

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE DEVIL INTERVIEWED.

THIS is an interviewing age. Nothing is sacred to the gentlemen of the press. If a politician stands for a constituency, they want to know his views on all sorts of topics, including divorce, short skirts, and Mr. Gladstone's tip about jam as a substitute for butter. If a public woman is going to get married, they ask what she thinks the best place to spend a honeymoon, and whether she goes "the whole hog" on the subject of woman's rights. If anyone makes a brilliant discovery, they call before he has patented it, and desire him to tell them all about it for the benefit of their readers. If a great statesman is visiting the town they inquire what he thinks of the little difference between Bismarck and William, and what are the outlines of that Bill which is a cabinet secret. They go to places burnt out and interview the caretaker, or in default of him the cat with the singed whiskers. They ask Patti what lozenges she affects, and Joachim what rosin he uses for his fiddle. Everybody must toe the line, put his hands behind his back, and answer these gentlemen's questions, on his word of honor, as a victim to the public good—or at least the public curiosity.

Hitherto the *Freethinker* has kept out of this fashion, or away from this contagion, as you please to call it. But "there is no armor against fate," and we can hold out no longer. We have resolved to go in for interviewing ourselves, and to do it with consummate dash (or cheek) and enterprise (or unscrupulousness). Small game is beneath our attention. Showmen, circus proprietors, lion tamers, rope dancers, politicians, and even princes are too insignificant. We fly at higher quarry, at the boss of the whole world-show—the DEVIL.

There are many reasons why the Devil should be interviewed, and many reasons why the *Freethinker* should do it. His Satanic Majesty is falling under suspicion; not as to his character—for that is as high as ever—but as to his identity. Parsons are freely denying his very existence, and declaring that the Devil is not a rival of God, but merely a personification of the principle of evil; forgetting all the while, of course, that God himself may be only a personification of the principle of good. And this heresy is spreading still more rapidly among laymen and even among laywomen, so that Archdeacon Farrar is obliged to rebuke the superfine scepticism of people who set up as superior to Paul and Peter, and even to Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, the Lamb that taketh away the sense of the world. Myriads of Christians, with the story of Christ's temptation and the revised version of the Lord's Prayer before them, laugh at Old Nick as though he were no more than a bugaboo in Monsieur Guimet's Museum of Religions. They never speak of him but frivolously. If they want to damn you, or the optical part of your anatomy, they ask God to do it; but if they see a person in unmerited distress they say "poor devil,"

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and if you say you unexpectedly met your mother-in-law, who took you off with her to Exeter Hall, they exclaim "the devil she did." Nor is this all, or even the worst. Hell itself is in a bad way. Some of the clergy say it is not a place but a condition; others say it is a place, but not so hot as it was thought to be; others say "hot as hell" is a very proper phrase, only the place cools off in time, or does not last for ever; others say it is, next to heaven at any rate, the jolliest place in the universe. Those who stand up boldly and bravely for the old-fashioned hell are quite a minority. Swedenborg's fancies seem to have leavened the Christian mind, on the one side, so that Professor Mivart preaches "happiness in hell"; and on the other side, Voltaire's teaching seems to have produced a still wider effect, so that hell is openly scorned or derided by multitudes of educated people.

Now this is a perfect chaos; and shall the world rest contented with such a muddle? Perish the thought! But how is it to be remedied? It seems utterly useless to inquire of Jehovah or even of Jesus Christ. The head of the "old Jewish firm" was always reticent on the subject. He had the chosen people in hand for more than a thousand years (at least they say so), and during the whole period he never gave them a hint about any other world than this one; either because they were a shrewd business people who would not take promissory notes payable after death, or because he had no notions on the matter himself. Jesus Christ, it is true, was far more communicative. But the clergy get all sorts of different meanings from his words, and though they have been quarreling about his meaning for the best part of two thousand years, often to the point of fierce cruelty and wholesale bloodshed, he has never condescended to appease their animosity by a frank explanation. As for the other person of the Trinity, it is supposed to animate every ordained minister, and its services do not seem very valuable, as these are the very gentlemen who have done all the squabbling and fighting. We do not forget that Dr. Parker has lately made an appeal to the Holy Ghost to send celestial telegrams to the City Temple, but nothing of any importance has yet arrived, and some of the religious papers actually tell Dr. Parker that he was never deficient in "face."

All the three persons of the Trinity being impossible, we can only turn to the Devil—who, by the way, has had remarkably little to say on any subject, all the loquacity, and even garrulity, belonging to the opposite house. Surely he must be "a deep un" or he would never keep so quiet. Moltke was silent in seven languages, but the Devil is silent in all the languages of the globe.

Yes, we must apply to the Devil. And who should interview his Highness but a representative of the *Freethinker*? We are naturally enterprising, and all the world knows it, except those who don't. Besides, we have never said a word against Satan. He is a personage for whom we have always expressed a profound respect. He is therefore less likely to stick

our interviewer with his toasting-fork. Besides, we are supposed to be one of his devotees. Did not Mr. Justice North tell us, at the Old Bailey, in 1883, how sorry he was to see us prostituting our abilities—which he said God gave us—in the service of the Devil?

All these considerations, and more, were present to our minds when we resolved to interview Saint Nicholas. Shilling week had just opened, however, and the editor was too busy to undertake the task himself. It was confided to a member of the staff. This gentleman did his best—at least he says so, and we never knew him to go wrong, except on one occasion, several years ago, when he spent an evening with an advanced parson, drank two glasses of communion port, and “upon the strength thereof,” as the Bible says, wrote a Good Friday article for our Christmas number. He said the alphabet backwards, read the multiplication table diagonally, and pronounced three Welsh words to the best of his ability. This was no good. He then said the Lord’s Prayer upside down, and sent some astral vibrations through the solid earth to the depth of twenty thousand feet. Finally he cried “Abracadabra” and quoted *Hamlet*, calling on old mole and old true-penny. But it was all useless, the Devil would not give him an audience; so, thinking he preferred to see the principal, the editor decided to do the job himself.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

WHY CHRISTIANS HATE FREETHINKERS.

THE persecution which has been meted out to Freethinkers in all ages need occasion little wonder, and there are abundant reasons why Freethought, despite its widespread and many triumphs, should still excite hostility and its advocates have to encounter calumny and other forms of malignity. Ancient prejudice and bigotry is deep-seated, and, when the surface is scratched, is apt to show itself. In former times religion was an affair of state. Worshipers of the same gods had a common bond. Ancient gods, in fact, were tribal, like Jahveh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To acknowledge Baal was to be a traitor to Israel. To be of a different worship was to be of another nation. Pagan Rome, with its inclusion of the gods of the conquered nations within its capacious Pantheon did a little to break down this narrowness and induce toleration of rival faiths. But Christianity from the first was intolerant. Proclaiming its sole possession of an exclusive salvation; that there was no other name under heaven save that of Jesus whereby men could be saved, and that “he that believeth not shall be damned,” it regarded all other faiths as diabolical idolatries, consigned Pagans to hell hereafter, and as soon as possible provided them with a foretaste of what God had in store for them.

Dissenting Christians often lament that Christianity allied itself with the State, and took and used the sword of power. Had it not done so, it would have remained an insignificant sect. It was by the sword of Constantine it won its way in the Roman empire. It was by the sword of Clovis it converted the Franks. It was by the sword of Charlemagne it won the Saxons, giving them the option of baptism or death. This was considered the only treatment fit for the heathen, and the Spaniards who followed Columbus thought nothing of enslaving all who had not accepted Christianity. It was a way of bringing them to a knowledge of the gospel.

The genuine Christian yields up his reason and conscience to the dictation of religion. Whatever the Bible says, or whatever the Church lays down in its creeds, is to be accepted as the word of God. To believe it implicitly is necessary to salvation. Those

who question either the Bible or the Church are rebels to God, and without doubt will perish everlastingly. Any temporary penalties with which they may be visited, with a view of preventing the spread of their pernicious opinions, and thereby leading others to hell, are but as nothing to what God himself intends to inflict from heaven. And have they not gospel authority? Did not the beloved apostle John say (2nd epist., v. 10), “If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him godspeed.” Did not Paul declare (Gal. i. 9), “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”? Did not Jesus say it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who received not his apostles; and “those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.”

“No faith with heretics” was the admitted maxim of the Church when in power. Unbelievers had no part nor lot in Christian charity or even Christian justice. Calvin’s teachery against Servetus was a merit in his own eyes, and his execution at a green fire was extolled by the mild Melancthon. The heretic was considered to have neither political nor social rights. The enemy of God was fitly treated as an outlaw. When he could no longer be burnt or imprisoned, to deprive him of citizenship was deemed no wrong, and to slander him was no libel. A curious illustration is given by Isaac D’Israeli in his *Curiosities of Literature*. Richard Cumberland, in his *Life*, declared that Bentley relieved Anthony Collins when in distress. It was pointed out to him that Anthony lived and died in affluence, and that it must have been Arthur Collins. To this Cumberland replied that “it should stand, because it could do no harm to any but to Anthony Collins, whom he considered as little short of an Atheist.” The stories still told of infidel immorality and of their horrible death-beds show that the days of pious frauds are not yet quite over.

A secret consciousness of weakness is one reason why Christians hate infidels. They know their creeds will not stand examination. Reason and ridicule are all very well in their way, but they should be applied to proper objects, and not directed against the tender fortress of a Christian’s faith. The interested preachers of supernaturalism know they cannot prove their claims. If they have studied the matter at all, they are aware their pretensions will not bear investigation. They know their sacred book contains absurdities shocking to common sense, and obscenities revolting to decency. They know, too, that faith in its sacredness can only be maintained by preventing the light being turned on the imperfections of their idol. Like Demetrius the silversmith and his fellow-craftsmen, who made shrines for Diana of Ephesus, they perceive that through Freethought their craft is in danger of being set at nought. The most vital interest of the sky-pilots is perilled by the propaganda that maintains their charts of heaven and hell are erroneous, and steering by them can only lead to disaster. It is safe to say that in Great Britain alone thirty millions of money are annually devoted to purposes of religion and the payment of its ministers. Can those who live by it be expected to regard with equanimity the people who would cut their living from under their feet?

