

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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SPECIAL.

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CHRIST AT THE BAR.

MANY years have passed since Mr. Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* revealed a poet aflame with the revolutionary spirit. Republican and Atheist in one, open and unashamed, nay loud and flamboyant, Mr. Swinburne roused the anger of the political and religious bigots, as he had previously, in *Songs and Ballads*, enraged the prudes and puritans. The "Hymn of Man" was a splendid lyric, no less thoughtful than sonorous; and its fine qualities could not be denied by the most fanatical opponents of its spirit and intention. In the lines "Before a Crucifix," the poet gave fierce, uncompromising expression to his hatred of priestcraft and superstition. He was willing to admire Christ for his humaner sayings, but the admiration sank into disgust at the recollection of the infamies wrought in his name. Such stinging phrases as "the poison of the crucifix" were enough to make the orthodox mad, and they were ready to make an *auto-da-fé* of the ribald rhymster who spoke of their god as "rotten to the bone."

Mr. Robert Buchanan is not exactly a Swinburne, either in lyric fire, force of expression, or finish of style. He writes a great deal, in a rather slap-dash manner. Every now and then he ekes out a faulty line with a printer's accent at the end of a past participle. Sometimes he treats a past tense in the same airy fashion. Occasionally his ear is horribly at fault, unless we suppose him too indolent or hasty to correct a bad scansion. He can also be guilty of a most irritating anti-climax. After writing

Death is the one good thing beneath the sky,
he deliberately pens the feeble tag,

Death is the one sweet thing that men may see.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny his *vigor*. He is neither profound nor comprehensive; he is certainly not a great artist; but he goes along with a swing which challenges attention.

We need not wonder, therefore, that his new poem has "caught on"—to use a vulgar but expressive idiom. Mr. Buchanan has adopted the attitude of Mr. Swinburne; he has taken up the fascinating legend of the Wandering Jew; and by depicting Christ as that personage, in the spirit of the lines "Before a Crucifix," he has produced a poem that is shocking to those delicate things the "religious susceptibilities." Very much more might have been made of the idea by a poet of intense and powerful imagination, with a commensurate love of good workmanship; but Mr. Buchanan has made enough of it to serve as a destructive bombshell in the camp of Christianity.

No. 601.]

Mr. Buchanan opens his *Wandering Jew* in a snowstorm. He was (of course in imagination) walking the streets of London in a Byronic mood—

Bitter with God because my wrongs seem'd great.

While in this frame of mind he hears a voice in "hollow human accents" cry "For God's sake, mortal, let me lean on thee!" The poet obliges his abrupt accoster, who turns out to be the Wandering Jew—ancient, feeble, and hoary; and presently the Wandering Jew turns out to be Jesus Christ. As he reveals himself he becomes "white and tall and awful"; and the poet, after kissing the hem of his garment, falls fainting at his feet.

This was a narrow escape, for the poet had asked the half-frozen old gentleman to go to his lodgings and have something to eat; and if the interview had not taken that sudden turn, Jesus Christ and Robert Buchanan might have sat down together to oysters and stout, followed by churchwardens.

Poor Christ does not get a supper and a smoke. He is harried off, with the poet after him, to "an open plain beyond the city," where is a mountain like Golgotha, surrounded by swarms of quick and dead. "One sat silent in Judgment there," and "that ancient man, who trailed along a woeful Cross of Wood," is summoned to take his trial before the Spirit of Man, who addresses him in this fashion:

Jesus of Nazareth, lift up thy head
And hearken! Brought to face Eternity
By men, thy brethren, form'd of flesh like thee,
Brought here by men to me, the Spirit of Man,
To answer for thy deeds since life began,
Brought hither to Golgotha, whereupon
Thyself wast crucified in days long gone,
Thou shalt be judged and hear thy judgment spoken
Before the World whose slumbers thou hast broken.

The first impeacher is Death, who charges him with giving men "the poison of a Dream that slays repose."

This Jew hath made the earth that once was glad
A lazar-house of woeful men and mad
Who can yet will not sleep, and in their strife
For barren glory and eternal Life,
Have rent each other, murmuring his Name!

"This Jew" is charged with inventing fables, getting out of his grave when he should have lain there quietly, banishing all the joy and splendor of Paganism, spreading a gospel for the sick and witless, abetting a priestcraft that cursed and degraded mankind, lighting the fires of martyrdom—and other crimes against Humanity. Finally he is told—

Thy Kingdom is a Dream, thy Word a Lie,
Thyself a canker and a curse
Upon the Body of the Universe.

Judas Iscariot is the next witness. He betrayed Jesus to make him prove his Messiahship, and found him an impostor. He is followed by Ahasuerus, the real Wandering Jew, whom Jesus doomed to walk the earth without hope of death. Then comes Pilate, scornful alike of Jesus and the Jews. Tiberius and

Nero arise, and then Julian, who regrets his own love of toleration, and bewails his not having crushed the Christian superstition. He is succeeded by Hypatia, who was murdered and mutilated by the Christians at Alexandria. Zoroaster, Prometheus, Confucius, and Mohammed also bear witness against Christ, and then come the Popes, who tell how he covered their lust, greed, and ambition. Galileo arises, with Bruno on his right hand and Castalio on his left; and after them a crowd of heretics, who were persecuted, tortured, and assassinated. Finally the Jews impeach Jesus as the most terrible and bloody enemy of their race.

Jean Calas arises, kneeling at the feet of one whose hands he wets with tears, and who reveals himself as follows:

"VOLTAIRE the people named me. I denied
The godhead of that Jew, and at his brow
Pointed in mockery and scorn, as now!
Popes, Kings, and Priests shiver'd like frighten'd birds
Before the rain and lightning of my words,
And crouch'd with draggled plumage, awed and dumb,
Because they deem'd that Antichrist had come.
One day I heard this man in his poor home
Shriek aloud, encircled by the snakes of Rome;
And tho' their poison slew him, ere he died
I crush'd the vipers 'neath my heel, and cried
'Thy woes shall be avenged; I am here!
Even then a million wretches cast off fear,
And looking on this man's seed, redeem'd by me,
Fear'd the foul Christ no longer, and grew free!"

The witnesses on Christ's behalf are Saint Paul and the multitude of the weak and sorrowful who have trusted their Savior and cling to him still. Christ makes a poor defence for himself. He admits that his Dream was vain, but says he offered what the world was too wicked to accept, and had labored only "Within a barren Vineyard God hath curst." His prayer to the Judge is merely this—

Far have I wandered through the sleepless years—
Be pitiful, O Judge, and let me die!

"Death to him!" shout the multitude, but the Judge will not give him that merciful doom.

"Since thou hast quicken'd what thou canst not kill,
Awaken'd famine thou canst never still,
Spoken in madness, prophesied in vain,
And promised what no thing of clay shall gain,
Thou shalt abide while all things ebb and flow,
Wake while the weary sleep, wait while they go
And treading paths no human feet have trod
Search on still vainly for thy Father, God;
Thy blessing shall pursue thee as a curse
To hunt thee, homeless, thro' the Universe;
No hand shall slay thee, for no hand shall dare
To strike the godhead Death itself must spare!
With all the woes of Earth upon thy head,
Uplift thy Cross, and go. Thy Doom is said."

Jesus Christ goes off to bear his curse, and the poet exclaims, "God help the Christ, that Christ may help us all!"—which is rather enigmatical. If Mr. Buchanan means all the fierce impeachment of Christ in this poem, he should end like Mr. Swinburne with "Hide thyself, strive not, be no more." Jesus the man cannot very well survive Christ the god. Monarchs who get dethroned should retire into dignified seclusion, and Gods who suffer the same fate should take up their niches in the world's Pantheon. These ideal creatures are impossible as men; as played-out deities they are only fit (more or less) for the realm of imagination. While it is absurd to regard them as guides in the conduct of life, they may continue to serve the poet with mythological decorations. But whether Christ will be half as useful in this respect as the meanest god of Greece the poets must be left to discover for themselves.

G. W. FOOTE.

"ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY."

MR. LE GALLIENNE, in his *Daily Chronicle* letters in defence of the position that Christianity is no failure, puts aside all the dogmatic element in Christianity; all, in fact, which differentiates it from other faiths and which gave it vitality in the days when it really influenced men's lives, and calls the residuum "essential Christianity." This essence should indeed be infinitely precious, for it is infinitesimally small. According to his own definition it consists of "the belief in the beneficence of the Power who made it; in the spiritual significance and ultimate blessedness, of existence, and the life for others." Such a creed, if creed it can be called, might be subscribed to by any Deist. Voltaire indeed defined, not Christianity but natural religion, in a very similar way. It might be put forward by any Mohammedan or by any Jew. This, to any historic student, is a sufficient confutation; for Christianity, though an unmistakable offshoot of Judaism, is sharply divided from its parent by maintaining that Christ the Messiah has already come. It is a question whether a Unitarian is entitled to the designation of a Christian. Coleridge was of opinion that he was not. But there can be no question that those who have ceased to believe that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah of the Jews are no longer Christians.

The very term implies the original belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah of the Jews. The good news proclaimed by the early apostles of Christianity was that Christ, the promised king, had come to announce the speedy advent of his kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the living saints at his appearance. Paul said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51), and declared that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). This expectation was the cause of the early progress of the gospel—it was, in fact, the gospel itself.

No Christian, at the time when Christianity was a living system, ever said "Live for others." This formula was left to the Atheist Comte. The Christian said "Live for God." His duty was to give up all and follow Christ. And no early Christian regarded Christianity as an instrument for the amelioration of this world. Such an idea only dates from the renaissance of Paganism. All the Christian Fathers regarded this world as lying in wickedness and doomed to destruction. Christianity to them was the preparation for another and totally dissimilar world. The friendship of this world was enmity to God. Its wisdom was foolishness with God. Science, literature, art, and the conditions of social welfare did not concern the Christian. His business was to make sure his own salvation in another world. The neo-Christians, who cant of Christianity being the true Secularism, and preach "make the best of both worlds," would have been regarded by early Christians as detestable heretics flying in the face of Christ's declarations that his followers must resign father, mother, wife and children for his sake; that his kingdom was not of this world, and that it was impossible to serve God and Mammon.

The vain attempt to disregard the claims of this world has so honeycombed Christendom with hypocrisy that Christians do not scruple to identify their faith with that very worldliness which was its antithesis. We should rejoice in the spread of such broad views as those of Mr. Le Gallienne's "essential Christianity," but that they are made the cover of the most detestable hypocrisy. There is dishonesty at the bottom of this apparent breadth. It is an attempt to smuggle in and palm off a new article under an old name.

