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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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G. W. FOOTE.

THE NEW YEAR.

ONE more revolution of the earth in its orbit round the sun; one more succession of spring, summer, autumn, and winter! How many have gone before we know not, but their number is millions. How many will follow we cannot tell either, yet they also may be millions. But neither one nor millions will be of the least concern to the universe, which has infinite systems of planets wheeling round central suns, and infinite time for its incalculable operations. It is to us that

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the year matters. We make it the measure of our lives, and its seasons furnish us with metaphors to mark their progression. Life has its springtime; so many summers lay their roses on the maiden's cheek; by and bye, when wife and mother, she will reach her autumn; and the snows of winter lie upon the head of old age. And in one year—so little, so nothing, to the universe—how much may lie for us mortals. Life may be brightened by a great happiness, or darkened by a great sorrow; made richer by a noble experience, or poorer by folly and weakness and treachery and ingratitude.

Parties too, as well as individuals, are liable to these changes, these regrets, these hopes and fears. Their fortunes fluctuate, their prospects are bright or obscure; they are buoyant or dejected, active or quiescent; they have red letter years, and black letter years; they may open the year in high spirits and close it in gloom, or *vice versa*; they meet with accidents, which help or hinder; they make mistakes and score successes; they contemplate the past and speculate about the future.

The smaller a party is, and the more unpopular, the greater are its varieties of fortune.

The little more, and how much it is!
The little less, and how far away!

What would scarcely affect an old, extensive, and deep-rooted organisation, may revolutionise one which is new, limited, and precarious.

Since we have known it the Freethought party has had a singularly chequered history, but never has it passed through such difficulties as of late. Three years ago Mrs. Besant was one of its leaders. She was a vice-president of the National Secular Society. Her eloquent voice promulgated our principles, her character lent dignity to our movement. She is now gone from us, and gone for ever; treading, as we think, the path of mystery and superstition. Two years ago Charles Bradlaugh was living, and although he had resigned the leadership of our party, in consequence of failing health and overwhelming obligations, he was nevertheless a great force on our side. His fame threw a lustre on the party to which he still belonged, his counsel was available in our perplexities, and his aid in our distress. But he too is gone; not to the enemy, but to his grave. What he did for us remains, and his memory is an inspiration; but his tongue and brain (and how powerful they were!) are no longer with us in the battle for liberty and reason.

Many persons deemed it would be very hard for us to recover from Mrs. Besant's defection; more thought it impossible for us to recover from the loss of Charles Bradlaugh. But they were mistaken. Ideas outlive personalities. Movements are greater than men. Causes survive their leaders. They may be thrown back, but it is only for a while; they rally and advance again, if they have in them the vitality of principles.

Surely our party has that vitality. It is wonderful to see how its work has been carried on in such untoward circumstances; how humble soldiers, who were thought to count for so little, have counted for so much in this desperate battle. Personally I am proud to be their elected leader. I only wish I were worthier of the position. But I have done, and shall continue to do, my best. It is an arduous task I am fulfilling; doubly, trebly arduous in succession to a Bradlaugh; and this should rather stimulate indulgence than sharpen criticism. One thing at least I may claim; I have not shirked the responsibilities of leadership. Whether right or wrong—and I have tried to be right—I have gone straight forward, not letting adverse views make me irresolute, and trusting to results for a verdict on my policy. There are those, I am aware, who regard the presidency as a mere chairmanship. Charles Bradlaugh did not so regard it, and I shall not regard it so until the National Secular Society alters its constitution. In my callow days I thought the presidency a mistake. I was then twenty-six, I am now forty-three. Seventeen years, if a man is not a sheer fool, bring experience and reflection. I am convinced now, as I have been for at least thirteen years, that the presidency is *not* a mistake; that it is, in fact, indispensable. An indifferent president is better than none at all, and power and responsibility should go together. Free-lances, who will not fall into line, and submit to common discipline, do a party more harm than good. If a man possesses any influence it is best for him to take a position—whatever the party will give him; otherwise he shifts as he pleases, and never faces the consequences. When I was told by Mr. Bradlaugh that he would nominate me as his successor,

I said that if it would conduce to the peace and welfare of the party I would stand aside, let another person be nominated, and loyally support him if elected. Mr. Bradlaugh's answer was decisive. He said it would never do to have a sham president in the chair and the real president pulling the strings behind it. Eliminating the personality in the remark, it vindicates the truth that if a man is inside a party he should take up his post in it, let his opinion count for what it is worth, and be satisfied to do his duty though he cannot control the organisation.

Organisation! It should be our watchword in the new year, and for many years. Few who know our movement well will deny that our forces need centralising—without in any way injuring the true independence of the Branches. Our lecture system is a chaos. I pointed this out, many years ago, to the annual Conference at Birmingham, and nearly succeeded in carrying a remedial resolution. The Manchester Conference accepted my plan for centralising the lecture system; but it could not be carried out without money, and the party's cash has been needed since then in other directions. As soon as we get a little breathing space—in the new year if possible—I will see if the Organisation Committee cannot tackle the problem.

At the present moment we are certainly very short of lecturers who can always draw "paying" audiences. But it is not to be expected that unpopular truth can be advocated all round on commercial principles. Mr. Parris ought to do far more lecturing: his ability is half wasted, and he is already tinged with grey. Messrs. Moss, Hunt, Heaford, Snell, Cohen, and others, should be employed by the Organisation Committee, with constant work and the certainty of some reasonable remuneration. Books alone are a very expensive item, and if a lecturer does not read he soon becomes dry, and his fluency of speech is only an inflection.

Mr. Charles Watts, who is now thoroughly settled down in England, is a man of popular eloquence, who commands good Sunday audiences. But he has time for week-night lecturing, which does not "pay" on the average, and his services should be utilised in this manner.

There are many plans of organisation in my head, and I will keep them there until the time is ripe for their disclosure. We have a better machinery of organisation than I ever knew the movement to possess. Splendid work could be done if we had but the means. It is really a question of money. Here are Branches all over the country; here is a central Executive, to guide, and if need be to control, as well as to help and strengthen. During 1893 we might double our membership, and quadruple our active force in the country, if only the wealthier members of the party would provide the sinews of war. Let them do it. They are bound in honor to provide weapons and ammunition for those who do the real fighting. I am myself a poor man, but the out-of-pocket expenses of my post far exceed the annual subscriptions to the cause of any member of the party, with the single exception of Mr. George Anderson, whose liberality should be emulated by others. It is not without right, therefore, that I call upon those who can spare pounds to devote them to Freethought. Nor should the less well-to-do Freethinkers regard themselves as free from obligation. Let them give *something*. Every member of the party who is not in actual want has at least the opportunity of contributing something to the new year's fund, which is dealt with in another column.

During the new year it will be well if we can complete the success of the Hall of Science scheme. Freethinkers should take shares according to their means, and enable the directors to rebuild the front part of the premises. They will not be flinging their money into the ocean, but investing in a valuable property. And when the Hall of Science scheme is

within sight of completion, the directors will turn their attention to providing Secular Halls and Institutes in other parts of London and in the provinces.

With respect to the *Freethinker*, I have to say that it opens the new year with a bright prospect. It maintains its circulation, and the Sustainment Fund has helped to bear the loss involved in keeping it at the people's price. A new feature will be tried in 1893. On the first week in every month I propose to give a good illustration, make the number specially interesting, and publish it at twopence. This will make a difference to me, and very little difference to the readers. The *Freethinker* will still be a penny paper, but once a month the reader will pay an extra penny for a special number. Few are too poor to pay it, and surely none who can pay will grumble.

This new year's number is something exceptional. Such a budget of reading and illustrations has never gone out before from a Freethought publishing house. It is a sign that the Secular party is anything but dead or dying. And now the editor says good-day to his readers, and wishes them all a Happy New Year.

G. W. FOOTE.

PIOUS NONSENSE.

SALVATION, we are told, is without money and without price. That is theory. But somehow, in practice there is a little—just a little—divergence from theory. Bishops and archbishops are evidently not disposed to kill themselves preaching the gospel. That business can very profitably be left to smaller fry. Hence there was some surprise and expectation excited when it was announced that *Lloyd's Newspaper* had drawn the Primate for a sermon in its jubilee issue, to be followed by one from the Bishop of Wakefield.

Both sermons duly appear. But what little shots from such big guns! Each takes up about half a narrow column of the paper. The Archbishop's production appears in a number containing many exceptional features, and, in point of interest, at any rate, we fear it will badly stand the comparison with George R. Sims and Jerome K. Jerome.

Canterbury's theme is "Body and Spirit," and he takes as his text Paul's words: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The Archbishop says: "Most people thought it (and think it) natural, right, and proper to keep up their body. So far from keeping it under, they are afraid, above all things, that it should go down at all. Its tone and its comfort they maintain at much sacrifice of time, money, and attention." Ignorant persons—those not enlightened by the spirit of the Lord—might think that the Archbishop would very well come under the head of "most people." But to these we should point out that £15,000 a year, a palace or two, carriages and horses, and retinues of flunkies are quite compatible with keeping under the body. These things are absolutely necessary to enable the dear prelate to undertake his "terrible labors" and "racking anxieties . . . for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the Church."

There is one noteworthy line towards the end of the Archbishop's article. He says, "St. Paul's was very hard work, and religious work." This is a delightful touch. The idea, suggested rather than boldly stated, is that religious work is hard, is worthy of £15,000 a year.

The conclusion of the discourse is elevating. "Some suppose that hard work is enough to effect the overpowering of the body. . . . But no; there is no help for it but to consider how we can keep the body out of the way of the spirit—and how body, soul, and spirit can be united to the spiritual body

of him who only can subdue all things unto himself." That's the thing to consider. Apparently Canterbury is considering it. While he is doing so, we would suggest that he also consider where sanity ends and insanity begins. Of course the occult meaning of all this is that, no matter how hard you work, or how straightforward you are in your dealings with your fellow-men, you won't be right unless you go to church, put your coin in the collection-box, and help to maintain a system on which wealthy archbishops thrive.

The second of these sermons, that by the Bishop of Wakefield, is on the interesting theme, "The Kingdom of Heaven; Where is it?" Father Furniss assures us that hell is just four thousand miles away. But, apparently, the location of the opposition establishment is not nearly so precise. As might be expected, the Bishop of Wakefield's effusion is quite as cloudy as the region with which it deals. It is couched in the language which might be used by a goody-goody Sunday-school teacher in addressing his goody-goody class. Seemingly, the Bishop thinks the readers of *Lloyd's* a simple kind of folk whom any sort of stuff will satisfy. He contends that the "Kingdom of heaven" is not "up in the clouds, but down on the earth." And this is the reason: "First of all, it is plain enough to anybody who will think a little that the Master, who started and set up that Kingdom, never meant people to think of it as up in the clouds, or a long way off. Why, didn't He say it was like a field with tares in it as well as wheat? But that *must* be down here on the earth, for there will be no tares in heaven. And didn't He say it was like a net gathering of all sorts, good and bad? But that again *must* be down here on earth, for the bad won't be found in heaven"—Q.E.D. The Master said there would be tares in it as well as wheat, but the Bishop knows better for he says there will be no tares in it. In short, the argument comes to this: Heaven *must* be down here on earth, because it possesses characteristics not found in Heaven. At the same time, however, it would seem that Heaven, besides being "down here on earth," was also somewhere else. What indeed the Bishop means, if really he means anything, we cannot say, though, of course, we are aware that obscurity is no exceptional feature in theological exposition. But that does not matter. It is the function of theologians to raise dust and hide their poverty of ideas by the parade of empty verbiage.

FREDERICK RYAN.

RELIGION AND SELF-RELIANCE.

"The crying need of our day in State as in Church is for men who will call no man master; who will follow their leader only when their leader goes right; who will carry a conscience wrapped up in their ballot to the polling place; who will vote with an eye upturned to God."—*Rev. Heber Newton.*

But it is to be noted that men who have "an eye upturned to God" are the very ones who are most prone to call some other man "master." In other words, he who worships God is worshipping an enlarged man, and hence becomes easily the dupe and tool of men of superior strength and cunning. And of all voters who are undesirable and dangerous is this man whom Heber Newton sighs for—the godly man who carries "a conscience wrapped up in" his ballot. The religious conscience has in all ages been the enemy of liberty and the torturer of the weak. It is now sometimes called the "moral" conscience, but the change of name has not altered its character.—*E. C. Walker.*

O world! buzzard world! when wilt thou come out of thine infancy and assume a beard, and a mind worthy of that beard! Learn to despise long coats; reject thy leaders and leading-strings; stand upon thy legs, be of age; look round thee, and distinguish truth and freedom from restraint and disguise.—*Thomas Gordon, "Dissertation upon Old Women," 1720.*

THE GOSPEL OF DESPAIR.

SEARCH the religions of the world, and you will find none teaching such a gospel of hopelessness as Christianity. Hope for the majority of mankind breathes in all religions but this. Christianity has the unique honor of proclaiming the doom of mankind. Christ is said to have "brought life and immortality to light," but immortality was believed in by the Egyptians and other races thousands of years before Christ. What Christ *did* bring into belief was not life and immortality, but death and damnation. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," and *many* travel upon it, says he; while "narrow is the way to life eternal, and *few* there be that find it." "Many are called, few are chosen." Here are "tidings of great joy"—heaven for the few, hell for the many!

Who are the few to find heaven, and who the many to reach hell? Let us see. Believe or be damned (Mark xvi. 16) was the burden of Christ's teaching. Only believe, and heaven is yours; disbelieve, and hell is your portion. No matter how bad you are, only believe and eternal bliss is yours, and you will be feted on your arrival in the city of precious minerals with greater magnificence than if you had lived a good life (Luke xv. 7); no matter how good you are, only disbelieve that which insults your ideas of truth, and you will be thrust down to endless torment. Even Christ's criminal associate in crucifixion was awarded heaven for a brief expression of faith (Luke xxiii. 39-43). You may be lazy, drunken, unfaithful, cruel. You have a wife who is industrious, pure, loving, generous; you, in your cups, dash out that sweet life with a bottle. In your cell the chaplain brings you to repentance and belief. Finally the gallows trap is for you the outer portal of heaven, and you enter upon an eternity of joy that might never have been yours if you had been a decent fellow. Your victim, noble woman though she was, did not "believe," and the murderous blow, which was for you the open sesame to heaven, hurled her, "unprepared," to hell.