Of course, all Christians do not hate Freethinkers. But by even the most charitable, the knowledge that there are persons who dispute the fundamentals of their faith is felt as disquieting. I have known even good people so anxious for the conversion of Freethinkers that their solicitude has amounted to a mild form of persecution.

J. M. WHEELER.

Bigotry is a kind of rheumatism, which twists a man’s soul into all sorts of deformities.—Henry Simon.

MISERY IN HEAVEN.

[CONCLUDED.]

WE will now glance at what may be termed the Throne Room of heaven as it is described by St. John, who is alleged to have been an eye-witness. He certainly had very peculiar ideas both of artistic beauty and of pictorial theology. He says that God was like a jasper and a sardine stone; the rainbow about him was the color of an emerald. This sparkling Deity was surrounded by four-and-twenty elders, their heads being adorned with crowns of gold. Before the throne was a sea of crystal, near which there were seven lamps, which were the seven spirits of God. It is said that St. John was "in the spirit." This may be so, or perhaps the spirit was in him; for no man in his normal mental condition, either waking or sleeping, could conceive such a jumble of nonsensical impossibilities as those recorded in the book of Revelation. Some profane persons have compared their alleged author to Tam O'Shanter, who also is said to have had some strange visions.

St. John, we are told, found the door of heaven open, and there he stood in front of a great white throne, with a frontage of a crystal sea, but "whether (he was) in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." He does not say that he felt alarmed at the "lightnings and thunderings of voices" which "proceeded out of the throne." People as a rule do not feel supremely happy in a thunderstorm. But in addition to the war of the elements there were four most remarkable beasts in the midst of and round the throne, the like of which, so far as we know, no naturalist has ever seen in this or in any other country. The beasts are represented as having resemblance to a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, and they possessed six wings each and "eyes before and behind," besides being "full of eyes within." They must have been wideawake animals indeed, and to have found the blind side of them would have been exceedingly difficult. But, stranger still, they were musical beasts, and could all sing, and evidently did so to some tune, for "they rest not day and night, saying holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty." Then we have what may be called a chorus, in which the beasts are joined by the elders and by "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels. A pleasant place this, truly, for a studious man or a nervous woman to be doomed to "for ever." Of course it may be a matter of taste, but, speaking personally, if ever we find ourselves among such a motley crew, we shall be inclined, if all other means of escape fail, to test the efficacy of prayer, and to exclaim from this place "Good Lord deliver us."

According to St. John, the acoustic properties of heaven must be unique, for he says that he heard every living thing both there and on earth, under the earth, and on the sea, say something to him that sat on the throne, to which the four beasts (one of them having a voice of thunder) said Amen! Such an exhibition of heavenly music would be to us no pleasure, but a tremendous nuisance. We might perhaps, under pressure, be able to sit out the performance for a brief time; but to have to endure it day and night for ever would be enough to drive one stark staring mad. A succession of the same sounds and sights, even when of a pleasant kind, would be one of the most monotonous experiences on earth; but to be compelled to listen perpetually to the uproar of St. John's heaven, and to behold its horrible sights without any intermission, would be the quintessence of misery. Putting aside their hideous thundering shouts amidst lightning and hail, it makes one's flesh creep to think of those strange beasts constantly crawling all over the place. There would be no rest for us even in the presence of all the saints and the Lamb. St. John incidentally remarks that a good deal of bookkeeping goes on in heaven. If this be so,

accuracy, we should think, could not be guaranteed under such conditions of noise and confusion. In all probability many names will be omitted or wrongly inserted, unless the recording angel is deaf and dumb and receives his instructions through the medium of "divine inspiration." As to him who was sitting on the throne, he must have been a peculiar individual, for it is said that from his face "the earth and the heaven fled away," but whence we are not informed.

There were other wonders in heaven, one of which was a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and twelve stars on her head. Evidently she must have been the centre of light, and had no necessity to grope about in the dark. She was not, however, to be compared with the marvellous angel giant, who was clothed with a cloud, had a rainbow on his head, a face like the sun, a voice like a lion, and his feet like pillars of fire. The length given of his legs is most remarkable; he set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth. There is one thing mentioned which must have given inexpressible joy to some of the unfortunate inhabitants. "There was silence in heaven for about the space of one hour." This must have been indeed a relief, even though it was only for a brief interval. Crusty old bachelors have thought that if there were silence in heaven it was evident that there were not many women there. Upon this point we give no opinion, except that, if there were more than one there, they must have been delighted that the chorus of the beasts was stopped even for an hour, so that a little cheerful feminine conversation could be indulged in. Most women are painted as angels, at least, before they are married; let us hope, therefore, that if there were any in heaven, they had wings with which, at the recommencement of the native music, they could fly away and be at rest. This description of heaven and its angelic inhabitants is, what the Americans would say, "fine and large"; but we ask, where does the happiness come in? Gaping at monstrosities and wonders like St. John witnessed, is not our idea of a blissful state. It is said in the New Testament that Jesus was going away to prepare a place for us. If, however, St. John's account of the "place" is correct, we have no wish to congratulate Christ upon the success of his undertaking. One thing perhaps, we ought to be thankful for, and that is that the path to heaven is so narrow that only a few can find it. If ever it is our misfortune to be located in the orthodox heaven, we shall be inclined to burst into song and say:

Heaven's a cheat, and all things show it;

We thought so once, but now we know it.

We are sometimes told that if heaven does not really exist, it is a pleasing illusion which people ought not to be ruthlessly deprived of; and that they should not have doubts concerning its existence infused into their contented minds. Our answer to this is, when absurd errors are taught as truths, it is necessary that the fact should be made clear, in order that their injurious influences may be avoided. Now St. John says his account is accurate, and that anyone making alterations or additions will be subject to unspeakable penalties. But we repeat that it is not the existence of heaven that we here question, neither do we desire to deprive anyone of the hope of happiness hereafter. We have simply shown that the Christian's heaven as depicted in the Scriptures does not offer grounds for a pleasing illusion, and that it is not a home of happiness, but an abode of the most wretched misery that it is possible for the human mind to conceive. A heaven to be desirable should be a place where suffering is unknown, where the true and the noble of the earth can dwell in peace and harmony, undisturbed by personal pain, or a knowledge of the gloom and sadness of others. To us the Christian's heaven appears destitute of every redeeming feature,

and it would be no pain to us to see it occupied by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and ourselves shut out. If there is such a heaven as that described by St. John, we know of no people to whom it would be a more appropriate abode than to the inmates of a lunatic asylum. The fact is the popular notion of heaven and hell, which the churches profess to entertain to-day, is based on superstition of which Pope said:—

She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,
To Powers unseen, and mightier far away;
She, from the rending earth and burning skies,
Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
Here fixed the dreadful, there the blest abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods:
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust,
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, formed like tyrants, tyrants would believe,
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide,
And hell was built on spite, and heaven on pride.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE MOUTH-PIECE OF GOD.

THE Rev. Salvatore M. Brandi, editor of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and an influential man in the Catholic camp, contributes to the December number of the *North American Review* an article on the infallibility of the Pope, which just serves to bring this preposterous claim on the part of Rome to our notice.

Now there is no doubt that the Catholic Church has a very great advantage over the Protestant Churches because of this dogma of Papal infallibility. The Protestant practically worships an infallible book. The Bible is his fetish. But evidently the question arises, and it is continually put with great force from the Romish side, What is the use or object of an infallible book if it has not an infallible interpreter? An infallible book which may be held to mean a hundred and one different things by fallible men is, manifestly, an absurdity. And hence it comes that on the one hand we have a drilled organisation "moving," as Mr. Justice O'Brien said, in South Meath the other day, "as one machine, with resistless force" to accomplish its object; stretching its members out in every direction; powerful because the governing force is concentrated; uniform because of its diplomacy; and, on the other hand, a Church, split up into innumerable factions, with almost every minister holding his own little set of doctrines, with High Church and Low Church, and, for aught we know, Medium Church, with one half looking longingly towards Rome and the other to Freethought, and with hardly any organisation to compare with that of its more powerful rival.

Father Brandi, in his article, of course assumes the dogma of infallibility. He takes it for granted—as, of course, all good Catholics should. Demonstration is a superfluity in theology, for, where "faith" is abundant, demonstration is not required. "Papal infallibility," it seems, "is defined by Catholic theologians to be a supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost, whereby the Pope, as head of the whole Church, is preserved free from error whenever he defines a doctrine that belongs to faith or morals." The work of Father Brandi is to dilate at length upon the conditions which must be observed by the Pope whenever he speaks infallibly, and spin rubbishy talk about the difference between believing with an "ecclesiastical faith" and believing with a "Catholic faith" and so forth.

It appears that "all Catholic theologians agree in denying the existence of any new Catholic revelation after the times of the apostles." But of course that does not prevent new interpretations being put upon the old revelations, nor of the infallible Pope of to-day contradicting the infallible Pope of yesterday.

