

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE DEVIL INTERVIEWED.

II.

PROFITING by our subordinate's failure, we looked about for a fresh plan of raising the Devil. We first thought of seeking Mrs. Besant's assistance, but she was in America. We next thought of Mr. W. T. Stead, who has lately been practising occultism, so that his hand and pen are now at the service of "spirits." On second thoughts, however, we considered Mr. Stead too flighty for our purpose. Next we turned to Dr. Parker, but he is trying to get "tips" from the Holy Ghost, and could hardly help us to get "tips" from Satan. There remained the Archbishop of Canterbury, but we felt it would be difficult to gain access to a gentleman so surrounded with flunkeys.

The only resource was to do our own level best, so we took down some gruesome books from our library shelves for consultation. Defoe's "History of the Devil" and his book on "Apparitions" gave us no practical suggestions. He tells of several persons who raised the Devil, but he does not say how they did it, which was precisely what we wanted to know. Mr. Conway's "Demonology" was just as useless. The reverend Robert Taylor's shocking sermons were also unserviceable. Sir Walter Scott was no use either. Then we turned to volumes on Witchcraft, and especially to the trials of witches. Some of the stories made our flesh creep, some made our blood boil, but none of them gave us the faintest hint on the way to interview the Monarch of Hell.

Our next step was to send for a shilling's worth of rum. This we poured into a dish, and placed it on our library table. Around it we piled a lot of the wickedest books, reeking with scepticism and blasphemy; on the top of which we laid the most diabolical sketches we could find in old numbers of the *Freethinker*. The gas was then turned down to a mere bead of light, and we set fire to the rum, which burned with a blue, mysterious, flickering flame, calculated to attract the Devil if he happened to be looking through the window or peeping through the key-hole.

While the rum burned bluely we invoked the Devil in the following devilish rhymes:—

By the sacred number seven,
By thine awful fall from heaven,
By thy doom in fire to dwell,
By the smoke and stench of hell,
By thy escapade with Adam,
By thy tempting of his Madam,
By thy tricks with Mr. Job,
By his leprous-skinny robe,
By thy pantomime with Jesus,
By thy home, where nought will freeze us,
By all that makes us flinch and fear,
I charge thee Nicholas appear.

This is only a summary of our invocation; the rhymes were more numerous, and perhaps a good
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deal worse—though some will say it is impossible. We did not exactly *compose* them; we made them up as we went along; they were "Improvisations of the Spirit." Anyhow they had no effect. For some reason the Devil would not appear. Maybe he couldn't stand the company of such a wretched poet.

Then we cried out in a loud and lamentable voice, which frightened a couple of cats courting on the top of the cistern—"O Nicholas, most potent, grave and reverend Satan, Prince of this World and King of Hades, thy old friend the editor of the *Freethinker* would see thee, shake hands, and rub noses. Come, oh come, and do not let his blue fire flame in vain."

That fetched him. All of a sudden, in less than the twinkling of an eye, he stood upon the little mat in front of the fire. He had neither horns, hooves, nor tail; at least we were unable to perceive them. His figure was stalwart, his face handsome, his brow majestic. Not a parson in England, not even the distinguished-looking Archbishop of Canterbury, is fit to hold a candle to him. He would set the ladies by the ears. No wonder he triumphed over the piety of Mrs. Eve.

Naturally we were not frightened; on the contrary, we were quite fascinated. We felt quite at home with that fine personage, who looked at us with such affability.

"Good evening, Foote," he said, in a voice that would strike envy into the souls of Parker, Moody, Canon Holland, and Hugh Price Hughes.

"Good evening, sir," we replied, "it is rather cold; how do you like this weather?"

"Not at all," he said, "I am used to a warmer climate." And the smile on his face was worthy of Voltaire.

"Take a cigar," we said, offering him the relics of a Christmas box.

"Thanks," he replied, "I'm used to smoke."

"Anything to drink?" we queried.

"Thanks; a tumbler of water. You hardly keep champagne, and spirit is too inflammatory; at least, I find it so when I get home." And he smiled again.

We were soon seated, Satan and I, facing each other at the fireside. For a few minutes we smoked silently, taking a good look at our visitor, and the more we looked at him the better we liked him.

Rousing ourself, we asked, "Have you long to stay? for there is much to talk about."

"No hurry," he said, "I can give you an hour; but first I'll take a look at your books."

The gas had long been turned up, and our visitor walked round looking at the crowded shelves, and occasionally taking down a book to look inside. Presently he walked to the table and glanced at the old *Freethinkers*. Catching sight of his own caricature, he observed, "I see you were not very flattering." This was said with the utmost good-humor. "But," he continued, "I see my rival, Jehovah, is not flattered either, and his precious son is just as unfortunate."

Satan turned over a number of Ingersoll's lectures. "What a fine fellow," he exclaimed; "a man after my own heart. You remember that David was a man after Jehovah's." And both of us laughed loudly.

"Seriously though," said Satan, "I admire the Colonel. He is doing a splendid work in America. Jehovah writhes over his *Mistakes of Moses*. I have often occupied a seat at the Colonel's lectures; and being so different, as you see, from the popular conception of me, I was never suspected by the audience."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

PROVIDENCE.

"Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."—1 KINGS XVIII. 27.

ALTHOUGH people continue to pray "Give us this day our daily bread," they have for the most part ceased to believe in any other providence than that supplied by humanity itself. This means that they are practical Atheists. Despite the odium still attaching to the name, this is the fact. Thousands who would repudiate the term with indignation have, in fact, ceased to expect any manifestation of providence in daily life. A God who "does nothing," as Carlyle sadly confessed was the case, is not worth his worship. The only God any sane mortal cares about is the alleged Father in heaven, who answers prayer and provides for human wants. Any other deity is a mere abstraction of no more importance to every-day people than the theory of a fourth dimension. If there is no such Father in heaven; or if he is, as appearances indicate, deaf, dumb, blind, asleep, or paralysed, man has only to rely on his own thought and action. All religion is vain.

The Bible is full of instances of special providence. It is, from beginning to end, miraculous. God's watchful care is exhibited for his one chosen race. For them he fights as well as legislates. He hurls stones from heaven at their enemies, and even stays the course of the sun and the moon that they may be slaughtered wholesale. Jesus says that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the eye of providence. But they fall all the same and perish wholesale in winter. Has God retired from business?

All the early Christians believed that God manifested his presence in their favor. Lactantius is full of the most wonderful fables concerning the dreadful deaths of all who persecuted the early Christians. Eusebius is weak or wicked enough to declare that when Cerinthus the heretic was bathing, the roof providentially fell down and crushed him. And this arraying of God against one's own enemies has been kept up during the whole history of Christianity. Each of contending armies has prayed before entering into battle, confident that God was on its side. In the reign of James I. a dreadful accident happened known as the fatal vespus. A celebrated Jesuit preacher, Father Drury, gave a sermon to a large audience, in a room up three pair of stairs, near Apothecaries' Hall. In the midst of the discourse the floor fell, and ninety-four persons besides the preacher perished. The Protestants considered the accident as a judgment on the Catholics for their idolatry; the Catholics attributed the accident to a plot of the Protestants, to bring destruction on their dissenting brethren.

J. S. Mill speaks of the sense of being a co-operator with God as one of the consoling beauties of Theism. To me it seems impiety masking in the guise of religion. For how can we pretend to know what the purposes of God are? Jack the Ripper may think he is co-operating with him in putting unfortunates out of existence. Tyrants and villains have always

pleaded the will of God as the sanction of their wrong-doing. The only safe course in life is to set aside the conjectural and attend to the demonstrable needs of human welfare.

Voltaire was once in company with a pious old lady, when a violent thunder-storm came on. She fell to her genuflexions, and screamed out that it was on account of his impiety that she was put in this peril; and that she had no doubt the house that contained *him* would be dashed to pieces on their heads. Voltaire, after some compassionate pleasantries, at length lost his patience, and said, "Sachez, madame, que j'ai dit plus de bien de Dieu dans un seul des vers, que vous n'en penserez de votre vie" ("Know, madam, I have said more good of God in one of my verses than you have thought in your whole life.")

This old lady's accounting for thunder and lightning, beyond natural causes, reminds us of the anecdote of the Jew, who was enjoying a repast of ham for the first time; when, lo! a tremendous clap of thunder made him drop his knife and fork, while he exclaimed, 'Ma conchence, vat a fush is here about a tiny bit of pork!'

Absurd as such superstition may seem, it is nevertheless a legitimate outcome of Theism. If people believe in a God, they must put him to some use, and they can only endow him with their own thoughts and sentiments, for the sufficient reason they have none other to bestow. Providence at bottom only means what man would like to provide. To trust in providence instead of providing for oneself is the height of improvidence. J. M. WHEELER.

DO ANIMALS REASON?

Mr. Allen Pringle has returned to this topic in the *Popular Science Monthly*. I should think a sufficient answer was given by any dog who, seizing a stick by the end, shifts it to the centre of gravity in his mouth to carry it the easier. Mr. Pringle, however, gives several anecdotes which may be interesting to lovers of soulless creatures. One is the well-known one of the Newfoundland, who, when an imbecile person threw a child in the water, repeatedly got it out till, seeing the child was exhausted, it forcibly restrained the superior animal from committing a crime. Another is of a dog who, seeing his master's son fallen in the water, seized it and kept its head above water. Finding he could not in the current properly keep the child's head up without some support, he swam with his charge to a beam which crossed the water, and, resting his two fore-paws on the beam, waited there, keeping the child's head out of water until rescued. The late Henry Ward Beecher used to tell an amusing story in proof of dogs' reasoning powers. A big dog met a little one on a narrow plank crossing water where either could not easily recede. The big one stayed a minute, and then solved the difficulty by firmly planting his paws at each edge of the plank, while the little dog crawled under his whole body. The big one, said Beecher, walked away with the air of having accomplished something to be proud of.

CHRISTIAN PUNISHMENT.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."—Exod. xxii. 18.

When Alison Balfour was accused of witchcraft, she was put in the capsie-claws, where she was kept forty-eight hours; her husband was put in heavy irons; her son put in the boots, where he suffered fifty-seven strokes, and his little daughter, of about seven years of age, put in the pilniewinks, in her presence, in order to make her confess. She did confess. She retracted her confession in the course of the trial; and publicly, at her execution, declared that the confession was extorted from her by her torments.—Hugo Arnot, "*Collection of Celebrated Crimes and Trials in Scotland*," p. 368; 1785.

THE UNKNOWN AND UNKNOWABLE.

If it were really useful to win back and secure the bare belief that there is a God, or even to create it, we might well wonder at the poverty of the age which can see a gain in the merest pittance of religious consciousness, and which in its church has sunk so low as to worship at the altar that stood in Athens long ago, dedicated to the Unknown God.—"*The Logic of Hegel*," p. 136, translated by W. Wallace.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

THE term supernatural is used by the present writer, not as indicating any known existence, but simply as referring to notions which theologians profess to entertain in reference to something above and superior to the natural. These notions undoubtedly originated in ignorance; they were nursed in credulity, and in their growth they have been fostered by a dogmatic theology. The first recorded indication of supernatural worship is connected with fetishism—the worshipping of material objects, such as trees, rocks, animals, etc. This, however, strictly speaking, was nothing more than a form of Naturalism, inasmuch as a tree, a stone, an animal, a fish, and a bird, are all pertaining to Nature. Such worship was soon transferred from these material objects to an imaginary something supposed to be latent, or hidden in the perceptible object adored. In this manner there gradually grew up among primæval man the notion of a non-natural—that is, a supernatural—world, a world of spirits, of beings, which lay, as it were, at the back of all phenomena. Fortunately these primitive fancies disappeared as knowledge advanced, and to-day, in the realms of science, Nature is accepted as the only domain of the known. Her glory is the glory of the great whole, her power the potency of the infinite. The highest attributes which we can imagine are hers, for from her we borrow our ideas of what she is, or what her possibilities are. Our thoughts are in Nature and of Nature. Our ideas are pictures of her revelations to the mind of man, our sublimest conceptions are but reproductions in mental visions of her doings before our eyes. She is the great mother of us all; on her breast we repose during life, and in her arms we are enfolded in death.