It is unfair alike to the old Church and to those who boldly put the new wine into new bottles. There

is an intellectual cowardice and dishonesty about these neo-Christians who vainly try to hold with the hare of authority while running with the hounds of free inquiry. They will accept reason only as far as they do not see its issues. They do not believe, but they will play at pretending to believe. The only fight they care for is a fight in the dark. Brought to the test, they will disclaim belief in the Trinity, the Atonement, the inspiration of the Bible, eternal rewards and punishments. They no longer hold that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, or that he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven; but they will utter the creeds as glibly as though they were the expression of their inmost thought, because, forsooth, they hold to what they call essential Christianity—which means just as much as they think beyond the reach of rational criticism.

Christianity is anything, or rather nothing, unless it denotes, as historically it does denote, those dogmatic beliefs which have come down the ages embodied in the Church. Those who have discarded these have virtually discarded Christianity.

Neo-Christianity may enfold in its cloudy embrace all the dishonest and half-hearted, but it will no more succeed in the long run than did neo-Paganism. The world wants a plain issue. You cannot feed men on phrases, however persistently you fill them with new meanings. The real battle is between Supernaturalism in its most consistent and organised form, the Catholic Church, and Secularism, which refuses all attention to the supernatural. That on all sides Protestants are modifying their dogmas; that even the *élite* of the Catholics are seeking to lower the temperature of hell; that such a discussion as that on the question "Is Christianity Played Out?" should be continued in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*, are among signs that the Freethought assault on Christian superstition has not been made in vain.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRIST AND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY.

A PUBLIC meeting was recently held in Regent-square Church, London, in connection with the Federal Council of the United Presbyterian Churches of England and Scotland, for the purpose of urging "The Application of Our Lord's Ethical Principles to the Questions of To-day." The chief speakers were the Rev. John Watson, of Liverpool, and the Rev. D. M. Ross, of Dundee. These gentlemen considered that the time had arrived when the teachings of the "Sermon on the Mount" should be practised as well as preached, if the social and political problems of to-day are to be solved. Although these divines did not indicate how the solution was to be brought about, Mr. Watson alleged that to do so was very easy, for, said he, "Once a man felt the mind of Jesus within him" he was bound to "carry his principles into action," and thereby advance the social and political condition of the people. If this statement be true, we are justified in assuming either that men have not felt this "mind," or, if they have, the feeling has not inspired the taking of "action." For certainly up to date the Church has done little or nothing towards the political emancipation and the social advancement of the "hewers of wood and drawers of water." In fact, the Establishment, through its Bishops in the House of Lords, has bitterly opposed nearly all progressive legislation, while the majority of the general clergy and many Dissenting sects have either shared in the opposition or have manifested a persistent indifference to the rights and privileges of the masses of society.

The reverend gentleman next says that a citizen's ideas of politics cannot rise to any great height

"unless his soul is properly filled with the principles Jesus laid down." After these positive affirmations we might fairly have expected to find either in Mr. Watson's speech or in Christ's teachings and example a method that would enable us to "carry into action" the injunctions of the Sermon. But we are disappointed, for Jesus, having been no political reformer, is no guide in the matter; and Mr. Watson did not even attempt to show in what manner the proclamation on the Mount could be made the basis of settling the social and political problems of to-day.

The reverend gentleman, however, not only placed Jesus outside the circle of reform, but he told us what might have happened if Christ had sought to secure general improvement. As an instance, Mr. Watson said: "Had Jesus put the emancipation of the slave, the equality of woman, and civil and religious liberty before men, there would have been a great danger that after his departure Christianity would not have survived." Is not this a practical admission that the teachings of Jesus are not suited to grapple with the questions of to-day? True, an explanation was given of Christ's silence upon these topics, to the effect that the time for reform had not then arrived, and that if he had pleaded for reform he would not have obtained the necessary support to have enabled him to secure his object. We reply that slavery, the degradation of woman, and social inequalities were wrong and unjust two thousand years ago, and to have endeavored to remove them was as much a duty then as it is now. To refrain from doing right through fear of consequences is not the policy of a true reformer. Thomas Paine never hesitated to preach and practise principles of reform even when the world was in arms against him. Besides, Jesus not only abstained from doing anything to rid society of the evils that then confronted him, but he was silent as to any remedy that might be applied by others in after-time. He did not bequeath to the world any principles the adoption of which would emancipate the human race from the burden of misery and wrong which has always been inflicted upon it. Mr. Watson says: "Fifty years ago the slave-owner was furiously orthodox; to-day he would be shown to the door." No doubt this is true, but the point to note is that Jesus did not either "show him the door" or suggest that others should do so. Is it at all likely, therefore, if Christ's own "soul" were not "properly filled with his principles," that the souls of his present followers will be largely influenced by their active force? The truth is that in the "Sermon on the Mount" there are no principles of freedom, of equal rights, of and personal dignity taught that can be usefully applied to the social and political questions of society.

It would be most interesting to see Christians make an effort to carry out the teachings they profess to value so highly. Suppose our politicians in Parliament were "properly filled with principles laid down by Jesus," what would they do in reference to the "questions of to-day"? Such persons could not consistently vote for savings banks, life insurance, sick and provident societies, or old age pensions. If the poor, hungry, and mournful are "blessed," why should Christian politicians support any measures for the relief of these favorites of the Lord? By so doing they would rob people of their "blessedness," and by the amelioration of their condition they would be making them full, rich, and merry, and thus they would incur the "woe" of Jesus. Mr. Watson appears to be a hopeful man, for he said: "It is possible that to-morrow huge and unnecessary fortunes will be looked upon as a moral sin against the Sermon on the Mount, and the man who has a fortune will be regarded as a semi-criminal." We are inclined to think that, so far as the Church is concerned, that to-morrow will never come. It is far more likely that if the request that is said to have been once

made by Christ to a young man, were put to church-goers of the present time, the majority of them would be found to walk mournfully away rather than obey the injunction "follow me." Jesus would have done more service to mankind if, instead of condemning riches, he had given some sound rule by which they could be fairly divided. To "give to the poor" may be quite right while the poor exist, but it would be much better to devise a plan whereby poverty would be rendered impossible. Undoubtedly there is sufficient wealth for all classes of the community if the affairs of the world were properly arranged; but how to secure such an arrangement is just what Christ failed to tell his followers. It should therefore be recognised that wealth is not necessarily a curse; on the contrary, it is one of the greatest advantages to mankind, for without it we fail to see that civilisation could be preserved and extended. The requirement of to-day is to know in what manner riches can be used so that they contribute to the comforts not of one class only, but of all sections of society.

The Sermon on the Mount may afford suitable material for orthodox preaching, but no body of sensible professors of Christianity will even try to put into practice its ascetical and humiliating injunctions. What real business of life could be done if its precepts were faithfully adhered to? If food and raiment are to be obtained upon the plan suggested by the Sermon on the Mount, the methods now in operation in the commercial world can be dispensed with, and persons can adopt the advice to "Seek first the kingdom of God," and to pray "give us this day our daily bread." We may consider the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air, but to do so would be very little profit to us, for they "toil not, neither do they spin"; and, what is more, they have no need of the food and clothing necessary for us, but which, alas! it is often difficult for many to secure even when they toil and spin. These orthodox proposals are foolish, and they evince upon the part of those who urge them a very small acquaintance with the world and its requirements if it is honestly expected that such a gospel can furnish any solution of the great "questions of to-day." Of course it is within the right of Christian ministers to offer such "solutions" of our social troubles as they deem fit, and it is our privilege and duty to point out the inadequacy of such "solutions" to meet the demands of the age in which we live, and to show that they are totally foreign to the habits and aspirations of the nineteenth century. If the friends of the Churches think we are wrong, let them try the experiment of applying the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to the exigencies of daily life, and then we shall see what we shall see. While unable to "pray," we will "watch" with profound interest, and no doubt we shall observe the results with curiosity. If the Christian "solutions" succeed, we shall be pleased to offer congratulations; and if they fail to solve "the knotty problems," we can offer comfort in the hour of defeat by assuring the deceived ones that we have a "solution" in the principles of positive Secularism that time and experience have proved to be efficacious in promoting the material welfare of the general community.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

A NICE DEITY.

Adore and tremble; for our God
Is a consuming fire;
His jealous eyes with wrath inflame,
And raise his vengeance higher.

Almighty vengeance, how it burns!
How bright his fury glows!
Vast magazines of plagues and storms
Lie treasured for his foes.

DR. ISAAC WATTS.

ASTOUNDING MIRACLE! AN INFIDEL SAVED.

BOB BURTON was an out-and-out infidel. "I stopped praying as soon as I'd any sense," he would declare. "I never saw the inside of a church after I was eighteen, and dropped all concern with the carpenter's wife's son before I came of age." He had no more belief in any God than in a green dragon dwelling on the other side of the moon. As Bob did not keep his opinions to himself, the horrid Atheist was often the subject of remark. On one occasion he had put what he considered a poser to the Rev. Zephaniah Hedges Westmoreland, and that noted infidel-slayer had replied by more than once publicly praying for him. "The dirty sneak," said Bob; "he sent a letter to my employer to try and get me out of my berth. But I'm too good a workman for that trick to succeed. Let him pray. He knows the utility of prayer, for his street-corner mouthings have got him a salary which no other ability would have assured him."

But the proud Atheist was to be laid low. Prostrated by a severe cold, and in a high fever, Bob, usually so cheery, looked glum enough when the physician, upon his reiterated request, told him he must prepare for the worst, and when his landlady, a pious old soul, declared roundly that she felt it her duty to tell him he was dying and must have a minister, he could only say "No minister for me; give me some toast and water, please, my throat is parched." "Ay, poor man," said the kind woman, "you've been a good fellow to me, but if you die unsaved you'll be parched all over for ever and ever. I must fetch the Rev. Mr. Howler." "Stop! I've lived like a man and don't mean to die like a baby. It's no use bringing any sky-pilot here. I don't want to insult them, and I won't have them insult me. So you'd better let me die in peace." The woman was undecided, but when she went out she met the Rev. Z. H. Westmoreland. That worthy had already heard of Bob Burton's parlous state from the doctor, and was on his way to add another to his list of converted infidels. "Well, my good woman, is he really dying?" "I fear so, sir; but he doesn't want to see anybody." This she said knowing the Rev. Z. H. W. was Bob's pet aversion, and thinking some other minister might prove less objectionable. "Nonsense, woman," says he; "it's my duty to take the message of Christ to him. Would you have him die unsaved?" This overcame all objections, and the landlady showed the man of God into the death-chamber. The sick infidel had fallen into a dose, when the minister, with his lugubrious nasal twang, said: "Are you prepared to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Have you made your peace with God, poor infidel?"