A gospel which allows such a possibility as this, if universally believed, would, as Shelley says, "people earth with demons, hell with men, and heaven with slaves."

Justice renders future punishment necessary, says the Christian. Supposing it does, is it also necessary that the punishment shall be eternal? Is infinite punishment for finite offences just? Can it be that in eternity a point will never be reached at which the sinner may be said to have received sufficient punishment? Will the avenger never cry "enough," never stay his tormenting hand? Would not, say, 70,000,000 years of fiery agony atone for 70 years of sin? Christianity answers, "No; when an age has elapsed eternal punishment will only have just begun. What the sinner has then suffered will be, as compared to what he has to suffer, less than a grain of sand as compared to the universe." If a man's cruellest enemy had the power to keep him writhing in agony for three weeks, would not the fire of his wrath by the end of that period be quenched by pity, and would he not exclaim, "I think I've given the poor wretch enough"? Will, then, the thirst for vengeance of a God of love *never* be satiated? If a good God will torture his creatures for ever, what would a devil have to do to be more wicked? It is related of Catherine of Sienna, a Catholic saint, that she prayed that her soul might be placed in the mouth of hell to stop it, so that no more souls could enter. Can it be that a woman has more love for humanity than "her creator"?

The late Mr. Spurgeon thus described hell: "In fierce fire, exactly like that we have on earth, thy body will be asbestos-like for ever, unconsumed, all

thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel upon; every nerve a string on which the Devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament."

Some endeavor to gild the naked hideousness of this doctrine by saying the punishment will not be by literal fire, but that the torment will be mental. This does not improve matters. The torture is compared to burning by fire and brimstone, and if it is to be as bad as burning, it may as well be literal roasting by fire.

Christians are sometimes twitted with wearing long faces. It is to their credit if they do. If I believed that ninety-nine out of every hundred persons I met in the street would go to this hell, I should be ashamed to smile. How many are converted to "saving faith" before they die? Not more than one in a hundred. Yet many who wear white chokers and a smug self-righteous smile will from their pulpits tell their hearers that if they were to die that night unconverted they would drop to the bottomless pit, and, after making this fearful declaration, will go home, joke over their cold meat, wine and cigars (provided out of the pockets of their dupes), go to bed, and sleep peacefully. More creditable to the human heart are those who drift to suicide or the madhouse, under the strain of this blighting doctrine, than these ghouls of the raven cloth.

Do the "happy" Christians believe what they profess, or do they fail to grasp its appalling meaning? or are their hearts cold as stone and callous as leather—which? I have more admiration for the nuns who used to smother babes to ensure to them heaven, or the inquisitors who destroyed men's bodies "to save their souls." Do the "happy" believers never consider that, believing as they do, they commit a crime every time they bring a child into the world to be tempted by God's Devil, and risk the hundred to one chance of going to God's hell.

Not satisfied, however, that the millions living in Christian countries run this fearful risk, believers will collect thousands of pounds to send men abroad to take to those who never heard of the gospel the chance of damnation through rejecting it. Will not hell be full enough without the "heathen"?

Forced to admit the terrors of his creed the Christian will urge "Heaven and hell are so bound together in Bible teaching that if we lose the one we lose the other—prove hell does not exist and you also disprove heaven." Be it so, then. A heaven for a select few can be purchased too dear if the price be a hell for nearly all. Better that a thousand should miss heaven than that one should gain an eternal hell.

The Christian believes in hell because the Bible declares its existence. But is a book which says "God is love," and at the same time attributes to him fiendish purposes and actions, a book to be relied upon for anything? "The Bible is inspired," answers the Christian. But would God inspire men to libel him? Read Jer. xxxiii. 5; Lam. ii. 21; Hosea xiii. 16; Isaiah xlv. 7; Rom. ix. 15.

If there be an omnipotent and just—not to say merciful—God, hell does not exist, and if we do our best to increase the sum of human happiness, no good God will thrust us down to endless woe. It is time this bogey of the pulpit was destroyed—this hell with which the parson frightens the wits (and the money) out of people—time the gospel of happiness was substituted for this ghastly gospel of despair.

A. G.

Monothism in Western Europe is now as obsolete and as injurious as Polytheism was fifteen centuries ago. The discipline in which its moral value chiefly consisted has long since decayed, and the sole effect of its extravagantly-praised doctrines is to degrade the affections by unlimited desires and weaken character by slavish terrors.—*Auguste Comte.*

THE HERESY HUNT.

Inscribed to Hunters in general, and Scotch ones in particular.

My son, be wise and be na' seen
'Mongst wranglers in religion,
Wha would pike out ilk other's een
For some auld heathen legen'.
Each sect believes its ain creed best—
A great infatuation,
For none of them will stand the test
Of strict investigation.

Up rouse ye a', John Calvin's sons,
At orthodoxy's dangers:
Come, seize your theologic guns
And be your faith's avengers;
Join in the cry, ye holy few,
And shout with desperation;
The duty now devolves on you
To stir the agitation.

From north to south, from east to west,
Resounds the holy clangor,
And like a trumpet's rousing blast
We skirl out our anger;
With voices like sharp prongs and tines
Their sinful souls we'll harra';
As great expounders and divines
Ye winna find our marra'.

The shinin' lights and earthy saints
Their swords of speech are scourin',
And ilka sceptics doonfa' paints
Wi' language re-assurin';
The highland host leads on the chase,
Richt supple-tongued and frisky,
Whiles pourin' out the words o' grace,
Whiles drinkin' in the whisky.

The heretic and sceptic crew
Think they hae gi'en's a blinkin',
But dinna fear, ye chosen few,
We'll bring them doon like winkin';
Unsparingly let us make use
Of darts of defamation,
And, in choice language of abuse,
Consign them to damnation.

Oh, if we only had the power
To hasten their destruction,
They'd never hae a quiet hour
For heresy construction.
We'd stap them in a roarin' fire
Till they were nicely roastit,
Or tramp them naked in the mire,
Where they would soon be frostit.

These men now treat contemptuously
Our faith's inspired confession,
And daur to doubt presumptuously
Original transgression.
They question if the Pentateuch
Was written a' by Moses,
And rive the sand wi' critic pleuch
On which our faith reposes.

They say, there's bitties in the Book,
Like poet's lucubrations:
And through its pages they will look
For false interpolations.
They say some tales were slipped in,
By crafty auld translators;
They range their facts wi' muckle din,
These modern commentators.

They liken to some worldly rhyme,
The book of Jeremiah;
And say that poetry sublime,
Was written by Isaiah,
Their hearts are a' pang fu' o' sin,
And hard as flint or whunstone,
Wha daur to look the book within
For onything but brunstone!

To common sense they now subject
Our dogmas and our tables,
And mony holy truths reject
As bein' auld wives' fables.
They contradict our creed, that hell
Is mans' last destination;
A heresy that gars us yell,
Wi' perfect consternation.

But when we hear a priest of gods'
Misdoubt our condemnation,
And say, between the bible brods,
They reed na' o' damnation;
Na wonder through our zealous hearts
Be fairly filled with terror.
For Belzebub has wondrous arts,
For spreadin' doubt and error.

And men are unregenerate.
From well trod paths they wander.
Auld saws that we sae venerate,
They dinna stick to slander;
They've surely ane and a' gane daft,
To ask for sense and reason,
When god's elect hae tauld them aft
"Inquiry's out of season."

But halleluia, we are richt,
While sceptics are in error,
And if our warnin's they noo slicht,
In hell they'll shake' wi' terror;
While we in Abram's bosom sleep,
'Midst angels sweetly chanting'.
The weary hours o'er them will creep.
'Mongst horned deevils rantin'.

From earthly Zion we've ca'ed out
Some of these misbelievers
Who raised within our halls the shout
Of sinners and deceivers.
Folks who with us do not accord
Say we would kill intelligence;
But when they try to sift the word
We hunt them down wi' diligence.

Why should a sinfu' mortal man
Daur utter an opinion
About the great salvation plan
O'er which we have dominion?
We only hae the earthly richt
To give consideration
To creeds and doctrines by the light
Of our own inspiration.

Or why should these misguided men
Daur pass an observation
About a minister wha's ta'en
Committing fornication?
And if some holy man should be
O'ercome at times wi' thinkin',
They should na' shout, wi' sinfu' glee,
"The minister's been drinkin'."

But joy of joys, to ken these chieils
Wha godly folks are teasin'
Will soon be dwelling wi' black de'ils
Where fruity sulphur's bleezin'.
What fun to us, if we could see
Wi' safety, frae a distance,
Auld Satan wash them in his bree,
In spite o' their resistance.

It would refresh our sinless souls,
Like we were eatin' manna,
To hear their shrieks an' groans an' howls,
While loud we sang Hosanna;
And wha can tell but that we may
Be granted this indulgence,
Rewarding us for the brisk way
We showed our own effulgence.

To extirpate the sceptic brood
God sharpens up his whittle,
And a' that lear of which they're proud
Will help them then but little;

But ye are safe, and heav'n will win,
Wha stick na' at low quirnies,
And staunch and true through thick and thin,
Stab wi' foul poisoned dirkies.

Your sma' bits fau'ts o' fleshly lust
That pleasures are affordin',
The Lord, wha kens we are but dust,
Will wink at when recordin';
Nor will the kirk gainsay your choice
Of lechery and drinkin',
But loudly she maun raise her voice
'Gainst men who take to thinkin'.

JAMES DOWMAN.

ACID DROPS.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham isn't going to let Professor St. George Mivart be "Happy in Hell." He affirms that those who die in mortal sin will certainly endure everlasting fire; not metaphysical fire, but actual material fire. Such is the true Catholic doctrine, as given in the Councils of Florence and Trent; and the Bishop thinks it necessary to make it the subject of his Advent Pastoral.

This is a very pretty squabble. Here are Catholics differing like Protestants. And what the Catholic Bishop calls the true doctrine the Catholic Professor calls horrid and disgusting. Go it, sirs, go it! The more you differ and quarrel the better for mankind.

How the Christians agree among themselves! They seem to think it a sign of disunion among Freethinkers if one of them likes his meat well-cooked and another underdone. Meanwhile these very same Christians are dreadfully at loggerheads with each other. Some of them—the most knowing ones—like Professor Bruce, accept Evolution, because they see it has really won, and set about reconciling it with the Bible. But the less knowing ones, the stick-in-the-muds, still fling stones at Darwinism. Here is the *Christian Commonwealth*, for instance, chuckling over the fact that Sir Richard Owen was "an anti-Darwinian," and holding him up as a "protest against the fantastic scheme of the evolutionist." Our pious contemporary doesn't appear to understand that Anatomy is not Biology, and that Darwin was not only a Biologist but a Philosopher. Those who oppose Darwinism to-day are ignorant or interested. Our contemporary is perhaps a mixture of both.

The *Christian World* is fond of short sermons. So are we, and the shorter the better. We like them about the length of the geometrical definition of a point. In one sense a great many sermons come up to that level. They begin nowhere, and end nowhere.

Our contemporary is severe on "the long-winded times when, as John Howells tells us, a Sunday's service would be kept going, with an hour's break at midday, from nine in the morning till five in the afternoon." It declares that "When we read the prelections of those days—such, for instance, as Manton's on the 119th Psalm—our chief consolation is that we can shut the book when we choose." We have often heard Manton described as tedious, and in one sense he is, for Christian doctrines are very tedious. But he was not tedious in any other sense. We never read an article in the *Christian World*, or in any other religious journal, displaying an approach to Manton's powers of mind or command of language. Maybe the *Christian World* man only knows Manton by name; indeed, we have a strong impression that professional Christians often know less of their own literature than is known by many Freethinkers.

There are, of course, sermons and sermons. In the old days, when Christianity was really believed, and its teachers were not obliged to trim, explain, and apologise, a man of genius could put his best thought into his sermons. Thus it was that Taylor, Barrow, and South produced real literature. Poetry, eloquence, intellect, wit, and humanity, may be found in their writings, quite irrespective of their theology. But their race is dead. Butler was the last of the great Bishops.

The Chicago Probate Court won't allow it. Won't allow what? Well, it happened in this way. A certain "physician" put in a claim against an estate for the costs of his "magnetic treatment." The deceased lady had this treatment transmitted to her from Wisconsin by prayers, which were reckoned at one dollar seventy-five cents each. If that "physician" is to be paid, the lady who died under his "treatment" will have to transmit the amount by occult means. Mrs. Besant is now in America, and that "physician" should consult her as to how the debt is to be recovered.

Mr. R. C. Carton, Q.C., lecturing at Dublin on "Catholicity in Modern Poetry," bewailed the spread of Paganism among the poets of England. Swinburne, he said, was the worst of all, and had boldly broken through all the bonds of religion and decency. Mr. Carton said he "could well understand how no minister would face the storm of indignation which would rightly be raised by Swinburne's selection for the laureateship." This observation elicited loud applause. It was, however, somewhat "previous." Swinburne is not a candidate for the laureateship.

The *Christian Leader* reports at length, lectures by the Rev. A. Whyte, on Bunyan's Characters, No. 33 dealing with "Atheist," who, by the way, plays no prominent part in *Pilgrim's Progress*. He is introduced towards the end of the journey, and Dr. Whyte says: "Under other hands than Bunyan, we would have met with this mocking reprobate just outside the City of Destruction; or perhaps among the booths of Vanity Fair."

But Dr. Whyte goes on to show that atheism lies deep in the hearts, even of the religious. "So deep down is the atheism of all our hearts, that it is only one here and another there of the holiest and ripest of God's saints who ever get down to it, or even get at their deepest within sight of it. Robert Fleming tells us about Robert Bruce, that he was a man that had much inward exercise about his own personal case, and had been often assaulted anent that great foundation truth, if there was a God. And often, when he had come up to the pulpit, after being some time silent, which was his usual way, he would say, 'I think it is a great matter to believe there is a God.'"

