

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XIII.—No. 6.]

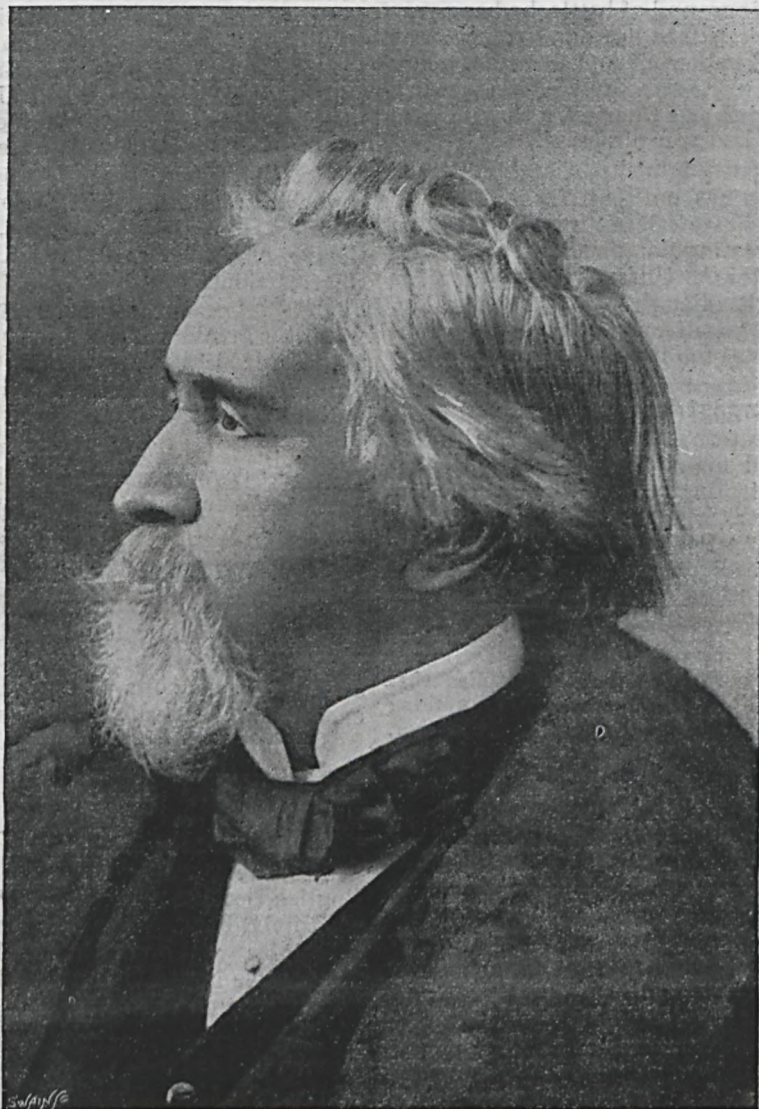
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1893.

[PRICE TWOPENCE.

Price 2d.

SPECIAL NUMBER.

Price 2d.



G. J. HOLYOAKE.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE Nestor of Secularism was born on April 13, 1817. He is therefore nearing the ripe age of seventy-six. Twenty years ago no one thought his life would be so prolonged. Certainly no one thought he would attend the funeral of Charles Bradlaugh. Mr. Holyoake is a striking illustration of the truth that the delicate often outlive the robust. They are wise betimes and husband their resources. Mr. Holyoake also illustrates the longevity of annuitants. His admirers, in the fields of politics, social reform, and Freethought, subscribed enough to provide him with an income which secures him from want or anxiety; and, as he humorously remarks, it would be ingratitude on his part to die in a hurry.

No. 602.]

Mr. Holyoake has resided for several years at Brighton, where the weather is generally fine and the air is always invigorating. He frequently visits London, however, and occasionally travels as far as the north of England to deliver lectures and take part in Co-operative meetings. How he stands the worry and discomfort of such journeys is astonishing. Age is telling upon him now, and we presume he will keep more at home in future. Still, there is no sign of abatement in his care for the success of his principles and the welfare of humanity. He is a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and a director of the Hall of Science scheme. He writes frequently on Co-operation, a movement which he helped to found, and of which he has written a standard History. He is also known at Brighton as a supporter of every effort to improve its secular well-being.

Speaker and Writer.