"Who the deuce are you?" cried Bob, starting up in bed. "Oh, it's you, you lily-livered sneak. You lied about me living, and come to add another about my death-bed? But you shan't have that satisfaction. There is the door." "My good man, you are raving. In a few moments you will be in hell. Call on Christ to save you." "If you don't go I'll call for the police." "Pooh-pooh, man; you are raving or drunk." At this insinuation Bob roused up further, and said: "You know I'm not drunk, and if you had any spark of the gentleman you'd go, and," added Bob, "give your testimony that I die as I have lived, an unbeliever in your religion." "But I will see you die, saved or howling, and shall chronicle your death for the salvation of others." This so exasperated Bob that he deliberately got out of bed, dressed, and, without a word, showed the astonished man of God to the door. Nor did he undress till sure that his visitor had departed. Then he went to bed, fell into a deep slumber, and on the following morning felt quite better. The excitement of the visit had carried the sick man over the crisis of his disease. He

rapidly got well, and still lives to tell the tale. The infidel-slayer can claim with truth that on this occasion at least he saved a dying infidel. LUCIANUS.

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

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

[CONCLUDED.]

But there are many other reasons which prove there is no God. It has never been proved there is a God, and if there is one he himself has not proved it. Yet the burden of proof devolves upon those affirming. Has God been proved? No! as our greatest Theists admit, and I will agree to give 100dols. to charity for every definition of God which I cannot prove to be absurd.

Existence (nature) is absolutely incompatible with the existence of God. It is either all God or all nature. It cannot be both. The one annihilates the other. Nature is infinite—here and there and everywhere. God, if "he" exists, must be infinite also. If not infinite, "he" cannot be God and all it implies. But two infinite entities are impossible, both cannot exist in the same space at the same time. We look around the world, we search space for billions of miles with our telescopes—alas, no God! All is nature. Nature here and there and everywhere. Where, then, is God?

To insist, dear friend, that nature "is as undemonstrable an entity as God himself," is, permit me to say, one of the weak arguments in your very interesting letter. You *know* nature exists, and to explain it—for no other reason—you still cling to the (higher) God idea, which, however, you cannot explain. So, in seeking the latter, you tacitly admit the former. But without the self-evident fact of nature—grand and, indeed, a we-inspiring—the God idea would never have been born.

But, *en passant*, permit me here in kindness to suggest a simple but practical test to demonstrate the supremacy of nature over God: Boldly place your finger in the fire, pray fervently to your God to protect your finger from injury and you from pain, and if at the close of the experiment you have experienced some pain, you will at least have received demonstration of the existence of nature, if not of God!

One of the strongest arguments against a God you involuntarily supply yourself. You say: "I, nor anyone else, ever knew wisdom, intelligence, knowledge, affection, or benevolence disassociated from a personality of some sort." You have seen what you (wrongly) interpret as "unerring intelligence and undoubted beneficence" in nature, and consequently, these being purely personal attributes, you are compelled to a Theistic solution.

Permit me to reply as briefly as possible: A God implies being—an organic being; this physical being; this necessitates limit, as an unlimited being is an absurdity; but a limited being cannot be God.

"Divine Potentiality" implies animal potentiality, because, as you say, where there is no being or personality there can be no "Divine Potentiality." Such a being necessitates brain. A God without a brain cannot be a God, but, my dear madam, a God with a brain cannot be infinite, and consequently cannot be God.

A God can only be conceived in the form of man. But a man-God, though a huge giant, is but an impotent agent to change the course of the smallest planet even a hairsbreadth. Imagine *your* God personality off in space among flying and burning orbs, with no foothold, but violently revolving, flying, and burning orbs, and by what law of nature would he escape instant destruction? Science says all organic life freezes to an icicle in interstellar space—this freezes out God. And if "he" should venture too near to one of the stars—which are all suns, except a very few planets—or too near our sun, he would instantly be incinerated!

Please imagine yourself in a large hall and molten balls of fire shot from immense cannon flying thick and fast all around you and you have an approximate idea of the fate of a God, if he really exists in interstellar space.

And lastly, as intelligence is always associated with personality, so is it always associated with sex. There is no sex without intelligence, and no intelligence without sex. But sex implies kind—male and female. The one without

the other would be a lamentable failure—an adaptation for no purpose, one of the "mistakes of nature" we read about. If there is a God, you admit he must be a being or personality. Conceded. Now, if a person, what gender? The Church in ignoring a female God virtually denies both, as the one cannot possibly exist without the other and imply perfection. OTTO WETTSTEIN.

TRUSTING TO PROVIDENCE.

Two articles have appeared in the *Daily News*, one on the 9th inst., entitled "Our Normal Poverty," and one on the 13th, headed, "A North-east London Inferno." These articles are sad reading. Sad to Christians, although they have the consolation that Jesus said "the poor ye shall always have with you" and "blessed be ye poor." But they are particularly sad reading for Secularists, who see in them the result of immutable law, and who have a clear conception of the enormous amount of prejudice and ignorance which will have to be removed before the roots of these evils can be attacked. In these articles one kind of factor appears monotonously, e.g., "and there are five little children dependent on him, and five and sixpence a week in rent to find." "Ever so many days," said a woman, whose husband was out looking for work, and who had four or five little children about her, "we have no food or fire all day long." And so on, "swarms of little children." The tales of misery total up until one can thoroughly understand the minister who is reported as saying, "I sometimes feel as though I should go mad with the hopeless wretchedness with which I am always trying to grapple." "Always trying to grapple." Yes, and always failing to grapple, while he assists to perpetuate the delusion that there is a special Providence ruling this world, that cares more for the sufferings of men than for those of mice or flies. This minister, no doubt a good fellow of his sort, has not the courage to suggest that prudence in the procreation of children might lessen the evil. That would conflict with the glib sophism, "that where God sends mouths, he sends food." The writer of these articles evidently has but little faith in providential assistance, vide the following:—"In spite of all the sadness of the thing, one cannot help being tickled into a sense of humor by some of the poor people's rigmaroles. One unhappy old lady, who, while she tried to talk was torn and shaken by a cough, which it was most distressing to witness, and whose sentences when she did begin them had a queer knock of dying off inaudibly in a nervous shaking of her toothless lower-jaw, declared with much unctuous fervor that she had gone down on her bended knees, and thanked the Lord for showering down his mercies upon her, when somebody had unexpectedly sent her a quarter of a hundred of coal." A quarter of a hundred of coal! A present from an omnipotent God, who had fed all the Israelites with "angels' food," and to whom the miracle of the loaves and fishes was mere child's play. No wonder the writer styles this "rigmarole." In yesterdays' article there is a death-bed scene of a poor old woman, surrounded by all the tortures of the direst poverty. The visitor asks all to kneel, and offers up the following prayer to God:—"That He is about to take the aged sister out of the troubles of this world, to a brighter and better life beyond." That is the chief cause of the dire miseries found in this certain life we have here.

If a Christian should read the foregoing, I can imagine him asking, what have your party done to relieve this misery? I answer, being human, we have to work as circumstances permit us. We take pains to avoid, as well as we know how, the misapplication of our doles, which we dispense in proportion to our means; but our motives are not the same as yours. We have no faith that a heavenly bookkeeper is recording a debtor and creditor account on our behalf. We have no faith in the selfish consideration that "he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." In addition, we do our utmost to weaken useless reliance on that providence which never helps, and to inculcate trust in human effort, which slowly, but surely, will lessen and tend eventually to remove the terrible miseries, which are mainly due to superstition having its foundation in ignorance. I take a lesson from this old woman's death-bed. She was ordered a little brandy, but she could not get it. I quote: "At least not till Mr. Somebody gave 'em twopence to buy some. He is very kind, is Mr. So-and-So. That's the man with four children of his own and six shillings a week, says my companion." Pretty good as compared to the gift of "a quarter of a hundred of coal" by the Omnipotent—or by somebody,

THE "SALVATION" DRUMMER'S HYMN.

I'm a 'allelujah shouter,
Which I castergates the drum,
And I thump the h'erring doubter
Into the blessed Kingdom Come ;
They say our grammer's 'azy,
And our music's rather rough,
But I'll send the Devil crazy
If I whack away enough.

O, the General's a-telling
Of his mishun here below,
While the multioodes are yelling
And a-swaying too an' fro ;
We are bringing life eternal
To the loafer in the slum,
And that Satan chap infernal
Has to flee before the drum.

Our system of behaving
Seems a bit like "makin' game,"
But the souls we keep on saving
Always gets there just the same,
Our "glib and and h'uncshus story"
May be blasphemy to some,
Yet there's dozens drove to Glory
By the 'allelujah drum.

You seldom find them clerics,
Who are quite the real cheese,
Get the women in hysterics
And the men upon their knees ;
Our good effects are fleeting
Very orfen, we allow,
Still, the drum is always beating,
And there's a virtue in the row.

Bang, bang! for our Commander,
And another bang for luck ;
They can chaff, condemn, or slander—
But they can't deny his pluck ;
He treats the 'ardened sinner
Like a brother and a chum,
Ay, and calls the prigs to dinner
With a thump upon the drum.

There's a mob of parsons preaching
Holy 'ash that's awful dry,
All the hearts that they are reaching
You could shove 'em in your eye ;
With religion they are *messing*.
And might just as well be dumb,
But we've got the Father's blessing
On the 'allelujah drum.

ACID DROPS.

The Rev. G. F. H. Rowe, curate of St. Augustine's, Halifax, thinks that Theism is preferable to Atheism because it solves "riddles." Had he read any Atheistic literature he would have seen that Theism only solves "riddles" to raise fresh ones. If God created the universe, what was he doing before he created it? If he created it out of nothing, how is that "riddle" to be solved? If he created it out of himself, how came it to be matter when he is spirit? If he is All-Wise, how came he to create fools and idiots? If he is All-Good, how came he to create thieves and murderers? We pause for a reply.

Kissing the Bible is dying out in this age of sanitary science. Dr. Thomas Jackson, the Croydon coroner, allows witnesses to hold up the right hand instead of slobbering the blessed book. If a witness has lost both arms we presume he would be allowed to hold up his right leg.