Professor Huxley, in his recently published *Essays on Controverted Questions*, writes with unmistakable boldness, and frankly acknowledges that he has no belief in, or knowledge of, what is termed the supernatural. He points out with great force how rapidly the process of elimination of the supernatural from the historical evolution of humanity is going on. "Experience teaches," he observes, "that it does not answer to neglect Nature; and that on the whole the more attention paid to her dictates the better men fare. . . . The extant forms of supernaturalism have deep roots in human nature, and will undoubtedly die hard; but in these later days, they have to cope with an enemy whose full strength is only just beginning to be put out, and whose forces, gathering strength year by year, are hemming them round on every side. This enemy is Science, in the acceptance of systematised natural knowledge which, during the last two centuries, has extended those methods of investigation, the worth of which is confirmed by daily appeal to Nature, to every region in which the supernatural has hitherto been recognised. . . . For myself, I am bound to say that the term 'Nature' covers the totality of that which is. The world of psychical phenomena appears to me to be as much part of 'Nature' as the world of physical phenomena; and I am unable to perceive any justification for cutting the universe into two halves, one natural and one supernatural." These direct sentiments from such an able scientist furnish a just rebuke to those mystic dreamers who seek to rob Nature of her sublimest potency, transferring it to a source which is beyond human ken to perceive. Such efforts are the rhapsody of uncontrolled emotion, not the product of well-balanced reason. Despite all this fantastical imagery, it is gratifying to know that the scientific discoveries of the present age show what can be done by sound judgment in the way of obtaining knowledge of the powers and forces of the universe—forces

which for ages have lain hidden in its arcana. These discoveries have been made in spite of a persistent opposition from all classes of theologians, and are the result of patient and persistent investigation on the part of a noble and hard-working band of men—the devotees of science. The discoveries already made are an indication of what is yet to come. From what has been we may judge of what may be. Earnest men are still pursuing their investigations into Nature, regardless of fanatical bewailings. They study her laws, they question her phenomena, they interrogate her doings, and they seldom go unrewarded for their toil and pains. Almost every day something new is discovered which tends to lighten the load of human sorrow, and to bring about harmony among mankind. Thus we learn from experience that the laws of Nature are our guide in life, and that the grandeur and the manifold resources of the universe are our incentives to rely upon its instrumentality for the only available aid and comfort known in the hour of need.

Professor Huxley recognises the fact that despite the mere going through old forms and indulging in stereotyped ceremonies, men of intelligence have no practical faith in obtaining supernatural assistance in the affairs of life. He justly remarks: "The phraseology of supernaturalism may remain on men's lips, but in practice they are materialists." Witchcraft is no longer believed in, exorcism is not now substituted for rational modes of treating disease, and prayers for rain have been almost entirely discarded, while "an outbreak of pestilence sends men, not to the churches, but to the drains." The truth of this last remark was strikingly illustrated when recently the cholera threatened to invade this country. The old preventive, once relied upon by orthodoxy, was then unheeded, and instead of royal proclamations being issued for prayer and fasting, the aid of science was evoked.

The belief in the efficacy of supernaturalism has sadly confused the science of ethics. Ignoring the natural sanction of morality, the theologians assumed a supernatural sanction, "and imagination supplied the motives which reason was supposed to be incompetent to furnish. Religion, at first independent of morality, gradually took morality under its protection; and the supernaturalists have ever since tried to persuade mankind that the existence of ethics is bound up with that of supernaturalism." Professor Huxley also significantly observes, "I am not of that opinion." It is said of the Devil "that he was a liar from the beginning," and the Professor does not hesitate to state that those who start out in life pretending to know what they do not know, and who ignore facts which militate against some comfortable hypothesis, are doing their best to deserve the same character. It is a just reproach to orthodox believers that they indulge too much in hypocritical assumption; they claim that their belief is based on knowledge, and that their faith is supported by fact. This is not so, for in vain do we look for any verities behind their speculations. Of course the sphere of faith or belief is quite legitimate when it is not distinct from or opposed to knowledge. Faith in the order of nature is reasonable, because it is based on experience; faith in the supernatural is absurd because it is opposed to all possible knowledge—not only to the knowledge that we have, but to all that it is in any way possible for us to have. We therefore agree with Professor Huxley that if people would object to say they know when they do not know, and would act upon that principle in every relation of life, "a reformation would be effected such as the world has not yet seen."

It is this principle of discrimination between the theoretical and the practical; this objection to subordinate the known agencies of existence to mere conjectures to some fancied beyond, that constitute

the fundamental features of Secular philosophy, and herein lies the value and potency of Secularism as the true gospel of daily life. It inculcates reliance on known realities, and refuses to sacrifice the certain present for a problematical future. Better employ our energies and direct our efforts in ennobling man and woman, of whom we know something, than in employing our time in the worshipping of a God of whom we know nothing. For, as Professor Huxley remarks, "intelligent work is the only acceptable worship; and that, whether there be a Supernature or not, our business is with Nature."

CHARLES WATTS.

PRESENT DAY MARTYRS.

THERE is no cause for wonder at the comparatively few *professing* Freethinkers to be met with, when one considers what such a one has to put up with at the hands of the party of peace and goodwill! Under present circumstances, the life of a professed Atheist is not to be envied, for he is subject to every system of petty persecution which can be conceived by Christians. We professed to be a follower of Christ at one time, teaching in Sunday-schools, assisting at meetings, and even participating in that Wesleyan confessional, the testimony meeting, and studying the scriptures thoroughly. The result of the latter has been to cause a gradual change from Christianity to Free-thought, and with it all those absurd pieces of advice, and those persecutions which are invariably the result of such a change. As soon as the news of this got about amongst our Christian friends we were pestered with advice. They advised prayerful study of "the good book," and could not understand the argument that it was unreasonable to expect a man to pray to a God in whom he did not believe, in order that he might receive light enough to understand how to find that God. They expressed a hope that we should find Christ, and were shocked at our presumption in saying that one whom they called "Our Savior" should need no finding. We had the lady visitor come to us and tell us of the loving Father, and when we pointed to the little child, in all the agony of cutting teeth, and asked if that was the way God showed his love, she said that it was sent to try us. We then asked if that was the justice to be expected of a just God, and were told that God's ways were not our ways; and that lady visitor never again called after we made the remark that until she could hold up a more merciful brute for us to worship, we must remain in "infidel darkness!" When we were warned that God would punish us for not believing on him, we asked, "Did God give me my reason?" and they always said "Yes!" Then we said, "Is he a just God?" and again we received a reply in the affirmative. "How then," said we "can a just God punish me because the reason which he gave me causes me to disbelieve in him? This was always a poser, and was invariably met with some remark as to our duty in believing without question. One lady with whom we were acquainted in the early stages of the transition urged us not to study the Bible with the view of finding out whether or not it was worthy of credence, as to study it in that spirit would be sure to lead us wrong. We asked her if God made everything, and she said that he did; but we could not make her see that if the fly's leg would bear the most minute examination, the guide-book to heaven should also do so—if he inspired it. Such things as these went on until they gave up all hope, and we renounced religion altogether. Then our employer got wind of the change, and one day, after we had arranged to take part in a debate on the existence of the soul (the negative, of course), a little note came advising (!) us not to do so, or—well, it meant that another

vacancy would occur. Journalism is our profession, and we were then editing a small country paper, and from the time we embraced Freethought we underwent a system of petty persecution which made the work unbearable. For us to mention the name of God in a local note meant the obliteration of that note; fault was found with everything written by us; and the result had to be "a change," our employer being candid enough to say when we went that he was glad we gave him notice to leave, because, although he did not mind what creed his employees professed, he would never, if he knew it, employ an Atheist. Such is Christian charity! This is an illustration of what many others have to undergo, and it is the explanation of the smallness in number of professing Atheists. But the Christians must not cackle too loudly on the few Freethinkers there are, for we ourselves know of many in good positions who, if they only dared, would show the Christians that "things are not what they seem." Tradesmen would be boycotted, and others displaced, were they to state their opinions openly: but we trust the time is not far distant when the Christians may understand that it is not every regular church-goer that believes in God.

ASHLEY SLADE.

IS CHRISTIANITY PLAYED OUT? ROBERT BUCHANAN SAYS YES.

MR. BUCHANAN has stirred up a lively controversy in the *Daily Chronicle* on the question, "Is Christianity Played Out?" The very title is ominous, and indicates a growing perception that the religion of the majority may yet take its place among those departed faiths which, after having garnered the thoughts and aspirations of various races of men, have yet, in Heine's phrase, died from being found out. Obviously such a question could not suggest itself to one who believed in Christianity as a divine revelation to man. Yet Mr. Buchanan not only answers in the affirmative, but in his poem, *The Wandering Jew*, makes Jesus himself confess as much. Mr. Buchanan is a poet. This may sufficiently account for his having an ideal Christ of his own, who is so obviously ideal that it would be in vain to bring him to the test of any documents or legends. But he sees that the faith which has been founded on Christ has been powerless for good, and he says so in vigorous language. A crowd of nobodies, among whom we must not class the rising young poet and critic, Mr. R. Le Gallienne, have entered the lists, but one and all are remarkably shy of coming to the real point. Their Christianity is other than that which, for the purposes of historic inquiry, Christianity must be considered—viz., the distinctive beliefs which have come down the ages embodied in the Christian Church. It does not even imply the original signification of the word Christian, a belief that Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews. It is a vague, nebulous beneficence, which is as much distinctly pagan as Christian. One writer of the hazy Spiritualist type says: "If Christianity means a Church system, it seems to me it is also doomed. I have a very wide range of acquaintance among intellectual men in London; yet I could not name three of them who ever enter a church from January to December, much less take any part in its sacraments. And we all know that much the same is the case in the great cities of Christendom."

In Monday's *Chronicle* Mr. Buchanan replies. Meaning by Secularism the spirit which rejects all compromises with frauds, however innocent, which affirms that the business of humanity is not to wear sackcloth and ashes, but to enlarge the area of its own happiness, and which incidentally points out the evils that other-worldliness has brought on man, he declares:

"It is Secularism, not Christianity, which is fighting the battle of the poor and suffering masses against the classes

which would keep them for ever in ignoble chains. It is Secularism which is hastening on the cause of moral and intellectual freedom in every land, spreading abroad the good news that science is beginning to formulate the laws of life, asserting in the face of all selfish institutions that human nature has a right, not merely to its daily bread, but to its daily love and joy. It is only in so far as Christianity is itself secular that it is of the slightest influence upon the age in which we live."