We seldom pass opinions on Secular speakers and writers, but the rule may be broken in Mr. Holyoake's case; for, considering his age and other circumstances, he is really an historic personage.

Mr. Holyoake as a writer is always bright, and often epigrammatic. He invests the commonest things with a notable charm. His wide reading furnishes him with a variety of choice epithets, which are the color of composition. He is sometimes quaint, with a sly, subtle humor.¹ In controversy, he never knocked down an opponent, but always dealt him many delicate rapier-thrusts. As a speaker Mr. Holyoake was unfortunate in a feeble voice. Had nature been more liberal in this respect, he would have been a commanding orator. He possessed all the other requisites—fluency, force, agility, point, and an added air of literary distinction.

Though not of Mr. Bradlaugh's daring temperament, Mr. Holyoake, in his own way, has plenty of courage. If he has liked to choose his ground of battle, he has never retreated, except with his face to the enemy. He was once imprisoned for "blasphemy," and from the "law and order" point of view he deserved a good many doses of the same medicine as a Chartist, a Republican, and a friend of "rebels and conspirators."

Mr. Holyoake has recently issued (through T. Fisher Unwin) two notable volumes entitled *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*. The work is extremely readable and crammed with interesting details about a number of "advanced" characters. Unfortunately there is very little about Mr. Bradlaugh; but perhaps Mr. Holyoake feared to lay himself open to misconception. There is also (for our taste) too little about the Secular movement.

Ancestry.

Jacob Holyoake, the paternal grandfather of G. J. H., was "a powerful, wilful man," who "had a forge on the old river Rea in Birmingham." Richard Groves, his maternal grandfather, was a bucklemaker. Mr. Holyoake's mother was "a Puritan-minded woman, of clear, decided ideas." In later life she had "a grave, impressive face." His father had "a quiet, implacable will," and was somewhat resentful.

"During all the years of my youth I never remember to have heard my father use an expression which implied that he had ever heard of religion. He never said anything against it, nor anything for it. He left all that to my mother. He seemed to think that she had enough religion for both of them, and in that he was right. He had a pagan mind, and his thoughts dwelt on the human side of life."

"My mother," Mr. Holyoake says, "had many children; she reared eleven." Perhaps this accounts for so many of them being delicate. Mr. Holyoake says he soon came to see how much better it would have been "had her family been limited to three or four children"—which is an encouragement to the Malthusians.

George Jacob's delicacy made it doubtful whether he would be reared. Danger was prophesied at fourteen, at twenty, and at thirty; but he lived through those "critical" periods, and writes "at seventy-five in pleasant health," being able to count "thirty or forty colleagues, all stronger than myself, who died at my side." All he is tired of is the name of Jacob. He says he never liked it. He would sooner have been called Esau.

Early Life.

After helping his mother to make buttons, Master George (unfortunately also called Jacob) went to learn his father's trade of whitesmith. What went on is dismal reading. Mr. Holyoake says he did not know these were what he should afterwards hear of as the "good old times."

Birmingham was quite a revolutionary centre in the pre-Reform days, and young Holyoake soon became a politician. By-and-bye he heard Robert Owen, and took part himself in discussions on Socialism. Afterwards he became assistant to George Combe, author of *The Constitution of Man*, who felt his bumps and said he would suit very well. But the assistant got nothing for fourteen nights' service in Mr. Combe's lecture-room, but an old bust with the nose broken off. Combe

told him he had "the organs of Locality large," and on the strength of it he generally took the wrong road.

Marriage.

Mr. Holyoake married in 1839. His wife was a soldier's daughter, and "she met calamity as a soldier meets a shot," which was fortunate, as her husband had begun the unprofitable, and even dangerous, advocacy of unpopular ideas. Mr. Holyoake tells as much about her as the public has a right to know. She appears to have been of clear mind and decided character. Dying at Brighton in 1884, she was buried at Highgate Cemetery, her husband speaking at her graveside, and Mr. Percy Greg writing her epitaph.

The martyr's cross, without the martyr's cause,
The grief, the wrong, without the self-applause,
The homely round of duties nobly done:—
These were her life, who sleeps beneath this stone.

Some Acquaintances.