If some Nonconformist ministers acted as agents of the Liberator, their chapels had some share in the plunder. The Hollingreave Congregational Church, Burnley, has decided to hand over to the Liberator Relief Fund a donation of £25 which was made by Mr. J. S. Balfour, and the pastor of the church appeals to other churches who have received money from him to do the same.

Revivalists have a good time in New Jersey. At a place called Perth Amboy the mayor issued a proclamation calling on the inhabitants to shut their shops and go and hear some travelling Evangelists. Probably Perth Amboy is a very wicked corner of creation.

There will be a big gathering of Evangelists at the Chicago World's Fair. They are to hold forth in a tabernacle to accommodate 10,000 people. All of them will get well paid. "For wherever the carcass is there," etc. etc.

The *Christian World* finds Prophet Baxter more than it can stomach. In the recent litigation, which the Prophet judiciously settled out of court, "his manner of giving evidence was so unsatisfactory that the judge more than once sharply rebuked him, and warned him of the bad impression he was making." This is the gentleman who extracts hundreds of thousands of coppers every week from the pockets of ignoramuses whom he frightens with his predictions of the approaching end of the world—in which, by the way, he appears to have the slenderest belief himself.

There is something very funny about the news that a woman has been appointed Sergeant-at-Arms for the House of Representatives in Arkansas. It is to be hoped they will never have a Bradlaugh case there.

How should the men of God wear the hirsute adornments (or disfigurements) of their faces? Archbishop Maclagan holds the moustache in abomination. He tolerates a little whisker, but recommends a perfectly clean shave; which, of course, makes the men of God more like Jacob than Esau.

A pious story comes from Hungary. A man and his wife drove some miles to have their baby christened. On the way they drank freely, and when they arrived at the priest's house the baby was missing. Hurrying back they found the poor little thing frozen to death. What a terrible drama of religion and bestiality!

Cardinal Vaughan is good enough to pat England on the back. Among other things he admires her "true love of liberty." But she did not learn it from the Catholic Church. She derived it from her Tuetonic and Scandinavian blood, which the Catholic Church shed in torrents but could never subdue. "Liberty" in Cardinal Vaughan's mouth reminds us of Satan rebuking Sin.

Archdeacon Farrar is calling on the public to relieve the distressed clergy. He hints nothing of any duty on the part of those who have the plums in the Church cake. His own share is not so bad. As Canon of Westminster he gets £1,000, as Archdeacon £600, as Rector of St. Margaret's another £600, as Chaplain to the House of Commons £400, and as Chaplain to the Queen £40. In all £2,640, besides a good income out of his books.

In opening a new High School for Girls at Yarmouth, Canon Venables spoke of the progress of infidelity and unsanctified knowledge. The evils of the world came through Eve's desire for knowledge, and the desire was unsanctified. The Church must give sanctified knowledge, which, being interpreted, means that unless the Church impresses the notion of its own sanctity and that of its dogmas on infant minds, the secular education they receive will endanger the superstition of sanctification.

The Legislature of Cape Colony having passed a law legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister, the Bishop of Cape Town has issued a pastoral letter telling his clergy that they are not to celebrate such marriages, and that they are to repel persons so united from receiving Holy Communion. The bishops of the Province have all concurred in this advice, so that in this question the Church has set up its authority against that of the state.

America has its Sunday question as well as England. Dean Hart, of St. John's Cathedral, Denver, set the police in motion against the theatres, which dared to set up a rivalry with him on the Lord's Day. Three theatres were raided and numerous arrests made. At the Tabor the manager and the whole of the orchestra were run in for giving a performance of sacred music. The audience hissed the police and declared the arrests to be an outrage upon American liberty. After-

wards 2,000 citizens went to Dean Hart's residence and smashed all his windows.

The Rev. O. A. Lane has been lecturing at Boston on the Church of England. He declared it to be one of the mainstays of the land. He should have said the *landlords*.

Dr. Alfred Momerie writes to us as follows: "I must ask you to be good enough to correct the statement which appeared in your issue of the 8th inst. I have *not* come out of the Church, and have no intention of coming out. Regretting that this admission will deprive me of your good opinion, I remain," etc.—The statement Dr. Momerie complains of was in Mr. Wheeler's article. We regret the blunder, and take note that Dr. Momerie is still *in* the Church, though we have our own opinion as to whether he is *of* it. Dr. Momerie has the right to decide his position for himself. We do not doubt his honesty. We admire him for going as far as he has, and we hope he will go farther.

The Church Protestant Aid Society, bossed by the Rev. J. B. Coles, seeks to raise a fund of £50,000 to provide temporary places of worship for Evangelicals belonging to the Church whose parish churches are in the hands of Ritualists. A certain teacher said long ago that a house divided against itself cannot stand. We hope the fate of the Established Church will prove the truth of the saying.

The *Progressive Thinker* of Chicago, noticing the number of libraries and art galleries now open on the continent and in England on Sunday, says "England is a monarchy, while in the United States we have a hierarchy. We call this a republic; but when are the people consulted, or their rights conserved, if in conflict with the demand of the clergy."

The minister of a church not a hundred miles from the university told his congregation on Sunday morning that the human body is composed of four elements, namely, fire, water, earth, and air!—*Glasgow Weekly Herald*.

Mrs. Besant seems to be the victim of more practical jokes. The San Francisco *Morning Call* of Jan. 3 says that "When the office was opened yesterday morning attention was drawn to a long envelope on the mantel, which was not there when the rooms were locked the night before. It was addressed to 'The Esoteric Priestess, Mrs. Annie Besant, Theosophical Headquarters,' and marked 'From the Head Mahatma of the Universe.'" We suppose this is the gentleman now supposed to sit on the throne of the ex-monarch Jehovah.

The Catholic priests do not seem to "cotton to" the idea of happiness in hell, which Dr. Mirart got up for the benefit of his scientific friends. Some say truly enough that it is of faith to believe in material fire. Father Clarke S. J., has pointed out that Pope Innocent IV., in his decrees against the Waldenses, declared the "penalty of actual sin is the torment of eternal Gehenna." One priest writes in alarm to the *Catholic Times*, asking "if in spite of all the horror of eternal fire the bulk of sinners are still unmoved, what would happen if hell were made a mere classical hades?" So the good old hell must be retained by the Church just to "haud the wretch in order."

When the much lamented Christian idol levitated to heaven, where did he actually go to? Such is the question posited by Dr. Thain Davidson in his magazine. Of course he does not put it in this way. He asks, "To what world or planet or star did Christ's visible form wing its airy flight?" Well, the Acts of the Apostles says he was exalted to the right hand of God. How he got to the right hand side of the infinite is rather a puzzle, but Dr. Davidson lets us know his valuable opinion as to where it is. He argues that it must be "in the bosom of the Pleiades, the very pivot of the starry universe, is the peculiar residence of Jehovah, the palace of the King of Kings." When Dr. Davidson prays he should turn up his eyes to the Pleiades.

Canon Hayman, of Carlisle Cathedral, is accused by the Rev. C. J. Wilding of inducing him to take shares in a company promoted by the canon, to forward the interest of some grazing land leased by a relative in Canada. The Company proved a worthless one, though people were induced to invest their money in it on the strength of seeing Canon Hayman's name on the prospectus.

Estella Lucy Clarke, head mistress of the Melvin-road Infants Board School, Penge, was found suffocated, in the attitude of prayer by her bedside. What an illustration of beneficent Providence.

Men, women and children frozen to death with severe cold in all parts of Europe, form the comment on the pulpit text about our loving Father Almighty's beneficence.

At Lambeth, Henry Struger and George Reynolds, two Salvationists, were summonsed for annoying a resident by their musical instruments. The magistrate remarked he was sorry to say he could not believe their statements, and fined them each forty shillings and costs.

Guzman Blanco, who knew Jesuit morals from personal experience, described the South American mission Indians as "creatures whose vices degrade them much lower beneath the level of beasthood than their degree of intelligence can be said to raise them above that rank."

Sarah Turner applied to a London magistrate (Mr. Denman) for advice and assistance. Her husband had been a Wesleyan local preacher, and had since joined King Solomon's sect—which gained notoriety in connexion with the Glory Hole at Brighton. Two years ago he told her the Lord had commanded him to live with another woman; and another member of the sect came to say the Lord had commanded him to live with Mrs. Turner, but she indignantly repelled this inspired gentleman. Her husband had occasionally sent her sums of money, stating that they were the Lord's freewill offerings. The magistrate gave her a summons for a maintenance order, and it is to be presumed that the Lord's freewill offerings will come in more regularly.

The Rev. W. H. Jones, vicar of Mumby, Lincolnshire, whose friends advertised him as "missing," are probably sorry they spoke. A warrant for his arrest has been since issued, the charge being one of embezzling the school grant.

The Rev. H. B. Mason, vicar of St. Mark's, Ninebanks, Northumberland, has shot himself. The jury returned the usual verdict of insanity. Another fact for Talmage!

A man named Butler, living in Zion-court, Boston, went mad on religion. In this state he bit William Barton's finger, which had to be amputated at the hospital. Barton is making satisfactory progress, but Butler is as mad on religion as ever.

What twaddle the men of God will utter! The Rev. A. E. Swift, who officiated at the grave of the woman murdered at Lickey End, did not scruple to ask "how did they know but that the Lord had permitted the tragedy in order that it might act as a lesson to some of them?" What a nice Omnipotent Deity!

The Russian Church has again instituted persecution against the Stundists and other dissenting bodies, who are forbidden to meet in their assemblies.

The *English Churchman*, noticing Mr. H. S. Salt's *Rights of Animals*, refers to 1 Tim. iv. 3 as showing that Paul included vegetarianism among "doctrines of devils." It is, however, the Church which *commands* to abstain from meats on particular days.

The Archbishop of Canterbury hardly thinks that Christianity can be "played in" to the Mohammedans. This is a most extraordinary confession to come from the head of one of the principal forms of a divinely-revealed faith, and is tantamount to an admission that Christianity, considered as a universal religion, is a failure.

The Primate's words, as given in the report of a meeting at Croydon, to promote the mission to Assyrian Christians, were: "There is such a difference between Eastern and Western minds, that the hope of converting Mohammedans is very slight." What! with the grace of God and his promised assistance? Slight, indeed, is the progress of Christianity among Mohammedans. Probably as many Christians embrace the faith of Islam as those who turn from it to Christianity. So Christians have to send missionaries to convert to their own form of faith those who are already

Christians, finding how very slight is their success with those completely outside their pale.