Replying to Mr. Le Gallienne's contention that "essential" Christianity is everything that is of good report, Mr. Buchanan says:

"There is nothing, I think, which so amazes a dispassionate observer of human progress as the feats of moral legerdemain of which Christianity, so called, is capable. Its history is one of endless cruelties and countless horrors. Its constant effect has been to paralyse human activity and to pervert every beautiful human instinct. Its teachers and preachers have from age to age been the enemies of human thought. Its war against the carnal man has been a blind and brutal battle with nature itself. Yet on the score of a few beautiful words spoken by its founder, Christianity has, with overmastering arrogance, claimed for itself every great moral victory that men have achieved in spite of it! As well might it be claimed, on the score of the almost equally beautiful words of pagan philosophers, that the victories of civilisation have been achieved by paganism. No one will contend that Jesus of Nazareth was disingenuous or hypocritical; but the creed which bears his name is to this day a synonym for disingenuousness or hypocrisy. Slippery as a snake, fitted to assume all constructions, asserting its own triumph at every moment of its own failure, it replies to the protests of its victims, 'Ah, but mine is essentially a creed of Love!' 'Essentially'! The qualifying adverb represents a lifelong attempt to juggle with the reason and mock the sense. It was on the lips of Torquemada when he piled the faggots of the martyr's fire, on the lips of Calvin when he burned Servetus, on the lips of Catherine de Medici before the eve of St. Bartholomew, on the lips of Charles when he harried and destroyed the Covenanters. . . . Oh, but Mr. Le Gallienne explains. 'Essential' Christianity just means one thing—the spirit which works for the coming of the 'Christ that is to be!' In other words, the Christ which is not, and which has never been, but which is coming! Is it not about time that he came? Eighteen hundred years is a long start; and if he has advanced so slowly in all that time, how long will it take him to arrive at the end of his journey?"

This is pointed, and almost makes one wonder why Mr. Buchanan does not join the crusade against degrading superstitions that hinder human progress. But he holds with Tennyson that life without the hope of immortality is futile; and having thus the root of superstition in him—the first to come and last to go—cannot take rank with its thoroughgoing assailants.

Mr. R. Le Gallienne's contributions to the controversy deserve separate notice. He assumes the title of Christian, having discarded everything that differentiates Christianity from any other faith. He says "essential" Christianity is "the belief in the beneficence of the Power who made us, in the spiritual significance and ultimate blessedness of existence, and the life for others." Why this is pure Deism. "Priests and professing Christians," he says, "may still be discussed along with the Trinity and the plenary inspiration of the Bible, at preparatory Secularist meetings; it is well they should, and I agree with 'M' that the Secularists have done splendid work in so discussing them." But Mr. Le Gallienne prefers to trade a new article under the old name, a proceeding which strikes us as neither fair to the old vendors nor the new manufacturers.

THE BIBLE GOD.—Just see the position the Bible places its God in. He created man, pronounced him good, found him bad, repented for having created him, resolved to destroy not only him, but the whole animal and vegetable creation; then repented again of having done it, and resolved never to do it again. Would any of you like to be placed in so ridiculous a position?—Mrs. E. L. Rose, *Speech at Bible Convention, 1854.*

RENAN'S APPEARANCE.

A WRITER in the Contributors' Club in the December *Atlantic* describes Renan's outward appearance:

"Coleridge once mistook for a philosopher a silent, thoughtful-looking man who eventually revealed himself as a Norfolk farmer by exclaiming, on the appearance of dumplings at dinner, 'Them's the fellows for me!' Renan, on the other hand, would have been taken for a man without two ideas in his head beyond eating and drinking. The foreigner in Paris, drawn by admiration for his talents to the stuffy little room at the College de France assigned to the Hebrew lectures, was stupefied at finding a burly man with flabby face, reminding one of Luther, and very pronounced double chin, all the more marked because clean-shaven; an exterior, in short, far from bespeaking the refined writer, the acute thinker, the greatest stylist of his age.

"Discoursing, moreover, in the easiest conventional tone, he would loll back in his chair, or sprawl his arms on the table, as, with shoulders up to his ears, he stooped to read a Hebrew text. A second glance, it is true, showed the silkiness of his long brown hair, and the shapeliness of hands, which he used very effectively for emphasis. His forehead, too, was fairly high, though not broad; his eye, deep-set behind bushy brow and lash, was full of animation; and his voice was mellow. At home or in society his attitude was far from imposing. He would either lean forward, his hands resting on his knees, or would throw himself back in his chair, his hands crossed on his breast. In either case his eyes were half closed, yet no man was a better listener.

"To see him in the streets—but of late years he walked only too little for his health, and he avoided omnibuses through aversion to the scramble for a seat—you were reminded of Dr. Johnson sailing down Fleet-street. In a Protestant country he might have passed for a country parson of limited means and equally limited intellect. In France he resembled a retired tradesman vegetating on a small competency. Had he donned cabman's uniform, he would have passed muster as an average specimen of the Jehu; and there are said, indeed, to be unfrocked priests in the fraternity. He was in reality a typical Breton priest minus the robe.

"His paternal ancestors were Breton fishermen—all, he says, as poor as Job—and Renan had inherited their physique, his good points doubtless being due to his mother, who came of a good middle-class Bordeaux family. Strange that such a mind, with its delicacy, acuteness, and many-sidedness, should have had so uncouth an embodiment."

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING held at Hall of Science on Wednesday, Jan. 11, Mr. Geo. Standing (in absence of the President) presiding. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.—The suggested alteration of meeting night was discussed, but the matter was allowed to drop.—The Camberwell Branch delegates announced that their Branch had made arrangements for the holding of a series of week-night lectures in March—the Branch paying expenses and the profits to accrue to the Federation.—Miss Vance brought forward the matter of the more equal distribution of popular open-air lecturers among the London Branches, and dwelt upon the difficulties many Branch secretaries had in filling their lecture lists, owing to the system, at present in vogue, of booking dates far in advance. After discussion, it was agreed that the Secretary call a meeting of lecturers, Branch secretaries and other Branch representatives, for the purpose of discussing this matter, with a view to the better conduct of our open-air propaganda.—The Secretary presented the balance-sheet for the past year, and financial statements of the Islington lectures and the Ball and Soiree; all of which were accepted.

Some discussion took place on the Annual Dinner, but the business was left in the hands of the Dinner Committee.—Some minor matters were disposed of; and the Council proceeded to the election of officers for the current year. All the old officers were unanimously elected; viz.: President, Mr. G. W. Foote; vice-presidents, Messrs. R. Forder, A. B. Moss, Touzeau Parris, J. Robertson, G. Standing and J. M. Wheeler; treasurer, Mr. R. O. Smith; secretary, Mr. E. Pownceby.—The Council then adjourned.

[Branch Secretaries and other officers—particularly those who have experienced any difficulty in arranging their open-air lecture engagements—are requested to note that they are invited to meet the lecturers in conference on this subject. Due notice will be sent to all Branches and lecturers.]

THE LATE THOS. W. ELLIOTT.

It was my duty (in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Foote) to conduct the funeral service of the above at Worthing on Saturday, Jan. 14. My acquaintance with Mr. Elliott extended over thirty years, and old Radicals will have recollections of him in connection with the Reform League and other movements in London a quarter of a century ago. During the last fourteen years he has resided at Worthing, where he has taken a prominent part in local and imperial affairs. In November, 1891, he was returned at head of the poll to represent the Central Ward in the Town Council, but soon afterwards he underwent an operation, followed recently by a second, for stone, to which he succumbed after a long and painful illness, aged 62. Last year he went to South Africa, I furnishing him with introductory letters to Freethought friends in various towns in the colony. He desired me to convey his thanks through this paper for the hospitable treatment accorded to him by our "saints" in those parts.

An immense concourse of people were present at the grave, including the Mayor and some other of his fellow town councillors. The local Tory organ of the previous day had said: "He died as he had lived, an infidel; and his orders to the undertaker were that he should be buried in a way that would secure the earliest possible return of his body to dust. His remains will therefore be interred on the earth to earth system; and it is understood that the interment will take place in accordance with the views of the Freethinkers, one of whom will probably deliver an oration over his grave."

His coffin was of ordinary cardboard, covered with plain black serge. Many beautiful wreaths were sent by friends; and one, composed entirely of red tulips and maiden-hair fern, bore the inscription, "From the poor of Worthing, in loving remembrance of a true friend."

That he was loved by a large number of the people may be gathered from what follows from the Tory paper above alluded to: "He had the merit of straightforwardness, and throughout his career as a public man he seemed to retain the confidence of a considerable number of the townsfolk. He championed the cause of the working class, and the excellent condition of some of the thoroughfares in the populous parts of the town is due in a great measure to the persistency with which he advocated the improvements which made them what they are. Mr. Elliott's political views were those of advanced Radicalism. There was not a grain of loyalty in him. It is said that on one occasion he turned to the wall a painting representing her Majesty the Queen, which was hanging in one of the rooms of the local Liberal Club; he had indeed an abhorrence of monarchy, and did not scruple to express his antipathy. He was an ardent supporter of the policy of Home Rule, and a few years ago paid a visit to Ireland, returning with a stronger conviction than he had formerly entertained that the way to make the Irish a contented, happy, and prosperous nation was to grant her the complete management of her own affairs. During his residence in Worthing, Mr. Elliott also paid a visit to America.

"The deceased Councillor was a Freethinker; he resented the appellation of an Atheist, but he had no belief in a Supreme Being. The Divinity of Christ was therefore denied by him; his doctrine was the equality of men before the law, and the fullest recognition of the wage-earning class to a fair share of the profit derived from their industry. He was a supporter of the National Sunday League, of the Eight Hours Movement; of the principle of the one man one vote; in short, he was a Radical of the most uncompromising type. His political education, we believe, began with the Chartist riots, in which, though then scarcely more than a boy, he took a prominent part."

The career of Elliott is one that conveys a lesson to our oft too timid friends in small towns, and in London too. He never concealed his opinions—and more, he never apologised for holding them. To him they were truths, sacred to hold, and ever to be defended when attacked or disparaged. His earnestness, courage, and sincerity, soon conquered the bigotry and prejudices of his neighbours, eventually winning their esteem and confidence.

Friends were present from Brighton, Shoreham, Horsham and other places.

ROBERT FOWLER.

The *Fleetwood Chronicle* notices the death of M. Desquesnes, a French teacher at Blackpool, well known as a Freethinker and Republican. On his tomb is inscribed the lines of Paine: "The world is my country, and to do good my religion."

ACID DROPS.

"Why Men remain Christians" is a question discussed by the Rev. T. W. Fowle in the current *Contemporary*. This gentleman declares that "the religion of Jesus Christ stands quite alone." Not yet, sir, not yet; all in good time; the people are leaving it fast enough, and it will be "quite alone" in due course.

Mr. Fowle tells us that this religion of Jesus Christ "bears upon the face of it that ineffable look of uniqueness by which its claim to be the predestined religion of mankind will have to be established." The words italicised are praised by the *Christian World* as "felicitous." But can anyone not in the business understand them? What is an "ineffable look of uniqueness"? We give it up.

We see from the *Wigan Observer* that the Rev. A. Hebblethwaite has been lecturing on Unbelief—that is, unbelief in his religion. He gave "striking facts from history" to prove that "unbelief ruined individual character and national life." We are left to guess what these "striking facts" were. Probably they would not strike our readers at all. Mr. Hebblethwaite went on to say that "when people get the idea that they will die like a beast, they soon begin to live like a beast." Now, this is a foolish falsehood. History contains the names of a great many unbelievers; how many of them lived like beasts? On the other hand, we are ready to give the names of popes, cardinals, priests, and ministers who lived beastlier lives than any beasts on this planet.