Mr. Holyoake suspends the narrative of his life to enumerate his "advanced" friends who suffered in some way or other for their principles. George Julian Harney, Charles Reece Pemberton, Francis Place, Ernest Jones, Garibaldi, Mazzini, Orsini, Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, Aurelio Saffi, Ulric de Fonvielle, Elie Reclus, Felix Pyat, Alexander Herzen, Karl Blind, Bakounine, Kossuth;—all these were personally known to Mr. Holyoake. He has known too, and he writes about, the English prisoners for a free press—Richard Carlile, Henry Hetherington, James Watson, John Cleave, Abel Heywood, John Collins, William Lovett, Charles Southwell, and many others down to G. W. Foote. At one time Mr. Holyoake came into contact with the great Walter Savage Landor, who respected and admired him. It was about this time that he tried some bombs for a certain friend. The incident is a curious bit of tragi-comedy.

Owen and Socialism.

Robert Owen was one of Mr. Holyoake's acquaintances. When Owen became a parliamentary candidate for the City of London, Mr. Holyoake was one of his nominators. He was also present at Owen's funeral. Robert Dale Owen, he says, was mentally affected before he took up Spiritism and Katie King. Towards the end of his days he fancied himself the Marquis of Breadalbane. In politics he was not so much a force as an ornament, but "in his Freethought writings he excelled all his contemporaries in finish of expression."

Becoming himself a Social Missionary, Mr. Holyoake was appointed Station Lecturer at Sheffield in 1841. It was there he published his first pamphlet on *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Trades Unions*, which brought him the acquaintance of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymér. "It was the aim of English Socialism," he says, "to make good citizens, good neighbors, good parents, and good workmen. Our principles went no further, and as Karpos said to Prince Tuetan, we hoped God would take it in good part, and have mercy on our souls."

"The clergy were angry with us. According to their own account, God had been very bountiful to them in according to them many graces—but we found discernment was very sparingly vouchsafed to them in those days. Attacked without reason, we went out on the war-path. On the banner entrusted to me I put the words, 'They who believe they have Truth ask no favor, save that of being heard: they dare the judgment of mankind: refused co-operation, they accept opposition—for opposition is their opportunity.' It was demanded of us that we gave our opinion on Theism and Futurity. Mine was brief, but as straight as I knew how to make it.—Outside the world of science and morality lies the great debateable ground of the existence of Deity and a future state. The ruler of the debateable ground is named Probability, and his two ministers are Curiosity and Speculation. Over that mighty plain, which is as wide as the universe and as old as time, no voice of the gods has ever been heard, and no footstep of theirs has been traced. Philosophers have explored the field with telescopes of a longer range than the eyes of a thousand saints, and have beheld nothing but the silent and distant horizon; and priests have denounced them for not seeing what was invisible. Sectaries have clamored and the most ignorant have howled—as the most ignorant always do—that there *was* something there, because they wished to see it. All the while the white mystery is still unpenetrated in this life, and we must die to find it out. But a future being undiscovered is no proof that there is no future. Those who reason through their desire will believe there is; those who reason through their under-

standing may yet *hope* there is. In the meantime all stand before the portals of the untrodden world in equal unknowingness of what lies beyond. In this world which is under our feet we may be equal in friendliness, duty, and justice."

It was not very long before these principles got Mr. Holyoake into trouble. The Bishop of Exeter—a famous fanatic—denounced the Owenites in the House of Lords. Their lecture-halls being under episcopal license, they were called upon to make public oath that they held Christian tenets, and took the Bible as the guide of their teaching. Robert Buchanan—the father of a living poet—and Lloyd Jones took this oath. So did G. A. Fleming, editor of the *New Moral World*. Mr. Holyoake disdained to lie in this fashion. "Mr. Charles Southwell and myself," he says, "with Mr. Maltus Questell Ryall, the son of an engraver in London, and William Chilton, a printer of Bristol, formed a Defiant Syndicate of Four, and issued the *Oracle of Reason*."

Gloucester Gaol.