Moody thinks the good ship "Spree" was saved by his prayer-meeting. The Rev. Dr. M'Chesney, of New York, who was on board with him, is rather doubtful. "Certainly," he says, "we owed our safety to God. But are we sure that if there had been no prayer-meeting on the sinking "Spree," the vessel would have sunk? Do we know enough of God's purpose to say that? Have we any information on that point? How about other ships that have been disabled, with no prayer-meeting on board, and yet did not sink? I find no warrant for saying that prayer saved the ship."

Christian journals are very indignant at the censorship of the Bible in Turkey, and at the obstacles placed in the way of its circulation. They forget that it is not so very long ago that the Bible was not allowed to be circulated in Christian countries.

The darkies of north-western Kentucky are indulging in a revival resembling the ghost-dance craze of the Sioux Indians. In the larger cities their meetings are protracted till long after midnight and are being watched by the local police. The result is an unusual stringency of the poultry market.

A controversy in the *Times* shows that the use of the confessional is spreading in the Church of England. It is even said to be insisted on in his diocese by the Bishop of Chichester, and there is no control over its use by the youngest and most recently appointed minister. It is always young girls who are specially urged to attend and receive priestly absolution.

The *Catholic Times* ends an account of Cioccio Cappuccio, once the chief of the Neapolitan Camorristi—a secret society of scoundrels—by saying that "he died a Christian death." Of course he did. Gentlemen of that sort always do.

The *Glasgow Herald* is facetious. After a long report of Principal Caird's introductory Gifford lecture, lauding Christianity to the skies, it placed a letter from a correspondent who quoted Omar Khayyam's lines à la Fitzgerald—

O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise,
One thing at least is certain.—This Life lies;
One thing is certain and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.
The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which awoke from sleep,
They told their fellows, and to sleep return'd.

The New York correspondent of the *London Globe* sends over the following news:—"Colonel Elliott Shephard, of the *Mail and Express*, dismissed his manager for 'incompatibility'—that is, for swearing, drinking, disobedience, and other things incompatible with the management of a paper which publishes a text of scripture every day over its editorial utterances, and is owned by the good Colonel Shephard, President of the Sunday-school Union of America, etc. The dismissed manager brought an action against the Colonel, and engaged Colonel Ingersoll, attorney-at-law, Atheist, etc., to conduct his case. The bad Colonel, fresh from delivering a characteristic lecture on Voltaire to a crowded theatre last Sunday night, proceeded with great gusto on Monday to the cross-examination of the good Colonel. The dismissed manager, Mr. Gray, had by way of revenge brought forward a charge against Colonel Shephard of attempting to obtain Government advertisements by the bribery of officials; he also incidentally asserted that he had often seen the Colonel the worse for liquor, and had once escorted him home to bed. Colonel Shephard, who is wealthy as the husband of one of the Vanderbilt daughters, is, in spite of his goodness, a very foolish and obstinate person, and perhaps the most unpopular man in New York. The spectacle of the cross-examination of the champion of goodness upon charges of corruption and drunkenness by the champion of infidelity, who is one of the best orators and wittiest cross-examiners in the country, was a great attraction. Hundreds of people were turned away from the court, and those who got in filled the room with their laughter in defiance of the judge."

In an article in the *Deutsche Revue*, the Rev. A. H. Sayce mentions that on a temple at Medinet Habu, Ramases III.

recorded the names and places of the lands he had conquered. These inscriptions prove that Ramases III. extended his conquests over Southern Palestine. But though his conquests covered the land allotted to Judah, he makes no mention of the children of Israel, nor do the Jew books make any reference to Ramases III.

As the London press tried to make out that Secularism was responsible for the Marquis of Queensberry's lecture on Marriage, Mr. Foote thought it necessary to write the following letter which appeared in the *Star*:—"Sir,—Will you kindly allow me to protest against your statement that the 'proceedings' at the Marquis of Queensberry's lecture were 'distinctly Secularist throughout'? Mr. Charles Watts, who took the chair, informs me that he plainly stated his dissent from the lecturer's opinions. Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who proposed a formal vote of thanks, made a similar reservation. Both gentlemen were ready to defend the lecturer's right to be heard, if anyone would listen to him; and that was the only thing implied in their presence at the meeting. Discussion is valuable even though it lead to occasional eccentricity, and Secularists are mostly of an inquiring turn of mind. But it is an error to suppose that the Secular party is in any way committed to the views of the Marquis of Queensberry on the relation of the sexes. My own impression is that he would find precious little sympathy in our ranks for the 'reform' he advocates, which seems more defensible on Biblical grounds. Truth and utility, however, have no reason to fear the breath of criticism; and if, as I believe, the Marquis of Queensberry is honest and sincere in this propaganda, his case should be heard, if at all, on its merits, without a disposition to saddle other persons with its responsibility. The maintenance of a man's (even a lord's) right to his opinion is not a declaration that his opinions are right.—Yours etc., G. W. FOOTE (President, National Secular Society)."

Here's a queer advertisement from the *Church Times*: "Will any Lady or Gentleman kindly Lend a Clergyman of good position, with no friends, £30 at 15 per cent. interest? Rev. Hindley, Post Office, Hastings." According to Crockford's *Clerical Directory* there are only three Hindleys in the Church. Two have livings in town, valued at £540 and £330 per annum, and a vicarage respectively. The other one is out in Melbourne.

William Schofield, a teacher in the Free Church Sunday-school, has been remanded at Sheffield on a charge of embezzlement from the Smithy-bridge Co-operative Society, of which he was secretary.

Anent the question "Is Christianity played out?" several men of God have been saying their religion has never had a fair trial. Well, if eighteen hundred years is not a fair innings, how much longer do they want? Have Science and Secularism had a fair trial?

Hugh Price Hughes has a poor opinion of Atheists, but it can hardly be poorer than the opinion Atheists have of him. At St. James's Hall last Sunday, in the course of his address on Mr. Buchanan's poem, he declared that "Atheists had done nothing to reform the world." English Atheists, who have recently lost Charles Bradlaugh and still have George Jacob Holyoake amongst them, can afford to laugh at this foolish falsehood.

"No Atheists," Mr. Hughes exclaimed, had died in Africa while on a mission of comfort to the inhabitants of that dark continent." Perhaps not. Atheists have enough to do at home, in remedying the evils of "Christian civilisation." On the other hand, they don't go to Africa on filibustering expeditions, clearing their way with gatling guns. Christians have done far more harm than good in Africa, and Atheists have no desire to rival them in the missionary, rum, and rifle business.

Here is a little story about the late Ernest Renan. One day when he went into a church he uncovered his head. "What!" said a friend, "I thought you had broken off with our Lord?" "Well," said Renan, "we greet one another, but we never speak."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, January 29, Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street, Bristol:—at 11, "Science and Miracles"; at 3, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"; at 7, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

Monday, January 30, Corridor Rooms, Bath:—at 8, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

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 28, Bolden Colliery; 29, South Shields; 30, North Shields; 31, Ebchester. February 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.

R. CHERTOFF.—Received. You are welcome.

C. M. STEADMAN.—May find room.

R. G. W.—Postal Orders never were "negotiable" like cheques. But they are honored by the Post Office when presented by Banks. If an Order is stolen, the receiver is responsible—though not criminally, if he was in ignorance—as in the case of other stolen goods.

J. G. WARREN.—We are obliged to you for taking and distributing four copies weekly.

J. WILLIAMSON (Glasgow) writes—"A gentleman I gave the Double Number of the *Freethinker* to, informed me that he was so pleased with it that he would buy it for himself in future."

J. B. COPPOCK has received the parcel of books from Ron Mahon for the Science Classes at Camberwell, and handed them over to the library committee. Ron Mahon is thanked for his present.

A. J. P.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. V. KREBLE.—Cuttings are always welcome.

A. B. WAKEFIELD.—Thanks for report. Pleased to hear you will take six copies of next week's special number.

J. KEAST.—The black champion gives a fresh excuse every time he is challenged to debate. Secularists are tired of his evasions. As to his color, it makes no difference to us whether he is black, yellow or brown; only, as he used to advertise himself as a "negro," we do not see that he has any ground of complaint.

T. MAX.—We note your suggestion that a Shilling Week should take place at Midsummer. Of course the printing of all the names is a bother, but then, as you say, it "looks *bona-fide* and shows who's who."—Secular organisation is a big problem. We have done something in this line, and hope to do something more.

G. BRADY.—Perhaps another attempt might be made with better success. Mr. Foote will be happy to visit Perth, at his own risk, when he next lectures in Scotland.

A. CASTLE.—If your "mite" is not acknowledged we presume it did not reach us. What do you mean by "others." Did you send for others as well as yourself? If so, look carefully through the lists and see if they are acknowledged. Of course we don't guarantee absolute accuracy. On the other hand, letters frequently go astray in the post.

R. KILLICK.—Mr. Foote has no advice to give with respect to the shareholders' meeting on Monday. He will be at Bath himself trying to form a new Branch of the N.S.S. Shareholders must take their own course. Mr. Foote has sufficiently explained his views as to a Bradlaugh Memorial.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—We have received the following dinner subscriptions:—W. Hunt, 10s.; Mrs. E. Moore, 2s.; T. G. Moore, 2s. 6d.; W. T. Allfroy, 5s.

E. STIEBEL.—Cuttings are always welcome.

C. HUGHES.—(1) Mr. Foote supported the right of civil servants to combine like the employees of private firms. They are driven into political action because this right is denied them. (2) Glad to hear the minister of Field-road Chapel strenuously endeavored to obtain fair play for Mr. Anderson.

T. FARQUHARSON, 46 Henry-street, South Bank, Yorkshire, will be glad to hear from local Secularists willing to form a Branch of the N.S.S.

A. MORRISON.—The *Freidenker* is published at 414 East Water-street, Milwaukee; *Der Arme Teufel* at 6 Camplain-street, Detroit, U.S.A.

JOSEPHUS.—(1) We cannot deal with free-will and responsibility in this column. You will find the subject admirably treated in a little book by Anthony Collins published at our office, and in Holbach's *System of Nature*. (2) It is getting fashionable for Christians to boast that they are Freethinkers. But see what Christians wrote about the term "Free-

thinker" a hundred, nay fifty years ago. They called it absurd, hateful, and so forth. Now they want to appropriate it. That is an ancient trick of theirs.