Mr. Hebblethwaite mentioned Charles Bradlaugh. Did he live the life of a beast? Does John Morley, Professor Huxley, Frederic Harrison, Leslie Stephen, Samuel Laing, Herbert Spencer, or Colonel Ingersoll? Go to, thou silly Hebblethwaite; thou art a poor libellous creature, unworthy to take off the boots of the men thou defamest.

"Die like a beast" is a favorite phrase with sky-pilots. But what do they mean by it? Every man must die, exactly like a horse or dog, and the fact is not altered by the doctrine of another life. Besides, some men—not Freethinkers—die worse than beasts. Did you ever hear of a beast dying of delirium tremens? Answer that, Mr. Hebblethwaite, and work the answer into the next edition of your lecture.

Mr. D. Perry, a local preacher, held forth at Ebenezer Chapel, Sudbury, from the text "Not a bone of him shall be broken." Some hours afterwards the preacher fell down and broke his leg.

Hugh Price Hughes, speaking at Plymouth, said that "In the London Mission they had men and women of all religions; the only thing they required of them was to be Christians." This remark was greeted with applause. We are to presume, therefore, that the various denominations of Christians are really different religions. This has always been our own opinion, and we are glad to have it endorsed by a notorious preacher, especially when the endorsement is applauded by a big meeting of miscellaneous "Christians."

At Plymouth, as elsewhere, Mr. Hughes was eloquent—in he really can be eloquent—in favor of repressive legislation. He wanted to see drink, gambling, and apparently prostitution, put down vigorously by the strong arm of the law. This may be all very well—for the moment we do not argue it—but does it not occur to Mr. Hughes that we do not require Churches to reform the world in that way. It has been the Church's boast to be a "spiritual" organisation, and this function is abdicated when it calls on policemen and gaolers to suppress the vices of society. The clamor of men like Mr. Hughes is also a confession that Christianity, as a "spiritual" force, is an utter failure.

Price Hughes's addresses at Plymouth have stirred up a correspondence in the local press. One gentleman falls into a curious mistake. He accuses Mr. Hughes of wishing to give the young a purely secular training. The truth is, however, that Mr. Hughes is strongly in favor of religious education, only he likes it to be as near as possible Wesleyan Methodism. He cries out against the bigotry of the Church of England, but he is equally bigoted himself towards Freethinkers. When his own corns are trodden on he shrieks loud enough to be

heard in Sirius; when he treads on other people's, and they make a wry face, he asks them what the devil they are grinning about.

It appears that a Sicilian priest has for years been the real and absolute chief of the criminal secret society of the Mafia. As a confessor he had been able to keep up unsuspected relations with the most infamous characters.

Mary Walsh, of New York, has been committed to custody. She has become insane over religion, and believes herself the Virgin Mary.

The Rev. James Barton, of Willesden, shot himself dead last Saturday morning with a Colt's revolver in his bathroom, 26 Plumpton-road. Infidelity is not assigned as the cause of suicide.

Macrae, the Althorpe murderer, made an edifying end, as we predicted. He died "looking to Jesus," with the belief that he would soon be "looking down from heaven" on those he loved. No doubt this is very gratifying to all other people who expect to go to the same place, and who will enjoy his society for ever and ever.

The *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, in view of Macrae's expectation of bliss in heaven, remarks how curious it was that he "made such desperate struggles to remain on earth." But, after all, there is nothing very curious in the phenomenon. It is common among Christians, and even among sky-pilots. However sure they are of heaven, they cling to this world like a limpet to its rock. "Captain," said a parson in a storm, "captain, is there any danger?" "Sir," replied the skipper, "in five minutes we shall all be in heaven," and the parson exclaimed "God forbid!"

St. Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. The curate of St. Paul's, Brixton, was said by his vicar to have improved on this advice. This led to a law suit, and a judgment for £25 damages. Now the vicar will have to drink and forget his sorrow.

The *Chicago Tribune*, noticing Mrs. Besant's lectures in that city, says, it is evident that there are two racial elements in her composition, and hints that Irish emotion overcomes Saxon reasoning.

At the Yarmouth quarter sessions a decrepit baker named Edward Taylor, seventy years of age, was found guilty of indecently assaulting a little girl, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. One of the witnesses, Annie Gowing, a little girl of eight, was objected to by the prisoner's counsel, who said it was not sufficient for her to know she had to tell the truth; she should also have an idea where she was going after death. This elicited from the Recorder the sensible question, "Do you know where you are going, Mr. Frere?" The learned gentleman could only get out of the difficulty by replying, "I am not in the witness-box."

Monday's *Daily News*, under the head of "Police Courts," gave only two cases, and both were peculiar. One was a "missing clergyman," the Rev. W. H. Jones, vicar of Mumby, Lincolnshire, whose friends want to know his whereabouts; and, instead of asking the Lord, they lodge a notice at the police courts. The other case was that of a Jewish gentleman, bearing the classic name of Levy, who asked the magistrate what he should do about a dishonored cheque, which was given him not to prosecute a man he had given in charge for stealing a pair of trousers. Mr. Levy is a wonderful innocent, considering his age and nation. He and the Rev. W. H. Jones ought to find each other by mutual attraction.

A fisherman was brought before the Grimsby Borough magistrates recently, charged with the crime that is locally known as "stopping a ship." He explained that when he had signed on, but before he went aboard, he found out that the skipper of the smack was religious, and he wasn't going to sail with any more religious skippers. The mayor reproved the defendant, and told him that he ought to be ashamed to come there and say such a thing, to which the fisherman replied that he wasn't religious himself and had got sick of religious skippers who wouldn't leave a chap alone. He'd been to sea with no end of 'em, and they thought more about praying than they did of catching fish,

and some of 'em even objected to a chap smoking on Sunday. But the fisherman's objection availed him nothing, and the Christian magistrates fined him a guinea.

David Forrester, who was sentenced to death at Glasgow with William McKeown, has been reprieved, his sentence being commuted to penal servitude for life. When the news was conveyed to him by the Governor he exclaimed, "Thanks be to God." It is to be hoped that "God" is duly sensible of the man's gratitude.

Mr. W. O. Clough, M.P. for Portsmouth, appears to be a very pious man. He addresses Sunday-schools and religious services. At King-street Congregational Church, Portsea, he gave a Sunday afternoon discourse to men on the duties of masters and servants from the text "Servants [it should be slaves] be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart as unto Christ" (Eph. vi. 5). What a beautiful text for a Liberal M.P. to preach to the democracy!

Mr. Clough, M.P., gave his testimony that "He had found among non-professors of religion some of the brightest examples of conscientious discharge of duty in his experience." It would appear that belief in his God-given texts is not absolutely essential for the performance of the duties of citizenship.

Canon Maglione (Catholic) and the Rev. W. Gellay (Protestant) are slogging each other in the *Blackburn Times*. It is pretty reading for the "infidel." As Voltaire said when he heard two old ladies abusing each other, we believe them both. It seems to us that when the men of God fall out other people have a chance of learning the truth.

New York is to have a big cathedral, which will cost ten million dollars, and is to become "the Westminster Abbey of America." The corner-stone was laid on December 27 by Chief Justice Fuller. This lavish expenditure on a new house for God (who may never enter it) is a fine waste of money when myriads of men and women are working for a bare pittance, and thousands are almost dying of starvation.

The Rev. W. B. Paterson, of Orieff, is a young preacher, and has the audacity of his age. Recently he delivered what is called "a very original sermon," and it certainly merited the description. It was upon "Mary, the Mother of Jesus," whom Mr. Paterson treats as a Revolutionist. He has found out—perhaps through the Holy Ghost, who gave him his "call"—that Mary looked for a complete reversal in the religious, social, and political order of the time. It was Mary also who influenced the "spiritual growth" of Jesus. Poor Joseph, as always, takes a back seat. We should like to hear his account of the matter.

A clergyman had a clerk who, in saying the Psalms, made many mistakes. At last he remonstrated with him and said, "I wish, John, you would not say in the 74th Psalm, 'Let us make haycocks of them' If you look you will see the words are, 'Let us make havoc of them.'" Old John answered, "Well, sir, of course, if you wish it, I will; but it always used to be haycocks."

Baxter's organ, the *Christian Herald*, in its issue for Jan. 12, gives Talmage's New Year sermon. The Jabbernacle orator repeats the oft-told lie that Voltaire, "the blatant infidel," said in his dying moments to his doctor, "I will give you half what I am worth if you will give me six months of life"; and when told that he could not live six weeks, he burst into tears and said, "Then I shall go to hell." Talmage is not ashamed to use the oft-repeated Catholic *canard*, which finds no place in any reputable life of the great French anti-Christian.

It appears from a case that came before the courts that the Rev. Michael Paget Baxter is both prophet and provision merchant. In his *Christian Herald* he advertises for subscriptions to feed the poor, and the provisions are supplied by the firm of Paget Baxter and Co., of which his son is manager, and for which firm he provided the capital. It also transpired that he bought a milk factory in Switzerland for £2,000, which he sold for double the money. In the name of the prophet, provisions!

The Baxterite crank has again been advertising his *Five Astounding Events* 1893-4. Some people might imagine that to advertise such imbecilities is a waste of money. But it evidently brings grist to somebody's mill. Baxter himself boasts that his paper has a larger circulation than that of any religious contemporary, and this fact speaks volumes for the intelligence of the pious public.

The Mahatmas have hypnotised Mr. W. T. Stead and made him believe that spooks inspire his writing in the *Review of Reviews*. The spooks that take up the Mattei Cancer Cure, Mrs. Maybrick, and Social Purity, exemplified by showing how easily Eliza Armstrong might have been seduced, must be a curious lot. We should recommend Mr. Stead to be cautious in his dealings with them.

It is currently reported that since opening up communication with the spirit world, Mr. W. T. Stead has offered to act as the medium for a conference between Mr. Gladstone and the ghost of Mr. Parnell, with a view to the effective settlement of the Home Rule question.

There is always a deal of method in Mr. Stead's madness. Mr. Frederic Harrison says he seems to be always calling out—"Almighty God, help the *Review of Reviews*, and damn everybody that don't read it." If reports are true the divine assistance is languishing.

"The theory of Evolution," the *Christian World* says, "was in its inception anything but an ecclesiastical tenet, but to-day all the best Christian thinking is being modelled on its formula." Precisely so. Christianity has opposed every new truth, and when beaten it has adopted the triumphant truth, and professed to be its only true friend. This is what is called "development." We should call it impudence.

Dr. Clifford says that labor cannot do without religion. This means that the spiritual physicians must make all classes take their medicine. It is natural for the priests to say so, but the workers will be fools to believe them.

Religious people are always thrusting their piety into social and political matters. The other evening, when Mr. Foote spoke at the Memorial Hall on behalf of the Post Office employees and their civil rights, he had to listen to a number of speakers "goding" it through thick and thin. One speaker, a county councillor, mangled a famous passage in "In Memoriam," and finished by adding a bit of his own. This is how he concluded:

Ring out the wrong, ring in the right,
And fight for God with all your might.

This revised version of Tennyson was loudly applauded. But before the Post Office employees brace themselves to fight for God, it would be well for them to see what God has done for them in their trouble.