For issuing No. 4 of that journal, Southwell was sentenced at Bristol to twelve months' imprisonment. Mr. Holyoake's income at that time being about sixteen shillings a week, he walked from Birmingham to Bristol (ninety miles) to visit his colleague in gaol. On his way he delivered a lecture in the Mechanics' Institute on "Home Colonies." During the discussion he said something (he does not say what) which caused merriment at the time, but led afterwards to his own prosecution for "blasphemy." A full account of the affair can be read in his *History of the Last Trial for Atheism*. The criminous passage was something to the effect that the Deity should be put on half-pay. For this very sensible advice Mr. Holyoake was arrested, and brought before a bench of magistrates, which included a brewer and two clergymen. The prosecutor was Mr. Bubb, a "particularly gross, furious, squab-built, vulgar person." The principal witness was a dog fancier and a prize-fighter. Bail was practically refused, and the "blasphemer" was handcuffed, and marched between two policemen to Gloucester Gaol. The men of God on the bench, in their eagerness to punish the "infidel," actually committed him for *felony*. Mr. Holyoake sat on the edge of his cell bed during the night, pondering the ways of clergymen; and he adds, with poignant satire, "The lice I observed creeping about the blankets prevented me lying down." Had he been a magician of Egypt, he would have seen in these vermin "the finger of God."

Ill-treated as he was, Mr. Holyoake was not friendless.

"My host in Cheltenham was Mr. George Adams. Indignant at what befell me, he put the *Oracle* in his window, and sold it, which led to his being apprehended. His wife, a handsome, intelligent, and spirited woman, indignant at that, continued the sale of the *Oracle*, and she was apprehended with her youngest child in her arms. Four other children were left alone in the house—father and mother being both locked up. When the neighbors found the poor children the neighbors were indignant. The next day Mrs. Adams was liberated on bail, but both she and her husband were committed for trial."

Preparing for Trial.

Mr. Holyoake had three weeks in prison to prepare for his trial. The chaplain, with a professional sense of fair play, vetoed the books he required, and they were only handed to him after a message from Sir James Graham. Bail was acceptable—two sureties of £50 each, and the prisoner's own recognizances in £100; but Mr. Holyoake refused to take an oath, as it implied a belief he did not hold. Captain Mason, the governor, said to him, "What does it matter, Holyoake, how many gods you swear by, since you do not appear to believe in any?" Mr. Holyoake replied that it did not matter to the gods, but it mattered to him. At last, not matter to the gods, but it mattered to him. At last, only a week before the Assizes, he was liberated without making an oath, for fear of scandal. Questions had been raised in the House of Commons by Mr. Craven Berkeley and Mr. Roebuck, and the famous "Publicola" had been thundering in the *Weekly Dispatch*.

The week of freedom passed, and Mr. Holyoake left his home at Aston, Birmingham, to proceed to Gloucester. Imprisonment seemed to lie before him, and he could make no provision for those dependent upon him for bread.

"My little daughter ran from her mother's knee to the door when she found I had gone, and called after me down the street. Her sweet, clear voice arrested me. I looked back, and saw her dark, black eyes gleaming. I never met her glance again, nor heard her voice any more. . . . It was not till after my liberation that I knew the manner of her death. The sole income of home was from subscriptions from friends in various parts of the country, supposed to average 10s. a week; but it was not regular. A few days before the fever took the child, her mother was carrying her through Bull-street, Birmingham, when she cried from hunger for a bun in a window. There was no penny to buy it, and the frenzied mother slapped the child to quiet her. She never forgave herself for doing that, and forty years later she oft repeated the last words of the child on the night of her death, when she exclaimed that 'I was coming to see her'—repeated them in the tones of the child, which went into the mother's heart for evermore."

These are the things that lacerate the heart. Not the handcuffs—what are they to a proud spirit? Not the prison—it can be borne by the strength of conviction. No, it is through those we love that we are most cruelly stricken. The real martyrdom fell upon the father when he knew that his darling was dead, that she had looked for him in vain, that she had not been able to lay her weak little hand in his, that he had even been denied the privilege of kissing her brow in the coffin.

(To be continued.)

A SACRED OUTRAGE.