But this emphatic declaration ought to settle, once for all, the claim of "advanced" Christians that Christianity is progressive; that, as it gets older, it expands and develops; and, in short, that Christianity is subject, and legitimately so, to the law of evolution. From its nature it is not, it cannot be, progressive. It is hardly necessary for "Catholic theologians" to deny the existence of any new revelation. Notwithstanding the labors of gentlemen of the Archdeacon Farrar type, we know no more really about Jesus now than those of the past centuries. Christianity, implying, as Mr. Robert Buchanan pointed out some time ago, a belief in the historical reality of certain individuals and the historical accuracy of certain records, cannot by any possibility be said to be subject to growth or progress. Alleging, as it does, that it possesses all the knowledge necessary to salvation, "the faith once delivered to the saints" means, and always must mean, an unchanging and a stagnant faith.

Infallible Popes, however, are not free from the inconveniences of ordinary mortals. In private conversation, and when not laying down the law on "faith and morals," he is liable to make a mistake, it seems. It is only when he fulfils the conditions that Father Brandi details—it is only, that is, when he is speaking *ex cathedra* that the Holy Ghost backs him up or puts the words into his mouth. In fact, when the Pope speaks infallibly he is really a kind of living phonograph: he is a mere talking machine. The Pope is only the instrument, the Ghost does the speaking in reality. Afterwards the Ghost may take his departure, and leave the Pope as free and as liable to err as the most hardened heretic. But a difficulty arises here, it seems to us. Who is to settle when the Pope is fulfilling the conditions laid down? In other words, who is to say when the Ghost has possession of him? And that this difficulty has arisen Father Brandi practically admits. In fact, his article is largely intended to clear it up. But we do not see how it can be cleared. Father Brandi lays down the conditions under which the Pope speaks infallibly. But suppose a difference of opinion arises. Suppose the Pope alleges he is speaking *ex cathedra*, and somebody else alleges he is not, what then? If the Catholic laity are to decide the matter, evidently they set themselves up as judges of what is infallible and what is not, thereby claiming infallibility for themselves. If, on the other hand, the Pope himself is to decide the matter, then of course there is no check on him. He may allege that every petty expression of opinion on his part is uttered *ex cathedra*, and is therefore binding on the belief of every Catholic. This point only just exemplifies the absurdity of the whole business.

A large part of the article under notice consists of examples of infallible Papal utterances, and a pretty selection it is too. The following is from the Encyclical *Quanta Cura* (1874) of Pius IX.: "In the midst of so many pernicious opinions, we are mindful of our apostolic office. . . . By our apostolic authority, therefore, we reprobate, proscribe, and condemn all the wicked opinions and doctrines expressly mentioned in these Letters, and we will, and command, that they be held as reprobated, proscribed, and condemned by all the children of the Catholic Church." The doctrines here condemned, we are told, are Naturalism, Liberalism, Socialism and Communism, and Father Brandi says they are "infallibly condemned."

The question of the "relation of the civil power to the Head of the Church" is dealt with at length by Father Brandi. It appears that a "solemn definition" that the temporal power is necessary to the Head of the Church, was prepared by the Episcopal Committee, and submitted to the Bishops of the Council. It was only the events of 1870 which, depriving the Pope of his temporal power, and consequently

obliging him to suspend the work of the Council, precluded for a time the actual definition of this point as well as many other important ones." Fancy Jehovah allowing his chief henchman, the "Head of the Church," no less, to be upset in the consideration of "important points" so that the work had to be suspended!

There are several choice samples of infallibility here. Socialism is declared in the Encyclical of Dec. 28, 1878, to be "utterly opposed to the doctrine of Christ." We cannot resist the temptation to transcribe one more passage, but it shall be the last. It is from the Encyclical *Immortale Dei* (Nov. 1, 1885) on the Christian constitution of States. It proposes "what the Catholic Church teaches and prescribes on this question":

"That public authority (ultimately) is not from the people, but from God; that rebellion against legitimate authority is against reason; that neither the individual nor the State may dispense with religious duties, or be indifferent with regard to the various forms of worship; that the *unbridled* freedom of thought, and of the press, can never be a right, or deserve favor and protection . . ." To those who talk glibly of the Church being the friend of liberty we commend the "unbridled freedom of thought and of the press."

There is one thought, in conclusion, that this article of Father Brandi's suggests to us. Is it not a remarkable sign of the times that one of the chief pen-men of the Church should "stoop" to defend, or even to explain, her dogmas in pages that are frequently "disfigured" by the contributions of Colonel Ingersoll, a valiant defender of that "unbridled freedom of thought" which Father Brandi's chief has condemned. What a change from the old days! Fancy the Church of the Dark Ages, the Church of Torquemada, the Church that murdered Bruno, arguing its doctrines in a literary magazine. The change is significant. It marks the advance that has been made. Verily, as Macaulay says, the days of the Crusades are over. In the future the Church will have to fight with the weapons of reason and of argument, and the result of the struggle no rational man can doubt.

Meanwhile, what a spectacle this old man in Rome—the relic of a dead past, a past that is for ever gone—hurling his anathemas at people who take hardly any notice of him, and proclaiming to a semi-indifferent world that on "matters of faith and morals" he cannot err. It is a sight at once pitiable, contemptible and absurd.

FREDERICK RYAN.

NATURAL MORALITY.

THEOLOGIANS are responsible, in a very large measure, for the erroneous ideas that prevail respecting moral questions. They have taught for so many years that a good God created a perfect world, that was subsequently spoilt by the entrance of an evil power that took possession of the will of man and caused him to frustrate the designs of omnipotence; and that since the alleged Fall man has been neither able to think nor to do any good thing of himself; that it is with the greatest possible difficulty the ordinary individual can be brought to consider moral questions from either the philosophical or scientific standpoint.

Our early ancestors pictured a perfect world with a perfect man in paradise in the distant past, and theologians preach the fond delusion to this day. No doubt the idea was a perfectly natural one to our ignorant ancestors. We naturally idealise the things of the past. We rarely consider present happiness as comparable with that of the past; indeed, no matter how rugged our path in life, no matter what

trials and troubles we may have experienced in our childhood, we always think of the days gone by as the happiest part of our lives.

The authors of the Bible take this view. They relate the story of a "golden age" in the distant past, but they regard the future of man on earth as hopelessly bad. The same idea runs through all the books of the Bible, and indeed through all religions. The study of the sciences, however, leads us in these modern days to a very different conclusion. From them we learn that the farther we go back in the past the lower down the scale of being was man, and that his capacity for appreciating and enjoying the good things of the earth are necessarily small in comparison with the more highly organised and more fully developed human beings of later times.

We then not only have good grounds for belief that man was never a perfect being, but all the evidence goes to demonstrate the very contrary. In fact, the idea of perfection as applied to human beings is an absurdity. Perfection is only a relative term. One thing may be more perfect than another, just as one thing may be larger than another; but the large thing is small in comparison with something else, and the so-called perfect thing is imperfect in comparison with something else. Evil, according to the theologian, was something that was supposed to have been introduced into the world by an evil being, while good proceeded from God alone.

Evil was an entity, a being, a real existence. We know now that this idea is erroneous; that evil *per se* has no existence; we know now that disease is not an entity but a condition; not an evil spirit that could be cast out, but an abnormal condition of the body. When a man suffered from epilepsy it was thought that a demon had taken possession of his body, and that it might be cast out by a priestly performance—by holding up a cross, or by repeating certain pious phrases. Now all this is known to be superstition, but still the majority of people decide moral questions according to exploded theological ideas.

Now it would be quite impossible to discover the exact moment in the evolution of man when he first grasped the idea that good conduct consisted in the performance of those actions which produced a beneficial result in the tribe or community to which he belonged; it is, nevertheless, not difficult to understand how, when individuals had become sufficiently civilised to live in communities, it was found prudent to come to some mutual arrangement by which each would consent to do nothing that was likely to be injurious to any other member of the community. Thus in time it would be an easy matter to draw up a code of conduct for the regulation of the community. A study of the Bible will show how Moses drew up such a code, although the biblical writers leave their readers to suppose that Jahveh was the real author of the Mosaic laws.

At first no doubt, among religious folk, all conduct was considered good that was supposed to have the approval of God, or his earthly representative the priest. But that does not prove that it was good. It only proves that it was considered good for the time being until subsequent experience showed that it was injurious to the community. Thus no doubt slave-owning may have been advantageous in promoting the evolution of a particular race in preference to an inferior one. By giving a few well-favored individuals leisure and opportunity to study the art of warfare, or agriculture, or any other art that would give them an advantage in the struggle for subsistence, slavery may have been an important factor in promoting their advancement. But that would not make slave-owning a moral act when judged from our present standpoint of utility. The fact is, morality is a growth; and what was considered good in one age has often been found to be altogether harmful in the next. And yet

the nature of goodness has not changed, but only men's opinions with regard to it.

Undoubtedly there are underlying principles in nature to which all human beings must conform or perish; and there are also definite principles of conduct which cannot be violated without causing injury and consequently suffering. Natural laws for the regulation of human conduct should be, therefore, as much a subject of scientific study as the laws of astronomy or any other natural law. And in time it will be found that human morality is not something given to man by some outside agency, but that it is a growth resulting from a larger knowledge of natural laws and a truer understanding of those principles of conduct by which the well-being of the majority of human beings is secured.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

SALVATIONISM IN NEW ZEALAND.