W. ROBSON.—See "Acid Drops."

G. CROOKSON (Hoyland Common).—(1) Thanks for your little history of the worthy Hebblethwaite. We did not know he was mixed up with the mobbing of Mrs. Besant at Barnsley. (2) Glad to hear that your sale of the *Freethinker* has increased from three copies to a dozen in a very short time. There is always a sale for this journal where the newsagents give it a chance.

T. FLETCHER writes—"I am very pleased that the *Freethinker* will be illustrated once a month; it will be a happiness to see the faces of the heroes of Secularism." This correspondent is informed that we see nothing to object to in his methods of circulating this journal.

W. NEWALL.—Kindly send all future orders direct to Mr. Forder. We don't know the book you mention. Thanks for offer.

F. PRINCE.—Thanks for the reference. We see the *Sunday Sun* weekly.

C. WINSLET, Deneview, Hart-road, Dorking, would like to communicate with "W. C." of that place who subscribed to Shilling Week.

J. HORNE.—Your name is in the Jan. 15 list, page 52, third line from bottom of column. As you don't give the name of your friends for whom you remitted, they may be beside yours in the list for all we know. Pray look yourself. We cannot recollect such a lot of letters individually.

A. N. STAJLER.—Shall be looked into.

J. W. BAYLISS.—Shall appear.

R. CHAPMAN.—The Strauss you saw priced at 1s. 6d. is a bogus book. Strauss's *Life of Christ* was published in England in four volumes. This fetches about 12s., and is not often met with. Strauss's *New Life of Christ* (a later book) was translated by George Eliot, and published in two vols. by Trubner. This is now reduced to 15s. Another edition of the same (copyright having expired) is published in one volume at the same price by Sonnenschein, with a preface by Pfeleiderer.

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—Fritankaron—New York Herald—Leamington Chronicle—New Zealand Times—Cape Argus—Rochdale Observer—New York World—Western Morning News—Bromsgrove Weekly Messenger—Beckenhams Journal—West Yorkshire Pioneer—Yarmouth Mercury—Kent Messenger—Northern Evening News—Epsworth Leader—Sporting Chronicle.

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* (including the twopenny special number for the first week in each month) 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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Despite the fact that the *Daily Chronicle*, by some freak of scrupulosity, refused to insert an advertisement of Mr. Foote's lecture on "Christ at the Bar," a splendid audience assembled at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote gave an account of Mr. Buchanan's *Wandering Jew*, with several extracts, and then dealt with the correspondence in the *Chronicle*. The audience was deeply interested, and the lecturer received a perfect ovation on resuming his seat. Two gentlemen offered opposition. The chair was occupied by Mr. James Rowney.

The *Morning* gave a brief report of Mr. Foote's lecture. It was rather topsy-turvy, but it is a sign that the old conspiracy of silence is breaking.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Jan. 29) at Bristol, and on Monday evening he delivers his first Freethought lecture at Bath, where he hopes to establish a Branch of the National Secular Society.

Mr. Touzeau Parris occupies the London Hall of Science platform to-day (Jan. 29), both morning and evening. We shall be glad to hear that he had good meetings.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday morning and evening again in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, to good and thoroughly appreciative audiences. In the evening the meeting warmly and repeatedly applauded Mr. Watts's answer to the question, "Is Christianity Played Out?" We are glad to learn that the sale of the *Freethinker* is still increasing in Birmingham. Last Sunday, although extra copies were on hand, all were sold before the evening lecture.

Mr. Charles Watts—as will be seen by his list of engagements—is just commencing a lengthy tour in Durham and Northumberland, under the auspices of the N.E. Secular Federation. Should the weather be at all decent he is sure to have good audiences, and his visit should strengthen the local Branches.

The projected friendly discussion between Mr. Foota and the Rev. Fleming Williams has been postponed in consequence of the chairman, who is one of the London Liberal M.P.'s, being obliged to go into the country. Mr. George Standing, who has had the arrangements in hand, informs us that he hopes to fix a date suitable to all parties early in March.

A general meeting of the Finsbury Park Branch of the N.S.S. will be held to-day (Jan. 29), at 6, at 11 Blackstock-road, Finsbury Park, when all members of the Branch are urgently requested to attend.

The East London Branch sends us its annual balance-sheet Under its auspices forty-one lectures have been delivered in the twelve months. The income has been modest, but the Branch has got out of debt and has a small balance in hand. At the annual meeting, on Sunday, Jan. 15, Mr. Haines moved a sort of ancient-history resolution about the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, but the members decided to pass to the next business.

Ladies and gentlemen willing to take part in organising the annual Children's Party, to take place on Wednesday, March 1, are earnestly requested to meet the Committee at the Hall of Science this evening (Jan. 29) after the lecture. Donations for the Children's Party should be sent in promptly. No one can grudge a trifle to provide a bright evening for hundreds of little ones. Mr. Forder or Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street, will be happy to receive subscriptions.

The special dancing class for members of the N.S.S. and their families has been successfully started at the Hall of Science. Tuesday evenings are set apart for instruction and practice. Mrs. Anderson is a very capable teacher, and takes a lively interest in her pupils. Two or three Freethinkers who are proficient dancers assist her *con amore*. Intending members should join at once; the fee is 5s. per quarter.

A bill has reached us announcing a four nights' debate in the Secular Hall, Hanley, on Jan. 29, 30, 31, and Feb. 1 between Mr. Geoffrey Hilton (Secularist) and Mr. Joseph Taylor (Christian). The latter is advertised as an ex-Secularist lecturer. He is the gentleman who applied for a special lecturer's diploma, and made a great fuss about his "treatment" by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. We are not quite sure, but we believe he was never a member of the N.S.S. We do not know Mr. Hilton personally, but we dare say he will be able to deal with Mr. Taylor in debate.

Open Court, of Chicago, has made a significant change in its sub-title. It was formerly "Devoted to the work of Conciliating Religion with Science," but we presume it has found the task of mixing irreconcilables a vain one, for it has substituted "Devoted to the Religion of Science," which it declares to be "the trust in truth, the search for truth, and living the truth."

The *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, every now and then gives its readers an Eclectic number taken from its foreign exchanges. The number for Jan. 7 gives from our columns Mr. Foote's article on Tennyson and the Bible, two of Mr. Wheeler's papers on Hell, as described by those who have seen it, and Mr. Ryan's article on Modern Miracles.

The continuation of our Interview with the Devil stands over in consequence of the press of other matter this week. This interview has brought us several letters, all but one expressing approval. (The one, by the way, is anonymous.) It seems impossible to please everybody, and we have no intention of trying it. The plan we follow is to please ourselves; then we know that *some one* is satisfied.

Our readers are requested to note that next week's *Freethinker* will be a special one, price twopence. It will contain more than the ordinary quantity of reading matter, and a fine portrait of Mr. G. J. Holyoake, with a biographical sketch. As this number will be a good one for lending about, and several readers may want extra copies, we shall print a somewhat larger edition than usual.

SHILLING WEEK.

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

J. Moon, W. T. Allfrey, J. Phillipson, Mr. Edgecombe, J. Hollowvine, Manchester Branch (per W. Payne) 5s., G. Steer 2s. 6d., J. Crabtree £1; R. Restieaux, H. J. Bartor 2s.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY (ONLY).

A Sympathiser 2s. 6d., R. Johnson, J. G. Warren 5s.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND (ONLY).

E. P., M. P., A. P., F. P., W. A. B. 2s., J. Barnaby, Mrs Hancock 2s. 6d., A Sympathiser 2s. 6d.

RESULT.

	£	s.	d.
General Total	107	12	2
N.S.S. (only) Total	7	2	9
<i>Freethinker</i> Sustentation Fund (only) Total...	15	17	3

One-third of the General Total goes to the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund, and two-thirds to the National Secular Society's General Fund. The net result, therefore, is £51 14s. 7d. for the *Freethinker*, and £78 17s. 5d. for the N.S.S.

(These figures are subject to audit by Mr. Reynolds.)

IS CHRISTIANITY PLAYED OUT ?

MR. FOOTE'S LETTER TO THE "DAILY CHRONICLE."

(Printed Monday, January 23.)

You will perhaps allow me, as President of the National Secular Society, a little space in this discussion, especially as both Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Le Gallienne have highly praised Secularism when it does not take the form of sneering at—well, at what superstition *those* gentlemen elect to retain.

Mr. Buchanan has advanced since he robustly attacked Colonel Ingersoll some eight years ago. He is now but a few steps behind the great Freethought orator. He resents what Darwin called the "too much suffering" in the world. He denies, with John Stuart Mill, the doctrine of Omnipotent Beneficence; he even says that God does not interest him. But he still clings to the "hope" of a future life, and talks of Christ as his "Elder Brother"—with capital letters. Some day or other he may learn that the Christ of the New Testament is no more a real figure than the Christ of his own "Wandering Jew."

Mr. Buchanan's indictment of Christianity meanwhile stands unanswered, except by the feeble and hackneyed objection that all the evil done for so many centuries in the name of Christianity, and by its ministers who were supposed to have "received the Holy Ghost," is not chargeable upon Christianity itself. The raisers of this objection quote certain New Testament texts. They forget that other texts were quoted as appositely by the persecutor, the opponent of science, and the friend of arbitrary power. They also forget (or do they forget?) the remark of Cardinal Newman, that by a judicious selection of facts you can prove anything. Put all the good to the credit of Christianity and all the evil to the credit of something else (poor human nature, perhaps), and the result is a splendid vindication. But the same logic would equally vindicate every other religion; nay, it would whitewash the blackest monsters of history.

Mr. John Morley, in his "Voltaire," speaks of Christianity as "the creed in whose name more blood has been violently shed than in any other cause whatever." Now, if this blood was not shed by Christianity, it was certainly shed by Christians. By *professed* Christians, it will be said. Yes; but that opens up the question, What is Christianity? which has not been faced in this dispute.

Suffering as "growing pains," the theological significance of consumptive monkeys, the "whatever is, is right" of Pope, and the "whatever is, is wrong" of Schopenhauer, may all be set aside. It is not Theism, but Christianity, which is being controverted; not what the Christian has in common with Brahmans, Mohammedans and Jews, but what is distinctively its own.

Mr. Le Gallienne gives a definition of Christianity which does not include Jesus Christ. Every word of it might have been taken from Plato, Socrates, Cicero, or Marcus Aurelius. This is what he calls "essential" Christianity, as distinguished from "conventional" Christianity. If I may be pardoned a coarse loan from Bishop Warburton, it only seems to me Mr. Le Gallienne's "doxy" as opposed to other people's "doxies." For when "A Priest" asks him for something definite, he declines "a purely theological controversy."