It is in the cold days when I write. I am sure ideas "suffer from the severity of the weather," and those who deal in them are entitled to the sympathy or relief commonly accorded by compassionate readers to other disabled persons. Why should the "glad tidings" have come in cold weather, when most persons in need of them are too chilly to be pleased. Two writers in *Secular Thought*, of the Toronto Christmas Number, endeavor, without success, to account for it. In Canada, "glad tidings" below zero must be more inconvenient than in England. Here we are glad when frost gives notice to leave, and packs up its ice and snow, its east wind and fog, its shivers and catarrhs, and other materials of its congealing business; and though it leaves without paying its rent, we issue no process of "distrain," and never care to "seize its effects." If Christ was born in the inclement weather time, things must have been very uncomfortable in the Judean stable, the shepherds outside must have been benumbed, and angels who appeared to them—considering how lightly celestial visitants are clad—must have taken cold that night. Even the "Star of Bethlehem" would have been warmer shining on a June night than on a late December evening. We know why St. Thomas's Day falls on December 21. He was not one of the "twelve," and besides he had a sceptical turn of mind and refused to believe incredible things on hearsay, and asked for material evidence where it could be had. Thomas of Didymus was the wisest of all the saints. So he was made a cold weather saint, and is accorded the shortest day in the year. Seeing that it is only in cold countries that Christianity is believed in—a fact which must have been foreseen by the inspired contrivers of it—it is inconceivable that the "glad tidings" could not be arranged to arrive in warm weather, when the human heart is most susceptible of gratitude; when a radiant sunshine endows even grim cities with glory; when the beneficent warmth soothes the chill bones of penury, and enables the fireless children of poverty to creep out under animating and cheering brightness. Could the arrangement be divine which assigns the "Nativity" to mid-winter?

Could there be a more striking proof than was given in St. Paul's Cathedral on New Year's Day, when famished Englishmen and poor foreigners assembled there, proof that no God of Truth inspired the lying words, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away"? Whereas he has plentifully helped the rich (and many of them deserve it), but the hungry he hath sent away as empty as a drum. Is it not wonderful that gentlemen (as canons and deans are supposed to be) can stand up in

public and say and sing these things, which have been false ever since they were first written? The famished foreigners, when they understood the words of the Magnificat, cried out against this mockery—which shows that they were more intelligent than the English, who suffer this sacred outrage in silence. If we cannot have the truth from the altar, what is the altar for? Why should we keep a State Church to tell the poor what is not true? They can be told that elsewhere, at much less cost. Why should any one labor by learned arguments to try to prove the scriptures are not “given by inspiration,” when it is palpable to common sense, to right feeling and to daily experience? Not only may “those who run” read it, but they who sit still can see it. The time is nearing when divinity will have to speak the truth. Christianity is daily coming to be perceived not to be a working system for this world. Goethe said that the first and last thing required of genius was truth and its practical application. Plainly Christianity is not a device of “genius.” There is no more false or irritating verse in the scriptures, than the one sung in St. Paul’s Cathedral—saying the rich shall be sent away empty and the hungry shall be filled. There is not a poor man or woman in the East-end of London but knows it is untrue. There is not a rich gentleman or lady in the West-end but knows the verse to be false. Can there be a greater outrage—one more heartless and contemptuous—than that gentlemen who put themselves forward as ministers of a God of Truth, should assemble a crowd of hopeless, friendless, foodless men and women, in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and sing them as true, words which are not true? It is time such spiritual effrontery was ended. There was a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. W. M. W. Call, who resigned a rich living rather than mock his poor parishioners by reading to them as true words which, in his honest heart he felt to be untrue and misleading, which no gentleman could read in public. Instead of the Magnificat, when the Church assembles the poor, it should sing to them Call’s nobler prayer :

O Lords! O rulers of the nation!
O softly clothed! O richly fed!
O men of wealth and noble station!
Give us our daily bread.

For you we are content to toil,
For you our blood like rain is shed;
Then lords and rulers of the soil,
Give us our daily bread.

Your silken robes, with endless care,
Still weave we; still unclothed, unfed,
We make the raiment that ye wear.
Give us our daily bread.

Can Christianity be the refining and ennobling influence it is said to be when its highest ministers can stand up in our national temples and solemnly repeat the thing which is not?

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

CRUMBLING CREEDS.

FREETHINKERS should be delighted with certain signs of the times. It is more than eighteen hundred years since Jesus Christ lived and died in Palestine; if, indeed, he ever lived and died at all. The devotees of the religion he is supposed to have established have worshipped him as a god. They have called it “blasphemy” to criticise his pretensions. They have killed and tortured myriads for being sceptical. They have practically had Europe in their hands for considerably above a thousand years. They have worked their faith into the very texture of society. Yet we now see the doubts, that once were the passport to prison and death, infecting all classes of the community. Scientists openly reject the Christian creed; poets deride and denounce it, philosophers regard it with lofty disdain, and workmen treat it as their worst enemy. Clergymen discuss “Why the People do not come to Church,” and a great newspaper, like the *Daily Chronicle*, opens its columns to a correspondence on the question, “Is

Christianity Played Out?” It is a spectacle to gladden the heart of every friend of Reason. Voltaire and Paine, could they behold it, would feel more than compensated for their labors. It seems a pity, when the world is taking a fresh turn, that the heroes who have thought and worked and sacrificed for the change, cannot be resuscitated for a moment, and hear as it were the Genius of Humanity crying, “Lo the reward of all your toil!”