Halyburton's *Memoirs*, too, are quoted to the effect that he had found more subtle objections to Theism in his own mind, than ever he had read in atheistic books. Now, what we want to know from Dr. Whyte is, if scepticism in the minds of these holy men was for a minute justifiable, why it should not also be justifiable when permanent. When Dr. Whyte answers this question, we will ask him some others.

The committee of inquiry into General Booth's Social Scheme have shirked all the real difficulties, and taken an easy way of given him a good testimonial. They state, for one thing, that although some members of Booth's family draw salaries from the Army, he himself draws nothing, having "a small income partly settled on him by a personal friend, and partly derived from the sale of his literary works." But the committee omit to tell us what those literary works are. Do they include the *War Cry*, or any other publications that are hawked about by the "soldiers" who are paid out of the Army funds?

Tennyson wrote a divine poem entitled "Rizpah" After the late Laureate's gold comes Talmage's brass—a metal in which the oracle of the Jabbernacle abounds. "Rizpah on the Rock" is the title of a recent sermon by the Brooklyn Boanerges. It is not without a certain dexterity—a dexterity of evasion; not a positive but a negative dexterity. Rizpah, in the Old Testament story, watches the corpses of Saul's grandsons, who were hung to stop a famine; that is, got out of the way on that pretence, after the immemorial fashion of the East, where reigning monarchs like to cut off all possible pretenders to the throne. But this is not hinted at by Talmage, who pretends that the "seven boys" suffered for the "crimes of a father and a grandfather." Stuff and nonsense! What crimes? Saul was not criminal enough to please Samuel and Jehovah. David was chosen to supplant him, and the "crimes" were committed by this man after God's own heart.

The *Birmingham News* took a religious census of the city on Advent Sunday last, and has published a statement of the

results. The church attendances, morning and evening, are estimated at 71,000; those of the Nonconformist bodies at 90,000, 4,500 of whom attended a Sunday evening concert at Aston Lower Grounds. Some of the churches are very poorly attended. St. Peter's has sittings for 1,500; the attendances were, morning 65, evening 106. St. Bartholomew's seats 1,800; the attendances in the morning were 60, in the evening 92. Birmingham certainly does not want any more churches; and if Nonconformity was as well spread everywhere, we should soon have disestablishment and disendowment of the Church.

According to this census there were no fewer than 13,489 persons in Birmingham who, instead of attending churches and chapels, visited the Art Gallery, Reference Library, Aston Grounds concert, or Sunday lectures, etc.

At Edinburgh some enterprising pietist has started a Bible Witness Association to combat infidelity. A Commission of the Church of Scotland has also been making visitations with a view of inquiring into the religious condition of the people. They say they everywhere find that the people do not go to church as they did formerly, and they usually lay the blame on the ministers. Of course disbelief in the Confession of Faith can have nothing to do with it.

The *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette* is responsible for the statement that the pay of Mr. D. L. Moody, the American Evangelist, while in Dublin, was at the rate of £40 per week, exclusive of first-class hotel accommodation. No wonder Moody, like the negro who smacked his lips at the communion wine, "loves his Jesus." He can sing with Sankey

This is why I love my Jesus,
This is why I love him so;
He takes me in the shekels,
That make the mare to go.

Mark xvi. gives as the last words of Jesus, his promise that his faithful believers shall take up serpents and perform other prodigies. A farmer named Southers, converted at a recent revival at Oklahoma, seeing a rattler thought he would test his assurance that he was a true Christian, took up the snake from the ground and as a consequence received its poisonous fangs in his flesh. He refused to receive medical treatment, believing in the assurance of St. James that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." But despite a large dose of prayer he expired. The *Truthseeker* devotes a cartoon as well as a leaderette to the circumstance.

Says the *Truthseeker*: "A member of the Plymouth church council says: 'I am sick and tired of giving to the American Board of Missions to aid in supporting missionaries who believe out and out in the damnation of all the heathen. I am tired of the whole miserable humbug, and I won't give a cent. to spread the news of damnation.'"

The missionary business is in fact humbug. If the heathen can be saved from hell without Christianity, there is little incentive to carry it to them. To do so is, in fact, to increase their chances of damnation, by rejecting beliefs they did very well without.

Buck Olsen was hanged at Dorchester, for murdering a constable. On the scaffold the priest said that Buck hoped for forgiveness, as he had just forgiven everybody. After prayers Buck kissed the crucifix and said, "May God forgive me." Priest Goudett cried, "Go to heaven!" and the drop jerked him to glory.

A girl of the Eskimo village at the World's Fair grounds who had never seen black men, was frightened into a sickness by one entering her tent, she thinking him the Devil.

The head-masters of the great public schools are reopening the question of religious education. They have nearly all been in what are called "holy orders"—that is, what Carlyle called "solemnly constituted impostors." They would be wise if, like Dr. Arnold at Rugby, they paid their main attention to moral training and let the dogmas of religion alone. Prayers and all other religious performances at public schools are a farce, and if the farce is made an

irksome one, it will not redound to the ultimate advantage of religion.

The lads in public schools know well enough that they are there for other purposes than learning the Bible, the Catechism, and the Book of Common Prayer. They know that whatever time is devoted to what is called religious instruction is taken from more important subjects relating to human interests and their own future welfare; and if the best attention of the masters is devoted to divinity, they need not expect that the best attention of their pupils will follow suit.

The Spiritists often tell us of the progressive state of the departed in the blessed spheres beyond, but they never give any show of the spirit's progress. Milton and Shakespeare return only to utter poor twaddle in doggerel verse. The extent of the information to be derived from the séances is well illustrated in the following:

"Yes," said the spiritualistic medium, thoughtfully, "the spirit who is here tells me you are not an Englishman by birth."

"He was right," replied the earnest inquirer.

"He says that you were born in another country."

"Dat is true."

"He says the name of the country is Germany."

"Dot was so—it was Shermany."

"I am tired now—five shillings, please."

And the seance ended.

Mrs. Besant, the *Liverpool Daily Post* says, has shaken off the dust of her feet against her native land, and has removed the headquarters of the Theosophical Society to America. We wonder if this is true.

According to a press paragraph the Marquis of Queensberry has been lecturing at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, on marriage and the relation of the sexes. His lordship, it is said, advocated the introduction of polygamy as a means of doing away with the evil of illegitimacy. The press paragraph says his lordship was in company with Mr. Charles Watts, the Secularist lecturer; the object of this being, apparently, to associate Secularism and polygamy in the public mind. Mr. Watts simply took the chair, and the Marquis spoke his own opinions. They have no necessary connexion with Secularism. As a matter of fact, polygamy is a Bible doctrine. But in this, as in other cases, the Christians don't know their own book.

At St. Andrews Free Church Hall, Hawick, an entertainment was given on behalf of the Zenana mission. The Rev. D. Stewart, pastor of the congregation presided, but the man of God got out of temper at the recitation by a young man, of a parody of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade." He sternly ordered him to desist. The reciter stopped short and left the hall, followed by the choir and nearly the whole of the audience.

The lines which roused the parson's ire were entitled "The Village Choir," and began

Half a bar, half a bar,
Half a bar onward,
Into an awful ditch
Choir and precentor hitch,
Into a mass of pitch
They led the Old Hundred.

This, Mr. Stewart thought, verged on blasphemy.

The paternal government of the Czar proposes to reconcile the Jews by permitting baptised husbands to marry a second wife if No. 1 refuses to renounce the errors of the Talmud. The permission to cremate a stiff-necked mother-in-law would probably double the number of converts.

A wealthy Moscow merchant has found a way to draw some of the poor persecuted Moscow Jews to Christ. He announced that he would become godfather to all who would be baptised, and remember in his will everyone certified to have received the sacrament regularly once a year. About four hundred Jews, at the time of the persecution, accepted baptism, and some cash with it, we hope; but only two are now properly certified as abiding in the faith and heirs of the old merchant as well as of the Christian paradise. Perhaps the Jews found out the merchant did not mean to leave them much, or that it would amount to little if shared

among too many. Perhaps even they agreed to divide by a syndicate, choosing two victims to take the odious communion.

"Do you ever pray for the coming of the millennium, madame?" "Not much." "Why not?" "My husband is a professor in a college for the training of missionaries. When the millennium is here there will be no need of missionaries, and my husband will have no occupation."—*New York Press*.

The Rev. Thomas Dixon, of the Twenty-third-street Baptist Church of New York, is a worthy disciple of the gospel of damnation. He was arrested at Staten Island, and has been fined for shooting 31 song birds in violation of the law of the state. In this sporting parson's game-bag were found 27 robins and four other birds. But robins have no souls. If parsons of this description get to heaven, humane people will prefer other quarters.

Mayor Washburn, of Chicago, recently signed the petition for the Sunday opening of the World's Fair, and in doing so, said: "Officially I shall object to the closing of the Fair on Sunday, for the reason that if the attendance be only one half as great as is anticipated, the throwing upon this community of several hundred thousand visitors each Sunday without occupation, will crowd every brothel, saloon and place of evil resort to overflowing."

Michael Davitt was too much a priests' candidate. They were really his election agents. This little fact has cost him his seat. We are sorry for him, for he is a brave man, who has suffered much for Ireland. But he is not a Parnell. That masterful man got the Nationalist party clean out of the priests' hands, and that is why they hated him. Had he been a Catholic, and a good son of the Church, he might have committed as much "adultery" as he pleased.

According to the *Church Times* there is a steady decline in the number of first classes obtained by students at Church Training Colleges. Theological training is not likely to make any one first class at anything except pedantry. It has no hold on facts.

While our friends the enemy are seeking to prevent the spread of Freethought through the means of paid lectures, we find everywhere an increase in the number of sacred concerts in church, with admission by payment. The *Torquay Directory* contains an announcement by the rector of Upton, calling attention to a forthcoming sacred concert in his church, at which "The Messiah" was to be performed. "Subscribers of five shillings will receive stamped copies of the service-book, entitling them to priority of admission to the church." In addition to the charge of five shillings, the collection in the afternoon was to be a "silver one," though the "pennies of the working-men" were said to be valued.

"Call this a Young Man's Christian Association, indeed!" exclaimed the daughter of one of our hospitable citizens. "Why, just as I was preparing to find out if we were entertaining an angel unawares, he turned out to be married and the father of six children! No more of that kind of angel in mine, if you please."

AN EPITAPH ON JOHNNY'S TOMBSTONE.

When Johnny lived,
He lived to please us,
And when he died
He went to Jesus.

A wag added:

But you can't most always sometimes tell;
Maybe Johnny went to Hell.

A minister of a Highland parish preached one day on the duty of unqualified truthfulness, and was a little surprised to receive a visit from a parishioner who was well known to the guagers as a maker of "sma' still" whiskey. "I have come to-day to thank ye for yon sermon ye preached," he said. "I will aye speak the truth efter this. Ye see, on Monday morning I got a visit frae the guager. 'Hae ye ony whiskey here?' he demanded. 'Oh, ay,' says I, 'nae doot I hae some whiskey.' 'Aud where is it?' he inquired. 'Oh, jist below the bed there,' says I. Weel, what dae ye think? I tell't naething but the naked truth, and the cratur never as much as poked his stick below the bed, though he looked at every ither part o' the hoose. I'm thinkin', sir, ye are quite right

that it is aye best to tell the truth. I maun thank ye, sir, for the sermon. It has dune me good. Honesty is the best policy efter a'. I'll aye tell the truth."

Rev. D. Gritton has been associated for twenty-five years with the Lord's Day Rest Association. He has also been for forty years a Church of England clergyman. But at length he has seen the error of his ways and become a Baptist. He has been dipped by the Rev. James A. Spurgeon, and we hope he feels better after the operation. On the other hand, the Rev. W. Roberts, a Congregational minister, has joined the Church of England, and been ordained by the Bishop of Rochester. Probably both gentlemen have lost nothing by the change.

Professor Drummond is reported to have spoken in a very depreciating manner of his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. A considerable part of it, he says, would have to be rewritten if he wrote as he thinks now. Yet that book, weak and washy as it is, made Professor Drummond's fame, and gave the high market value to his later effusions.

Professor Drummond wrote a weak book, and the great Henry Fielding once wrote a faulty play. But there the analogy ends. Professor Drummond didn't know it, and Henry Fielding did. The great man didn't go to the theatre himself on the first night. He went to a coffee-house and took it easy. By and bye a friend came in with a long face, and said that at a certain part the play was hissed. "Ah," said Fielding, "the fools have found it out, have they?" Professor Drummond's fools haven't found it out. But he has. What he has now to do is to tell the fools all about it.

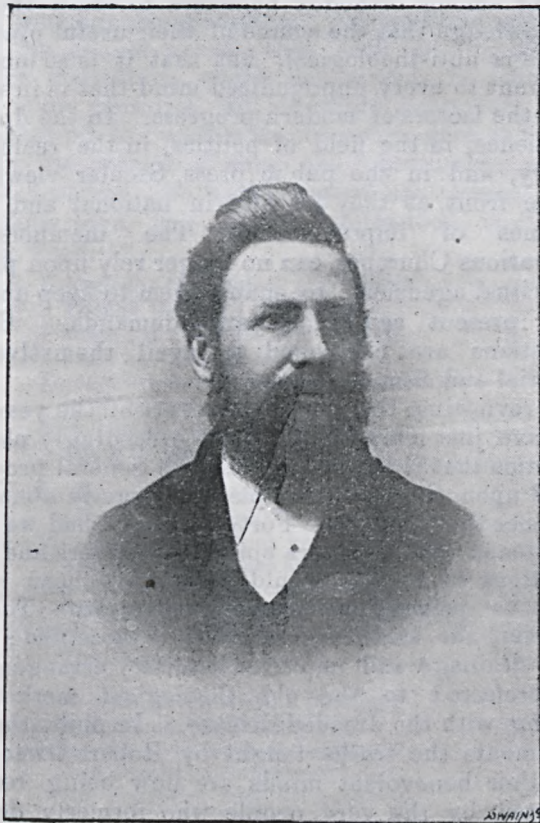
Dr. Parker begs of "God the Holy Ghost" to "send messages through me concerning life, business, politics, religion, and duty, which may be of real service in the highest education of the world." Up to the present the Holy Ghost hasn't sent any message worth a copper to Dr. Parker. When the unemployed deputation waited on him he said he was sorry he could not advise them what to do. Perhaps if they call again Dr. Parker will give them a tip from the Ghost.

