatened, and ready to give a good account of themselves in any battle to which they were challenged.

The Birmingham Branch will understand my position. I am bound to be where I am most wanted. Wherever Freethought is seriously attacked I must defend it.



Wellington Hall is too small for my usual visits to Portsmouth, but I lecture in it this time for obvious reasons. There is no room for threepenny seats. The tickets will be sixpence and a shilling. This is inevitable in the circumstances.

It remains to be seen whether the bigots will take action. If they do, there will be a stiff fight—at least on our side; if they do not, the Portsmouth Branch will have shown that it is not to be frightened, and other Branches throughout the country will have been certified that they will always be helped in the hour of danger.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Next week's *Freethinker* will be a double number, price twopence. It will be printed on superior paper, and will contain an extra quantity of specially interesting reading matter, as well as finely-executed portraits of G. W. Foote, J. M. Wheeler, Charles Watts, Touzeau Parris, R. Forder, G. Standing, A. B. Moss, and W. Heaford. Instead of printing a smaller number of copies on account of the price, we shall print a larger edition than usual. We are confident that there will be an extra demand for this double number.

Mr. Foote lectured to a good audience on Sunday evening at the London Hall of Science. His preliminary statement that he was going to Portsmouth to fight the battle with the Branch was vociferously applauded.

Mr. Cohen called at our office on Tuesday. He lectured at Reading on Sunday, and reports that the Branch took a collection instead of charging for admission, in consequence of a letter from the proprietors of the Foresters' Hall. This may have nothing to do with the Portsmouth case. On the other hand, it may be a symptom of a general crusade against our Sunday meetings. We must be prepared for the bigots, and give them more trouble than they reckon on. Perhaps the Portsmouth fight will clear the atmosphere all over the country.

Mr. Foote's lecture at Ipswich is reported in the local press. The *Journal* is brief and sneering, but allows that the lecturer's eloquence was worthy of a better cause. The *Suffolk Chronicle* report is longer and fairer, though defaced by some inaccuracies. Mr. Foote, for instance, did not call Paine an Atheist, nor did he say that in a set debate the audience would decide the question by a show of hands. He said the very opposite. But this does not lessen our obligation to the *Chronicle* for its impartiality.

The London Secular Federation's annual dinner is a very interesting social function. It brings together the most earnest workers in the metropolis. Wednesday, January 4, is the date of the fifth of these gatherings. The dinner will take place at the Hall of Science. A good caterer has been secured, and the hall will be decorated for the occasion. Mr. Foote, as president, will be supported by C. Watts, Touzeau Parris, J. M. Wheeler, G. Standing, A. B. Moss, R. O. Smith, R. Forder, W. Heaford, and other well-known Secularists. Among the ladies we expect Mrs. Charles Watts. The tickets are half-a-crown, and can be obtained at the Hall, at 28 Stonecutter-street, or of any Branch secretary. We hope this year's gathering will be larger than any of its predecessors.

London members of the National Secular Society, and country members who happen to be in town, are cordially invited to the *Conversazione* at the Hall of Science next Wednesday evening (Dec. 28). There is no charge for admission. It is a kind of "At Home," at which the President and his colleagues of the Executive will be happy to meet the members of the Society. Mr. Foote will be glad to shake hands and converse with Secularists whom he has few other opportunities of meeting.

Mr. Watts had two enthusiastic meetings in Birmingham last Sunday, the evening audience was the largest he has had there this season. Both the chairman (Mr. Ridgway) and Mr. Watts referred to the bigotry at Portsmouth, and the audience

manifested their intention, in a very decided manner, of supporting Mr. Foote in any fight that may be necessary to vindicate our rights against the attempts of the orthodox party. Next Sunday being Christmas Day, Baskerville Hall will be closed.

After the lecture at the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evening a resolution was passed, amidst great applause, expressing sympathy with the Portsmouth Branch, and assuring it of the fullest support in any struggle that may arise.