A few wandering Salvationists held a holiness meeting about a fortnight ago in a mining camp near Lyell (N.Z.), and many hardened sinners were scuffed into the fold. The local drunkard entered in at the narrow gate, and in a brief and pathetic address he stated that beer had lost its attractiveness for him; a dazed-looking nigger knocked and it was opened unto him, and in broken accents he declared that he would smite his missus on the head with a chair-leg no more; and a Chinaman explained that he had put on the garment of righteousness and was waiting anxiously for the summons to a fairer world on high, and meanwhile, during his sojourn on earth, he would continue to sell cabbages of the best quality at reasonable rates, and trusted the Clistians of the neighborhood would patronise him in preference to Hi Skunk, the rival Mongolian, who was an unconverted Philistine, and was still in the bond of sin and the gall of iniquity, also his lettucee would be found of superior quality, and with regard to carrots he considered he could wipe the floor with any other vegetable merchant in the district. Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Further, in the matter of beans he would shortly be able to supply his customers with an article which had never been equalled in that part of the county. He was choked off at this point by the chief shepherd, who considered that the foreign brother was dealing too much with worldly concerns, and accordingly the Chinaman closed with an impassioned peroration, in which he expressed a firm conviction that he would meet them all in the city which was paved with gold, and there fly him bow-wow in him pan, allee samee Chineeman did on earth; also he wished to state that concerning potatoes, the beastly article vended by that swindling leper, Hi Skunk, who deserved to boil for ever in the lowest sink in Tophet—at this stage he was literally forced into a seat, and a long, sad-looking white brother took his place, and said he would like to make a few remarks. He felt it was good to be there. For many years he had led a sinful existence caring nothing for sacred things, but his heart had suddenly undergone a change. The emotions which filled him at that moment were beyond his power to analyse. Hitherto his soul had been wrapped up entirely in his business; in fact, he might mention that he come into that district as agent for a valuable work, which he was prepared to supply at 4s. for each monthly number. It would be completed in fifty parts, and, considering its merits, no intelligent man or woman should be without it, the illustrations alone being worth far more than the price demanded. For the last six months he had devoted himself to the sale of this work, completely neglecting the higher considerations which led to eternal life, and so much had he been wrapped up in the concerns of this world that he even had a copy in his pocket at that moment, which he would be happy to show to any brother or sister who might feel inclined to subscribe. Even in his unregenerate state he had booked several thousand orders, and—but at this juncture the deacon fell on him and drove him out, and, while he was being emerged, the saved Chinaman took the opportunity to state in great excitement that that unprincipled idolator, Hi Skunk, frequently sold cabbagee with glubs in them, whereas he vended a really superior article. Enter ye at the narrow gate—Here he also went out suddenly, and after a few words from the chief Salvationist, in the course of which he casually mentioned that he was prepared to supply Salvation hymn-books at 1s. 6d. each, the proceedings closed with prayer.

BOOK CHAT.

Three Essays on Italy, by W. W. Strickland (R. Forder, price 6d.), deal first with "The Fallacy of the Latin Union," and contends, among other things, that the Italians have little affinity with the French; next with "The Triple Alliance," which is supported as a step in the right direction of a tribunal for the preservation of peace. The third essay on "Murder and the Law of Mercy" is of general interest, though it refers to the Italians having in 1865 substituted penal servitude for life for the death penalty, since which, says Mr. Strickland, personal security has been constantly on the increase. The author is a humanitarian, holding that crime is a disease, and pleading for the law of mercy. All three essays are worth reading.

Shelley's writings continue to be of great interest to bibliophiles. At Sotheby's sale rooms, on Dec. 22, the following first editions went under the hammer: *Masque of Anarchy*, £1 1s.; *Queen Mab*, £21 10s.; *Address to the Irish People*, £25.

Darwin's *Life and Letters*, originally published in three volumes, is now issued in one volume (7s. 6d.) by Murray. The parts most interesting to Freethinkers, and most instructive to Christians, are quoted in Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*.

Theosophy is a very simple thing, just suited to the intellect of the inhabitants of Thibet; but as some of its terms may sound a little uncouth to English ears, we must thank the late H. P. Blavatsky for giving us the *Theosophical Glossary*, even at the price of fifteen shillings.

The main fault we find with this glossary of 388 pages is that it needs a still larger glossary to explain it. It begins very simply with the letter A, which, we are told, "is a letter of great mystic power and 'magic virtue' with those who have adopted it, and with whom its numerical value is one." A1 at Lloyds', we presume. The explanation of Abatur is not so plain. It runs thus: "In the Nazarene system the 'Ancient of Days,' *Antiquus Altus*, the Father of the Demiurgus of the Universe, is called the *Third Life*, or 'Abatur.' He corresponds to the *Third 'Logos'* in the Secret Doctrine." How beautifully clear this makes matters.

Turning to some of the more familiar Theosophic terms we find that "*Chohan*" means "Lord" or "Master"; a chief; thus Dhyan Chohan would answer to "Chief of the Dhyanis, or celestial lights—which in English would be translated archangels." *Astral Body*, or "Astral Double," is "the ethereal counterpart or shadow of man or animal. The *Linga Shanra*, the 'Doppelgänger.' The reader must not confuse it with the *Astral Soul*, another name for the lower *Manas*, or *Kama-Manas* so-called, the reflection of the Higher Ego." He who runs may read, but some would prefer running instead of reading, especially if they learn that, owing to Russian spelling they must look even for King Chandra-gupta under Tch.

Mr. A. Benn writes very disparagingly of the Koran in reviewing a work by Noldeke in the *Academy*. He says it would be harder to explain Mohammed's military exploits without supernaturalism than this "tedious forgery on which his claims to a supernatural mission were based." But a similar glamor surrounds the biblical books in the eyes of the Christian to that with which the Koran is invested by the Moslem, or they too might appear only tedious forgeries.

The anti-Semitic agitation is by no means over in Germany, being chiefly fanned by the Catholic press and population. A Catholic firm at Dresden has republished Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum*, which repeats the well-worn "blood accusation" and makes numerous odious charges against the chosen race. This and similar works command a large sale.

So Many Books! So Little Time. What to Do? is the title of a little pamphlet, by J. J. Wright, published by J. B. Collings, Birmingham. It is written on behalf of the National Home Reading Union, which undertakes for a shilling a year to advise members what to read. The N.H.R.U. may do a good work in promoting Home Reading Circles and perform a useful function on general lines, but we doubt its ability to meet individual wants, which are as varied as the individuals themselves.

ACID DROPS.

Old Nick has had a lift up. Archdeacon Farrar, in a new year's sermon at Westminster Abbey, declined to have the Devil done away with. He would not argue with "the fine young man" or "the fine young lady" who are "so much more philosophical and so much more profound in sacred things than St. Peter or St. Paul, or even the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ himself, all of whom, not once, but many times, spoke distinctly of this personal spirit of evil." Of course they did, and every true Christian is bound to do the same. But the true Christian is also bound to do other things; for instance, take no thought for the morrow, and sell his property and give the proceeds to the poor. Archdeacon Farrar hasn't done this yet. When he has, he will have a right to quarrel with other professed Christians for not minding the teaching of the Lord of Glory.

The New York Presbytery, after a nineteen days' trial, has acquitted Professor Briggs on the charge of heresy. He seems to believe in men having a chance after death. Here in England we have Professor Mivart preaching "happiness in hell." What is the world coming to? We shall soon see ministers acquitted on the charge of teaching that Jehovah plays billiards and goes a trifle on the New Jerusalem Stakes.

According to the *Christian World* the recent seizure of Talmage's Tabernacle for a painter's bill is the second event of that kind at this establishment, which was built "almost entirely on faith"—that is, on tick. There is still a debt of £40,000. Scripture says "Owe no man anything," but how the dickens are gospel-shops to be built in that way? St. Paul is dreadfully behind the age.

A short time ago there came before the Maidenhead Borough Bench a case, duly reported in the local paper, which affords an amusing commentary on that absurd relic of superstition, taking the oath. The principal witness was a woman who, on being asked to take the oath, demurred, and although the clerk pressed her, she obstinately refused. At last, after considerable delay, the witness, holding the greasy Testament in her hand, inquired if any Roman Catholic had been previously sworn on it. "Oh, yes, often," was the rejoinder. She then kissed the book, and directly after caused much amusement in the court by producing from her pocket a Roman Catholic version and kissing it reverently. But this was not all. The next witness was a doctor, who carefully placed a piece of blotting pad over the Testament before indulging in his osculation. *Verb. sap.*

Another oath incident occurred in a case of indecent assault upon a little girl at Yarmouth. The prisoner's counsel claimed that a witness aged eight could not give evidence simply because she knew she must tell the truth. "She must have an idea as to where she would go after death." The Recorder then asked the counsel if he knew where he was going after death. The counsel replied that he was not in the witness-box, and the girl's evidence was taken on her stating that she believed in a God.

The good Christians of Calcutta, though they constitute an insignificant proportion of the population, have petitioned the Government to declare Sunday a legal *dies non*. The Government has replied that the Christians already have what they want so far as regards the closing of all courts of law and public offices. To go further and impose the Christian Sabbath on Hindus and Mohammedanism would be a violation of the declared policy of our rule in India.

The Christian Evidence-mongers are always boasting of Christian works of beneficence; but it appears from figures given in the *Charity Record* that the amount contributed to missionary societies during the past year is considerably more than four times that subscribed to the London hospitals and kindred institutions. While these institutions are in urgent need of funds to relieve the sick and destitute bodies of those at home, the religious and thoughtless have wasted £1,500,000 in conveying the gospel of damnation to the heathen in foreign parts.

A writer in the *Hawk* remarks: "I have travelled about myself in my time, and I have taken frequent opportunities of asking officers in the army and persons who have been

resident in India and China whether they were ever personally acquainted with *one single case* of conversion to Christianity of a native by the Church Missionary Society. The almost unanimous reply was 'No.' One lady from India told me, it is true, that she had heard of a case at her station, but the converted man, she gave me to understand, was bribed into it."