Dr. Adler has been discoursing on Jewish Humor. He thinks the Jews have been misrepresented. They have a humor of their own, and he gave some instances, but they were not very brilliant, though his audience laughed at them. For our part, we do not mean to discuss the subject. It is enough to say there is precious little humor in the Bible. Mark Twain only found one joke in it, and that was in the New Testament. The "street which is called Straight" is like a corkscrew.

"I don't believe you have been to the Sunday-school. You've been in swimming. Your hair is wet, and your trousers are hindpart foremost." "Well you see, mar, I was runnin' so hard ter Sunday-school that my head got all wet wid perspiration, and then I fell down, and I was going so fast I turned over in my trousers."

Moody had anything but a spree on board the *Sprea*. The vessel got disabled, and Moody nearly blubbered. He shuddered at the thought of parting from all he loved on earth. "I confess," he says, "it almost broke me down. I could not endure it. I must have relief, and relief came in prayer." It was a good job that the captain, officers, and crew were seeking "relief" in another fashion.

Dr. Parker asked the Holy Ghost to send messages through him to mankind. Since then he has written some frightful drivel in the *Echo*. Is this the best the Holy Ghost can do? And what is the reason? Have they been keeping Christmas heavily in heaven?

"To preach," Dr. Parker says, "is to lay down your very life for the sake of others." Indeed! How remarkably he flourishes on this species of martyrdom. A big salary, a private carriage, and all the comforts and conveniences of life, are the fruits of Dr. Parker's self-sacrifice.

Dr. Parker declares that preachers "come forth from the unseen altar clothed in the white linen of simplicity and love, and burn with the fire which warms the universe." Everybody will recognise Dr. Parker's portrait. It is drawn to the life.

From the *Church Times*: "Can any clergyman recommend a trustworthy married couple, the husband to act as fire, housemaid and the wife as cook, in a large boarding school at Margate? They must both be thoroughly competent! Applications and testimonials to be sent to Alpha." What price the housemaid?

Reviewing the new James Thomson (B.V.) volume, the *Weekly Dispatch* says that some of the prose pieces "show that he was by no means such an Atheist as his enemies alleged, or as he even thought himself at times to be." This is a very fatuous observation. Thomson's "enemies" exist only in the critic's brain. On the other hand, the passages that show he was not an Atheist were written when he was a Theist. He started as a Calvinist, and gradually went through all the stages of intellectual emancipation to the Atheism of the last twelve or fifteen years of his life. The *Dispatch* critic seems to write as the Chinese paint—without perspective.

Father M'Glynn, who was excommunicated for joining Henry George, and saying he would take his religion but not his politics from Rome, has been restored to his old position in the Church. The press declares "without conditions," but no one will believe that who knows the Papacy. The conditions may not be published, but all the same Dr. M'Glynn will be muzzled.

"Two or three years ago, at a meeting of the Baptist Congregational Union, at Burnley, he made an eloquent speech on the necessity of universities for the training of ministers of the gospel." This is from the *Echo*, and it applies to Mr. J. S. Balfour, of Liberator fame.

According to the Rev. W. Walker, chairman at the annual meeting of the Private Schools Association, the educated classes have "a very imperfect knowledge of religious subjects," and many of them "regard religious service as a weak fad of their mothers and sisters." Parson Walker's remedy for this awful state of things is characteristic. Let the children be stuffed with Christian doctrine in our schools, then they will grow up to fear parsons and shun infidelity.

OBITUARY.

At the Maidstone cemetery on the 12th inst., amidst sorrowing relations and friends, the remains of the wife of George Pierson were laid to earth. A soul loved and admired by all who knew her, a brave Freethinker, conscious and fearless to the last; aged 71. The Secular service was most impressively read, together with a few heart-stirring words, by our old friend F. Haslam.—R. W. II.

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.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 22, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—11.15, "On the Brink of Home Rule"; at 7, "Christ at the Bar: a Review of Robert Buchanan's *Wandering Jew*."

January 29, Bristol; 30, Bath.

February 5, Hull; 8, 12, 15, 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 22, Birmingham; 28, Bolden Colliery; 29, South Shields; 30, North Shields; 31, Ebchester. Feb. 1, Sunderland; 2, Hetton-le-Hole; 3, Blyth; 4, Chester-le-Street; 5, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 6, Horton Colliery; 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.
- SHETTLSTON FRIENDS.—Sending money in unregistered letters is against the Post Office Rules. We were charged eightpence—which is, of course, a monstrous imposition. However, it reduces your subscription to 1s. 4d, which is so acknowledged.
- LUCY, who writes from "The Vicarage," hopes our Shilling Week fund will have the same number of subscribers as "Unaccountable." She is unaccountably sanguine. The *Freethinker* has not the circulation of *Pearson's Weekly*. If it had, we could support the N.S.S. ourselves.
- W. H. VALENTINE, who considers our Double Number a "splendid success," says he has been a subscriber to the *Freethinker* for five years and likes it better every week.
- J. HERRINGTON says "You might conveniently have another call on your readers at midsummer as well as midwinter, as as there are more people in work then than now."
- PROPAGANDIST.—Tracts and copies of the *Freethinker* are both good for distribution. Better judge for yourself. Thank you for circulating four copies of this journal weekly.
- O. E. SMITH.—Thanks for notes and suggestions. Glad to hear you so appreciate "The Devil Interviewed."
- K. HUNT.—The verses are Thomas Paine's. They are included in our edition of his *Miscellaneous Theological Works*.
- J. EATON.—The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* will, we hope, be published before very long.
- A. C. S.—Shall appear.
- R. W. HEARNDEN.—We do not charge for obituaries, so your enclosure is put to the Shilling Week fund.
- W. COX.—Always glad to receive any matter for an interesting paragraph.
- T. H. MARSHALL.—We could not undertake to classify the Shilling Week subscriptions under the heading of various towns, though a special list sent in from any town or Branch could easily go in as such. Some have already so appeared.
- J. BRIERLEY.—The person you ask about found Jesus. He had a strong objection to hard work, and men of that sort are useless in the Freethought party.
- F. WILSON.—A just criticism. The dissonance is explicable historically.
- J. D. WALKER.—Newcastle lecture notices go into the box with others, and the compositor does justice to all. We cannot have any reason for doing otherwise. Lecture notices must be written on separate slips of paper, not mixed up with other matter. We cannot undertake to disentangle; it means copying out with our own hands, which are tired of writing.
- JOSEPH BROWN.—Pleased to hear you will take a share or two in the Hall of Science scheme. The copy was duly received and will be dealt with shortly. We cannot keep Shilling Week open any longer, although, of course, we shall not return any laggard subscriptions that may flow in.
- JAMES HORNE.—We have not kept Shilling Week letters, and cannot remember the details. What is wrong in your acknowledgment? State precise particulars, and we will rectify.
- G. BELSHAN.—If each does his best, however little, the cause will prosper.
- W. ALLAN.—See "Sugar Plums." We drink success, in a big mouthful of London fog, to the Aberdeen "saints."
- W. H. MORRISH.—Printer's blunders will happen. You'll never get it perfect until you get to—wherever you are going. We have corrected. Your previous guinea was acknowledged.
- LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges:—W. Trevillion, £1; W. H. Linton, 2s. 6d.
- H. JONES.—See "Acid Drops." Strauss's *Life of Christ* would cost you about twelve shillings.
- J. AARON.—We do not keep letters after dealing with them. If your previous communication was not acknowledged, it did not reach us.
- JUDAS ISCARIOT.—Mr. Foote may visit Scotland again before the summer.
- B. MILLICAMP.—The Marquis of Queensberry is not a member of the N.S.S. His views on the marriage question are his own, not ours. We have no power to silence him, and we would not if we could. All opinions have a right to be heard, if anyone will listen to them. We cannot answer your other questions.
- W. B.—Mr. Foote will try to visit Plymouth in the spring. He would like to do a week's tour in Devonshire.
- H. D.—Thanks. The "last supper" story is an old one that has often done duty.
- H. GILL.—When we have a little more time at disposal we will see what can be done for South Wales.
- W. T. LEEKEY.—Thanks for cuttings.
- S. STANDRING.—We are not surprised. Dr. Harrison will probably never be drawn for another debate.
- T. BIRTLEY.—It was already altered.
- J. D. STONES.—Pleased to hear you are "delighted with the *Freethinker* and think it gets better every week." Several have asked us to reprint the letter to Mr. Blomfield, but it is not long enough for a pamphlet, and too long for a tract.
- C. H. BROWNSWORTH.—We really cannot insert the four week's lectures in one week's Lecture Notices. We should like to oblige, but the thing is impossible. Another paragraph your Branch is welcome to, and we have given it.
- G. T. HULL.—We hope you will succeed in getting the *Freethinker* placed in the reading-room.
- R. TURNER.—Mr. Foote is accustomed to seeing his lecture-titles appropriated. It is sometimes a little trying, but there is no copyright in the matter.
- A. SCORES.—Glad to hear the circulation of the *Freethinker* is increasing in Ipswich, and that the new Branch has arranged for Sunday lectures. We suppose we must conclude that Mr. Blomfield will not debate—except in his own pulpit.
- H. J. STRONG.—Thanks for your trouble.
- E. J. TIERNEY.—(1) "Bugaboo" is not in ordinary dictionaries. It appears in Davies's "Supplementary English Glossary" (Bell and Sons; 1891), which is a very admirable compilation. The word means a hobgoblin. It may be regarded as slang, but it is too expressive to be debarred from regular usage. (2) The extract you send is sheer invention.
- E. COHEN.—A note to the gentlemen in care of their respective publishers would reach them.
- A. STANLEY.—Under consideration.
- J. BELL (Spennymoor).—(1) Mr. Foote declines to argue the matter with you. His opinions and yours of the functions of a committee are so entirely different that correspondence is useless. (2) The book has been sent to you by Mr. Forder, to whom all orders for literature should be forwarded direct.
- T. R. JONES.—We wrote you as desired, but it would be better for Freethinkers to provide themselves with a copy of the *N.S.S. Almanack*, which gives full and precise instructions on the subject of Affirming instead of Swearing in courts of law.
- J. WILLIAMSON.—It is significant to see a great Glasgow daily pleading for a jolly celebration of Christmas.
- J. EBBLEWHITE.—The Islington Branch has been formed.
- CATHOLIC.—It would all depend. The confessional is a delicate subject to handle.
- L. SMALL.—The Liverpool Branch has done very well.
- J. HORNE.—Thank you for the offer to take so many copies, but we do not think of reprinting the letter to Mr. Blomfield. If it really was "crushing," as you say, it has done its work.
- MINNIE MANN.—Very sorry to hear of your bereavement. Your remembering the cause at such a time is a valuable commentary on the hackneyed Christian statement that death plays havoc with Freethinkers' convictions.
- P. SHEARS.—Many, like yourself, would sooner pay sixpence than lose their *Freethinker*; nevertheless, we want to keep it at the people's price. Glad to hear that our *Comic Sermons* has given you many an hour's amusement.
- H. ROTHERA.—Mr. Foote is taking care of his health.
- H. GUISE.—Thanks for your cheering letter. Mr. Foote has no taste for fishing. It is slow work, and rather rough on the fish. He has a weakness, however, for eating good fish; and perhaps that's where his inconsistency comes in.
- W. H. MIDDLETON.—Mr. Logan is to have a written debate with Mr. Foote in the spring. By all means join the N.S.S. We hope to give some ladies' portraits as well.
- H. R. DOVE.—Would it not be possible to form a Branch at Lancaster?
- T. FISHER.—Yours is a most encouraging letter. It is very pleasant to hear when we are doing good.
- E. CONOLLY says: "I commenced to read the *Freethinker* at the time of your trial for blasphemy, and have read it ever since. I have kept every copy."
- W. T. GRIFFITHS.—You are a brave man without knowing it. Accept our heartiest good wishes.
- A. B. WAKEFIELD writes: "I have read Freethought literature since the earlier years of the sixties, but I cannot recall to my mind anything equal to your double number."
- G. CROOKSON.—The letter seems to have given general satisfaction. Mr. Holyoake's *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life* should be easily procurable. Try Mr. Forder if you have any difficulty.