The North Eastern Secular Federation's annual social gathering will take place at the Royal Arcade Assembly Rooms, Pilgrim-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Tuesday, December 27. Tea will be on the table at 6.30. The concert will begin at 7.30, and dancing at 10. Tickets are 1s. 6d. (children 1s.), and can be obtained at Mr. Weston's, 77 Newgate-street; Mr. Walker, 98 Tynemouth-road; J. Brown, 86 Durham-street; or Mr. Peacock, 35 Baring-street, South Shields. These annual parties have hitherto been very enjoyable. No doubt the present one will be of the same character. It should be well patronised by the Tyneside Freethinkers.

Mr. W. M. Rossetti gave an interesting introductory address upon the poet Shelley before the Shelley Society on Wednesday, the 14th inst. Shelley, he said, did his best to shatter the ideal of authority and to set up the standard of love. The lecturer did not agree with those well-intentioned people who tried to show that Shelley was less of an Atheist at the time of his death (twenty-nine) than at the time when he published *Queen Mab* (twenty-one), and thought we, in our time, should feel very much obliged to a man who, living in the early part of this century, as he did, ventured to say, "I am an Atheist"—to proclaim it aloud, and stick to it. He thought Shelley was one of the first men bold enough to put that word down as a personal designation.

There was exhibited during the evening several early editions of Shelley's works, manuscripts, letters, etc., as well as a couple of curious drawings, probably executed by the poet in his school days. Some songs rendered from Shelley's writings helped to make up a very enjoyable evening.

We are pleased to note that Colonel Ingersoll is again lecturing. On December 11 the large Broadway Theatre, Broadway, New York, was taken for his oration on Voltaire, and tickets were secured long beforehand as for a successful drama.

General M. M. Trumbull, who was once a Chartist "navvy" and is now a general in the American army and a writer in *Open Court*, extols the Sunday Society, and says in that paper: "Not until I went back to my native land as a foreigner and a stranger did I have an opportunity to visit the British Museum or the National Gallery, because when I was a youth in England, these and all similar 'places of culture' were closed on Sunday, and I could not visit them on any other day. The same spirit that shut up them closes the World's Fair too, against the working men."

The Rev. J. M. Logan's pamphlet on God has met with a second answer. *Is it Reasonable to Believe in God?* is the title of a pamphlet published by Harvey, 30 Lower Arcade, Bristol. It contains a paper read before the Bristol Branch of the N.S.S., which is published by request. The writer is shrewd and forcible. Mr. Logan will have all his work to dispose of this critic. The price of the pamphlet is twopence.

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) is publishing an Extra Christmas Number, which we hope to see in due course. The Dec. 3 number opens with a reference to our recent statement that the maintenance of *Secular Thought* should be the first consideration with the Canadian Secularists. "We are proud," the editor says, "to have the favorable opinion of our English contemporary, to whose columns we are indebted for some of the most valuable articles which have appeared in our own."

The favorable reply given by Mr. Acland, Vice-President of the Council, to the deputation of representatives from the Metropolitan Trade Societies, the Sunday League, and Sunday



Society, in regard to the opening of South Kensington Museum, warrants the inference that we are measurably nearer the time when the people's rights to view their own property on their one day of leisure will be conceded.

The Huddersfield Branch holds a social party in No. 5 Room of the Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall on Monday, December 26. The tickets are one shilling. We are not supplied with fuller information.

Arrangements are being made at Newcastle for a debate between one of the Branch members, Mr. Dawson, and a local gentleman on "Atheism and Its Influence."

On Thursday evening in last week the Leeds Secularists met at the Central Ward Liberal Club (by permission). The tea was a great success, thanks to the kindness and energy of Mr. and Mrs. and the Misses Winter. Subsequently a handsome tea service was presented by Mr. Fisher to Mr. John Judge, late secretary, who has had to remove to Leicester. Songs and dances filled up a most enjoyable evening.