The Rev. J. Stockwell Watts, who started a fund to assist the Liberator victims, told a *Pall Mall Gazette* interviewer that Church people and Nonconformists are alike in the slough. Even curates put their "little savings" into the concern. The interviewer asked how these people were got at, and this was the reply:—"Oh, by the influence of the names of professedly Christian men on the directorate. I will give you an instance within my own knowledge of how they worked. A deacon of a London Congregation church, who was an agent of the Society, called on an influential man whom he knew in a town in the provinces. By his own reputation and representations he induced his friend to put some money into the Society, which he did to the extent of £4,000. Then the gentleman in the country town was asked to act as agent. He, in all good faith, accepted the position. His character and influence induced the superintendent of the Sunday-school to invest £1,000, and in turn others did so to a smaller extent. Thus the circle beginning with the church ever widened."

The expulsion of Jews from Russia goes on with increasing severity. Where they are to go to is the main question. Baron Hirsch has not yet prepared the Argentine Colony; the United States won't have them; no European country wants them, and they will not go to the sterile land which their forefathers declared was flowing with milk and honey. A new form of persecution has been instigated in Russia, the refusal to deliver any letters to Jews, who, to avoid odium, may have taken Christian names.

"What's in a name," said Shakespeare, and we may well repeat it when we hear that in Burton-on-Trent the *Freethinker* is supplied by Mrs. Christian, of Station-street. This reminds us, too, of a reader who entered the shop of a devout Wesleyan and asked him if he would supply the *Freethinker* every week. The newsagent said he would, saying that he often had to sell papers he did not like to. Fancy a man risking his chance of heaven for a penny a week!

In his fifth book the much-lamented Moses, Egyptian murderer and Jewish lawgiver, tells how the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day." Goethe, by the way, suggested that Aaron may have put him out of the way. But the Mohammedans now claim that the sepulchre of Moses has been discovered near where the Jordan falls into the Dead Sea, and they have recently had a large pilgrimage to the spot. Pity they cannot discover the actual remains and find out if, when the Devil and Michael the archangel contended about his body, as recorded in the veracious book of Jude, they lengthened it out by seizing hold the one the lawgiver's heels and the other his head, as depicted in an inspired Bible picture in the *Freethinker* a few years ago.

The death of Monseigneur de Dreux-Brézé, the Bishop of Moulins, who is said to have inherited the heart of Voltaire from the Marquis de Villette, has given occasion to a paragraph which is going the rounds on the strange event of an aristocratic priest possessing the heart of Voltaire, "the great hater of priests and nobles whom he wanted to see hanged in an atrocious manner." The writer evidently refers to the well-known lines about strangling the last king with the entrails of the last priest. But these lines were not by Voltaire. They were written by Diderot, not as his own sentiments, but put in the mouth of an eleutheromaniac.

God made rabbits, and of course he doeth all things well. But the Australian farmers don't understand it. Anyhow, they are slaughtering the pests wholesale by means of the smoke of poisoned cartridges. "The composition of the cartridges," it is said, "is for the present a secret." Are they afraid the rabbits will take precautions?

The *New York Times* of Jan. 10 publishes details from Anderson (Indiana) of a fatal fight at the conclusion of divine

service between two rival parties among the congregation. Shot after shot was fired, amid the terrified screaming of the female worshippers, and when one side retreated it was not till both factions had left one of its adherents dead. Seven other persons were wounded, two of them fatally.

After forty years of married life Christopher Candler broke out assaulting his wife. He was thought to be intoxicated, but declared in court that he would not touch a "drop" for his life, and that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Religion, in fact, had proved a worse intoxicant than alcohol, and completely unhinged his mind.

A paragraph in the papers headed "Failure of a speculating clergyman," tells us that a meeting of the creditors of the Rev. J. Hart Davies, vicar of St. James', Bristol, has been held. The liabilities were stated, to amount to £2,819, and there was a deficiency of £2,676. "Owe no man anything" is, we believe, not the text chosen for his next sermon.

Frank Franklin, a youth of Stratton, near Swindon, who committed suicide and left a confession of having murdered a little girl at Kingsdom, had written just previously the following verses:

Heaven's a beautiful city,
The streets are of pure gold;
I'm going there to see Jesus
And all the Apostles of old.

Heaven's a beautiful city,
And God will sit on his throne;
I'm going there to see Jesus,
And will you let me go alone?

James Butler, of Zion Court, Boston, broke out in a state of frenzied lunacy through religious mania. He has recently been converted by one of the open-air religious societies, and took to smashing everything he could lay hands on.

Kate Dillon, of New York, and the Misses Harmon of the same city, are other cases of persons recently crazed by religion.

The convict Diane, executed at Port Louis, Mauritius, for an atrocious murder of a little girl, whose blood he sucked under the superstitious belief that it would give him super-human power, paid great attention to the ministrations of the priest in attendance, and made an edifying ending before joining Moses, David, and Co. in heaven.

The late Rev. J. Spurrell must have a difficult job to squeeze through the gates of the New Jerusalem, considering that he gathered up riches to the tune of over £580,000. He, however, did something to ease his way by leaving good sums to various religious institutions, such as to the Church Missionary Society, and the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.

For a person to be married nearly four hundred years after death would be strange except to Theosophists and Catholics. However, it has been gravely proposed that Columbus shall now be married to his mistress, Beatrice Enriquez Arana, as this will remove the devil's advocate's one objection to the canonisation of the great discoverer. That he upheld slavery is too trivial a matter to concern the Church.

The sacerdotal spirit is well shown in the parish magazine of St. Andrew's Church, Worthing, which, in a chapter headed "Self-examination before Confession," asks, "Do we make our confession humbly, kneeling at the feet of the priest in the attitude and in the frame of mind of a culprit before his judge?" Priests of all religions are the same, and presbyter is but old priest writ large.

Our old friend the sea-serpent has turned up again, a doctor having written a learned book to prove his existence. The unicorns, dragons, satyrs and cockatrices of the Bible have far less evidence for their existence than the sea-serpent.

We never came across an actual Christian, but we have heard of a boat being called one. It was an old screw ship named "The Druid," that plied between Cardiff and Bristol. When she got into cross currents she lay in the trough of the

sea and drifted helplessly. "Ah," the captain used to say to the eighteenpenny passengers, who fancied that, making no progress, they would never reach their journey's end, "she's a good Christian, and now she's praying." When drifted out of the current the screw began to act again, and the good Christian substituted work for prayer. Which things are an allegory.

The Pope has issued a new *pronunciamento* against Freemasonry, adhesion to which, he declares, is incompatible with Christianity. This will astonish most English Freemasons, who will take it as a sign of Papal ignorance or stupidity. And yet the Pope is quite in the right. Apart from all secret objects, any society proclaiming the brotherhood of man, distinct from all religion and creed, is incompatible with Christianity, which claims the exclusive monopoly of all divine truth.

But further than this, every Freemason who has reached to thirty degrees knows that all religions are only symbolical and none exclusively divine. It is because English Masons rarely advance high in their craft that they do not discover it is really the anti-Christian system the Pope knows it to be.

Our only "General" won't have anything to do with trustees outside the Salvation Army. If he has any colleagues he must be able to boss them.

A preacher of the Celestine Edwards race has rushed to notoriety in the States by preaching the destruction of Chicago during the time the World's Fair is in progress. If J. C. would also personally appear the other attractions of the show would have to hide their diminished heads.

The Rev. Mr. Shepherd, of Reading, says: "If the whole of the country were in favor of an Establishment with the exception of ten earnest men, the ten could offer a moral argument against the Establishment that no casuistry can resist." To this the Rev. G. S. Reaney, ex-Congregationalist and now Church of England minister, retorts that far more than ten earnest Atheists protest against religious teaching in Board schools, but the Rev. Mr. Shepherd pays no more heed to the conscientious minority than does Mr. Reaney.

At an inquest at Newington on the body of a man named Woods, who hanged himself in despair from want, it was stated in evidence that after paying the rent, the deceased, his foster daughter, and a child, had only sixpence a week to live upon. "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled" (Luke vi. 21).

From the *Leeds Mercury* we see that the fatalities on the ice up to Thursday in last week, were no less than 44. "He will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm xlviii. 14).

The *Catholic Directory* for 1893 gives no statistics by which we can adequately judge of the growth of Roman Catholicism in England. In the archbishopric of Westminster there are now 356 ministers to 129 places of worship. The average attendance at Catholic schools is stated to have nearly doubled since 1865.

Archdeacon Farrar and Dr. Lunn are organising a personally conducted sky-pilots' pilgrimage to the Holy Land, intended to "cover all the most important centres of Christian history." Perhaps they may discover the actual spot where their head pilot levitated through the clouds up to the right hand of the Infinite. The *St. James's Gazette* suggests they would do well to commence their tour by a visit to the Haymarket to see *Hyppatia*.

"Well, my son, what did you learn at Sunday-school today?" asked Johnny's mamma. "O mamma! sich lots of things the teacher told us. She told us about a man who preached so long the people went to sleep, and one of them fell out of the window and broke his neck, and they went and gathered up the fragments, and they were twelve baskets full! and—and—they fed 'em to a herd of swine that ran violently—that ran away!"

Tolstoi says marriage is a sin. Let this idea generally obtain and we expect to see a tremendous boom in the matrimonial market.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 15, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :- 11.15, "General Booth as a Social Savior"; at 7, "Our Father which art in Heaven."

January 22, Hall of Science; 29, Bristol; 30, Bath.

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. — January 15, Birmingham; 22, Birmingham; 28, Chester-le-Street; 29, South Shields; 30, North Shields; 31, Ebchester. Feb. 2, Hetton-le-Hole; 3, Blyth; 4, Bolden Colliery; 5, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 12, Liverpool; 19, Leicester; 26, Birmingham; 28, Sheffield. March 1, 2, 3, Sheffield; 5, Birmingham; 12, Hall of Science; 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.