Mr. Morrison Davidson does not champion "essential" Christianity. He stands up for "genuine Christianity." And what is that? The Communistic Commonwealth. But this is denied by your clerical correspondents. It is again a case of Mr. Davidson's "doxy." He picks out half a dozen texts from thousands, and says "This is Christianity." With the same intellectual rigor he talks of the "Atheist Constantine" and the "ten imperial persecutions of unparalleled atrocity" which were long ago solved in the acid of Gibbon's criticism.

"Essential" and "genuine" are only adjectives. The substantive's the thing. Gold is gold, when we come to logic, and Christianity is Christianity. And what is that? What has it always meant? Belief in the deity of Christ, his absolute authority as a teacher, his atonement for the sins of believers, future rewards and punishments, salvation by faith, the depravity of human nature, the efficacy of prayer, the inspiration of the Bible, and the revealed will of God as the rule and sanction of morality. This and more has been accepted, and is still accepted by all Christian sects except the Unitarians, who are not Christians in the historic meaning of the term.

Now if this be Christianity, it is undoubtedly played out. Of course I may be accused of writing as a partisan. Well, I ask anyone to read an old standard book like *Pearson on the Creed*, and then a new book like Professor Bruce's *Apologetics*, and I am much mistaken if he will not feel that Christianity is in the last state of nebulosity. And it is in this way that religions disappear. No one ever sees a religion die, said Charles Bradlaugh. It changes into something else, and the process occupies generations and centuries.

Clinging to Christ as an ideal personage is a modern phenomenon, and a temporary one. When the deity of Christ is gone, this is commonly the next stage of sceptical development. But it does not last. Men of intellect, like Dr. Martineau, or at least like Professor Newman, go on to deny the perfection of even the idealised Christ of the gospels.

Christ may "comfort" the sorrowful and afflicted. So will anything a man is trained to look to in the hour of need. Fatalism itself has been found very soothing. Every religion gives "comfort." But there is something better; it is prevention; and this is the work of science.

Setting aside "intuitions" and "feelings," and all the elements of a personal equation, let us look at history. I gather from Mr. Le Gallienne that Christianity did little good for 1,800 years. It came before the world was ready—which is directly opposite to the common argument of "preparation"—and has only had a chance during the last half century. In other words, Christianity is only able to help the world when science, education, the printing press, international communication, and democracy are doing the work. It is not "essential," but quintessential, like the meat-roasting power of the meat-jack.

Civilisation is a recent thing in modern Europe. It did not come in with Christianity. It is purely the result of scientific discovery. Knowledge is power; it is also elevation. The railway, the ocean steamer, the telegraph, and the Press—and not Christianity—are breaking down the barriers of hatred and prejudice between nations, and bringing about the unification of mankind.

Christianity has in no sense saved the world, and it has had a great opportunity. To plead for another chance is the thief's shift in the dock. What are the distinctive vices of Christendom? Drink, gambling, and prostitution. I have the Archbishop of Canterbury's authority for saying that in the Christendom "intemperance is in far greater rage and ravage than among those 'Gentiles'" we read of in St. Peter. His remarks on "impurity" are no less scathing. On gambling it is needless to expatiate. Even war is more characteristic

of Christendom than of heathendom. The great armies, the awful instruments of slaughter, the terrible war tax, are all conspicuous in lands that swear by "the Prince of Peace."

Despite the protests of Mr. Le Gallienne, Christianity is a practical failure, and it is the priests he denounces who give it longevity. They have always opposed secular progress, but they have a wonderful power of appropriating the laurels of other men's victories. They teach the children that Christianity has done what it resisted; they falsify secular history as they falsified ecclesiastical history; they train the sheep to cry, "Long live the wolves!"

G. W. FOOTE.

HOW THE WIND BLOWS.

SCEPTICISM IN THE PRESS.

These Bampton Lectures of Bishop Barry's are a specimen of the modern apologetics of compromise that have lately come into fashion. Being Bampton Lectures delivered by a specially chosen preacher before the University of Oxford, they may be taken, we presume, as a favorable specimen. Fifty or sixty years ago the majority of clergy in high places were still denouncing geology and palæontology. Twenty-five years ago they were denouncing Darwin and kicking against the antiquity of man. Ten years ago they were denouncing the serious application of historical criticism to the canon of the Scriptures and the date and composition of the several books. All these mops wherewith orthodoxy would fain stem the ocean are nowadays too obviously worn to the stump, and they are thrown away. Geology has become as innocent, nay edifying, as the Newtonian astronomy, which was itself a wicked thing in its time. Darwinism is admitted into the company of the faithful, and is passing into the stage of matter for edification. Historical criticism is received on terms of diplomatic relations, though not without suspicion. Moreover, the new school of apologists profess a lively interest in the social movements and problems of the time, hint that they possess or will shortly discover the true key to them, and speak smooth things to those who seem to represent growing tendencies of popular feeling. It is more to them to flatter Alderman Tillet and Mr. Sidney Webb than to speak with Kuenen in the gate. And then, having set forth these and such like matters with more or less rhetorical art and in more or less scholarly form, they complacently bid us observe that a Church which is so eminently successful in keeping itself only about a generation behind lay science and philosophy must go near, after all, to be a more than human institution. They eschew St. Augustine's glory over the cruder physical details of miracle; they do not even use miracles, on the assumption that the twelve apostles were a special jury, for a practical warrant of doctrinal mysteries to common sense. Rather they hope that, for the doctrine's sake, modern laymen will tolerate the few necessary miracles, discreetly kept in the background and veiled in a dim religious half-light.—*Pall Mall Gazette*, January 20.

CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE.

Of all absolutely powerless things on earth Christianity is the most powerless, even though sovereigns are still consecrated, multitudes still baptised, parliament and tribunals still opened, and countless churches and cathedrals still built in its name. It has become a shibboleth, a husk, a robe with no heart beating within it, a winged angel carved in dead wood.—*Louise de la Ramée "Ouida."*

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO N.S.S.

SPECIAL FUND.—A. J. Larkin, 2s.; C. H. Parkinson, 2s.
BENEVOLENT FUND.—Mrs. Bussie, 10s.; Heckmondwike Branch, 5s.
E. M. VANCE, Asst.-Sec.

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. Forster will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

CORRESPONDENCE.

JEWISH SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I have been a reader of the *Freethinker* for some time, and whilst utterly objecting to the arguments contained in its columns, have enjoyed and appreciated many articles notwithstanding. I have observed at all times a disposition to treat the great subjects it criticises, somewhat flippantly, yet likewise logically, and when a departure from the rule takes place and a question is dealt with in an unfair spirit, it is only correct that objections should be raised. In reading your reply to the Rev. W. E. Blomfield (which I may here remark would have been better liked had the parson's sermon been printed side by side), I notice that you assert that the Old Testament sanctioned slavery, and that the Jews were allowed to buy and sell the heathen. Being a member of the Hebrew race—proud of its history and traditions—proud of the fact that they gave the world a superb system of morals—proud of the fact that out of its ranks have been produced brilliant geniuses in science, art, and literature, I must join issue with you upon the question of the Old Testament's sanction (as you assert) to slavery. In Exod. xxi., xxii., xxiii., we find that God gave Moses a series of "judgments," which were to form the basis or foundation of the moral and social laws of the Israelites—that is to say, the laws which were to regulate their manners and their dealings with one another. The first series of these "judgments" referred to slavery—or more properly to "servitude." Now you might suppose that one of the first laws that would have been given to a nation just released from slavery would have been a law for putting an end to all sorts of bondage, and many writers who have looked only on the surface of the Bible, have regarded the Mosaic law as cruel, because they allege (like yourself) that it countenanced slavery. But it will be seen that, far from countenancing, it distinctly prohibits slavery—that is, slavery in the sense in which we understand it. God ordains that "he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (Exod. xxi. 16). So slavery, such as we understand it—such as existed until lately in some parts of America, and such as still exists in certain Spanish possessions and in parts of Asia and Africa—could never have existed, for it was an act punishable by death to steal a human being. Still there was a mild kind of slavery permitted, but it was so hemmed in by laws for the protection of the slave that the words used, "servitude" and "servant," should be used to designate this condition of semi-bondage rather than the words "slavery" and "slave." (In the Hebrew Bible the word which is used means equally "slave" and "servant.") If you carefully read Exod. xxi. and Deut. xv. 12-17, you will understand the nature of these protective laws. Only under three conditions could servitude exist. First, strangers who were taken prisoners of war could be bought and sold as bondsmen; secondly, Hebrews who had been found guilty of certain crimes were sentenced to penal servitude (Exod. xxii. 3), and were liable to be sold as slaves, but for no longer than six years, unless they of their own accord renewed their servitude (Exod. xxi. 5, 6). "In the seventh year he shall go out free for nothing" (Exod. xxi. 2). Thirdly, Hebrews who had become so poor that they could not support themselves or their families might sell themselves (Lev. xxv. 39) into servitude; but their servitude would also expire at the end of the sixth year, unless voluntarily renewed. No unkindness (Lev. xxv. 39, 42, 43) of any sort was permitted towards servants or slaves. A runaway slave might not be captured and restored to his master (Deut. xiii. 15, 16). If a master struck his servant or slave, and injured him, however slightly, he was obliged to let him go free (Exod. xxi. 26, 27). You may therefore be sure that no Israelite would risk the loss of his servant by striking him. And when the time of servitude was over, the Hebrew slave or servant did not go out into the wide world empty. He was to have enough to enable him to re-commence this life of freedom ("Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor [threshing floor or granary], and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to-day."—Deut. xv. 14, 15). Thus you have striking evidence of the humanity of these laws relating to servitude, teaching the Israelites that they had been bond-

men, and causing them to remember that when they became masters not to be tyrants, like the Egyptians, but to be kind and merciful to those who had to serve them. I must apologise if I have trespassed too much on your patience, but in common fairness I think it is right that when you charge "slavery" against the ancient laws of the Israelites to properly qualify the term, especially in the sense that it was understood to imply, for the word "slavery" to modern ears means something horribly inhuman and debasing.

S. GOODMAN.

[We print this letter in full, to allow a Jew a hearing on the subject. Mr. Goodman's distinction between "servitude" and "slavery" is purely fanciful. The whole of his letter shows that he has read the Old Testament with inattention or partiality. Let him read again Exodus xxi. 20, 21; and Leviticus xxv. 44, 46.—EDITOR.]

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AT LEAMINGTON.