W. FIFE.—Ramsgate, Margate, Deal, and Dover ought to be roused a bit, but how is it to be done? We must have some local support to make a beginning.

J. DEAN.—Mr. Foote will be happy to lecture at Derby if you can obtain a hall.

M. A. DAVIES.—*Bible Romances* will be finished shortly. Mr. Foote is trying to arrange for a good long spell of literary work.

J. SEANFORD.—Always pleased to receive cuttings.

H. FLETCHER.—Our contributors, in signing their articles, take the responsibility for their own views. We are not the least offended.

C. B. HYDE.—We have corrected. Mr. Foote cannot afford a secretary or clerk, and does everything with his own hand.

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—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Echo—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—New York Herald—Blackburn Times—Fleetwood Chronicle—Thanet Advertiser—Porcupine—Sussex Daily News—Sussex Coast Mercury—Cambria Daily Leader—Catholic Times—Wigan Observer—Nottingham Daily Express—Yarmouth Mercury—Shields Daily News—Modern Thought.

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, 7s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 9d.; Three Months, 1s. 10½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

OUR SPECIAL NUMBER.

OUR readers are requested to note that the *Freethinker* for February 5—to be published on February 2—will be a special number, price twopence. It will be printed on superior paper, and the reading matter will be particularly interesting. The number will contain a finely-executed portrait of George Jacob Holyoake, and an account of his career, compiled from his recent Autobiography.

Our first week's number in every month will be a similar special at the same price. By this means we shall be able to meet our loss on the penny issues, and have a trifle left over for ourselves. The arrangement will press very lightly even on the poorest of our readers; and those who value their *Freethinker*, and have some appreciation of its editor's long unprofitable work, will hardly grudge an extra penny once a month for a specially interesting number with a good portrait to boot.

We intend to give portraits of prominent Secularists in the provinces as well as in London, frequently accompanied by a brief biography; and ultimately we shall publish the portraits on fine paper, so as to form a respectable album of Secular worthies.

Occasionally we may give a Cartoon, hitting off some religious fad or faddist of the hour. But nothing will appear unless it has artistic merit.

We shall not print a smaller edition than usual of our February special number; on the contrary, we shall allow for a possible increase in the circulation; for we believe the special number idea is going to catch on.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Shilling Week is at an end, but tardy subscriptions are still dribbling in. We have printed all up to Tuesday afternoon. Next week we shall state the complete result, and say a few words on the success of the experiment.

Mr. Foote's lecture at the London Hall of Science on "General Booth as a Social Savior" drew (for a morning) an unusually good audience. The weather was bitterly cold, tempting people to remain at their firesides; but a very fair audience assembled in the evening to hear, and applaud, the lecture on "Our Father which art in Heaven." Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again to-day (Jan. 22), his morning lecture being "On the Brink of Home Rule."

"An Hour with the Devil."—Mr. Foote's announced lecture for this Evening (Jan. 22) at the Hall of Science—will stand over till February. He will lecture instead on "Christ at the Bar," with special reference to Robert Buchanan's new poem, *The Wandering Jew*, and the controversy in the *Daily Chronicle*. As it is too late to issue fresh bills, we hope the London Freethinkers will give all the publicity they can to this lecture, and induce as many as possible of their Christian friends to attend it.

Nearly £7 has been sent in response to our appeal for a fund to advertise the Hall of Science lectures. Of course we are open to receive more. Very great good would be done by bringing *strangers* to the place. After the lecture on Sunday evening, a gentleman came up to Mr. Foote and thanked him; it was, he said, the first Freethought lecture he had ever heard; it rather startled him, but it set him thinking, and he began to see things in a new light.

London Secular Federation Dinner.—Mr. R. O. Smith, the hon. treasurer, acknowledges receipt of the following subscriptions from diners:—R. M. Malster, 2s. 6d.; J. Brumage, 2s.; A. A., 6s.; C. Skinner, 5s.; Mrs and F. Fox, 3s.; Mr. and Mrs. Turner, 2s. 6d.; B. Dundas, 2s.; A. O. Varley, 2s.; F. Walker, 5s.; A. B. Moss, 5s.; Philalethes, 2s. 6d.; F. Rutt, 2s.; D. Hart, 5s.; F. Martin, 5s.; G. Burton, 10s.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Lightowler, 2s.; Miss N. A. Robins, 5s.; G. Ward, 10s.; Mrs. Hancock, 5s.; Mr. Lawes, 10s.; Mrs. Lawes, 5s.; D. Colville, £2; A. S., 5s.; T. Smith, 10s.; W. Pearse, 10s.; R. H. Side, £1; H. R. Clifton, 3s. 6d.; A. Charles, 2s. 6d. Collected in box, 9s. 7d. Subscription cards yet to be paid, £4 7s. Total, £14 7s. 3d.

Mr. Charles Watts had a good and very enthusiastic audience at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, last Sunday evening. There was a great demand for *Freethinkers*; every copy on hand was sold before the lecture commenced. Over a dozen copies of the double number were also disposed of. Mr. Watts again lectures in the same hall to-day (Sunday evening, Jan. 22), taking for his subject "Juvenile Depravity in Birmingham: Is Christianity Played Out?"

Mr. Watts lectures at the Athenæum Assembly Room, Wolverhampton, on Monday evening at 8, his subject being "The French Revolution: its Causes and Results." The Branch asks us to desire the local Freethinkers to attend in full force.

Colonel Ingersoll lectured in the Broadway Theatre, New York, on Sunday evening, Jan. 1. A snowstorm was raging, but every seat was occupied. As the Colonel gathered up his notes and started from the stage, while the audience was applauding, he stopped and said, "I want to add that I never received a greater compliment than such an audience on such a night."

Dr. T. R. Allinson, one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, lectures next Thursday (Jan. 26) at the Athenæum, Godolphin-road, Goldhawk-road, Shepherd's Bush, at 8, on "Our Health: How to Get and Keep it." The chair will be taken by Mr. Touzeau Parris. We understand that the proceeds will be paid over to the West London Branch of the N.S.S. for propagandist purposes.

Newcastle friends are reminded that the Branch lectures are now resumed in the Eldon Hall, Clayton-street East. Mr. Joseph Brown occupies the platform this evening at 7, and his lecture is sure to be thoughtful and interesting.

An important meeting of the Council of the North Eastern Secular Federation will be held at the Eldon Hall, Newcastle, this afternoon (Jan. 22) at 3. Every member who possibly can should attend.

We announced last week that the Manchester Branch had arranged to try the experiment of having one lecturer four weeks in succession, and that Mr. J. M. Robertson had undertaken to deliver four courses of Sunday lectures in the Secular Hall from Jan. 22 to Feb. 12 inclusive. The Branch sends us a neatly printed syllabus of the twelve lectures, which promise to be instructive. Copies of the syllabus have been sent to a great many ministers in the district.

The Liverpool Branch is going to commemorate the Burns anniversary on Wednesday (Jan. 25) with a concert and ball in the Oddfellows' Hall. Tickets are priced as follows: Concert only, 6d. and 1s.; concert and ball, ladies 1s. 6d., gentlemen 2s. We hope the local "saints" will attend in large numbers. Any profit will be spent by the Branch in propaganda.

The Aberdeen Branch has done good work in 1892. Mr. John Harkis, the secretary, has resigned, but a new one has been found in Mr. William Allan, who will doubtless be a capable successor. On New Year's Eve the Branch had a social gathering, Councillor James Maitland occupying the chair. Owing to the smallness of the hall, only sixty sat down to tea, though the number could have been doubled. Songs and readings followed, and among the toasts were the N.S.S. President, the Organisation Committee, and the Rising Democracy. A hope was expressed that the work of the Branch would be extended farther north in 1893.

Mr. Sam Standing lectures at Leeds to-day (Jan. 22). Particulars will be found in our weekly lecture list. We hope the N.S.S. members will rally round Mr. Standing, and bring some of their more orthodox friends.

An *Academy* review of Espinasse's new *Life of Voltaire*, written by Frederick Hawkins, pays a high tribute to the great heretic's industry. "Ill or well," it says, "he got through an amount of work that might have exhausted the energies of half a dozen ordinary men. He had all the strength of purpose and the patient industry required to bring his many-sided genius into full play."

In Tuesday's *Times* Mr. M. D. Conway, agent the controversy on the new mesmerism (which Dr. Ernest Hart says is mainly imposture), cites a letter of Thomas Paine, written in 1802, on the mesmerism of Mesmer, which he attributed to the force of imagination. Paine cited Dr. Franklin to the effect "that the government might as well have let it go on, for that as imagination sometimes produced disorders, it might also cure some."

West Ham Secularists are requested to turn up in force to-day (Jan. 22) at Field-road Methodist Chapel, Forest Gate, at 3 o'clock. Last Sunday Mr. Anderson gave about two-thirds of a paper on "Why I do not go to Church," but was unable to get through it owing to opposition; one gentleman even requesting permission of the chairman to "throw him out." Mr. Anderson will attempt to complete the paper to-day.

The arrangements for the Smoking Concert (promoted by the Finsbury Branch in aid of the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund), which is to take place on Saturday evening, Feb. 4, at the Hall of Science, are being energetically pushed forward by Mr. James Anderson and Mr. W. G. Renn. A good entertainment will be provided, and purchasers of tickets will be assisting a fund which does its work ably and unostentatiously. Tickets (6d. each) of Mr. J. Anderson, Hall of Science; W. G. Renn, 44 Hall-street, City-road; or of the Branch Secretary, A. Wheeler, 21 Coburg-street, Clerkenwell, E.C.

The annual Children's Party at the London Hall of Science will take place on Wednesday, March 1. First-rate provision will be made for the comfort and entertainment of the little ones, and there is to be a novel arrangement for distributing the presents. Subscriptions for this good object can be sent to Mr. Forder or Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street, or to E. Pownceby, 9 Finsbury-street, E.C.

SHILLING WEEK.