L. HEWITT. — It is all right. "Not negotiable" is a piece of nonsense put at the top of the new Postal Orders to perplex the people.

A. WHEELER. — See "Sugar Plums."

W. SIMONS. — Pleased to hear that the notices have brought new members to the Balls Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society. Your sixth annual balance-sheet looks a healthy document.

F. RYAN. — Glad to hear you think Shilling Week "a very happy idea," and still more glad to find a good many others are of the same opinion.

W. HYDE. — Our "gallant little paper," as you call it, though it isn't so very little now, you know, is happy in having so many staunch friends.

A. W. FREER. — The twopenny number once a month will, of course, make a considerable difference to us, and very little to the readers. Glad to know you find our double number good for propagandist purposes.

M. BENWELL. — Yes, the cause is right, and a little more loyalty and generosity on the part of the rank and file would enable the leaders to make it very much more successful.

A. KNIGHT. — Thanks for your good wishes.

M. STITT. — Mr. Robinson says you consider Shilling Week a capital idea, and hope we shall do something in the same way at midsummer for the Benevolent Fund. We shall see.

J. WHITE. — Mr. Foote has already accepted a Freethinker's hospitality at Bristol on Jan. 29.

L. PARKES. — As we only appeal to a limited section of the public we cannot give as much matter as the ordinary newspapers. Still, as you say, a good story would be attractive to many, and something should be done, as soon as possible, for children.

SMALLWOOD. — We are not likely to alter our policy in the *Freethinker*.

E. BELCHER. — The Secretary will send your member's card.

J. KENNEDY. — (1) We are not going to issue a double number once a month. That would give us extra work and leave us financially where we are. We are going to issue a special twopenny number the first week in every month. It will be always illustrated, printed on good paper, and made specially interesting, but it will only be sixteen pages. At midsummer and Christmas we shall probably try a double number again. (2) What you say as to the portrait is perhaps right.

C. W. POTTER. — We have read your letter with interest.

T. ROY. — Glad to hear from you again.

W. CALDER. — We reciprocate your good wishes.

R. H. UFFERN. — Glad to hear the *Freethinker* is your "Thursday evening's delight," and that you were specially pleased with our reply to Mr. Blomfield.

F. EDWARDS. — Mr. Watts will value your appreciation of his articles. Mr. Forder can still supply copies of the Double Number.

T. A. PARKIN. — Your experience with the newsagent is encouraging. The sale of this journal can always be greatly increased if the vendors will do it justice. We beg our friends to put pressure on their newsagents, getting them to take extra copies for show and sale, and if possible to exhibit a contents-sheet.

F. LESTER says our Double Number was worth sixpence; he bought six copies and gave away five.

J. C. GOODFELLOW says the *N.S.S. Almanack* is "a splendid article for sixpence." This correspondent will send a copy of his "Border Biographies" to any of our readers who send address on a postcard. Address—63 High-street, Hawick.

S. OSWIN. — Pleased to hear from such an old Freethinker. Mr. Holyoake's portrait—a good one, finely executed—will appear in our issue for February 5.

O. R. CATER. — Glad to hear you intend to take a share in the National Secular Hall Society. We hope a great many Secularists will do so during the next three months.

H. SMITH. — The Secular party has subscribed a good deal of money during the last two years.

C. B. HYDE. — Amount is acknowledged elsewhere. Thanks for good wishes.

A. S. F. — What we have in common is greater than our difference.

T. R. (Leicester). — It was £100,000 that Booth raised for his "Darkest England" scheme.

M. WARREN. — *The Jewish Life of Christ*, edited by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler, is published at sixpence. Send that amount to R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

M. WEATHERBURN. — Very pleased to have your approval and support in this matter.

G. BRADY. — We hope your good wishes will be realised. Is there any chance for Freethought lectures at Perth?

EGYPT. — Will write you shortly. The Portsmouth affair was a fizzle. No matter. If it was a game of brag we have out-bragged them.

M. A. BRISTOW. — Thanks. The Holyoake portrait will be accompanied with a long notice of the veteran's Autobiography.

J. WILLEY. — Your letter has given us much pleasure. It is good to hear that, though you are now 75, the last ten years of your life have been the happiest, in consequence of Freethought; and especially good for us to know that the *Freethinker* has contributed to this result.

DR. MORTIMER. — Always glad to see your handwriting.

J. THOMSON (Renfrew) — Sorry to hear of Mr. Glen's death; so is Mr. Forder.

BELGRAVIAN FOOTMAN. — A brave letter.

A. SLADE. — Your communications are very welcome.

J. CLEGG. — Rochdale has done well for Shilling Week.

J. JORDAN. — Your appreciation is encouraging.

J. GRAHAM. — Mr. Foote will give Wigan a date as soon as possible. Things will be better when we have two Sundays a week.

W. ROGERS. — Yes, it is well to be discreet when the bigots are so numerous and malignant.

J. TOMKINS. — We value your sympathy.

G. JACOB. — We hope to continue what you are pleased to call our "untiring exertions for truth and common sense."

J. WILKINSON. — Routledge's edition of Shelley, edited by W. Rossetti, price 3s. 6d., is the best in a cheap form. The prose works are separate. Shepherd's edition in two vols. is the only one for moderate purses.

QUIZ. — Delighted to hear that you like our Double Number "immensely" and have taken seven copies for distribution.

J. GARVEN. — We hope to give a really good cartoon now and then in the twopenny special.

E. PARKER. — Space is limited this week. We hope Mr. Jones will have a good meeting at West Ham.

D. LAW. — Placing this journal on the table of reading rooms is an excellent service.

D. FYFE. — Your wish of "a hard-fighting new year" just suits us.

W. HARGREAVES. — Our compliments to the whole family.

S. SMALL. — Mr. Foote is taking all possible care of his health. Work must be done.

J. THOMPSON. — Glad to hear the three copies you take weekly are well read by your orthodox friends.

SYMPATHISER. — It is difficult to change the name of a journal. Besides, if some are repelled by a title, others are attracted; and one gets to love an old flag one has long been fighting under.

T. BULLOCK. — Age does bring confirmation of real convictions.

E. BARREYATT. — The Secular party is sound enough, though, like other parties, it wants rousing occasionally.

J. H. LEE. — Proud to have a kind word from an old friend of Charles Southwell.

J. H. MORRIS. — A good story for Freethinking readers is not so easily obtainable.

D. CAMPBELL. — Glad to hear you say this journal is worth double its present price. Once a month our readers will have an opportunity of proving they share your opinion.

N. B. BILLANY. — A letter from you is like "the smack of the hand of a gallant fellow."

J. P. SILKSTONE. — As you see, we have extended the time, at the risk of the editor's funeral.

E. S. II. — The personalities of the paper you mention will do us no harm with thinking people. The rest may go to the place which Professor Mivart says is happy.

J. HORNE (Barrowford). — Delighted to hear you have returned three out of seven School Board members on the Secular ticket. This is the work that tells. Sorry we cannot give you the information you want.

J. PARTRIDGE. — Thanks for Birmingham list. Mr. Foote will offer you an early date.

E. COLVILLE. — If you cannot get a larger hall Mr. Foote will lecture in the room you have sooner than not lecture at all at West Ham.

W. H. MORRISH. — All right. Letter shortly.

E. PONAT. — Mr. Blomfield has not replied, so far as we are aware.

C. SHELDON. — Lending your copy of the *Freethinker* to so many friends is good propagandist work.

R. TURNBULL.—Our compliments to your household.
 R. O. SMITH sends us a list of London Secular Federation dinner subscriptions, which will appear in our next.
 J. PRICE.—Cheery letters like yours show us the good we are doing.
 J. W. OSBORNE.—Thanks for your offer, but we think there is no difficulty in obtaining this journal in Portsmouth at present.
 W. HALLEY.—The Freethought movement is extending in Scotland, and we hope it will reach Perth. Our compliments to your three friends.
 J. UMPLEBY.—Very much pleased to hear from you. Your daughter's member's card shall be forwarded.
 W. B. THOMPSON.—Our thanks to Chatham friends. Glad to find that, with their own burden, they have an eye for the outside world.
 AGNOSTIC.—Acknowledged in general list. Hope to see you in good health. Notice next week.
 L. MILNE.—Glad to hear you have joined the Bristol Branch in response to our appeal. We want to strengthen the Branches everywhere.
 W. M. KNOX.—Thanks for Belfast list for Shilling Week. Under consideration.
 J. WARD.—A good many names and addresses of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker* are given in the *N.S.S. Almanack*, in the list of Branches.
 C. WOOLLEN.—Like yourself, we should be pleased to see a little more activity in Sheffield. It is a large field inadequately worked.
 G. FISH.—Many thanks.
 A QUANTITY of correspondence stands over till next week in consequence of sheer want of space.
 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—Reading Observer—Fur Unsere Jugend—Clarion—Thanet Advertiser—Western Figaro—La Piqueta del Libro Pensamiento—Liberator—Phonetic Journal—Yarmouth Mercury—La Vérité Philosophique—Catholic Times—Tyneside Weekly Notes and Programme—Liberty.
 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, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

SHILLING WEEK.

It is impossible to print all the subscriptions to Shilling Week in this number of the *Freethinker*. A long list must stand over till next week, and in the circumstances I have resolved to keep the fund open till next Tuesday. Several subscribers have said it ought to be Shilling Month, as a single week hardly allows time for all to send who would like to. Others say it is the wrong time of the year, the weather being very cold and trade slack. All this will be borne in mind for the future. Whether it be Shilling Week or Shilling Month, the idea is heartily welcomed, and a great many hope it will be an annual institution—as it should be.

My share of the work has been rather trying. I have been kept occupied from two to three hours per day, and my ordinary work has fallen into arrear. Most of the subscribers have written letters, and it seemed uncivil not to read them; besides, it is pleasant, and perhaps useful, to get into contact with one's readers in all parts of the country.