It appears from a circular issued by John Wand, of Park Hill, Moseley, Birmingham, that a shameful case of religious persecution has been perpetrated at the Midland Counties Home for Incurables, Leamington. A person of the name of Sparks, who had been for seven years a trusted clerk in Mr. Wand's employ, but who is now unable to stand, was summarily dismissed from the Home, for irreligion. According to Sparks's statement, the matron said, "I have reason to believe that you are an Atheist; at any rate, I know enough of your religious opinions that I'll not trust you another day. I will not live in the house with an Atheist. If you were in a workhouse, you'd have something to do beside read all day." Soon after the chaplain summoned him, and, without preliminary, asked, "What are you? An Atheist or Agnostic?" He replied, "Neither, sir; I am a Christian." The chaplain retorted, "That's a lie; you've been spreading your abominable heresy among the patients. I shall recommend the committee to-morrow to send you home." The chaplain, the Rev. Maze Gregory, is one of this committee; and poor Sparks was at once turned out, and a further charge of "familiarity" with a housemaid trumped up against him. This resolved itself into an interchange of the merest civilities, for the man is bedridden, and, though 5ft. 7in., only weighs 6st. At a meeting of the governors of the Home, presided over by Lord Leigh, the matter was brought up, and allegations were made that Sparks spoke disrespectfully of the Virgin Mary, and sneered at people getting answers to their prayers, etc. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter, but we fear poor Sparks will have little chance of redress. His doom will probably be the workhouse, or lifelong loneliness in an attic. One gentleman gave expression to what seemed a general view of Christian tolerance. He thought "proper religious liberty should be assured e.g., that a Catholic patient should attend the service of the Catholic Church. But this kind of proper religious liberty is a very different thing from liberty to talk atheism or irreligion among other patients." This is a truly Christian idea of proper religious liberty which prevails in other quarters, besides the Midland Home for Incurables.

The idea of sacrifice is carried to its extreme limits in the religion of Christendom. Had it not been for the absolute necessity of some sacrifice being offered to God, there would, according to the theory of Christian faith, have been absolutely no reason for the execution of Christ. He might have taught every doctrine associated with his name, performed every miracle related in the Gospels, have drawn to himself every disciple named in them, and yet have died, like the Buddha, in the calm of a venerated and untroubled old age. He was obliged to undergo this painful and melancholy death, if we accept the general belief in Christendom, solely because God required a sacrifice, and because without that sacrifice he could not forgive the offences of mankind.—Viscount Amberley, "Analysis of Religious Belief."

Belief in the Phoenix was no sign that the early Christians were incapable of receiving a spiritual religion, but surely it is one among a hundred signs that their intellectual development of it might be incorrect; that they had reflected but little on the nature and laws of evidence.—Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. George Meredith has nearly finished his new novel. Is it *The Journalist*, of which we have seen so many tantalising announcements during the last three or four years? Whatever it is, it will delight Mr. Meredith's public, which is a growing one. Sixteen years ago his genius was almost entirely neglected. We had then the pleasure, and honor, of giving some fine extracts from Mr. Meredith in the *Secularist*. It was in the same journal that James Thomson wrote his brilliant review of *Beauchamp's Career*. Since then Mr. Meredith has been "found out," as a novelist. As a poet he has still but a partial recognition.

* * *

William Law, the English mystic, was the author of a famous book, the *Serious Call*, and of many other notable books—in their way—the best of which are the *Spirit of Love* and the *Spirit of Prayer*. He was honored with a commendatory notice in Gibbon's Autobiography. We see that a volume of Selections from his Works is being prepared by an Edinburgh minister. It is announced in the *Academy* as "a volume of selections from the writings of John Law." Such is fame!

* * *

Border Biography, by J. C. Goodfellow, 63 High-street, Hawick, gives the lives of fourteen noted borderers, of whom a dozen were poets, including Hogg, Mickle, Aird, and Riddell, whose fame at least has spread south of the border. The lives are instructive and accompanied with illustrative specimens.

* * *

Spirit Guided, or Re-united by the Dead, is a spiritist story, written and published by E. W. Wallis (73A Corporation-street, Manchester; 1s.), and reprinted from the *Two Worlds*, of which Mr. Wallis is the editor. We are not partial to ghost stories, and there seems nothing out of the usual in the spook and clairvoyant business introduced. There are, however, some evident transcripts from real life in the volume, and some rational discussion of the Bible stories and orthodox Christianity.

* * *

The discussion on "Happiness in Hell" reminds us of a striking passage in *Villette*, which admirers of Charlotte Brontë's genius will be glad to have recalled. It runs thus: "I think if Eternity held torment, its form would not be fiery rack nor its nature despair. I think that on a certain day amongst those days which never dawned, and will not set, an angel entered Hades—stood, shone, smiled, delivered a prophecy of conditional pardon, kindled a doubtful hope of bliss to come, not now, but at a day and hour unlooked for, revealed in his own glory and grandeur the height and compass of his promise, spoke thus—then towering, became a star and vanished into his own heaven. His legacy was suspense—a worse boon than despair."

* * *

Mr. T. B. Mosher, of 37 Exchange-street, Portland, Maine, U.S., who brought out a special edition on hand-made paper of Mr. George Meredith's *Modern Love*, has just published a similar edition of James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*. We cannot say that we admire the printing. The type is not good and the impression is not excellent. Mrs. E. Cavazza writes an Introduction, which is not without merit though somewhat high-flown. The volume also includes two other pessimistic poems by Thomson—"To Our Ladies of Death" and "Insomnia." The special feature of the volume is an admirable, though not exactly complete, bibliography, compiled by Mr. Bertram Dobell and Mr. J. M. Wheeler, which will be of great interest to Thomson's admirers.

* * *

It is pleasant to see that Thomson is finding a public in America. His writings do not sell so well as they should in England. There is a continuous, though far from rapid, demand for his chief poem, which has been so much talked about; but his other writings are comparatively neglected. This is deplorable; nevertheless Thomson's genius can afford to wait for recognition. The best judges have found him out; the rest will do so in time.

* * *

David Nutt, of the Strand, publishes a convenient resumé of the results of criticism on the book of Genesis, by Mr. Edgar Innes Fripp, whose cutting and carving of the book into its separate portions, slices away its history as well as its divinity.

PROFANE JOKES.

"Ah, my son," said the minister, "I'm glad to see you in the Sunday-school at last. Is this your first Sunday?" "Yes, sir." "How do you like it?" "Oh, I think I can stand it until after the Christmas tree."

Mabel was watching the lightning one stormy afternoon. "Mamma," she said, "Dad is dettin' weady to light his stars." "Why, darling?" "'Cause he's scratching matches on the sky."

Aunt Theo—"Tommy, I am surprised you forgot your Bible so quickly! Now, when the rain descended upon the earth for forty days what was it called?" Tommy (promptly)—"Mud!"

"Mamma, is it the same God here that is at Lake Pleasant?" "Yes, dear, I guess so," said mamma. "The very, very same God, mamma?" "Yes, darling, mamma thinks it is the same God." There was another period of deep thought, and then, "Well, mamma, I think he must be a long God to reach as far as that."

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, entertainment and dance (free). Monday at 6.30, tea, entertainment, and dance (6d.)

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free entertainment and dance. 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.: 7.30, S. H. Alison, "The Christian Devil: his Origin and History."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, C. J. Hunt, "Materialism and Spiritism."

Finsbury Park Branch, 11 Blackstock-road: 6, general meeting. Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.O.: 11.15, Touzeau Parris, "The Use and Value of the Bible" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Touzeau Parris, "Creator and Creation—a Reply to D. Dalinger" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. H. Martin, "Christian Blank Cartridges" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, C. J. Hunt, "The Book of Common Prayer."

Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: 7, James Rowney, "Prophecy Examined"; preceded by music.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, F. Haslam, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Mr. St. John, "The Tower of Babel"; 3.30, Stanley Jones, "Hell Breaking Up, and Damned Souls Escaping."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs): 6.30, William Cooper, "The Philosophy of Selfishness."

Bath—Corridor Rooms: Monday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

Belfast—Crown Chambers, 64 Royal-avenue: 7, W. M. Knox, "Education in Ireland."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, F. W. Carter will lecture; 7, a miscellaneous concert.

Bolden Colliery, Miners' Hall: Saturday at 6, Charles Watts, "The Church, the Labor Question, and Modern Progress."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, John Grange, "The Failure of Christianity."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 2.30, G. W. Foote, 11, "Science and Miracles"; 3, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"; 7, "What has Christianity Done for the World?"

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, C. Cohen, "The Meaning of Secularism"; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Morality"; singing by the choir after the evening lecture.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, G. M. Wright, "Count Tolstoi's Works"; 6.30, Mrs. Harper, "Woman: her Place and Power."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, J. Badley, "God's Expensive Luxuries—why Maintain them?"

Leeds—Crampton's Temperance Hotel, Briggate: 7, important meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Gowland, "Thomas Paine: Statesman and Philanthropist."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': J. M. Robertson, 11, "Judaism: its Rise and Growth"; 3, "Judaism and Morals"; 6.30, "Christian History."

Tuesday at 8, recital by T. Griffiths.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, debate between Messrs. Robertson and Dawson, "Atheism and its Influence."

North Shields—Spiritualists' Hall, Camden-street: Monday at 7.30, Charles Watts, "The Horrors of the French Revolution."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, James Hooper, "Thomas Paine."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, Mr. Webb, "The Seasons"; 7, a meeting. Tuesday, celebration of Thomas Paine's birthday.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 3 and 7, two series of musical and other recitals; collections for Hospital Sunday; tea at 5. Wednesday at 5.30, annual tea, soiree and ball in celebration of Paine's birthday.

South Shields—Thornton's Variety Theatre: Charles Watts, 11, "Theosophy: from a Secular Standpoint"; 3, "Education: Secular or Theological?—a Sidelight on the South Shields Bible Syllabus"; 7, "The Blight of Superstition."

Todmorden—Sobriety Hall: Sam Stranding, 3.30, "The Bible and the Labor Question"; 6.30, "A Defence of Secularism—a Reply to the Rev. D. Brook."

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, S. Walker, "The Incredibility of the Gospel Narratives"; 7, R. S. Bransby, "Brotherly Love at the Church Congress."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Jan. 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.—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. 29, Ipswich. Feb. 26, Camberwell. March 19, Hyde Park April 2, New Brompton; 16, Hyde Park; 23, Hammersmith.

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

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Jan. 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. 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. GREENZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Feb. 12, Bradford.

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