### CHRISTMAS AND THE PURITANS.

IN 1664 the Puritanic Parliament ordered Christmas to be kept as a fast. In the previous year the Westminster Assembly of Divines had attempted this measure; but Dr. John Lightfoot, the learned English divine, took the Rev. Edmund Calamy aside, and warned him that the abolition of the ancient festival would breed a tumult and bring the holy Assembly into disrepute. His prudent counsels prevailed, though the Puritanic City clerics kept one more Christmas Day by preaching on it, "but withal resolving to cry down the superstition of the day." They, however, prevailed with the politicians, and Robert Baillie, principal of Glasgow University, had the satisfaction of writing home to his friends: "Both Houses did profane the holy day by sitting on it, to our joy and to some of the Assembly's shame." In 1644, however, "Providence," as Calamy informed the House of Lords in his Fast-day sermon, interfered in a special manner for the abolition of Christmas Day in England. On Dec. 25 of that year the ancient Pagan festival and the new monthly parliamentary fast came into competition. Of course Parliament, petitioned by the Assembly of Divines, gave orders that the fast should be solemnly kept. The people, however, like Ephraim, were wedded to their idols. "The common people," said Baxter, "tell us we bring up new customs." They continued to keep up the festival privately, leaving the divines and Parliament to fast if they chose. The next year Parliament and the Assembly of Divines, determined to set the people a good example, went about their business as usual at Christmas. The shopkeepers, apprentices, and artisans refused to do ditto. Nor did they. In 1647 Lord Mayor Warner put out a proclamation forbidding preaching. The people dressed their houses with evergreen. The Lord Mayor and City Marshal rode out with militia, and the order was given to set external decorations on fire. This led to a tumult in which one young fellow was killed. The attempted suppression of Christmas was a constant source of grievance while the Puritan régime lasted. When Cromwell came to supreme power in 1653 it happened, fortunately for the Protector, that Christmas fell on a Sunday, when, of course, the churches were open and the shops closed. Many, too, considered his rule abrogated the parliamentary laws. Though this was not so, he was not the one to peril that rule for the sake of suppressing an annual custom. But it would have needed a succession of Cromwells to have eradicated so deep-seated an attachment as that of Englishmen to Christmas, and the attempts that had been made in that direction contributed not a little to make the Restoration acceptable to the multitude.

J. M. W.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS TO N.S.S.

SPECIAL FUND.—Anonymous, 7s.; A. Arnsby, 2s. 6d.; Sergt. Yulett, 2s. 6d.; Sergt. McKay, 5s.; Sergt. Roberts, 2s. 6d.; Pvt. Perkins, 2s. 6d.; Pvt. Arem, 2s. 6d.

GENERAL FUND.—Luton Branch, 5s.; Manchester Branch, £3 17s. 9d.; Manchester Branch, 2s. 3d.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Alpha, 2s.

E. M. VANCE, assistant-sec.

### NOW THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS ON THIS WISE.

I REMEMBER hearing an American, invited to church at Christmas, decline, saying, "No, thank yew; I happen to know how the thing originated. Yew see, I've been down the very same well where the accident happened and the baby was brought up." Now, I don't pretend to know anything about it, never having had, either at Lourdes or elsewhere, any familiarity with Mary, the carpenter's wife, who, as far as my information goes, was the only person possessed of authentic information. But a few items appear on the surface, and others lie a little beneath, which hardly need a detective of the capacity of Gaboriau's Lecoq to unfathom. Poor Joseph evidently was innocent. The little boys at the Board school who named him as Christ's father were very misguided, even though they had the authority of Mary herself, who said, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," and of Luke iii. 23. Joseph's simplicity in accepting the story of an angel's visit, when minded to put his betrothed away privily, sufficiently exonerates him. According to Luke, a priest of the Lord named Zacharias, as well as an angel named Gabriel, were somehow mixed up in the affair. Whether the party by the name of Gabriel really deluded Zacharias and kept him dumb, or whether the priest himself enacted the role of Gabriel and pretended to be struck dumb in order to say nothing of the matter, must for ever be left to conjecture. But the circumstance of Mary going to the house of the priest and abiding there three months; while Elizabeth was, in accordance with Jewish custom, separated from her priestly husband, or, as Luke i. 24 says, hid for five months, must, to those who accept the narratives as having some nucleus of historic truth, induce the suspicion that Jesus Christ and John the Baptist were even more closely related than cousins.