Great as is the number of subscribers to Shilling Week, it is after all a mere percentage of the readers of the *Freethinker*. A great many more may be glad of the opportunity of sending in their mites (or more) now they see the idea has "caught on." This opportunity will be afforded them. All who intend to subscribe—and their name should be legion—are requested to forward their cheques or postal orders by next Tuesday. Those who cannot spare anything—and in these times too many

are in that position—are not pressed, [except to keep the little they have for themselves; but the rest should rise to the occasion, and the poorest, not in actual distress, can surely send a shilling. I hope to pay over to Mr. Reynolds, the N.S.S. treasurer, a sum of money that will give fresh life to Secular propaganda during the rest of the winter season.

For the guidance of subscribers it is repeated that the fund is divided as follows:—two-thirds to the National Secular Society, and one-third to the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund. Those who wish the whole of their subscription to go to either fund, or to be divided in any other way, can say so, and their wishes will be carried out.

All remittances should be sent to me at 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. Postal orders, as well as cheques, should be crossed for safety; that is, two parallel lines should be drawn across the order, about an inch apart from each other.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (Jan. 15). The morning address is on "General Booth as a Social Savior"—admission free. The evening lecture is a new one on "Our Father which art in Heaven."

Mr. Foote lectured on Sunday at Leicester. The weather was—well, we would rather not supply the adjective. Owing to the condition of the streets the Secular Hall was only about half full in the afternoon; but it was crowded in the evening, and the audience was enthusiastic. Mr. Sydney Gimson presided on both occasions. We are proud to see him following in the steps of his noble and remarkable father, who did more than anyone else to give Secularism its high standing in Leicester.

The Secular Society at Leicester has raised its fund of £500 to cover the period from 1893 to 1898. This year is the last of the ten during which Mr. Josiah Gimson's legacy is available, and the Society has to make good the £100 per annum from that source. We are also pleased to record that the Hall Company's shares (£5) fetch £6 in the market.

There was no discussion after Mr. Foote's lectures, but several friends took the opportunity of handing up subscriptions for Shilling Week, which shows that the N.S.S. has friends there.

The wretched weather in London last Sunday did not prevent a capital audience assembling in the evening at the Hall of Science, where Mr. Charles Watts lectured upon "The Two Great Lights: Science and Christ." The meeting was very enthusiastic throughout, and at its close the applause was repeated again and again. Mr. Watts made another appeal on behalf of the "Shilling Week," which resulted in 135 shillings being subscribed in the hall.

The Marquis of Queensberry presided for Mr. Watts, and met with a most enthusiastic reception. He made a neat little speech, in which he avowed his intention to work actively in future in the interest of Freethought. Previous to the lecture, Mrs. Charles Watts gave a recital which was warmly encored. This Sunday (Jan. 15) Mr. Watts lectures morning and evening at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham.

The Marquis of Queensberry's statement that when in the House of Lords he used to place the *Freethinker* on the bench of bishops, deserves place in a chronicle of Freethought. Our paper gets into strange quarters. We regularly run the gauntlet of the Russian censorship, but the bench of bishops in the House of Lords is the last place we should have suspected. Perhaps some of the right reverend fathers in God concealed the paper under their lawn sleeves and took it home for a quiet read with their evening cigar. One never knows.

The London Secular Federation's fifth annual dinner took place at the Hall of Science on Wednesday, Jan. 4, and there was a good attendance. The service of the dinner proved

that it is impossible to cater properly in a building without kitchens. Next year the Federation will have to go to an hotel again. After dinner Mr. Foote, who took the chair as president, gave a brief account of the Federation's work in 1892; its courses of free propagandist lectures in London, its aid to the Branches, and its social efforts, including the summer excursion and the children's party. Unfortunately there was still a deficit to be faced, and he earnestly appealed to the generosity of all present, and even of those who were absent. London offered a magnificent field for Secular effort if only the means were adequate to the task.

After dinner speeches were delivered by Messrs. C. Watts, J. M. Wheeler, G. Standing, R. Forder, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, H. Snell, S. Standing, and Miss Vance. Mr. Touzeau Parris was unfortunately too unwell to be present. Mrs. Charles Watts gave a spirited reading from the *Freethinker*, and songs were rendered by Miss Nightingale and the Messrs. Harding. During the evening the subscription cards were filled in for a fair amount, and about £10 was paid on the spot to the Treasurer.

About 160 friends sat down to the "Federation Tea" in the hall of the Camberwell Branch last Sunday. And an excellent tea it was (writes one who was very much there). A varied entertainment followed. Messrs. Cornish, Hyatt, and other musical friends played or sang; a dramatic company, consisting of Mrs. Jones, Miss Vance, Miss Brown, and Messrs. G. Ward and Pack, gave a scene from the *Colleen Bawn* in admirable style; and for the rest there was much dancing. Many friends were present from other Branches, and a most enjoyable evening was spent. There is every prospect, too, of a welcome addition to the Secular Federation funds as one result of the gathering.

Prince Kropotkin, or Citizen Kropotkin, lectures this evening (Jan. 15) at 6 on Siberia. This is a subject on which he is an authority, and one which is of tragic interest to all lovers of freedom. Mr. Walter Crane will preside, and the proceeds will go towards the establishment of a Workmen's Educational Club. Fuller details will be found in our advertisement columns.

The Finsbury Branch holds a smoking concert at the Hall of Science on Saturday, Feb. 4, at which Mr. George Standing is to preside. The tickets are sixpence, and the proceeds will go to the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund.

London Freethinkers are reminded that the Wednesday evening free lectures are still given at the Hall of Science. Next Wednesday (Jan. 18) Mr. Stanley Jones occupies the platform.

Mr. Charles Watts resolved to get £10 at the London Hall of Science for Shilling Week. He has done more, the amount subscribed on the two Sunday evenings being nearly £12. Mr. Watts and the Hall of Science both come out well in this friendly competition for the benefit of the cause.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures for the Battersea Branch this evening (January 15). Before the lecture he will give a dramatic recital.

Mr. S. M. Peacock reports that the balance-sheet of the annual soirée of the South Shields Branch (in charge of Captain Thomson) was so satisfactory that, in addition to making up a deficiency on Mr. Jones's last lecturing visit, the Society, with a little assistance from individual members, decided to present £1 10s. to the head mistresses of the Board schools in the poorest localities for distribution as they consider best.

The Tyneside Sunday Society's *Weekly Notes and Programme*, noticing the new opening of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, for Sunday musical performances and the recent incident at Portsmouth, remarks: "Mr. G. W. Foote, however, has taken up the challenge of those who would make hypocrites of all whom they cannot convert. He delivered three lectures in the hall last Sunday. Bravo Foote! May Portsmouth follow Liverpool to victory!"

La Vérité Philosophique, of Paris, conducted by M. Cilwa, commences well with the new year. It is frankly atheistic,

and we trust will aid in the work of uniting French Freethinkers.

Mr. George Jacob Holyoake has been unanimously elected by the general committee of the National Liberal Club as an honorary member. The nomination was originally made by Mr. John Morley and Mr. W. S. Caine in 1886, but owing to inadvertence was not proceeded with. The election has now been made on the motion of Mr. Manfield, M.P., and Mr. J. Frederick Green. The names of the nominators included those of Mr. Arnold Morley, M.P., Mr. Herbert Gladstone, M.P., Mr. Schnadhorst, Mr. Spencer Watson, LL.D., Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, Mr. Percy W. Bunting, Mr. T. W. Rhys Davids, LL.D., Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, M.P., Mr. W. A. Hunter, M.P., and twelve others. Ten names only were sufficient to sustain the proposal. Mr. Holyoake is the first honorary member elected who was not a member of Parliament. They, including Mr. Gladstone, are but six in number.

The *Catholic Times*, noticing Mr. F. Harrison's annual address, says: "Unbelief claims for its own a large number, perhaps a majority, of scientific men and men of letters. Many of our novels (which form the chief mental food of the bulk of the middle classes) are text-books of Atheism."

We are pleased to note that since Mr. Symes' recent visit to Adelaide they are having regular weekly Freethought meetings in that city.

We have received from Barcelona *La Piqueta del Libre Pensamiento*, a new organ of Freethought conducted by Don E. Moreno Acosta, who drives his lance into Jesuitism, priestly celibacy, and Christian humbug generally.

Mr. F. W. Myers, in the current *Nineteenth Century*, regards Swinburne and William Morris as two poets who have put away from them the idea of a spiritual world, and feed their poetical natures only with what material man's natural nobility can minister to it. True, Mr. Myers; yet what splendid work these poets turn out, without the assistance of spooks or gods.

The Finsbury Branch sends us a copy of its 1892 balance sheet. This is one of the poor Branches, and its good work, especially in open-air propaganda, is done with slender resources. The expenditure side of the account shows severe economy. The sum of 12s. is down for the travelling expenses of the delegate to the Newcastle Conference, who must really have gone as luggage. There is an item of £1 5s. 6d. due to the treasurer, who is a working man. His name and address are, A. Wheeler, 21 Coburg-street, Clerkenwell, E.C. Perhaps a well-to-do Freethinker will send him the amount, so that the Branch may at least begin the new financial year without encumbrance.

The Manchester Branch has arranged for four Sunday courses of lectures by Mr. J. M. Robertson, beginning next Sunday (Jan. 22). Detailed announcement will be made in due course. This is part of a special propagandist effort on the part of the Branch, which is at present in a good financial position.