The Rev. Philip Ahier, of Battersea, was charged with knocking down and then brutally kicking Mr. A. F. White, a Clapham baker. The reverend gentleman explained that he had been called names. We suppose this illustrates the ethical power of the Sermon on the Mount.

The *Methodist Times*—Price Hughes's paper—says that "every drop of blood in General Booth's body and in Mrs. Booth's body was Wesleyan Methodist blood." We never heard of that variety of the sanguine fluid before. St. Paul was mistaken, it appears; God hath *not* made of one blood all nations of men. We should like to examine that Wesleyan Methodist variety under the microscope. Mr. Hughes, perhaps, will send us on a pint.

Mr. Hughes wants the Salvation Army to amalgamate with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. No doubt. But the "General" is too shrewd to do anything of the kind. His policy is to belong to no Church and to make use of all. Anyhow he's far too sharp to be caught by Hugh Price Hughes.

The Rev. W. E. Blomfield, of Ipswich, is a curious gentleman. Having a prior engagement, he came to Mr. Foote's lecture when it was over, and wanted to make a long speech in support of a vote of thanks to the lecturer. The reverend gentleman has since been asked to hold a set debate with Mr. Foote, but he declines to do so, on the ground that Mr. Foote is not "a reverent Freethinker"—which is quite true. "I would never lower myself," says Mr. Blomfield, "by arguing with any man who assails the Bible with derision and abuse." But the reverend gentleman *does* argue with Mr. Foote, only he prefers to do it where the "infidel" lecturer cannot answer him. The *Ipswich Chronicle* gives a two column report of Mr. Blomfield's reply to Mr. Foote in a sermon at Turret-green Chapel. Mr. Blomfield is not a bad sort, but he resembles other Christian ministers in this, that he treats "infidelity" with a mixture of foolish superciliousness and transparent fear. For the rest, it is really a colossal joke for a Christian minister to give Secularists advice as to how they should treat his religion; especially when the said Christian minister flings about his adjectives with orthodox freedom.



J. M. WHEELER.

GOOD WITHOUT GOD.

It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.

—J. S. Mill, on "Liberty."

LET our enemies think and say what they will, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we attack religious dogmas from above, and not from beneath. Freethinkers reject Christianity because it is not good enough. Its cardinal doctrines are as repugnant to their hearts as to their minds. The beliefs in eternal hell, and in tempting devils and salvation through blood, seem no less atrocious than absurd. Its promises are as futile as its pretensions are false. Its history appears as detestable, as its creed is despicable. Many people honestly cannot understand our position. They imagine that to be an Atheist one must necessarily be very bad. True, it may not logically follow that bad conduct is the necessary sequence of the rejection of belief in a god, any more than the rejection of a belief in ghosts, or in witches; but training has so entwined right conduct with religion in the minds of these people, that they cannot understand their separation. Often, indeed, when they have lost all real belief in theology, they retain devotion to its forms from dread of imaginary issues to the detriment of morality.

The man who clung for hours with frantic desperation to an Alpine crag, believing that if he but hold he should, in the stupid theological phrase, be "launched into eternity" (was he not always in eternity?), while in reality he was but a few feet from the solid ground, was wise compared with the religionists who cling so desperately to their old faiths, and say to give them up is to resign all. To see their error they have but to look around. Are the criminals Atheists? Are the Atheists criminals? They forget the wise words of Butler, "Things are as they are: why then should we desire to be deceived?" Those who believe in a fixed order of things; who hold that no repentance, no merits of any innocent person, can

wipe out the consequences of wrong-doing, are surely not the most likely to be numbered with the transgressors.

The Freethinker is pre-eminently a Truthseeker. He means to stand on the solid ground of fact, let it look ever so ugly. The morality that will stand must be based on the facts. For this reason true morality, unlike theology, can take care of itself. It depends on no book, church, creed or written law, but on the needs of man, and must last as long as they. Its worst enemies are those who place it on false foundations. One indictment we urge against clericalism is this—that, to enhance the power of their own rush-lights, they have obscured the entrance of the sunshine. They have warped morality by founding it on the arbitrary will of an imaginary irresponsible being, whose supposed commands have sanctioned the persecution and slaughter of millions.

The most persecuting inquisitors and bigots have not been deliberately wicked, but sincere believers who have let religion overcome the dictates of natural morality. And this must ever be so, once eternal rewards and punishments are sincerely believed. Their consideration dwarfs all others, and may, in the eyes of a believer, make it more important to attend mass than to wait on a dying mother. Even the highest reaches of morality have been spoiled by being followed, not for the sake of the healthy life of humanity, but to obtain the favor of God and escape the wrath to come. Confining himself to the issues of this world the Secularist is on higher as well as securer ground. There is no elevation of sentiment, no aspiration for human welfare that is not as open to him as to the Christian. But his aspirations are directed to the possible and practical. If limited in range they are concentrated in force. Those who give up the expectation of a hereafter are impelled to seek to improve the condition of things here and now. When people know there is no help in prayer they develop self reliance. When they dispense with an overruling providence they are prepared to dispense also with an overruling class, when they recognise that no God needs their services they will devote them more heartily to the needs of man.

J. M. WHEELER.

A NUN, A MILKMAN, AND A MONK.

(Translated from the German.)

A NUN sat in her quiet cell,
For in her sphere it was thought well
To do so, if she pleases.
The milkman brisk, on business bent,
Touched quick her latch and in he went,
When she exclaimed, "My Jesus!"

While she thus on her savior called,
Some fellow 'neath the table crawled,
With scarce a moment's warning.
"Go!" cried the nun, in fervent tone,
"Go! leave me with my God alone;
I want no milk this morning."

Abashed, confused, the milkman stood,
For in his vision flashed a hood
Most monkishly serene.
In confidence he tells his wife,
"Our Lord God looks, as true as life,
Just like a Capuchin!"

M. L. TAUBER.

"Provisions are running pretty low, pop," said Shem on the thirtieth day out. "What are we going to do about it?" "I don't know," said Noah, with a wink at Japhet, "unless we eat Ham."



CHARLES WATTS.

THE YEAR WE HAVE LEFT BEHIND! —

WHEN death deprived the Freethought Party of the services of its late valiant leader, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, many Christians exultantly prophesied the downfall of Secularism in England. No doubt in this case "the wish was father to the thought," for evidently nothing would have given the orthodox world greater satisfaction than to have witnessed the decline of the Secular movement, which during the last decade has made such rapid strides throughout the United Kingdom. Fortunately these prophecies have been falsified, for never has Secularism been in such a flourishing condition in this country as it is at present, and never have its advocates and principles received more respectful consideration than they do now from their opponents. While there might have been greater excitement manifested within the Secular ranks in previous years, we venture to affirm that never in the history of the cause which we have at heart has more genuine solid progress been made in the same proportion of time than has been achieved in the year that has just departed. The National Secular Society has the advantage of an executive which, in numbers and business-like activity, has never been surpassed; and in Mr. G. W. Foote we have a president who lacks neither ability nor courage. Thus we have reasons for not only congratulating ourselves upon the results of our labors in 1892, but we have grounds for hoping and believing that ere the new-born year expires the N.S.S. will have reached a still greater degree of efficiency and have still farther extended its sphere of usefulness.

Not only within our own ranks is this gratifying advancement perceptible, but Secular and Freethought principles are being adopted and acted upon by all sections of society outside our organized party. True the term Secularism is seldom connected with the agencies of modern progress by those not belonging to our association, but they accept our gospel nevertheless and act upon it in their pro-

gressive work. It is to be regretted that the power of fashion and the force of bigotry are still too strong among orthodox believers to allow them to acknowledge that the source of their useful practical labors is anti-theological, but that it is so must be apparent to every unprejudiced mind that is in touch with the factors of modern progress. In the domain of science, in the field of politics, in the realms of poetry, and in the public press, Secular views are to the front, as they are also in national and local schemes of improvement. The members of the various Churches can no longer rely upon purely "spiritual agencies" to enable them to keep abreast with present aspirations and demands. Hence Christians are compelled to avail themselves of material and Secular means.

In reviewing, therefore, the events of the year that we have just left behind, we are exceedingly pleased to notice that it has been prolific in general progress based upon Secular principles. There is abundant evidence that this is so. Forty years ago had we been threatened with a cholera epidemic, prayers and supplications to heaven would then have been relied upon as primary means of prevention. To-day, however, the service of science is accepted; and good drainage and improved sanitary arrangements are preferred to the old theological method of dealing with the dreaded disease. In philanthropic movements the truths taught by Robert Owen and by other benevolent minds are now being readily accepted by the very people who formerly denied their reality. Thus care for the body takes precedence of any anxiety about its supposed soul. People are now far more inclined to try to fill empty stomachs than to pester the hungry with the worn-out dogmas of theology. Even General Booth has to depend upon mundane agencies in the carrying out of his scheme. The same course has had to be adopted by the promoters of the numerous religious congresses and conferences that have been held during the past year. At all of them it was proclaimed that the Christian world lacked unity and the power to win and to retain the attention and confidence of the masses. This to us is not at all surprising, inasmuch as theology is destitute of cohesive force and of those requirements necessary to the well-being of the general community. This has always been the case from the time when some of Christ's disciples forsook him, down to the present period when Christians are compelled to seek for anti-theological means to hold their churches together and to give their religious propaganda even the semblance of popularity.

We have also had within the past year striking instances of the Secularisation of our public press. Most of the leading journals have complimented Mr. M. D. Conway on his successful endeavor to rescue the memory of Thomas Paine from the obloquy heaped upon it by the Churches for a hundred years. The severe criticism by Professor Huxley of the tenets of the Christian faith which is contained in his recently published *Essays on Controverted Questions* has met with a hearty reception from the public, such as certainly a few years ago it would not have commanded. Our popular magazines also now deal with heretical writings without indulging in the vituperative outpourings that once characterised Christian notices of the works of Freethinkers. The recent article which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* on "Happiness in Hell" indicates clearly that even some of the most orthodox Christians are becoming ashamed of their old faith. Hell, with its horrible theological associations, has become too revolting to the cultivated minds of the nineteenth century, and therefore, as the Church cannot afford to entirely give up this sulphurous abode, it is now claimed that the place is not so bad as the faithful have hitherto represented it to be. Hence we are

assured that happiness is to be found where once it was alleged that nothing was known but perpetual misery and agonising torture. As believers in evolution, we cannot expect that such an important orthodox institution, which has served the Church for so many centuries, will suddenly disappear; but these attempts to improve its character give us hope that, in the process of time, the "bottomless pit" will be deserted like an exhausted coal mine. As G. R. Sims says, hell as once understood, is "the missing word."

Though the fog is black and blinding,
Though the sun I never see;
Though the Fates are ever finding
Some new misery for me;
Though my soul is bruised and battered
In its narrow earthy shell,
Now I know it never mattered;
There is happiness in —.

In the days when life was bubbling
Like new wine within my veins,
I'd a conscience which kept troubling,
And I'd moral aches and pains.
When a crime I then committed,
On my mind that crime would dwell,
For it was not then admitted
That there's happiness in —.

Now without a qualm, to passion
And temptation I can yield,
Since the Devil's out of fashion,
And Damnation's been repealed.
Down the Broad Path, all unheeding,
With the crowd I rush pell-mell;
Yes! I know where it is leading,
But there's *Happiness* in —.

Thus, as Secularists, we have reason to feel proud of the past year's achievements. Of course all difficulties in the way of our advancement have not yet been removed. Orthodoxy is slow in accepting any innovation upon its strongholds. Still, the ramparts of superstition and fanaticism are giving way. In the past our opponents locked Freethinkers up. Now that can no longer be done, there are Christians who would fetter our public advocacy by invoking the power of old Acts of Parliament which were passed in the interest of bigotry and the Church. Upon this point our duty is clear, and our intentions are unmistakable. We must and will insist upon having unfettered freedom to publicly express our views and to question those who pretend to have a knowledge they do not and cannot possess. No one can reasonably claim that writers and speakers on God and the Devil, hell and heaven, have any knowledge of such persons and places. At most all that is written and said upon such topics is but mere conjecture, the result of perverted imagination, based on fear and ignorance. Our hope is in the newly arisen power of mind and in our own determined efforts. We seek to attain good in our time on the orb that carries us through space. What we cannot secure in our day we trust that our successors may obtain in theirs. By doing our best we feel satisfied that we are making the burden of life lighter and the road to happiness easier for those who shall follow us in the world we leave behind. Men and women with cultured minds and well-balanced faculties will find that serving others is one of the pleasures, as it is also one of the duties of existence. Secularism inculcates that the main motive which should influence the human race is that a well-trained and efficiently educated community will prove the best security for individual happiness, and will serve as the most reliable safeguard against the disturbing elements of the errors and follies of that theology which has too often detracted from the usefulness of conduct and the possible pleasures of a well-spent life. Our philosophy is no narrow and exclusive creed. We welcome one and all when they join in the laudable task of striving to better the condition of a long-neglected humanity. We regard science as being confined to no one sect and to no one party.

We deny that knowledge is peculiar to any Church, or that truth is the vested right of any religious denomination. We are, therefore, prepared to

Seize upon truth where ere 'tis found,
On Christian or on heathen ground—
The flower's divine where ere it grows.

CHARLES WATTS.

A DIVINE REVELATION.

There is a well-known anecdote of a young woman, the widow of a minister in Bishop Leighton's diocese, to whom he had been exceedingly kind, and who took it into her head that the Bishop was deeply in love with her. Finding he delayed to utter the missing word, she went to him in a lonely walk by the waterside where he used to meditate. "Oh, my lord," said she, "I had a revelation last night." "Indeed," answered he, "I hardly imagined you would ever have been so highly honored; what is it?" "That your lordship and I were to be married together." "Have a little patience," replied the Bishop, "till I have a revelation too."