LUCIANUS.

### A TALE OF INFINITE FAITH.

In a county Durham village, famed for smoke, beer and coal, Lived Dick Blunt—a sturdy miner—a rough unsav'd soul. The vicar, curate, and the clerk, all had tried in vain to reach The heart of this intractile Dick, with stories parsons preach. But Dick would list to none of them, he'd always answer straight: "I work for thirty bob a week, and sweat for it a treat. You parsons all get bumping pay, and drink the best of wine; You work for 'filthy lucre's sake'—no higher aim than mine. Go try your hands on someone else to scoop the L.S.D., My trade more useful is than yours, so don't come bothering me." Rebuffs like this from such as Dick, the parsons did repel, They left him on the crooked road, a candidate for hell: Until to the locality a change of preachers came; A vicar, who with boundless faith, thought Dick he could reclaim. Unto the humble tenement, where Blunt a home had made, This vicar of infinite faith walked forth to ply his trade. Dick unexpectedly polite, with smile instead of frown, The parson welcomed to his home, and asked him to sit down. The seat was neither chair nor stool, 'twas void of back and legs; No luxuries could Dick afford, his chairs were powder-kegs. The parson straight to business dashed, and piled it on a treat, 'Bout brimstone pangs, undying worms—the sinner's awful fate. Then all about the glorious place, for those with faith destined, Of golden streets, eternal joys, of ecstasies refined. Dick listened to the whole harangue, then thus expressed his view:—"These stories very awful are, but can it all be true?" The vicar, roused to fiery zeal, cried, "True! O yes, most true! For me my Savior's arms are wide, but hell it gapes for you. I feel as sure as I'm alive of everlasting joy, Of entering my grand home of bliss, the moment that I die." Dick grimly smiled, then quietly placed the poker in the grate, "Your hope's secure, and mine—well, here we'll test the matter straight— You're sitting on a powder-keg, as you can plainly see, This poker's touch brings bliss to you, no doubt 'tis hell to me." With fearful scream the vicar sprang like lightning through the door; And though so blessed with boundless faith, he troubled Dick no more. Sans parson's help Dick's prospered since, he now has chairs with legs, But still, as queer momentoes, keeps those empty powder-kegs.