This discussion in the *Chronicle* has proved two things; first, that the enemies of Christianity are not confined to the ranks of the so-called “infidels”; secondly, that the friends of Christianity are at loggerheads as to its meaning. Behind their disagreement, however, lies this obvious agreement; namely, that it is impossible to lure the world any longer with Christian dogmas, and that Christianity, to live at all, must become little else than an aspiration towards human brotherhood and the secular welfare of the citizens of earth. But this, of course, is not properly speaking Christianity. It is Secularism in disguise.

The dogmatic disagreement among Christians is specially marked in the article with which the *Chronicle* winds up this discussion. After remarking that most of its correspondents “have not clearly defined what they mean by Christianity,” it gives its own definition, which is as delightfully vague as any of the rest. “God working through man for the redemption of the world—that seems to us of the essence of the Christian idea,” says the *Chronicle*. Through *man!* Where then does *Christ* come in? However this question be answered, it is clear enough that the theological spirit will have to be driven for its ultimate citadels of Theism and other-world-ism after historic Christianity is annihilated. Still, it is a great work to demolish infallible Revelations, which are the consecration of ancient errors and vain imaginings, the bondage of the living present to the dead past. The time has nearly gone for arresting the progress of civilised nations by appealing to the plain or dubious texts of musty old documents “given by the inspiration of God.”

Christianity as it is really implied in the New Testament, and as it has been explicitly taught by Church divines from Athanasius to Butler, and from Augustine to Newman, is very near its dissolution. It has long been crumbling, and the process is now rapid. On all hands we perceive its effects. Dr. Momerie, for instance, having given up all the dogmatic contents of Christianity, thinks it quite proper to remain in the Church of England. Driver, Cheyne, Ryle, and others are so heterodox that Father Ignatius—whose voice is that of one crying in the wilderness—calls for their expulsion. Professor St. George Mivart, on the Catholic side, is prepared to reject nine-tenths of the Bible, and even teaches that we may be happy in Hell. Excepting for a little cheap cant about “Christ” there are scores of leading Christians whose slender creed might have been subscribed by the heresiarchs of former generations.

While Christian supernaturalism is fast crumbling away we shall hear foolish and nauseous wailings from two classes of persons—the ninnies and the hypocrites. The former cannot do without some kind of superstition, and it annoys them that other people are not as superstitious as themselves; so they cry out that, with the decline of faith, the world is going to the Devil. The latter, who think it still pays best to profess Christianity, spend a good deal of time in mutual recrimination. Ministers like Dr. Parker and Price Hughes admit the humbug of present-day Christianity, but it never occurs to them that their own incomes are ridiculous in the light of Christ’s teaching. Even the *Chronicle* editor, who calls on the worldly to openly renounce the Christian faith, has a salary which would have made Jesus and the twelve Apostles “rich beyond the dreams of avarice.” Yes, if we subtract innate credulity, profitable hypocrisy, vested interest, and old use-and-wont, from the Christianity of to-day, there is so little left that it needs no deep spirit of prophecy to foresee its doom.

G. W. FOOTE.

REASON AND CREDULITY.

THE struggle between Reason and Credulity constitutes an important, but unfortunate, feature in the history of human progress. In ages of ignorance, when the priest was supreme, credulity held undisputed sway. When, however, knowledge became disseminated among the general masses, reason was permitted to exercise its power, and the right of personal opinion was then recognised. Under the first-named conditions agreement existed by authority; but under the second, authority was the result of agreement. Inquiry, which is the precursor of doubt, has been too frequently regarded by the expounders of theological systems as being the enemy of human welfare. These self-appointed and would-be arbiters of the destiny of the race condemned free inquiry as superfluous and pronounced doubt to be a deadly sin. However agreeable such a course as this might have been to those who were credulous and intellectually lazy, it was clearly an imposition upon the credulity of mankind and an insult to the reason of thinking men and women.