Yarmouth Secularists and Socialists, at a special meeting, have elected Messrs. A. Stanley and J. M. Headley as their candidates at the approaching School Board elections. We hope both gentlemen will be well supported by the local progressists.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (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.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of the monthly Executive meeting, held at the Hall of Science, Thursday, Jan. 5, 1893. The President in the chair. Present: Messrs. Charles Watts, S. Hartmann, R. O. Smith, G. Standring, J. M. Wheeler, J. E. Brumage, G. J. Warren, C. J. Hunt, E. Bater, J. Potter, T. Gorniot, J. Fisher, W. Heard, C. W. Martin, Mrs. Thornton Smith, and E. M. Vance, Sec.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed; minutes of Organisation Committee being read, a lengthy discussion arose with respect to the proposed Islington Branch. The committee thought such a Branch should not be formed, chiefly in consequence of the protest of the N. W. London Branch and the previous attempts in that part of London. Messrs. Watts, Wheeler, Gorniot, Smith, Hartmann, and Hunt took part in the discussion; and eventually a compromise was accepted (the Organisation Committee agreeing), namely, that the Islington Branch be formed, but the Executive should express its strong disapproval of Sunday evening lectures at Wellington Hall in the present state of things.

The Camberwell Branch's letter was read on the subject of the Portsmouth case, expressing sympathy and promising support if necessary. On this matter the President reported the result of his visit to Portsmouth. The President also reported that the Special Fund started in October had realised over £30; the Shilling Week also promised to be a success. He hoped it would realise a welcome addition to the Society's exchequer. Some small matters of business having been transacted, the Executive adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, Asst. Sec.

[Owing to the President's absence from London, a mishap occurred to the report of the November Executive meeting, the principal item in which was the receipt of letters from Glasgow, Portsmouth and Sunderland, re the disposition of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund. Upon this the Executive could only regret that the three Branches in question did not agree with its policy.—E. M. V.]

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO N.S.S.

SPECIAL FUND.—J. Hart, 5s.; D. McIntosh, 3s.; G. Lupton, £1; A. G. Lupton, 2s. 6d.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—J. Unsworth, 2s. 6d.; S. Hartmann, 10s.; G. Harlow, 2s. 6d. E. M. VANCE, Asst. Sec.

THE HERETICAL MARQUIS.

LORD QUEENSBERRY'S EXPLANATION OF HIS EXCLUSION FROM THE LORDS.

THE Marquis of Queensberry, as most people know, is a somewhat remarkable nobleman. It is not so many years since he rose in the Globe Theatre and publicly protested against the portrait of the bold, bad Agnostic which appeared in Tennyson's "Promise of May." His fellows have refused to elect him a Scotch representative peer because of his heretical opinions, though there are some who have contended that his authorship of the rules of the prize-ring bearing his name should *ipso facto* entitle him to a seat in that house which is already adorned by Lord Ailesbury and Lord Lonsdale. But the secret of his exclusion came out at the Hall of Science, in Old-street, last night—it was his propaganda carried on under the very shadow of the Wool-sack. The Marquis presided at a lecture by Mr. Charles Watts, of Birmingham, and there was a crowded audience. His lordship doesn't look his part. The janitor at Exeter Hall would unhesitatingly pass him in "on his face," as they say in the sinful theatres, to the most secret and exclusive conclave of Evangelicals. Tall and slim, in a tightly-buttoned frock-coat, with a white cravat and severe features, he reminded a *Leader* representative of Brough's "Earl of Whitechokerlea." Explaining that this was the first time he had occupied that platform, he said such gatherings caused

A GLOW OF SYMPATHY

to pervade his whole being. At this the democratic folk present cheered lustily. He took a warm interest in that movement, and at the commencement of a new year they might congratulate themselves upon their position. They were steadily advancing, and winning victories all along the line. Eighteen years ago, while still sitting in the House of Lords, he used to be very fond of distributing Secularist literature about the House. He would leave *Agnostic Journals* and *Freethinkers* in the ante-room, and even in the seats

where the bishops used to sit. (The audience laughed uproariously when they heard how the marquis thus sowed tares in the bishops' own field.) He remembered sending a pamphlet of his own, entitled *The Religion of Secularism and the Advancement of Humanity*, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, with this message: "From one who hopes to be found some day foremost in the van fighting to the death against all ignorance and superstition." He had always felt that that had something to do with his exclusion from the House of Lords, for the bishops were very powerful people.

Everybody applauded the story of the marquis's little propaganda in high places, and then the chairman referred to the recent controversy on "happiness in hell" as one between two Christian gentlemen on a mythical abode of horror. They might congratulate themselves that they did not believe in it, and that Nature had sufficient power to punish those who transgressed her laws in this world. Mr. Watts's lecture was a reply to an address by the Bishop of Worcester, and was warmly applauded at many points.—*Morning Leader*.

SHILLING WEEK.

(When no figures follow the name the amount is 1s.)

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The dominion of priests is most odious to a liberal spirit.—*Gibbon*.

Give error the same chance that truth has, and truth the same chance that error has, to be heard, and let the people decide which they want. Hands off! Let us have a fair field and a free fight, and let the ideas which the people like best win!—*Twentieth Century*.

When men respect human life for the sake of man, tranquility, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God had forbidden murder have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire.—*Professor W. K. Clifford*.

OBITUARY.

On Tuesday last the remains of the much-respected wife of our president, Mr. Tappin, were buried at Chingford Mount Cemetery. She died as she lived, a Freethinker, and approached the end without any fear. Mr. C. Cohen gave a few well-chosen and impressive words at the grave, amongst numerous friends. The Bethnal Green Branch, to which Mrs. Tappin belonged, was represented by eight of its members.—*JAS. NEATE*.

A TALE OF PIETY.

On Sundays little William went
Unto his Sabbath-school;
He learned his lessons every week,
And never broke the rule.

He kept that up until at length,
When he had older grown,
He knew enough to take and teach
A class all of his own.

Behold what good may come to those
Who lead a pious life,
And mingle but with righteous men—
Abjuring sin and strife.

The president of that same bank
Where William was a clerk
Beheld with joy his interest
In doing Christian work.

"Of such a very pious man
There surely is no fear."
So said the president, who then
Made William his cashier.

Now William lives in luxury
Somewhere in Montreal;
Securely fixed with this world's goods,
Whatever may befall.

And to his children, when they come
And cluster round his knee,
He says, Be good, for just see what
The gospel did for me."

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): 7.30, A. B. Moss, "The Doom of the Gods," preceded by a dramatic recital (2d. and 4d.); social after the lecture. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 11.15, debating class; 7.30, H. Snell will lecture (free). Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class on "Spencer's Ethics." Thursday at 8.30 open discussion (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11, debating class, Andrew Little, "Is Theism Reasonable?"; 7.30, B. Hyatt, "I go a Fishing"; preceded by a dramatic recital from *Macbeth*.

East London—Tower Hamlets Radical Association, 18 Durham-row, Stepney: 11.30, annual meeting.

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, Lucretius Keen, "What is Life?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "General Booth as a Social Savior" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Our Father which art in Heaven" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, Stanley Jones will lecture (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, Touzeau Parris, "Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and the Christian Churches Demonstrated Failures."

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, Herbert Burrows, "Occultism, Materialism, and Science" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

West Ham—33 High-street, Plaistow: Saturday, Jan. 14, at 7.30, Stanley Jones, "Has Man a Soul?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "After Death—What?"

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): Stanley Jones, 11.30, "Has Man a Soul?"; 3, a lecture.

COUNTRY.

Belfast—Crown Chambers, 64 Royal-avenue: 7, W. Walker, "Wanted a Christian."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Charles Watts, 11, "The Old and the New Year"; 7, "Happiness in Hell, and Misery in Heaven."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, John Grange, "Christ and Labor; or Why do Men Starve?"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 2.30, Mr. Apsey, "Was Christ Historical?"

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, reading and debating union; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, J. J. Taylor will lecture.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 2.30, J. D. Crawford, M.A., "Devils and Hells"; 6.30, dramatic and musical recital by J. D. Crawford, and solos by a Lady Vocalist.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, T. Charlton, "Humanity's Debt to Thomas Paine."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Booth, "Is Christianity an Influence for Good or Evil?"

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': James Hooper, 3, "Thomas Paine: his Life and Death"; 6.30, "Our Heretical Poets."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, G. Selkirk, "Liberty."
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, Mr. Charlesworth, "Charity and its Administrators."
 Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.
 Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: C. Cohen, 11, "Evolution v. Special Creation"; 3, "Christianity and Morality"; 7, "What the Universe Teaches."
 Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: Sam Standring, 3.15, "The Great Lockout"; 6.30, "Elijah and Baal."
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 3, members' annual meeting, tea at 5; 7, a lecture or reading.
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7.30, T. Thompson "Recollections of an Old Freethinker."
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: Abel Andrew, 11, "The Bible of the Future"; 3, "The Humanity of the Gods"; 7, "Pure Food, Pure Thoughts; or What is a Vegetarian?" Free.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Jan. 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. 15, Battersea; 22, Leicester. Feb. 26, Camberwell.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Jan. 15, Portsmouth; 22, Hull; 23, Beverley; 25, Hall of Science; 29, Chatham. Feb. 4, Birmingham; 5, m. and e., Birmingham; a., Wolverhampton; 12, m., Battersea; e., Libra Hall; 19 and 26, Edmonton. March 5, Libra Hall; 12, Manchester; 19, Edmonton; 26, Camberwell.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Jan. 14 Plaistow Green; 15, Hyde Park; 18, Hall of Science. Feb. 5, Hall of Science; 8 and 9, Liverpool; 19, 20, 21, Manchester. March 5, Sheffield; 10, Beverley; 13 and 14, Hull.

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

J. GREEVZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Jan. 15, Shipley. Feb. 12, Bradford.

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

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