This story applies exactly to the sensible bishop's creed. His faith was founded on a particular revelation which is said to have been vouchsafed to certain Jews a long way off, and a good while ago. Now we surmise that if God wanted to give us any revelation he would have given it direct without trusting it to the uncertainties attending old manuscripts with their copyists and translators. If God had spoken, the world would have been convinced.



TOUZEAU PARRIS.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

(Revised Version.)

Our father which art far off in heaven, Hallowed be thy unknown name. Thy throne is in Kingdom-come. Thy will is done on earth as much as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, meat, and potatoes. Forgive us our debts, as we summon our debtors. And lead us not into temptation to think, but deliver us from heresy; for thine is the kingdom, and the priest's is the power, and the king's is the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.



GEORGE STANDRING.

THE CHRISTIAN MARTYR. A TALE OF 1950.

[PREFATORY NOTE.—I disclaim all responsibility—save that of being the medium of transmission—in connection with the following story. The MS. came into my possession in this way. One Sunday morning I delivered an anti-theological lecture, as hot and strong as I could make it, in Finsbury Park. When I had finished, a young man approached me, and, with a bewildered air, thanked me earnestly for the “excellent lecture” which I had given “in defence of Christianity.” He asked me to take charge of a little packet of manuscript, begging me to read it and have it published if possible, as he intended to blow out his brains in the afternoon. This announcement did not disturb me, for he evidently had nothing in that way to blow out. He departed hastily with a fervent blessing and a dilapidated umbrella. I never saw him again; but a few days afterwards it was stated in the *Daily Chronicle* that the body of a man had been found in the Thames at Wapping. The description corresponded with that of my unknown friend. With this simple explanation I leave the author to tell his own tale.—GEORGE STANDRING.]

CHAPTER I.

SPURNED FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.

OUR story opens on the eve of New Year 1950. Claude Montessor, a handsome youth of some twenty summers, whose massive brow indicated extraordinary intellectual power, was pacing to and fro in front of a magnificent mansion in Berkeley-square. It was the town residence of the Right Hon. Robert Corduroy, a vice-president of the all-powerful National Secular Society, and (by virtue of his office) a member of the Government of the British Republic.

Forty years before, the Christian religion had been deposed from its place in the life of the English nation, and triumphant Secularism reigned in its stead. A few faithful ones still professed Christ and Him crucified, but they were a persecuted and outcast sect.

Claude Montessor was one of those despised believers. His grandfather had been an open-air lecturer of the long-extinct Christian Evidence Society, and the strain of simple piety which had come down to him from that distinguished ancestor had protected

him from the influence of the overwhelming wave of infidelity that had destroyed the religious life of the country.

Claude fell deeply in love with Blanche Corduroy, the only daughter of the wealthy vice-president of the N.S.S. He had reason to hope that his suit was favorably regarded, at least by Blanche herself; but what would her father say when he demanded her hand? It was this maddening question which Claude determined to settle that night; and thus it came about that he was prowling around the area-railings of the Corduroy mansion.

At last he rang the bell, and was conducted by a liveried servant to a sumptuously furnished drawing-room. Blanche soon appeared and greeted him with a six-inch loving smile. She was dressed in a *poult de soie* Louis XIV. tea-gown, tastefully ornamented with green and blue antimacassars, cut bias and fluted down the seams with Berlin wool embroidery. She was radiantly beautiful; and, as Claude tenderly kissed her on the nose, he mentally calculated that no sacrifice would be too great if he could win such a prize as his reward.

Claude Montessor was soon summoned into the cabinet of his loved one's father. The Right Hon. Robert Corduroy was a hard-faced, bald-headed man of sixty; his cold and abrupt style was the expression of a character moulded by the harshness of the Utilitarian philosophy. He silently motioned Claude to a seat.

“Let us get to business,” said the old man in a fifty-per-cent.-and-no-renewal voice. “I understand you want to marry my daughter.”

Claude, in agitated but resolute tones, said nothing.

“What are your means of livelihood?” demanded the father.

“I am a poet!” proudly responded the young man. “As yet I have earned nothing by my writings; but I live in hope; and in the meantime I am supported by my parents, who are industrious and therefore poor, but as honest as they can afford to be at the price.”

“You are, of course, a Freethinker and a member of the National Secular Society?” said the old man.

Upon hearing this Claude rose to his feet, his face glowing with blushes and the glory of a noble resolve. “I am sorry to say, sir,” he began, in a low tone, “that my answer will probably offend you.” Raising his voice several feet, he continued: “*I am a Christian*: religion runs in our family; my sainted grandfather was an open-air lecturer for Christ and the Christian Evidence Society. By the memory of that pious man I am alone sustained in making this straightforward but presumably disastrous avowal.”

Mr. Corduroy regarded our hero with an air of cynical and mocking curiosity. “So! you are a Christian!” he hissed through his false teeth. “Think you, then, that a maiden bearing the honored name of Corduroy can be allied to the grandson of a C.E.S. lecturer? Hence, minion! betake yourself to your dismantled altars and your knock-kneed rhymes! My daughter shall never be thine—or, to speak more correctly, she shall never be your wife!”

Claude saw his cherished hopes crumble into dust. The stern father's anger was so terrible that protest and persuasion were alike impossible. Claude turned, and, breathing a silent prayer, he obeyed the old man's order—that is to say, he henced.

In the passage Blanche (who, of course, had overheard all) softly approached her lover and slipped a note into his hand. With bowed head he passed out into the chill night. In the fitful glare of a gas-lamp he opened the letter and read these lines, blotted with Blanche's tears:

“Await me at the front door at midnight. We will slope together.”

The language was not, perhaps, very elegant; but Blanche was in a hurry, and women have even been known not spell incorrectly when writing hastily.

Claude tenderly placed the sweet missive inside his waistcoat, and murmured heartfelt thanks to the great Giver of all good things.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.

TWELVE hours later Blanche Corduroy and Claude Montessor were neatly joined in holy wedlock at a service secretly held in a dismal lodging-house in Seven Dials. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been in hiding since the persecution of Christians began, left his secure retreat in Whitechapel to perform the ceremony. His Grace was disguised as a working-man, for a price had been set upon his head by the Government.

CHAPTER III.

THE MARTYRDOM.

THE fury of old Corduroy knew no bounds when he discovered that he had been hoodwinked. He swore an oath twenty-seven feet long that he would track Claude and his wife and wreak upon them a terrible vengeance. Detectives were set to work; the manuscripts of all poetry sent to newspaper editors were examined, in the hope that a clue might be found. At length, after nearly three months of incessant searching, the ill-fated pair were discovered in a dingy room, half-starved, but rich in love and pawn-tickets.

Claude was taken prisoner, and brought for trial before the Organisation Committee of the N.S.S. The members of that committee were mere creatures of the wealthy and unscrupulous vice-president, and they docilely lent an air of legality to his nefarious scheme of revenge. Claude's trial took place on March 31, when the committee sentenced him to death, and ordered that the execution should take place on the following day.

The closing scene of our story displays both the cruelty and the hypocrisy of the Secular spirit. In the old persecutions of Queen Mary's time there was enough of cruelty; but there was no *humbug*. The victim was fastened to the stake; the Wallsend was heaped around him; the safety match, which would strike only on the box (and very often would not strike there), was applied; and then the band played. But the Secularism of 1850 had evolved a refinement of cruelty and of hypocrisy. The hapless Claude was seated on the platform of the Hall of Science, and bound in his chair. The sentence of the Organisation Committee decreed that twelve articles on Hylo-Idealism should be read aloud to the doomed man; and a *seemingly* humane reservation was made that, if he survived, he should be released. The wretched persecutors knew perfectly well that it was impossible for Claude (or anybody else) to survive such an ordeal.

One after another the members of the committee advanced to our hero and administered a two-column dose of Hylo-Idealism. As each executioner completed his share of the dreadful work, he was assisted from the hall and restoratives were applied. The effect of the punishment upon Claude was closely watched by the spectators, who, with their ears tightly plugged with cotton-wool, thronged the place. When the third article had been read aloud Claude was delirious, and his pulse beat at the rate of twenty miles an hour; at the end of the fourth he called upon his sainted grandfather to deliver him; before the fifth could be completed he was *dead*.

Claude's body was cast into the Thames. As it floated down to the sea it was espied between Blackwall and Greenwich by a few Christians who went down by rail and secretly waited to pay a last tribute of respect to the martyr's memory. These pious friends declared that a halo of light played gently around the dead man's face. But the heartless Freethinkers derided this, and said it must have been the reflection from Claude's red nose.



ARTHUR B. MOSS.]

CHANGES IN CHRISTIANITY.

EIGHTEEN hundred and ninety-three! How the years rush on. It is now just eighteen years ago since I first made my appearance as an advocate of the glorious gospel of Freethought. What wonderful changes Freethought has wrought in every direction during those years!

I remember distinctly how, when I first announced that I had become an "infidel," and bade my Christian friends farewell, and gave up my position as Sunday-school teacher, I was considered by many to have become by that act an abandoned creature—worse than a thief, and almost approaching in villiany to a murderer. Thanks to the spread of education, things have altered very much for the better since then. Christians of all kinds have become much more liberal-minded, and some of them have come to see that the so-called "infidels" are men whose conduct is in many ways superior to that of those who profess a great deal, but who in practice fall far short of the "unbelievers" whose characters they have considered it a religious duty to malign.

The year that has passed has witnessed some extraordinary changes in the faith of the orthodox Christian: Bit by bit it has been transformed, so that to-day it is very difficult to determine what Christianity really is. No two educated Christians agree upon the point. Some Christians claim that Christ was a sort of modern Socialist; others that he was a Communist; others that he was an Anarchist; others that he was a Unitarian; and I dare say that it will be demonstrated in time that he was in favor of Home Rule for Ireland. But while these claims have been put forward with more or less show of reason, the Freethinker has been able to take advantage of them all and to advance his position; and now he is practically master of the situation. One by one the old positions of the Christian have been abandoned. The doctrine of the Fall of Man has become an allegory; original sin an evidence of man's lowly origin; demoniac possession has been transformed into "fits"; the Bible Devil relegated to a back seat; and last of all, a Catholic scientist has put forth, as a "feeler," a new

view of the doctrine of eternal punishment, wherein he claims that for the sinner there is happiness even in hell.

This is indeed the climax. If the unbeliever can be happy in hell what desire can he have in the future to go to the other place? If there is happiness in the lower regions how are we to know whether it is comparable or not with the bliss of heaven unless we try them both? No doubt the next step will be for the Catholic to show that all persons pass through three stages of happiness, viz.: hell first, then purgatory and lastly heaven. And then, no doubt, there will be the usual competition for front seats. The top price will have to be paid for the "upper circle"—heaven; and perhaps to accommodate the great crowds that will rush pell-mell to the pit (hell) the doors will be opened free; unless the Devil's acting manager proves himself a smart man of business and puts on a small charge for early doors.

Happiness in hell! Of course. How could it be otherwise? All the great poets and playwrights will be there; all the artists and musicians; all the people who supply amusement for the people here on earth. Why, hell on these altered conditions will be a veritable World's Fair; and on the Devil's stage will appear all the star artistes of untold generations. What a glorious prospect! The Devil will give up the part of eternal stoker to become stage manager to the greatest show in heaven above or hell beneath!

But enough. Christianity is being gradually changed from a horrible nightmare of superstition into a humane, ethical system; it is being gradually transformed; and Freethought is the good Fairy who, with her wand of science and common sense, is complacently effecting these transformations. There are still a few foes to deal with. Some of our writers in the press still pander to human prejudices and weaknesses. They still act as tools to king and priest. But let them beware. The day of reckoning is at hand.

The schoolmaster is abroad; and when his work is done the eyes of the people will be opened. Let the year eighteen hundred and ninety-three be a year to every Freethinker for accomplishing something in this direction. Open the eyes of the people to their ignorance and folly—teach them to think; and to our hypocritical scribes let us say, in the words of the poet:

Ye scribes, who pander to a class,
To creeds, to customs, or to king,
Go lead the fear-enfettered mass
To knowledge—wisdom's glorious spring:
That yet the world in mental youth,
A thirst for living light, may drink
Of waters from the fount of truth,
And learn to live in love and ruth.*

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

SAMPLES.

A Church of England clergyman, who was travelling on the Continent, was exceedingly partial to a peculiarly hot kind of pickle, a bottle of which he invariably carried about with him wherever he went. An American, who was seated next to him one day at *table d'hôte*, thinking these pickles were for general use, began to help himself.

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted the clergyman, "those pickles are mine; but help yourself by all means; you're quite welcome to try them."

The American thanked him, and tasted them.

"Stranger, I guess you're a parson."

"I am," responded the clergyman.

A slight pause.

"Stranger, do you believe in eternal punishment, everlasting fire, and all that sort of thing?"

"Certainly I do. But what makes you ask?"

"I kinder thought so. Well, I calculate you're the fust parson I've met who carried samples about with him."

"GOD WILL PROVIDE."

TEAR down the pales of Rant and Cant,
Wide fling the gates of Common-sense,
Plant Reason firm as adamant,
And banish all this Smug Pretence.
Too long have oily preachers tried
To drug us with a platitude;
"Have patience, for God will provide"—
Have patience—without work or food!

Have patience when the pestilence
Of Want and Care is on our brow;
Then say, in his omnipotence,
Why does not God provide it now?
You prate about Religion's charms,
We've got as much of that as you;
And we'll send up a dozen psalms
If he'll send down a loaf or two.

For though fat piety is vexed
When our faith-light is burning dim,
We can't subsist upon a text,
Or fill our bellies with a hymn.
If you could know a month of woe,
Such as we have through all the years,
You'd understand the sighs that go
Adrift upon a sea of tears.

Come down from off your pulpit perch,
Come down and share our nothingness,
And test the bubbles of your church
Against the thorns of our distress.
'Tis well for you to advocate
The creed which suits the smug and sleek,
But put aside your gown and "plate,"
And try our happy lot a week.

And when the winds blanch your heart's core,
Say, then, which fashion fits you best:
Whether the warmth of your home, or
The hell which burns within our breast.
Or kneel and watch your gentle wife
Fall as may fall the stricken dove;
Kneel there and see the slow, harsh strife
Between Starvation and her love.