A. LEWIS.



## SOME SCOTCH ANECDOTES.

THE earnest nature of Scotsmen has given currency to the popular fallacy that they are impervious to jokes. A greater mistake was never made. It is true they do not usually descend to mere playing upon words. An Englishman once asked Howard, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, why he had so many puns in his pantomimes. "Weel, ye ken," he answered, "they come back agen and try to mak 'em oot." It is humor, pawky, sly, often wise, humor, in which the Scotsman excels; and, despite his religiosity, much of this centres round "the kirk and the meenister." Dean Ramsay and Dr. Rogers have given numerous instances. The woman who, when examined on the Shorter Catechism, replied to the question, "What are the decrees of God?" "Deed, sir, he kens that best hissel," saw to the bottom of the old theology, as the beadle who said, "A kirk without a hell is na' worth a damn," saw to the bottom of the new. Characteristically canny, too, was the answer of the wee lassie Co the question, "Why did the Israelites make a golden tealf?" "They hadna as muckle siller as wad mak a coo." Better still was the answer of the boy who, asked if he wished to be born again, replied, "Deed no, for fear I might be born a lassie." In a small pocket collection of Scotch anecdotes recently issued\* a considerable proportion bear on the kirk and its ordinances. There is our old friend the beadle, or beadle, who, asked "What is baptism?" replies, "Ye ken, it's just saxpence to me and fifteen pence to the precentor." There is the coachman who, to the remark that there must be much piety to build so many eurches, truthfully replies, "It's no religion, it's curstness." There is the elder who, summoned before the presbytery to testify to the minister's having been the worse for liquor, declared, "I've mony a time seen him the better o't but never the waur." But did you never see him drunk? "Na, na, lang before he's half slokened I'm aye blind fou." There is the minister's daughter who, offered a dram by her father, said, "Na, na, papa, it wad gar me preach." Another ministerial devotee of Bacchus went to his duties after a good Sunday morning carouse. The psalm and potation lulled him asleep, and the people finished their praises ere he got out of his nap. The precentor gently whispered, "it's done." "Weel, weel, there's plenty mair whusky, fill the bottle out o' the muckle pig." There is the rigid Presbyterian lady, who, taken to the High Church, spoke of their surplices as whited sepulchres, and said "it's an awfu' way o' spending the Sawbath." Then we have the lady, who, dying during a thunderstorm, said, "Eeb, sirs! what a night for me to be fleeing through the air." Another dying woman to whom a neighbor remarked, "Weel Jenny, ye are gae on to heaven, an gin you should see our folk, ye can tell them that we're a weel." To which Jenny replied, "Well, gin I should see them, Is'e tell them, but ye manna expect I am gang clank, clanking through heaven looking for your folk." There is the man who was asked if a very aged person was still alive, answered "Hout ay, I'm thinking Jemmy means to live and blaw the last trumpet." Dr. Peddie, of Edinburgh was presented with a gown, but a lady of the congregation objected "we never read of the Apostle Paul wearing a gown." "Right Janet, but we never read of St. Paul wearing breeks." This reminds us of the much controverted question of dancing, and the elder who, when reminded of David, said "Ah, gif they were a' to dance as Dauvid did it wad be a different thing a' thegither." "Hoot fie, John, wad ye hae the young folk strip to the sark?" One of the best stories is that told of Merry and Baird the ironmaster, who gave the kirk half a million. Merry rallied Baird on his trying to gain a reputation for piety, and Baird bet Merry five guineas he could not repeat the Lord's Prayer. It was accepted; he immediately began "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and proceeded through the twenty-third psalm. "Damn it Jemmy," said the wealthy ironmaster, "I'd no idea you had such a memory. Here's your five guineas."

GABRIEL.

Little boy—"Mayn't I be a preacher when I grow up?"  
 Mother—"Of course you may, my pet, if you want to."  
 Little boy—"Yes, I do. I s'pose I have got to go to church all my life, anyhow, an' it's a good deal harder to sit still than to walk around and holler."

\* *Graphic Scotch Anecdotes*, compiled by J. Ingram. Glasgow: David Bryce and Son. 1892.

## THE OATH OF THE REV. I. GRABITALL.

THOUGH others may thine altars flee  
 And leave thee in the lurch,  
 Tenaciously I'll cling to thee,  
 O, Holy Mother Church

Though science flood with lurid light  
 Thy follies, blots, and blunders,  
 For thee and them I'll fiercely fight,  
 And fulminate thy thunders.

Though sceptics rend the texts in twain  
 Which prop thy proud pretensions,  
 I'll promptly mend the breach again  
 With lies of large dimensions.

When doctrines old are sliced away  
 By teacher's overweening,  
 I'll sweetly smile on folks and say  
 "Dear friends, they miss the meaning."

With slander's mace the infidel  
 I'll pulverise, dear Mother;  
 I'll strive to make this life his Hell—  
 He ridicules the other.

I'll shield thy shekels from thy foes,  
 Who swarm like vultures—curse 'em!  
 Thy piles shall soothe thy servant's woes,  
 While I, thy priest, disburse 'em.

I'll stick to thee like wax! Like glue!  
 Like barnacle! Like leech!  
 Through thick and thin I'll prove me true,  
 Till Kensal Green I reach.

My Church! The strife is fierce and strong!  
 Arise! Prepare to win it!  
 Thy cause is mine! (That is, as long  
 As there is money in it).

EX-RITUALIST.