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

Foreigner 3s. 3d., W. Griffiths, W. J. Wear 2s., T. Bates 3s., Two Walsall Friends 2s., A. Tarlton, N. Ashworth, T. Birtley, J. Robson, A. Dipper, J. Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. Tim 2s., Five Ashford Saints 3s. 3d., J. Yates, J. G., W. Barrow, W. B.; Liverpool: W. Blythe 2s., J. Ross, C. Doeg, H. Hall, J. W., A. G., Parry, J. Roberts, L. Small, W. Ross, E. Jackson, J. Yarwood; Alchem 2s., L. Johnson 2s., B. Brodie, O. Jensen, J. Summerfield, W. Stamp, T. Stait, T. Vipond, D. P. Reid, A. J. Smith, M. Christopher 2s., R. Hickman, T. Wilson, J. Chadwick, R. Langley 1s. 1d., J. Hicks, J. Harvey, Lancaster, F. Potter, J. Henry, Colno, J. Smith, G. Ebbelwhite 2s., J. Whitehead 2s., A. Marsh £1, J. H. N., S. Denny 2s., Q., W., E. S., J. J., M. Pruliere, J. Hewitson, Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby 2s., H. M. 2s. 6d., Allwright, J. Trollope, Gainsborough, T. Clarke, G. Balchin, G. Balchin jr., J. W. M., H. Edgerton, C. Bucknell, R. Neilson, M. Loafer, T. Bullam 2s. 6d., M. A. Davies 2s. 6d., J. Badlay 2s., Luton 3s., Mr. and Mrs. Hilton 2s., Four Hucknall Friends 4s., R. Weightman, J. Lee, Hannah Proctor, T. Browne, E. Browne, G. Coltam, W. Taylor, H. Strong, H. Stubbs, W. Barker, T. Leason, W. H. Putz 1s. 6d., G. Morris, C. Hoyle, W. Leekey, J. Dean, W. Brentnall, T. O'Neill, F. B. 2s., T. Bowman 2s., J. Adams, D. Baker 2s. 6d., Mrs. Baker 2s. 6d., Miss Baker 2s. 6d., T. Wild, C. Laurie, R. Laurie, J. Ward, Mrs. Ward, Jos. Ward, G. Sims, Mrs. Rothera, H. Rothera, Nameless, R. C. Smith 2s., W. Couch, P. Shears, J. Barry, J. D. £3, D. Gow 5s., G. Dixon, A. Riley, Mr. and Mrs. Clarke 2s., Three Chums (2nd) 2s., J. B. 2s., G. Pierson, Fannie Kingsnorth, J. Pierson, Mrs. Cogger, Hooker, R. W. H., Mr. and Mrs. Mann 2s., G. Biggs 3s., Nameless, J. Horne, W. Fife 5s., R. Harrison, A. B. Wakefield, G. B. Hepworth 2s., A. Newby 2s.; Per R. Forder: A. Eaton, W. P., J. H. Padgett, D. Wright, H. Sims, J. W. C., Anon, W. Stewart, Mrs. Beard, W. Balck, W. N. West, W. Kettle, S. E. Easton, J. Denham, W. Franklin, S. Soper, R. Green, H. Simpson, R. D. Turner, Mr. Christ, Mrs. Christ, J. Rathman, R. Thompson, F. Hyde, G. Pillier, W. Winterton, G. Marriott, W. B. Coppock, W. Charlesworth, G. W. B., R. Morgan, H. Jones, J. Copstick, O. G., T. Smith, E. S. 3s., P. Weston 5s., A. Stanley 5s., W. Elder 2s., F. W. D. 2s., S. Sazer 2s., R. T. Jones 2s., G. Harlow 5s., Four Woolwich Friends 4s., Joe Griffiths 2s., A. Lewis 2s., S. J. Rose 2s., B. Davies 5s., Weston's Sheffield 5s., D. Jones 2s., W. Macfarlane 2s., R. Hoarnden, W. Oox, T. H. Marshall 1s. 6d., J. Brierley, G. Belsham 2s. 6d., W. B., J. Morton 2s., A Friend, per E. Truelove 5s., O. Wilson 1s. 6d., Lucy 2s., W. Valentine, E. Winning, J. Herrington 2s., J. W. Smith, E. A. Holyoake, R. Mariner, J. Simpson and Two Friends 3s., J. Bonnywell, A. Alford, K. Hunt 5s., S. Mitchell, H. L. B., T. R. Jones, J. Cunliffe 3s., T. Jones 2s., H. Brierley, G. Lunn, W. C. Middleton 5s., F. Roos, J. Roos, T. G. 5s., G. L. Mackenzie 2s., A. Stewart, Shettleston Friends 1s. 4d., Nameless 2s. 6d., G. H. Hogg 5s.; Manchester Branch: S. Smith, T. Jones, Mrs. Jones, H. Jones, E. H. Jones, E. Brown, G. Hodson, E. Broome, S. King, A. Hemingway 2s., S. Hunter, D. Griffith, E. Shaw, J. Shaw, J. Megson, O. Watts 2s., H. Bromley, H. Arthur, E. Hatfield, F. Shornett; E. Cunliffe, J. Thornton, J. M., Mr. and Mrs. Birch 2s., E. Billson 2s., J. Hemingway 2s. 2d., C. J. Clifton 3s., W. R. P. and Friends 5s., J. Staunford, G. Crookson, Amicus, J. Burch, A. Haswell, J. Edy, Leaver, Allen, Kirbey, C. Strong, W. Strong, J. Martin, C. Bowie, G. Patten, A. Greenbough, H. Courtney, E. Jaques, H. M. Ridgway, E. F. 2s. 6d., T. Garbutt 2s. 6d., T. N., W. N., O. Doane, Mr. Lawson, J. Wittering, Tommy Hopkins 2s. 6d., R. Kimborley, Mrs. Kimborley, J. Kimborley, Mr. Symons, J. Edwards, E. H. Wright, W. Mack, A. Gibson, O. Audley, J. E. Griffiths 2s., W. Carley, W. H. Linton 2s. 6d., J. Scott, Four Fishers 4s., G. Kirtley 2s., J. Stones, R. W., R. Bottom, W. Sweetman 2s., P. W. Baldwin 2s., G. E. Fuller, G. Hull, J. McKenzie 2s., O. Eastop, A. Progger, H. Gill, F. G., S. Standing, Moore, J. Bolton and R. Kerr 5s., S. Hornby 2s. 6d., O. H. Wren 3s., E. Holdich, T. Nichols, H. Jones, J. Aaron, Mr. and Mrs. Humphries 2s., Barker, G. Halliday, T. Fowo, T. Elwon 2s. 6d., H. Nicholson 2s. 6d., Judas Iscariot, Hull Branch N.S.S. 12s. 3d., W. B., J. R. C. 2s., J. and W. Allan 2s., John Sutcliffe, James Sutcliffe, E. Wellawell, G. Smith, D. Smith, G. Bowerman 2s., G. W., H. Ohanter, E. E. Bolton 2s., E. T. Smith, Miss Miller.

HALL OF SCIENCE SUBSCRIPTIONS.—On Sunday, January 1, many names of subscribers were not taken, owing to their great number and the general hurry. On the following Sunday the same thing happened to some extent, but several names were then taken of subscribers whose money was lumped on the previous Sunday. We give *all* names taken in the following list, but for our own security we must state that the total amount we are responsible for, in addition to last week's acknowledgements, is £0 1s. 6d., a cheque for which was sent us by R. O. Smith:—J. Henderson, R. W. 2s. 6d., J. T. Short 2s., Wm. Hunt 2s., T. Noble, Philalethes, Yetton, J. Long 2s., Mrs. and Miss Long, A. Johnson, G. Burton 3s., Sleigh, M. E. Sayer 3s. 6d., J. N. Z. and Wife 2s.; Per G. C. Nidd: G. C. Nidd, L. E. Fraser, S. Fraser, A. C. Varley, H. Varley, W. Wasley, J. Tyler, C. Groves; Rowan Vincent, Thos. May 6s., Mr. and Mrs. Bowman 2s., H. Jones, Birkbeck, H. Smith 2s.,

D. Davies 10s., D. Davies 5s., G. H., Carlisle, G. C. Watson 5s., W. H. Maeers, C. Grason, Mrs. Boylson 5s., H. Bennett, H. Garcke, J. Brumage, "Chips," Emmeline Robins, Lord Dobbs, J. D. Williams, R. Hartley, W. H. Laurence, J. and A. Redway 2s., W. James, A. Friend, R. S. Pengelly 3s., Mrs. W. Davey, Groth, L. Smith, Friend 2s. 6d., G. W., A. Hodson, T. Campbell, A. M., J. Lewis, Fleming, J. L. Schaefer, J. H. Tripp, G. Sheggall, A. F. Taylor, C. Simmons, W. Williams, Finch, Hy. L. Barron, R. H. M., W. Rowe, E. Field, G. H. Baker, L. Bristol, Cody 2s. 6d., W. Grove, J. Grove, T. W. 2s., R. Armour, J. F. Schofield, Miss Schofield, C. Schofield, Omega, R. Johnston, Marquis of Queensberry £1, J. E. Billot, J. Hartley, F. Ahrens.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY (ONLY).

Mr. and Mrs. Quinney, T. E. Green 10s. 6d., J. Payne, T. G., J. Bawden, B. S. H. 1s. 3d., W. Varley 3s., E. Cottrell, W. G.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND (ONLY).

E. Conolly 2s. 6d., J. Allbright 5s., T. Taylor, Mrs. Taylor, H. R. D. 2s., W. H. Middleton 2s. 6d., J. H. Early, G. Hall, W. F. K. 5s., T. E. Green 10s. 6d., Mr. and Mrs. Hall 2s., J. Payne, W. G., J. Bawden, W. H. Jenkins, B. S. H. 1s. 3d., W. Varley 2s., J. Hartley, R. Riley, A. Howard, B. Howard, J. Primrose 2s., Anti-Fraud 2s. 6d., J. P. £1, J. Potter, Ex-Spurgeonite 2s. 6d., W. G.

Corrections.—W. H. Morrish sent 2s., not 1s.; C. B. Hyde sent 5s. for the Sustentation Fund and 5s. for N.S.S., not 1s. for each.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE UNIVERSE PROVES THE NON-EXISTENCE OF GOD.

AN OPEN LETTER TO A. AUGUSTA CHAPMAN.
(From the "Truthseeker.")

ESTEEMED MADAM,—Gods—your God and all other gods—were invented, assumed, inferred, and considered a necessity to account for nature and cosmic life. But no such necessity exists. Existence to-day implies, yes, absolutely proves, eternal existence. As well might we assume a time when time was not, a time when space was not, as to assume a time when the universe was not.

Something exists to-day. This requires no proof. The sum total of all existence cannot be increased or decreased to the amount of a solitary atom. Something cannot spring from nothing. Hence existence to-day proves eternal existence.

Before proceeding with my argument I must here define what I mean by "existence." All forms are transient (destructive of both god and spirits). There are no eternal forms. The only existence *per se* in the universe is matter. We know this exists. It embraces all reality, all existence. It is the objective, or basis of all subjective, and without it those who attempt to materialise thought and annihilate substance would not even be able to generate from their physique their stupid theories and attempt to draw the horse with the cart. Whatever exists is a form of matter, and whatever is not matter does not exist. All is matter, the remainder—nothing. This constitutes the great realms of God and spooks.

The universe exists only as an infinite aggregation of matter. Its worlds, suns, and their respective associate phenomena—men, houses, trees, rocks, etc.—have no existence *de facto*, but all these are simply mutable forms of lesser or greater aggregations of immutable matter. These forms are alike transient; at one time they were not, and at some indefinite time in the future they will cease to be. Their components, matter in its chemical and physical elements, alone survives, and thus perpetuates the formation process for ever. Therefore, when I speak of existence here, it is in the sense of abstract existence, not in the sense of existence of special forms.

The eternity of matter being conceded, this proves that it was never created, and hence needed no creator.

Matter is force. The idea that matter is inert, dead, impotent, and needs the aid of a creator or outside agencies or forces to manipulate it, is exploded. Matter is force, one and inseparable, physical and chemical force, and fully accounts for all cosmic phenomena.