Lean low and catch her latest breath—
Your soul's eyes seeking her's in vain—
Then, your heart dying in her death,
Live dead to everything but Pain.

Not any maiden you have known,
Not any maid in soft romance,
Not any girl in friezes shown,
Or carved in marble or in stone,
Had sweeter trust in sweeter glance
Than shone in my dear wife's blue eyes—
Blue as the grace of sky is blue;
Yet Hunger stifled her last sighs
And fed her fleeting soul on rue.
Not any heart of all the hearts
Was purer or was half so pure;
And all the faith your creed imparts
Was hers to suffer and endure.

And when Sleep battled with Disease,
And Want writhed in the arms of Pain,
With all that faith she prayed for ease,
She prayed—God let her pray in vain!
And there are tears as red as mine
In this great land of ours to-day;
And truths which only shine as shino
Pale stars beneath cloud-veils of grey.
And there are lives deep down the grave
Of Life slain in Faith's tragedy;
And there are hearts which only crave
To break upon their souls and die.

What good to us to count the worth
Of worthless Christianity?
What good to suffer hell on earth
To reach a heaven that may not be?
What good to us the faith which drags
The helpless in its bitter thrall?
When the wind's whipping through our rags,
What of the God who shelter's all?

When fat men fatten on a creed
Which binds the poor to kiss the rod;
When brave hearts only beat to bleed,
One truth stands clear for all to read—
The strangest work of man is—God?

* J. M. Peacock, a Freethought poet, who was once a contributor to the *National Reformer*.



W. HEAFORD.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN HEAVEN.

THE other night, being in a melancholy frame of mind, I was induced to seek solace and surcease from trouble by the perusal of some of those cheerful lucubrations of Christian piety, which are so eminently calculated to drive such dull care away as that which haunted me. I took down from my bookshelves such exhilarating effusions as Harvey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*, Drelincourt *On Death*, Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*, the *De Imitatione* of Thomas à Kempis, and having bathed my spirit for a few hours in the pellucid streams of sanctity flowing from the brains of these gifted authors, and imbibed therefrom an invigorating intellectual tonic, I wound up my literary excursions by making a raid into the celestial abodes, and revelled in the gorgeous fancies of the dreamer of Patmos, by whose aid I scoured heaven and hell with the penetrating gaze of imagination. In the midst of my exstatic vision of lambs with seven horns and as many eyes, of stars falling from heaven like leaves in the forest, and of elderly saints washing their night-gowns in buckets of lamb's blood, deep slumber mercifully sealed my astonished eyes and launched me "to worlds unknown" and gods unknowable. I found myself suddenly on the threshold of heaven, and was just knocking for admission when a weather-beaten sky-pilot came scudding along, anxious to squeeze his sleek face and pampered belly in through the narrow gate. I could hear within the husky querulous voice of Peter the Porter growling his maledictions upon the two disturbers of his quietude, and after much clanging of keys and creaking of hinges, the heavy door was half opened, and we were gruffly cross-examined as to our rights of *entrée*. The testy saint opened fire, first of all, upon the man of God, but had no sooner heard what manner of man he was, and ascertained his psalm-smiting antecedents, than, imparting on the latter's skull a good swinging blow with his huge rusty keys, he hurled the affrighted wretch down into fathomless space. I just heard the last faint echoes of his frantic screams dying in the distant depths below, and the hideous splash caused by his bruised carcase as it fell into the seething foam of hell, when I was rudely awakened from my reverie by a

volley of mingled expletives and interrogatories directed to the purpose of ascertaining what infernal errand had brought *me* there. Such was the terror evoked in my mind by the dismal fate of my pious predecessor, that, reckoning myself as lost, I metaphorically gave up the ghost, and summoning resolution from despair, determined to make a clean breast of my Freethought, thinking it just as well to be hanged for the sheep of humanity as for the lamb of God. Imagine then my astonishment when I found that in divulging my true character to the janitor of heaven, I had, so to speak, "struck ile"—or, more literally, "found salvation." The dark, surly face of the saint became lit up with unwonted sweetness and light; his wrinkles and furrows were suddenly pencilled out by the magic youth-restorer of joy; and, flinging down his keys at the same time as he removed from his frosty brow the circum-ambient wreath of glory rays, he impressed a smacking kiss of welcome and friendship on my cheeks, already ruddy with mingled pride and fear, and quite disarmed my terror by surreptitiously showing me a copy of the current week's *Freethinker*. "My dear Heaford, you come just at the nick of time," said the saint. "We are holding high revelry in heaven to-day, and you cannot do better than step inside and see all the fun of the fair." There was no resisting such a cordial invitation, and, natural curiosity lending an auxiliary impulse, I thanked his saintship and hurried along with nimble feet, in order to lose nothing that was to be seen. Heaven certainly appeared different from anything I had hitherto imagined concerning it. It was, as it happened, Christmas Day, and I ascertained, from a stray archangel whom I casually met loafing around with a brace of heavenly beauties on his arms, that a sort of moral revolution had taken place in "kingdom-come" during the last few hours. A fit of compunction, it appeared, had suddenly overtaken the senior member of the co-eternal trio concerning the state of the damned. He had at last seen the affliction of the millions of hell, and had heard their cry by reason of their tortures. Their sorrows had pierced his stony heart and stung him to a tardy repentance. The consequence was that, by his express orders, the fires of hell were to be extinguished, and, pending the execution of extensive alterations and repairs in the infernal regions, all the fried souls had been deported to heaven. The sounds of anguish no longer mingled with the songs of heaven to raise a sweet harmonious chorus of praise in the ears of a God proof against pity and love. The saints were no longer condemned to derive their chiefest joys from feasting their eyes upon the banquet of misery spread out before them in hell, nor were the former denizens of those salubrious regions tantalised in their misery by contemplating, with eyes full of envy and hearts void of hope, the ineffable beatitude of the saints. All was now changed—at least for awhile—and all were now happy, save that a deep load of regret weighed on the conscience of God on reflecting that the tidings of comfort and of joy had only spelt misery and degradation for countless millions of men. The first step towards the millennium had been taken—the Devil had been reconciled to God, and was the lion of the hour, no longer seeking whom he might devour, but might be seen lying down occasionally, after meal times, on the grassy mead of heaven, with the Lamb of God *outside* him. At the moment I arrived upon the scene, there were high jinks amongst the saints. The approach of the festive season had smoothed down the lines of care from the time-worn visage of Deity, and made him as frisky as a young kitten. Everybody got a smiling nod of friendly recognition from Heaven's Grand Old Man, and any fresh arrival in the celestial regions who, like me, could produce his card of membership of the N.S.S., came in for a liberal shower of divine congratulation. It was especially interesting to see Jesus Christ and Ernest Rénan walking arm-in-arm together, evidently enjoying an amiable *tête à tête*, or discussing nice points of biblical criticism. Old Nick and God the Father were the centre of a motley group of saints and sinners, as the former rivals were exchanging mutual regrets concerning the fatal feud that had so long subsisted between themselves, to the vast detriment of everybody else. Nothing half so

delightful had been seen or heard of within the memory of God and man, and every heart in heaven or hell was brimful of ill-restrained joy. Yet, sometimes tears might be seen in every eye, but they were tears of bliss, of reconciliation and of hope. Christian and Moslem, who, urged by cut-throat priests, had assassinated each other for the glory of God, were now moved to manly tears on remembering the monstrous crimes to which they had been urged by ignorant and interested knaves. Protestant and Catholic wept for the self-same reasons, and their tears, mingled on the altar of friendship, were offered as a sacrifice to pity. Calvin was seen shedding atoning tears on the bosom of Servetus; and Torquemada, weeping forth his lamentations for the innocent blood he had shed, washed out the foul stains of guilt which blackened his character. There was a "genuine "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," welling up from every soul, the reason being that the tempest of inhuman revenge, so long raging in the divine breast, had finally been calmed by a self-restraining "Peace, be still!" The advent of Christmas had brought at length its gospel of peace on earth and goodwill towards men by the obliteration of bigotry, the uprooting of the noxious weeds of superstition, and the removal, by the spread of education, of the barriers which popular ignorance and priestly domination have opposed to any possible fraternisation amongst mankind. God had ceased to play his old rôle as the stern stepfather of his human creatures, and had assumed the more humble, yet more useful, part of their elder brother and bosom friend. The Bibles of the various creeds—which had fossilised the thought and stupefied the sympathies of man and which had made the gods as surely as they had marred the men who venerated them—were no longer the objects of a blind and superstitious worship, but recognised as so many landmarks of the different stages of moral and intellectual development through which the race has passed. Now at last, I thought, are we safe in the haven of rest; the period of conflict is over; the enslavement of the race is a bygone episode; and we may sit under our vine and fig-tree enjoying the ripe fruits of our accomplished task; for a new heaven and a new earth have been summoned into being. And I exulted in the fact that I had lived to see such Christmas happiness, even in heaven; that the terrors of hell were for ever destroyed, and that the secular redemption of man was finally achieved. In an exuberance of ineffable joy, gods and devils, saints and sinners, and all sorts and conditions of men, linked themselves in one, and went dancing amid endless delight through all the spacious loveliness of heaven, with a constant accompaniment of music, and with mirth and blissful revelry, when lo! I awoke—and behold! it was a dream.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

CHRISTIAN ADMISSIONS.

For the million the only means of knowing the sacred books is through translations, which, however faithfully executed on the whole, do nevertheless but imperfectly reflect the sense of the original. Then even for the learned the Hebrew and Greek texts do not exist in their original purity. Nay, the text of the Hebrew Bible, with which we are at present concerned, never existed as one whole, in absolute purity. The errorless autograph for which some so zealously contend is a theological figment. There may conceivably have been such a document for each part in succession, but there never was an errorless autograph of the collection as a whole. The Bible was produced piecemeal, and by the time the later portions were produced the earlier had lost their supposed immaculateness. And that we may see how necessary it is to be circumspect in our *à priori* demands of perfection and faultlessness, it is well to remember in what form the words of the Hebrew autograph were written. They were written with consonants only, the vowels being left to be supplied by the reader, the result being that no man but the writer could be perfectly sure in numerous cases what he intended to say, and not even the writer himself, in every case, after the lapse of time long enough to allow partial forgetfulness of this thought to occur.

—Rev. Professor Bruce, "Apologetics," pp. 303-4.



ROBERT FORDER.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

(Revised Version).

- 1 Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of pain.
- 2 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled—when ye have no stomachs.
- 3 Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh—when your faces are dust.
- 4 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth—in coffins.
- 5 Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have kept the substance and neglected the shadow.
- 6 Woe unto you that are full! for ye eat the meat which perisheth.
- 7 Woe unto you that laugh now: for the Son of Man will cause thee to laugh on the other side of thy mouth.
- 8 Resist not evil; whosoever shall strike thee on thy nose let him give thee a black eye also.
- 9 If any man sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, give him thy mackintosh also.
- 10 If one compel thee to go with him a mile, make him go with thee twain.
- 11 Love your enemies, and kiss the rod wherewith thou art castigated, and the razor which cutteth thy throat.
- 12 Give to everyone that asketh, and from him that would borrow take not an I.O.U.
- 13 Be ye therefore perfect, for there is no one perfect but God.
- 14 And when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. X.

One of the homeliest men in Hull has a beautiful little girl about five years old. The other day she was sitting on his lap with a handglass before her. She looked at her father a moment, then looked at herself, and turned to her mother—"Mamma," she inquired, "did God make me?" "Yes, daughter." "Did he make papa, too?" "Yes." Then she took another look in the glass at herself. "Well," she said, thoughtfully, "he's doing a good deal better work lately, isn't he?"

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 1, Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea; at 11, "Sunday: What it is and What it should be"; at 3, "John Morley: Statesman, Writer, and Freethinker"; at 7, "The Doom of the Gods."

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

February 5, Hull; 12 and 19, Hall of Science; 26, Grimsby.

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, Ebbchester. 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.

P. H. ECHLIN.—We reciprocate your seasonable good wishes. NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S SPECIAL FUND.—J. D., £2 2s.; J. Downing, 3s. 6d.

CONSTANT READER.—Your communication arrived after our number for the Christmas week had gone to press.

J. R. ANDERSON.—It appears this week.

C. HEATON.—The testimony of travellers is dead against the flocks being out at night in Judæa at Christmas. The weather may sometimes be fine in the daytime, but it is too inclement in the long nights. Many Christian divines have considered that Jesus could not have been born in December.

D. HENRY.—Mr. Galton is the best English writer on Heredity. His works are expensive. Your Christian friend has found a mare's nest. It certainly is a fact that vicious parents corrupt or enfeeble their offspring; but this would be an injustice if it were designed by a being who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. Civilisation goes to work in the opposite way. It restrains the parents and tries to shield and improve their families. In this, as in other respects, God's ways are not our ways.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—C. Girtanner, 19s. 5d.; G. G. Ross, 4s. 4d.; J. Barnaby, 1s. 9d.; R. Orpen, 3s.

R. SCOPES.—Pleased to hear that the Ipswich lecture "gave great satisfaction" and that "all who heard it enjoyed it immensely." We hope the Branch will be earnest, active, and enterprising, and that the Harwich Freethinkers will throw in their lot with it. We give your address if they wish to communicate—14 Queen-street, Ipswich.

J. P. ADAMS.—Glad to hear from an old veteran, though sorry the infirmities of age prevent you from attending the President's "at home." Pleased to have your opinion that "Shilling Week" is an excellent idea.

A. W. SELBY.—It is your mistake. The "Acid Drop" says that the word is the same as is elsewhere rendered "drunken."

ANTICHRIST.—You say you picked up the verses on the table of a lunatic asylum. They are certainly fit for the establishment, and the pious writer should have quarters there.

POOR FREETHINKER.—We have taken your hint, and added precise instructions as to how to send the subscriptions for Shilling Week.

J. DOWNING.—You say "Shilling Week is a good idea." We hope the majority of our readers will think so too, and prove it.

O. H. BROWNSWORTH.—See paragraph.

H. HOLLAND.—Is your 2s. 2d. for "Shilling Week"? Thanks for cutting.

O. DOEG.—If Mr. Howard's nominee takes a fortnight to answer a letter—or rather not to answer it—you may know what to expect. We do not believe Mr. Howard will go into the debate.