## THE PIG AND THE PARSON.

When London Lounger feels at all doleful, he takes relief in a perusal of the following story—which is certainly very pretty reading, and which invariably puts him right again. It relates to two functions performed on the same day, viz, the presentation of a testimonial to a parson, and the description of a newly invented pig-killing machine, and in the Press the two accounts got mixed:

"Several of the Rev. Dr. H——'s friends called upon him yesterday, and after a brief conversation the unscrupulous hog was seized by the hind legs, and slid along a beam until he reached the hot-water tank. His friends explained the object of their visit; and presented him with a very handsome gold-headed butcher, who grabbed him by the tail, swung him round, slit his throat from ear to ear, and, in less than a minute, his carcass was in the water. Thereupon he came forward, and said that there were times when the feelings overpowered one, and for that reason he would not attempt to do more than thank those around him for the manner in which such a huge animal was cut into fragments was simply astonishing. The doctor concluded his remarks, when the machine seized him, and in less time than it takes to write it, the hog was cut into fragments and worked up into delicious sausage. The occasion will long be remembered by the doctor's friends as one of the most delightful of their lives. The best pieces can be procured for sevenpence a pound; and we are sure that those who have sat so long under his ministry will rejoice that he has been treated so handsomely."

On the following Monday the Rev. Dr. H—— preached a very animated sermon on what he denounced as "the libertine press."

A Class Examination in Scripture.—Clergyman—"What did Samson use to kill one thousand Philistines with?" Not receiving an answer, he continued (pointing with his finger to his jaw). "What is this which I am now pointing at?" Small boy (suddenly recollecting the answer to the former question)—"The jawbone of an ass, sir."



## CORRESPONDENCE.

## THE LATE MRS ROSE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—In the *Freethinker*, or some kindred paper, I read sometime ago a note to the effect that the late Mrs. Ernestine Rose would have devoted some of her property to the furtherance of her views, had not the gentleman who had charge of her affairs refused to act for her if she did so. If this were true, many friends in America, as well as in England, would be very much concerned to hear it. I mentioned the matter to the gentleman concerned, who assures me that any such impression is utterly without foundation; that she left her property exactly as she wished, and that there was less of it than was commonly supposed, she having sunk a considerable portion of it in an annuity some years ago. In justice to Mrs. Rose's memory, I have no doubt you will be willing to permit me to correct this impression in your columns.—Very faithfully,  
G. J. HOLYOAKE.

## CLOTHES FOR THE HEATHEN.

SOME years ago the ladies of a certain Dorcas society made up a quantity of shirts, trousers, and socks, boxed and sent them to a missionary station on the west coast of Africa. A man named Ridley went out with the boxes, and stayed in Africa several months. When he returned the Dorcas society, of course, was anxious to hear how its donation was received, and Ridley one evening met the members and told them about it in a little speech. He said:—

"Well, you know, we got the clothes out there all right, and after a while we distributed them among some of the natives in the neighborhood. We thought maybe it would attract them to the mission, but it didn't; and after some time had elapsed and not a native came to church with those clothes on, I went out on an exploring expedition to find out about it. It seems that on the first day after the goods were distributed one of the chiefs attempted to mount a shirt. He didn't exactly understand it, and he pushed his legs through the arms and gathered the tail up around his waist. He couldn't make it stay up, however, and they say he went around inquiring in his native tongue what kind of idiot it was that constructed a garment that wouldn't hang on, and swearing some of the most awful heathen oaths. At last he let it drag, and that night he got his legs tangled in it somehow, and fell over a precipice and was killed.

"Another chief got one on properly and went paddling around in the dark, and the people, imagining that he was a ghost, sacrificed four babies to keep off the evil spirit.

"And then you know those trousers you sent out? Well, they fitted one pair on an idol, and then they stuffed most of the rest with leaves and set them up as a kind of new-fangled idols, and began to worship them. The services were very impressive. Some of the women split a few pairs in half, and after sewing up the legs used them to carry yams in, and I saw one chief with a corduroy leg on his head as a kind of helmet.