Nature is one vast chemical laboratory; and, soulless and will-less, in the course of eternity, matter, of its own potencies, mingles with and selects by chemical affinity and physical process, genial elements, and unaided evolves into flowers, trees, men, worlds, suns, and systems. Evanescent and delicate in its segregate form, it becomes, in vast aggregation, the power which moves worlds and controls the universe. It is the sole cause and creator of a world teeming with life and beauty, and the source of all harmony

and order pervading the boundless realms of space. As the tiny drop of water or molten lead in mid-air assumes a globular form, so all cosmic bodies are shaped by virtue of like potencies composing and surrounding them. No God is needed in either case. On the contrary, it would require an infinite number of Gods to prevent phenomena, rather than a single God to cause the same.

Matter being eternal proves that its general aspect has also been for ever the same. No eternal chaos, followed by a sudden miraculous jump into its present form, but an eternal *statu quo*—a veritable and only perpetual motion. Hence no beginning to harmony and order, no first world, sun, or system, but all phenomena a repetition of similar phenomena preceding them for ever. If six thousand (or six million) years ago matter had been dead, inert, motionless, and in chaos, it would be in identical condition to-day. But it is plain what matter or all existing causes would not produce or evolve during the eternity of time prior to the above time it would, of course, never evolve. An eternity of time is ever sufficient time to accomplish at any special period of time what it has accomplished at the present time.

The same argument demonstrates the fallacy of postulating a "First Cause," a "lawgiver," a "designer," or a "God" in order to explain existence and life.

A "First Cause" implies an eternity of time prior to the time when this "First Cause" is supposed to have caused the universe, or before it began to act as a cause. Think of it! For countless millions of ages, multiplied *ad infinitum*, this cause was absolutely inert, dead, and non-productive of a solitary effect, then suddenly, without cause (because no other causes existed), it created (from nothing) an infinite universe as we behold it to-day! Can the credulity of fetichism go beyond this? Common schoolboy sense would conclude that if such "First Cause" had existed during all eternity without being active as such "First Cause," it would never have become active.

The same train of thought annihilates a "lawgiver." To give, make, or enact a law implies a time before such law was given, made, or enacted. But what such "omniscient lawgiver" would not give or enact during an eternity, "he" of course would never enact.

The idea of a "designer of the universe" shares the same sad fate. What an unchangeable, all-wise "designer" would not design during all eternity, "he" of course would never design.

And last, but not least, the God idea, when subjected to the same crucial test of logic and reason, "must go!"

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It would be hard to find a line in Munchausen which contains more falsehoods than this. First, no beginning; second, no God; third, no creation; fourth, nothing to create. But pardon, dear madam, this digression upon a subject which has now little interest for you and from which you concede you have evolved. But you have fashioned a higher ideal for your God, "a higher source of the origin of all our material blessings, and even life itself." Will you kindly inform us what your God was occupied with before, in his wisdom, he caused the origin of the universe? The duration of the period of time since this (imaginary) "origin," and the antecedent period, compares about as one drop of water does to all the moisture on the earth and "in the heaven." And no matter whether the period of such origin is supposed to be six thousand or six million of years ago, any definite period is utterly insignificant when compared with the infinite period of beginningless time preceding it. What then, my friend, was your God's occupation before the creative act? If "omniscient" he must be perfect and unchangeable. Prior to "the beginning" he must have embodied within "himself" all then-existing causes. No extraneous causes existed during all the infinite cycles of ages of eternity. "He" existed content (of course) in idleness, in absolute dark vacuum, and solitary and alone (almost any other member of "our persuasion" would have longed for a companion of "t'other persuasion") during all this dreary eternity of time. All existing causes did not prompt "him" to create a universe or a mouse. Now, like causes produce like effects. But no other causes existed to change God's lonesome condition of eternal solitude. If then your God, during the eternity prior to the period when you assume he caused the origin of the universe, had so existed, would it not follow, as a logical necessity, that "he" would so exist now? How, then, can you reconcile God's act with his omniscience?

Theism implies an eternity of nothing, of standstill, suddenly and miraculously transformed into a comparatively very brief period of universal life, motion and activity—an absurdity which all thinking and honest minds must and will discard in the near future. And thus, as you have courageously discarded "the little tin God of orthodoxy," I am sure that my good friend will continue in the grand work of investigation, and soon also discard her "sovereign ruler," or her "God of Perfect Wisdom," and leave them behind too!

And imagine this grand world with *all* the countless gods obliterated, and all the wealth and energy now sacrificed upon the altar of phantoms and for idle pomp and mummery applied to the moral and intellectual elevation of man. No more Catholics, Methodists, Mohammedans, or Jews, but only men and *brothers*. No more sources of dissensions, hatreds, and jealousies. No more churches, cathedrals, synagogues, or idols, but only schools and halls of science, music, and art. No more devotion of time and money to the unknown, but only to the true, the pure, and the beautiful. Morality and good behavior taught in graded lessons in our public schools, and a system of morality based upon natural law, generally promulgated, would be infinitely more productive of men of character and women of virtue than a vague system of theology which rewards and punishes only after death.

Let the gods go! They have absorbed the vitality of the world for centuries, now let us work and live for mankind.

OTTO WETTSTEIN.

(To be concluded).

BOOK CHAT.

Tennyson as a Thinker: A Criticism by Henry S. Salt (London: Wm. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street; price 6d.), sharply points out the limitations of the departed poet, many of whose admirers would fain place his bust in a pantheon among philosophers as well as among poets. Against this view Mr. Salt's *brochure* is an earnest protest. Recognising Tennyson's great artistic powers, Mr. Salt holds that the setting is of more value than the jewels. "Maud," indeed, is noticed as "one of the most deplorable instances of how a first-rate poet may be a tenth-rate philosopher."

* * *

Mr. Salt lays finger on a petulant childishness which the poet displayed in depicting Freethought as the ally of libertinism in "The Promise of May." Assuredly no admirer of Tennyson would desire him to be judged by that crude and unworthy performance. Tennyson was certainly no ardent believer in Christian dogma, and this we may take as a negative merit.

* * *

Mr. Salt is equally dissatisfied with his attitude on the question of woman. "The beautiful poetry of *The Princess*," he says, "will scarcely prevent a thoughtful reader detecting that, as a contribution to the discussion of female education, it is sadly trivial and commonplace, being the merest caricature of ideas it is supposed to combat, and a repetition of the immemorial fallacies by which men seek to divert attention from the real issue, culminating, of course, in the hypocritically evasive injunction,

Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

* * *

Mr. Salt sums up Tennyson's social philosophy as being "that of a man who, by the conditions of his birth, education, temperament, and general surroundings, was quite incapacitated for recognising the progressive and intellectual times in which he lived." As a protest against exaggerated panegyrics, Mr. Salt's *brochure* may be well timed, and as a criticism it is certainly worth reading, but we think this verdict overstrained. Tennyson's education certainly brought him in contact with some of the best, if not the most advanced thought of the first half of this century. It is not to be expected that the most popular poet of an age should also represent its most advanced thought. On the contrary that popularity is necessarily largely due to sympathy with its superficial current. The poet's office, however, is distinct from that of the philosopher, and if he but renders the average thoughts and sentiments of cultured people in exquisite language, and so makes them a part of the common possession of mankind, his place, though not the highest, is still a worthy one.

THE PARSON'S CANDLE.

A good story is told of a smart attempt by the parish clerk of a certain parish in the neighborhood of Bristol to shorten the evening discourses of his worthy vicar, who was noted for the extreme length of his sermons. The clerk only placed half a candle in each of the pulpit candle-brackets, and when the vicar had got about halfway through his discourse the candles had become exhausted. Consequently, as the preacher was unable to proceed with his sermon extemporaneously, he was compelled to wind up his discourse. This course was successfully adopted by the clerk for several Sundays; but the vicar, discovering the trick that was being played on him, last Sunday brought his own candles, and the congregation were treated to a sermon of exceptional length.—*Christian World*.

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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, W. J. Ramsey, "Life in Holloway Gaol" (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: 7.30, W. Heaford, "Religion and Insanity" (free). Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class. Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class in "Spencer's Ethics." Thursday at 8.30, open discussion (free). Saturday at 8.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11, debating class, Mr. Jackman, "The Registration Bill: what it should be"; 7.30, H. Snell, "Religion—the Slum and the Doss-House."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Evolution and Conscience."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "On the Brink of Home Rule" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Christ at the Bar" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches" (free). Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: 7, Touzeau Parris, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless"; preceded by music.

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, B. T. Hall (Asst. Sec. to the Seamen's Union), "Legislation for Seamen" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

South London Ethical Society, Chepstow Hall, 1 High-street, Peckham: 7, B. Bosanquet, LL.D., "Life in a North Country Village."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. James, "The Gospel of Secularism."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, F. Schaller, "A General View of Christianity."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs) 6.30, W. N. Allan, "A Plea for Total Abstinence."

Belfast—Crown Chambers, 64 Royal-avenue: 7, Thomas Millar, junr., "Is Christianity a Religion?"

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Orescent, Cambridge-street: Charles Watts, 11, "Juvenile Depravity in Birmingham—Is Christianity Played Out?"; 7, "The Supernatural: its Origin and Development."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, H. Smith, "Modern Inspiration: what does it Mean?"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 2.30, Mr. White, "Secular Creed."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, G. M. Wright, "Count Tolstoi: a Character Sketch"; 6.30, J. Griffin, "Psycho-phrenology" (with demonstrations).

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, J. Adams, "Ernest Renan and Jesus Christ."

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Carr-street: C. J. Hunt, 11, "God: Where and What?"; 7, "After Death—What?"

Leeds—Gladstone Hall, Skillbeck-street, New Wortley: Sam Standing, 11, "Sainly Thomas Paine"; 7, "Elijah's Carmel Fireworks." Free.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "World Evolution." Wednesday, concert and ball.

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: J. M. Robertson, 11, "Primitive Religion: its Natural Origin"; 3, "Non-Biblical Religion and Morals"; 6.30, "Christian Mythology."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, Joseph Brown, "Radicalism v. State Socialism."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, C. Pillier, "The Relation of Anarchism to Secularism."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea 3, mutual improvement class, Mr. Jannaway, "The Development of Science"; 7, Mr. Scarrott will lecture.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Robert Law, 3, "Why we have Heat, Light, and Color"; 7, "Sheffield Under the Sea; or how the Rocks at Sheffield were Formed."
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street; 7.30, C. H. Reynolds, "Man's Individual Responsibility."
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 7, J. Davidson, "What Christianity Teaches" (free). Monday at 8, Charles Watts, "The French Revolution: its Causes and Results."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

STOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Jan. 22, Islington; 29, Hall of Science. Feb. 5, Camberwell; 12, Portsmouth; 16, Hammersmith; 19, Sheffield; 26, Hall of Science. March 26, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Jan. 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. 22, Leicester; 25, Bermondsey Gladstone Club; 29, Ipswich. Feb. 26, Camberwell.

O. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Jan. 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.

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Jan. 22, Ipswich; 29, Edmonton. Feb. 2, Hammersmith; 19, Bethnal Green. March 12, m., Battersea; 19, Bethnal Green; 26, m., Hyde Park.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Jan. 22, Chatham; 29, a., Hyde Park. Feb. 5, Hall of Science; 8 and 9, Liverpool; 19, 20, 21, Manchester; 26, Wigan. March 5, Sheffield; 10, Beverley; 12, Hull; 19, Plymouth.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—Jan. 29, Camberwell. April 16, Manchester.

J. GREYZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Feb. 12, Bradford.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M, Manchester.—Jan. 22, Leeds; 31, Manchester. April 16, Hull.

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