J. E.—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" is in Exodus xxii. 18.

L. N. CLIFTON.—You have sent rather early for "Shilling Week," but no matter; better early than not at all. Glad you think it "an excellent plan." Mr. Foote is sorry to disappoint the Wolverhampton friends; still he is pleased to find that your Branch heartily approves his action, and promises its best support in any struggle at Portsmouth.

J. WALKER.—We cannot pretend to be a judge of Dr. Allinson's "medical authority." We do know, however, that his writings are full of honest common-sense, and his efforts towards medical reform have brought upon him a most contemptible persecution.

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—Eastern Mercury—Torquay Directory—Blackburn Times—Printers' Ink—Aberdeen Evening Press—Suffolk Chronicle—Hawick News—Chat—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Moralist. 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. 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, 3 s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

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.

N.B.—Remittances for the Shilling Fund to be posted to me at 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. Postal orders or cheques should all be crossed for greater safety.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures three times to-day (Jan. 1) in the Wellington Hall, Portsmouth. There is to be a charge for admission, and the usual opportunity for discussion. We are unable to say whether the threatened prosecution will take place. We hope it will. It is high time that the foolish old law of George III. were abolished, and that will be the end of the struggle, if we are attacked.

Since the above paragraph was in type we have heard from the Portsmouth Branch that the local press will not insert the advertisement of Mr. Foote's lectures, and that the bills cannot be printed in the town. Mr. Foote has to get the necessary printing done in London. No doubt the police have gone round Portsmouth, warning printers and newspapers against any direct or indirect help to the Secularists. The policy of these fussy bigots seems to be, "Let us isolate the Secularists and drive them into a corner." Well, we shall see—what we do see. Meanwhile we may regard this latest development of the Portsmouth case as a sign of the likelihood of a real struggle.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (Jan. 1), morning and evening. We hope he will have good meetings.

We hope to see a fine gathering at the Hall of Science on Wednesday evening (Jan. 4). It is the occasion of the fifth Annual Dinner of the London Secular Federation. Those who come may depend on a most enjoyable evening. We have engaged a first-class caterer this year, and the hall will be given a more festive appearance. Mr. Foote takes the chair; after dinner speeches will be delivered by Messrs. Watts, Parris, Forder, Standing, Moss, Heaford, Rowney, Snell, and Wheeler, and by Mrs. Samson and Miss Vance. There will also be some good vocal and instrumental music. As usual the tickets are half-a-crown. They can be obtained at the hall, at 28 Stonecutter-street, and of any Branch secretary.

Tickets for the Federation Dinner should be purchased at the latest by Monday evening. The committee must know on Tuesday morning how many will have to be provided for.

Mr. James Anderson, manager of the London Hall of Science Club, informs us that the Library will be reopened on Jan. 1. It contains 1,200 volumes, many of which are not to be found in other libraries. Members of the Club, and members of the N.S.S., are entitled to borrow them—a fact which is not so widely known as it should be. The librarian is in attendance every evening, Fridays excepted.

Mr. Anderson also informs us that the select dancing-class for N.S.S. members will open on Tuesday evening, Jan 10, at 8 o'clock. By request of the Committee, Mrs. Anderson will act as teacher. Those who intend to join the class should be present then if possible.

Social Salvation is a phrase that is coming into vogue. We notice it in a headline of last week's *Christian World*. And a very good phrase it is, though we say so that shouldn't. We gave it as a title to one of Colonel Ingersoll's discourses, which was delivered under a less happy designation. We never saw the phrase before, and we doubt if it can be traced farther back than the publication of this pamphlet.

Col. Ingersoll seems to have no more taste for politics than is indispensable to any humanitarian. His friends wish to nominate him a member of the Constitutional Convention of New York State, but he has not given his sanction.

This New Year the *Freethinker's Magazine*, of Buffalo, N.Y., enters on its eleventh year of useful propaganda under the conduct of Mr. H. L. Green. We hope its subscription list will increase with its age.

With the New Year *Modern Thought*, of Bombay, will enter on its third year. We trust that Freethinkers throughout India, whether natives or Europeans, will do their best to sustain Mr. Balfour in his efforts to maintain a worthy Freethought organ in India.

The South Shields Branch holds its annual social gathering on Monday (Jan. 2) in the Baring-street Schools. Tea at 7. All members should attend, and bring a friend to see what a Secularist festival is like.

The Manchester Branch holds its annual tea and entertainment to-day (Jan. 1). Tea on tables at 5; entertainment at 6.30. Tickets 1s. Entertainment free. We hope the Cottonopolis "saints" will muster in force.

On New Year's Day (at 5.30) the Battersea Branch holds its Quarterly Tea and Soirée. Tickets (6s. each) can be had at the hall and at outdoor meeting on Sunday morning. Friends wishing to join the Branch should also attend.

Mr. Swinburne's reply to Professor Minto in last week's *Academy* shows he has lost none of his controversial vigor. It also shows he has lost none of his old hatred of priests and theology. Here is a characteristic sentence: "He should take lessons from some past-master in the priestly art of prevarication—if any such representative survives of such grand old liars as the proverbial and immortal Escobar."

The *Truthseeker* has a very good cartoon illustrating what the priests did when Columbus was trying to discover America. Columbus is looking across the water through the telescope of reason, in front of which the priests hold up the Bible, a crucifix, and images of the Virgin and Child.

The *Truthseeker*, in its account of Col. Ingersoll's recent lecture on Voltaire at the Broadway Theatre, New York, says the orator spoke for two and a quarter hours, but no one thought it was half-past ten when he finished.

The National Secular Society's *Almanack* for 1893 is selling very well, but we are anxious to see the whole edition cleared out as soon as possible. The money will then be available for other purposes. It will be remembered that the *Almanack* is now the Society's property. Members of the N.S.S. should purchase a copy and keep it by them. Besides the ordinary reading matter, it contains a lot of special information that cannot be obtained elsewhere.

Our readers are earnestly desired to peruse every line of the leaderette headed "Shilling Week," and to see whether they cannot rise to the occasion. It is a very simple, and it should be an easy, way of raising money for Freethought purposes. Shilling Week should become an annual institution.

SCHOOL BOARDS AND BIGOTRY.

THE thriving village of Beeston, near Nottingham, well known to many Freethinkers as the home of an old member of the N.S.S., Mr. R. Porter, and more recently celebrated for its healthy situation and, bar one, the lowest death rate in England, has just added another (not insignificant) item to its honorable reputation.

The School Board election has just taken place, and resulted in the return, at the head of the poll, of a well-known Freethinker, Mr. E. Wildgust. The local Liberal Association, having selected its Liberal four, three of whom happened to be prominent Wesleyans, were very much annoyed to find, after the period for nominations had gone by, that the consciences of the three Wesleyans would not allow them to run with the other nominee of the party, who was a Freethinker, and issued an address without him. But there happened to exist in Beeston a sturdy body of Radicals who estimated the honor and integrity of their candidate so much above the creeds of his traducers, that after an energetic beating to arms among their faithful followers, they just managed to secure their election by a few votes, while the honest, broad-minded Freethinker, whom they had cast off as being certain to wreck their bark, was placed at the head of the poll with 1,500 votes to spare—having polled more than the whole three Wesleyans united; and, better still, without having asked any single individual to plump for him, receiving the support of nearly 50 per cent. of the entire number who went to the poll.

They have found out that actions speak louder than words, and that deeds are higher than creeds.

PROGRESS.

RENAN AND LITTRÉ.

(Edouard Durranc in "Le Radical.")

A REPORTER who presented himself at the house of Renan a few hours after his death asked the family if any priest had been there.

"None," was the answer. "Besides, if one had come, he would not have been admitted."

Do not think, however, that the reporter's question was a foolish one. It was not at all improbable that the priests would prowl around the bedside of the author of the *Life of Jesus*. He was an enviable prey.

Nevertheless not one of them appeared. And it is to the honor of this illustrious family that it was known to the outside world that the dying man was well protected.

Renan, who was well acquainted with the ways of the church, had early taken precautions against any enterprise that might result in the destruction, "to the delight of fools, of a life laboriously built up." The philosophical testament which he placed at the end of his "Recollections of Childhood and Youth" tells with incomparable eloquence what were the fears of the master philosopher regarding the possible weaknesses of the last hour. "Perhaps they will make me utter," he said, "perhaps they will make me sign, blasphemies against my whole life. But that will be no longer Renan. That will be no more than the shadow and the ruin of a softened brain. That Renan no one should believe or listen to. The true Renan is he who writes to-day, 'sound in heart and mind.' He rejects all priestly ceremony."

Victor Hugo, in his brief philosophical testament, had said:

"I refuse the prayers of all the churches."

And yet I betray no secret in saying that the clergy were obstinate in their attempts to reach the dying Victor Hugo. In the first place there was a free priest, an amateur priest, who for some time had been an intruder in the poet's hospitable parlors. He came there modestly as an admirer. He pretended to be a lover of literature and beautiful verses.

Hugo, who was Apollonian in his royal hospitality, gently shut his eyes and did not interfere. The priest took advantage of this broad goodness, and possibly counted on a famous conversion.

Nevertheless the admiring priest was kindly dismissed. And when the death-agony came, it was the turn of the cardinal-archbishop, Monseigneur Guibert, who wrote to the family to signify his willingness to dishonor Victor Hugo. It fell to Lockroy to thank the archbishop for his offers of service. He did it in terms polite but dry.

The same accident happened to Littré. Littré was a very brave man, who was so unfortunate at the last hour as to have no one to defend him. He was even betrayed by his wife and daughter. These two women belonged to the priests. Littré carried to such a point his respect for the opinion of another that for nothing in the world would he have done violence to the feelings of the persons most immediately surrounding him. But they had not the same respect for his free and tolerant mind. On the day of his death, which came rather suddenly, it was learned with astonishment that Littré lay upon his couch with a crucifix in his hands and a little holy water in a plate upon his bedside-table.

The family had succeeded in turning away from the obsequies of this vigorous mind all those who would have liked to be present. The body was literally stolen.

However, there were thirty of us who accompanied Littré to the Montparnasse cemetery. Renan was of the number. He wore his Academic costume of green.

Littré's body was taken to a little church on the Boulevard Montparnasse, where prayers were said.

On the sidewalk, where we remained, M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, a friend of the dead man, kept saying:

"Really, I do not understand it. I went to see Littré two hours before his death; there was then no trace of religious ceremony in his room. And when I returned, I found my old friend with a crucifix upon his breast. It is very extraordinary."

After the ceremony in the church, the procession started for the cemetery, where other funeral ceremonies were begun under the conduct of a frightful, ill-shapen priest. It was a sight impossible to forget.

After the services the procession began to file past the grave. A distressing sexton offered each person a holy-

water sprinkler. Renan, who represented the French Academy, headed the line.

Here it should be recalled that Renan wrote the *Life of Jesus*, and that Littré translated Strauss's *Life of Jesus* from the German.

Here then were two Lives of Jesus face to face.

But Renan was unctuous, gentle polite, sceptical, satirical; for nothing in the world would he have disturbed a ceremony by an act of *intransigence* excluded by the superb serenity of his mind. The picture will never vanish from my eyes. Renan, clad in Academic green, advanced with the gliding step characteristic of the priests; his eyes sparkled with mischievous irony; and, with an admirable sacerdotal gesture, he sprinkled holy water over Littré's grave.

It was at once polite, ironical, and contemptuous.

Littré was blessed by Renan!

I was a witness of this spectacle.

And I have always thought that it was on leaving the cemetery that Renan went home to write this phrase:

"I protest in advance against the weaknesses which a softened brain may lead me to say or sign."

PORTSMOUTH.

WE might upon our rights rely

Were Justice ours:

Our weapons might hang rusting by;

No call to arms, no battle cry,

No stern resolve to do and die

Were Justice ours.

But Justice yields for us no sword,

Her might is theirs.

Full in her lap the gold is poured

From sham Religion's fraudulent hoard:

Gold is their life, their strength, their Lord—

Her might is theirs.

Their hot blood thirsteth for the fray—

Be courage ours:

Their chargers snort, their trumpets bray,

Their arms are raised aloft to slay:

Be heroes all; let come what may,

Be courage ours.

Fear not: Eternal Truth is ours

Though Might be theirs;

The tempest now which blackly lowers

May break in storms or scented showers—

False traitor he who shrinks and cowers,

Though Might be theirs.

Let manhood glow throughout the land

For Truth and Right!

If ye can bear no pike nor brand,

Assist with open heart and hand

The few who strike—devoted band!—

For Truth and Right!

EX-RITUALIST.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Fordor will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRISTIANS.

BY CHARLES C. CATTELL.

[CONCLUDED.]

F.—What method have you adopted?

C.—The Socratic. I supposed I am conversing with you—a real Atheist.

F.—I don't think myself very sound on that subject, as I believe in universal causation.

C.—But you smashed all my inductive arguments from *design* in our last debate.

F.—Well, I suppose your first question will be my old friend P.'s.

C.—What's that?

F.—Before we begin, tell me "which is the nearest way from any given A to any given B?"

C.—Yes, that will do. What's your answer?

F.—I have only been through one book; but I said "a straight line." A—B.

C.—It is impossible to get over that, and my arguments are *all like that*, and none of your friends can answer me.

F.—That looks awkward for me, but I'll try.

C.—I will read the main points, and then you may question any one of them.

F.—I propose to make short work of it—long as it is.

C.—That's what I want, so as to make my argument *unanswerable*.F.—Taking your argument about bodies and space—Do you believe that every existence—whether suns, stars, comets, etc.—are *some* distance from each other, *known* or *unknown*?

C.—That's part of my argument—the main point.

F.—Well, A sun, B moon, C earth, must be so.

C.—Certainly; it can't be doubted.

F.—Then every *other* existence not named must have *some relation* to A, B, C.

C.—Explain the bearing on my thesis.

F.—I will put the matter in your manner. I have named A, B and C, but besides these I will postulate some unknown Z.