"I think though the socks were most popular. All the fighting men went for them the first thing. They filled them with sand and used them as war clubs. I learned that they were so pleased with the efficiency of those socks that they made a raid on a neighboring tribe on purpose to try them, and they knocked about eighty women and children on the head before they came home. They asked me if I wouldn't speak to you and get you to send out a few barrels more, and make them a little stronger so's they last longer, and I said I would.

"This society is doing a power of good to those heathen, and I've no doubt if you keep right along with the work you will inaugurate a general war all over that part of Africa, and give everybody an idol of his own. All they want is enough socks and trousers."

Then the Dorcas passed a resolution declaring that it would perhaps be better to let the heathen go naked, and give the clothes to the poor at home. May be that is the better way.

MAX ADELER.

Minister (to widow)—"I hope the dear departed was prepared to die." Widow—"Pretty well prepared; he was insured in three good companies."

## PROFANE JOKES.

In the midst of a fervent exhortation to sinners, a Portland revivalist, who is by business an auctioneer, exclaimed: "Twenty-nine I've got; thirty—shall I have 'em? Bless the Lord. Twenty-nine are saved. Who will come next? Shall I have thirty?"

The three gentlemen who were shoved into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar were spared at least one affliction. The old gentleman did not open the door and ask if it was hot enough for them.

There's a land that is hotter than this,  
Where the wicked folks go when they die;  
And they'll sing with more blister than bliss,  
"We'll shall melt in this sweat by and by."

Mrs. S.—"See here, my boy, Farmer Brown doesn't like you to swing on his gate." Precocious boy (who has lately been to Sunday-school)—"Well, I don't care for Brown, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."

In the middle of a stag hunt one of the field, who was well up in the first flight, fell into a brook. The master heard the noise, looked round, and turning to the first whip, who was close behind him, said, "Who's that, Will? Hadn't we better help him out?" "Oh," returned Will coolly, "it's only the parson, sir, and we sha'n't want him till Sunday."

A lady teacher in a public school in the Stirlingshire district was examining a class on Bible knowledge the other day, referring particularly to incidents in the opening chapters of Genesis. "We are told," said the teacher, "that Adam awoke out of a deep sleep. Can anyone tell me what was the first thing he saw after awaking from sleep?" One little fellow vouchsafed an answer. "Well?" said the teacher. Small boy—"A woman sittin' at the fit of the bed."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the pious little girl, "it's five minutes to nine, and we'll be late to school." "I'm afraid we will." "Jennie," said the pious little girl, impressively, "I'll tell you what we must do; we'll kneel right down here and pray that we won't be late!" "H'm!" said the other, "I think we'd better skin right along and pray as we go!" They "skun," and got there.

Many mothers are either compelled to stay away from church and theatre, or to take their babies with them. A poor woman took her little one in her arms to hear a famous preacher. The loud voice from the pulpit awoke the child and made it cry, and its mother got up and was leaving the hall, when the minister stopped her by saying, "My good woman, don't go away, the baby doesn't disturb me." "It isn't for that, sir, I leave," she replied with perfect unconsciousness of sarcasm; "it's you disturb the baby."

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[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): Monday at 8, entertainment and dancing (3d. and 6d.) Tuesday at 8, social gathering. Thursday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: Sunday at 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free entertainment. Monday at 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free entertainment.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: Wednesday at 8, Conversation (free to members only).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Real Meaning of Christmas."

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street; Thursday at 8, a lecture (free).

## COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 4, upstairs): 6.30, debate between John Harkis and James Maitland on "Is Atheism Possible?" (free).

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12 discussion class, R. Laurie, "Prominent Men of the Eighteenth Century"; 6.30, Zosimus, "Carbon" (with experiments).

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Sunday at 6.30, social evening. Monday, Debating Society's annual soiree and ball.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Bockingham-street: Sunday at 7, miscellaneous entertainment. Thursday at 5.30, tea, soiree and ball for members and friends.



**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Jan. 8, Camberwell; 19, Hammersmith; 29, Hall of Science. Feb. 16, Hammersmith.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Jan. 8, Battersea.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Jan. 1, Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Jan. 1, m., Battersea.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Jan. 1, m., Battersea; e., Libra Hall.

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