C.—But what does Z stand for?

F.—It stands for your three letters, "G o d."

C.—But the infinite is not *related*, as A, B and C are.F.—It does not matter *how*—it is or is not—known or unknown.C.—But that disproves the *infinite*, to make it related to other existences!

F.—But I thought you started by admitting my "etc.," which I purposely put in my former question?

C.—But when I answered I did not know what you included under "etc."

F.—Well, you know now, and it must remain.

C.—But do you put that as a *flaw* in my argument?

F.—I only put it that, according to your own method, God is deprived of one of his attributes, and how he can exist without it is for you to demonstrate.

C.—My position is that all *nature* is bounded or limited, can be thought of in *parts*; but *God* is *all*—one infinite and eternal.F.—You *say* that, but your proposal was to *demonstrate* it geometrically. Besides, you know that all you can think of geometrically must be *related*. To think is to *limit*. You can't think of an endless line except as a circle.C.—But I *infer* it.F.—From *what*?C.—From *known* existence.F.—But that implies *unknown* existences.

C.—Just so; that is the great argument.

F.—Well, my inference is that your God is "an unknown existence," and that the word *demonstration* is misapplied—it is all *assumption*—which may be true or false, geometrically considered.

C.—Well, if you consider that a serious objection.

F.—I consider it a fatal and unanswerable objection.

C.—But none of your friends took that objection. I don't think the bishop will see that as a *defect*.

F.—Perhaps not; but I have been dealing with your proposal to refute Atheism, and not satisfy an English Protestant bishop.

C.—You seem to think, as Dr. I. puts it, that God's existence cannot be proved by argument.

F.—That position I subscribe to, if you affirm it infinite and eternal. I further object that you make two infinities, as I *believe* those attributes as *far as we know* or *can think*, are applicable to the universe of worlds.

C.—But that makes Nature God, while we, like Pope,

Look through nature up to nature's God.

Or, as Milton says—

These thy works, O parent of good, thyself how wondrous then.

F.—That brings us back to your "smashed arguments." *Au revoir!*

PORTRAITS OF CHRIST.

MR. WYKE BAYLISS, President of the Royal Society of British Artists, has been lecturing on the commonly received portraits of Christ, and from the agreement of type found between the pictures, whether in London, Rome, Paris, Madrid, Constantinople or Moscow, he draws the conclusion that it refers to an actual likeness. A little reflection will show that this conclusion is unwarranted. Indeed, the more evident result from Mr. Bayliss's own researches is, that the portrait of Christ is an ideal, a type which may not only, as he says, be carried up to the first ages of Christianity, but which is indeed pre-Christian. Examination will bear this out. Jesus, whatever his paternity, was a Jew, a Hebrew circumcised Jew. Whoever was his father, and Signor Testa utilises the received portrait for his theory that Pandera was an Italian soldier stationed in Palestine, from his mother he must have inherited some Jewish characteristics. Even if without the typical hooked nose, he must, as a native of Palestine, have been as swarthy as a smoked haddock. The portrait in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, to which Mr. Bayliss does not refer, represents him as dark and of an Eastern type. Now the conventional commonly accepted portrait is, as was pointed out in "Acid Drops" last week, of an unjewish character. It is fair, almost feminine in the earlier portraits, with long colored waving hair divided in the middle over the forehead. It is indeed a combination of the portraits of several Pagan gods, the type being arrived at by a process similar to that by which Mr. Galton arrives at the type of the average criminal, by combining many portraits. The type I take it rather grew up in Egypt and Rome than in Greece, and this may explain the absence of what Mr. Bayliss thinks an essentially Greek character, a lock falling from the centre of the forehead. None of the evangelists or disciples thought it worth while to give us any indication of Christ's personal appearance. We know what Confucius was like, his disciples having described him as completely as Boswell did Johnson. We know enough of the general appearance of Mohammed, but of the Christian's idol we know nothing. There is, indeed, a spurious letter from Publius Lentulus to the Senate and people of Rome, originally invented for the comfort of nuns, and still sold, with the portrait, for the delectation of Christian ladies, in which the writer speaks of Jesus as having hair the color of wine, golden at the roots and curling from the ears down to the shoulders, and on the top parted "after the fashion of the Nazarenes," his eyes blue, uncommonly bright, and so on. But Christian evidence-mongers have ceased to adduce the authority of the mythical Publius Lentulus for their mythical Christ. The first writer who speaks of his appearance is Origen, early in the third century, who says that he had no external beauty, that indeed he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who said he was without form or comeliness, "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Of course Isaiah was not referring to any after Jew, but to his own despised and rejected Israel; but Origen and the rest of the early Fathers took the passage as referring to their blessed Savior. This ideal the Church soon found out would never do. To have put in the churches the portrait of an ugly Jew would

have been fatal to the faith of the fair sex, ever the chief devotees. Who could believe in a yellow-skinned,* hook-nosed Son of God, whose blotchy, pimply face bore testimony to the truth of the allegation that he was a glutton and a wine-bibber? Ages before Christianity they had discovered this, and made their gods, Apollo, Bacchus, Mithras, Horus and Serapis, the fairest ideals of youthful and manly beauty. So the Church gradually discovered such letters as those of Publius Lentulus. Tertullian, writing about the same time as Origen mentions that pictures of the Good Shepherd were represented on the glass vessels used by the early Christians, and he spoke of it as the practice of a time long gone by. For this taking us up to the first ages of Christianity is bound to take us beyond. When Christ said I am the Good Shepherd he referred to a type already in existence. Horus was no less a Good Shepherd than Jesus. Indeed the portraits of the infant Christ are modelled on those of the child Horus. The Virgin Mary is a Romanised Isis. As for the conventional portrait of Christ, of course Mr. Bayliss is right in saying it is no more the invention of Raffaele, Titian, Corregio, or Fra Angelico than it is of Burne Jones and Holman Hunt. It is far earlier. It is manifestly an amalgam uniting the types of types of Horus Apollo with those of Serapis. In the first Græco-Roman Saloon at the British Museum, the spectator may see the entrance of the Christian type in the statue of the bearded Bacchus. For Christ, like Christianity, is a composite made up from the religions of the past. When its church had got an ideal Christ sufficiently fair and at the same time sufficiently melancholy to be attractive to the fair subjected portion of its members, it soon had legends to fit. One told how Saint Veronica, when on her way to a portrait painter with a canvas on which she desired a likeness of Jesus to be painted, met with Jesus himself, who asked her where she was going. She told him her desire. He took the cloth and impressed upon it a true likeness—probably the first photograph ever taken. Another form of the legend says that St. Veronica covered up his face with her handkerchief, and a true image remained; another, that Abgarus, King of Edessa, wished his portrait, but the painter could no more gaze steadily on it than on the sun. He found an insurmountable difficulty in the light which beamed from Christ's countenance. His likeness was, however, taken by putting a handkerchief over his face, on which his picture became impressed. This Veronica handkerchief was shown at Constantinople, Rome, and at Genoa. The very name of the saint shows the marks of manufacture, for it is compounded of *vera-ikon*—the true image. But then the name of Jesus Christ himself, no less than his portraits, proves he was built up by a similar process out of earlier ideals.

LUCIANUS.

MR. MURPHY HAD PLENTY LEFT OVER.

In a certain church in Ireland a young priest was detailed to preach. This occasion was his first appearance and he took for his text "The Feeding of the Multitude." He said: "And they fed ten people with 10,000 loaves of bread and 10,000 fishes." An old Irishman said: "That's no miracle; begorra I could do that myself," which the priest overheard.

The next Sunday the priest announced the same text, but he had it right this time. He said: "And they fed 10,000 people on ten loaves of bread and ten fishes." He waited a second or two and then leaned well over the pulpit and said: "And could you do that Mr. Murphy?"

Mr. Murphy replied: "And sure, your reverence, I could."

"And how could you do it, Mr. Murphy?" said the priest.

"And sure, your reverence, I could do it with what was left over from last Sunday."

Fritankaren for Dec. 15 gives a portrait of Michael Servetus, being a reproduction of the picture which appeared in the *Freethinker*.

* St. John of Damascus says he was yellow-skinned and with a black complexion.

BOOK CHAT.

The librarian's report presented at a meeting of the Cambridge University Union, recently announced that a copy of "The Book of Genesis" had been received, "presented by the author."

On Jan. 1 will appear the first number of the *Positivist Review*, edited by Professor E. S. Beesly, and contributed to by Frederic Harrison, and other leading lights of Positivism.

A thoughtful twopenny pamphlet entitled *Social Redemption* by George Stirk, is sent us from Bradford, (71 Godwin-street). Mr. Stirk advocates limitation of ownership in land, direct taxation, and other changes in the direction of the equalisation of wealth.

A new life of Henri Beyle, the French sceptic, writer and critic, known as de Stendhal, is to be issued by M. Stryienski.

The Bearing of Co-operative Experience on the Question of Women's Suffrage, is a prize essay awarded to F. Rockell, and published by the Women's Printing Society. Mr. Rockell contends that the extension of the franchise to women would increase their incentive to self-improvement, and soon sweep away the obstacles which retard them.

We have read with keen interest a little book entitled *The Cry of the Children*, an Essay on Tyranny and Ignorance (Williams and Norgate), by a Free Lance. The author pleads for greater consideration in the treatment and training of children. After all, says he, "there is much of the bully in man, though decently veiled, and many enjoy a barbaric pleasure in ordering and domineering children." He points out the pernicious consequence of this patriarchal rule, so strongly exemplified by the way among the Jews, who thought it quite natural of Abraham to offer Isaac, or Jephthah to slay his daughter in fulfilment of his vow. He urges that they should be allowed to develop their own natures. Parents and teachers alike defer too long the invaluable education of self-reliance and independence. "I hold all repression, ordering and tutelage of children as a merely necessary evil, and that our endeavor should always be to diminish such as far as possible, consistently with the child's own good."

The writer points out that almost every imaginable evil is due to the reckless improvidence of selfish marriages, or selfish gratification after marriage. The moral training and careful supervision which may be a delightful duty when demanded for two or three, becomes an intolerable and impossible task in a family of a dozen. In almost every way the children suffer from their parents' selfish improvidence; insufficient care, education, and early toil being the necessary consequence of poor families obeying the holy command of "increase and multiply." The writer is strongly opposed to the system of sending children to boarding schools. But whether we agree with his views or not we must allow that all the questions he raises are of immense and permanent importance, and that he treats them with a clear head as well as a humane heart.

Olive Schreiner is returning from South Africa with the manuscripts of several new books, which we hope will soon be in the hands of publishers.

We are pleased to notice that Mr. B. R. Tucker, the editor of *Liberty*, has decided to publish a collection of his writings in that journal, having already a promised subscription list for 500 copies. There are evidently some admirers of individual thought and hard hitting in America.

Miss Helen Gardener's *Men, Women and Gods*, has just been translated into German.

The *Truthseeker* is about to issue a new edition of *Crimes of Preachers*. It would require a weekly edition to bring these up to date.

A translation of Fritz Schultze's well-known standard work on Fetishism, has been made by Mr. J. Fitzgerald, and is published by the Twentieth Century Co., New York.

Take away the fear of hell and the power of the clergy will vanish.—*Lamennais*.

PROFANE JOKES.

Fresh Arrival (pipe in mouth): "Good morning, St. Peter. Have apartments been reserved for me?" St. Peter: "Sir, the smoking-room is down below."

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon, and she was reading to him the Proverbs of Solomon, he was rapidly getting an attack of temporary oblivion. "Aren't they wonderful, George?" she said. "Yes, indeed," he replied; "if he had only misspelled his words, what a capital Josh Billings he would have made."

"Young man, do you believe in a future state?" "In course I does; and, what's more, I intend to enter it as soon as Betsy gets her things ready." "Go to, young man, you are incorrigible; go to!" "Go two? If it wasn't for the law against bigamy, dang me, if I wouldn't go a dozen. But who supposed, deacon, that a man of your age would give such advice to a man just starting into life."

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): 3, members' meeting; 5.30, tea and soiree (6d.) Tuesday at 8, social gathering. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, C. Cohen, "A Chapter of Errors." Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class (physical geography). Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class on "Spencer's Ethics." Thursday at 8.30, debate, "American Democracy and Socialism," opened by J. L. Blain (L.P.D.L.)

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Age of the Earth as Determined by Science."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "Lesson of the Year 1892" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Happiness in Hell, Misery in Heaven" (3d. 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, London Secular Federation's Dinner (tickets 2s. 6d.)

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

South London Ethical Society, Chepstow Hall, 1 High-street, Peckham: 7, discussion on "The Need of an Ideal," opened by Dr. Bass.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. Cohen, "The Meaning of Secularism."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Gods: Ancient and Modern."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, G. Bayliffe, "The Church and the Social Question."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, J. Greevz Fisher, "Theosophy: a Reply to Mrs. Besant."

Edinburgh—Labor Hall, 59 South Bridge: 6.30, debate between Stanley Jones and Ex-chaplain Smith on "Is Secularism a Reasonable Gospel?"

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11 Tontine Society: 7, Harry Smith, "Christ Slandering Humanity."

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: 4.30, tea.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, Mr. Eadon, "The Logic of Feeding."

South Shields—Baring-street Schools: Monday, annual social, tea at 7.

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, "Socialism," by a Member of the Fabian Society (free); 7, R. S. Bransby, "Heaven and Hell" (free).

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, 8 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Jan. 8, Battersea; 11, Hall of Science; 15, Libra Hall; 22, Camberwell. Feb. 12, Battersea; 19, Camberwell; 26, Libra Hall. March 12, Battersea; 19, Camberwell; 20, Blackheath Liberal Club; 26, Libra Hall. April 2, Manchester.

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

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Jan. 1, Hyde Park; 15, m., Battersea.

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

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

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Jan. 1, Aberdeen; 8, 9, 10, Glasgow; 15, Hyde Park; 18, Hall of Science. Feb. 8 and 9, Liverpool; 19, 20, 21, Manchester. March 5, Sheffield; 12, Hull.

J. GREEVZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Jan. 15, Shipley.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M, Manchester.—Jan. 8, Wolverhampton 22, Leeds.

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