It is this persistent opposition to mental liberty and to the right of personal discrimination that forms the basis of the enmity that so largely prevails in theological circles against that unfettered exercise of reason which leads to freedom and knowledge. The cause of such opposition is evident to most impartial observers. For one of the most important lessons to be learnt from the study of intellectual activity is that the free use of man's reasoning faculties tends to destroy the superstition that is necessary to the perpetuation of the power of the Church. The cultivation of the intellect provokes criticism, and that has invariably proved fatal to the claims of superstition. The supporters of theological faiths, the orthodox of every age, have feared independent thought, and their successors even now look upon Freethinkers as most objectionable members of the community. The priests may console and forgive all kinds of criminals, even the murderer; but the doubter is regarded by these servants of the Lord as deserving of being "cast into outer darkness, where there is to be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The upholders of orthodoxy seldom fail to discourage and to persecute those who dare to think contrary to the prescribed canons of the Church; the result has been that for centuries faith was in the ascendant. Fortunately, however, faith has at last to yield to reason, for persecution, born of bigotry and credulity, is now comparatively useless in checking freedom of thought. We are no longer at the absolute mercy of fanatical priests and their credulous followers. The Church may proscribe the free exercise of the mental powers in theological matters, but reason will assert and re-assert itself in spite of all endeavors to curb its force. No power of credulity can at the present time stem the tide of rational inquiry any more than King Canute could prevent the rising of the sea. The enemies of Freethought may, and they frequently do, raise their puny opposition to its progress, but they can never prevent its ultimate triumph. The proclamation has gone forth to the world that these obstructionists of intellectual progress must stand aside or else be trampled under foot in the onward march of freedom.

The creeds and dogmas of the past have now to face an unflinching criticism; their conflicting evidences and contradictory nature are in the hands of those who will spare them not. A generation of thinkers has arisen who cannot stifle their desire to know as far as possible the facts of existence and their relation to the duties of life. These newly-born children of emancipated thought unhesitatingly pursue the search for hidden treasure, whether it is to be found on "Christian or on heathen ground." Such men and women have ceased to bow down before the old idols; they no longer indiscriminately follow the custom of their fathers, or adopt the habits of the nations wherein they were born, or in which they happen to live. In times past the chief function of the priest was to tell men what to believe; now the reason why the belief should be accepted is demanded. Merely to say "It is written" will no longer suffice, as thinking people are more concerned to have an answer to the question, Is that which is written true? "Thus saith the Lord" will

not settle disputed points to-day; the Lord himself and also his alleged sayings have to undergo an examination by minds that are not awed by priestly threats or by orthodox credulity. That which is opposed to freedom of thought, however ancient or sacred it may be, is considered antagonistic to the development of the highest faculties of human nature, and an obstacle to the progress of society, and as such, it will be swept away from the path that leads to truth, freedom, and happiness.

We live in an age when the demands of the theologian are not taken for granted. The method adopted by modern thinkers requires that what is submitted to us for our acceptance must be capable of reasonable proof. For instance, if it be true that there is "a sure and certain hope" of a higher state of existence when we have "shuffled off this mortal coil," surely its evidence should be in harmony with reason and common sense. If it is not, how can we rationally believe in such an allurements? The hardest lesson that an inquirer has to learn (and, alas! there are but few who learn it) is how to avoid dogmatising upon subjects that transcend human thought. On every hand we are surrounded by "authorities," men who profess to have verified their conclusions by scholarship and by personal experience. Each one assures us that he alone is in the right, and that all others are hopelessly mistaken. This lands us in a logical dilemma for if we take the word of each there is no escape from the logical conclusion that all of them are wrong. But granting the most that can be made of the position, we have not then necessarily arrived at the truth, but have only discovered a number of persons who say they have found it. Scholarship and experience, to be of any rational service to us, must be our own and not that of some professor, who may desire that we take his opinion instead of that which we form ourselves. Some even claim to be endowed with a faculty that is not common, by which they can discern invisible and supernatural things. It is easily understood that such persons who fancy themselves possessed of extraordinary powers, and who make it a profession to guide others, should warn people that, above all things, they must not rely upon their own unaided faculties, that reason is but a blind and fallacious guide. It is here that reason bids credulity to pause by assuring us that, if we once surrender the only faculty we possess by which we can distinguish truth from error, we may become the subjects of every impostor who claims to be our guide and master. It makes no difference to the issue if the guide is himself mistaken. The fact still remains that the final decision as to what is true or false must rest with the inquirer and not with the teacher. No one can think or believe for another, for our thoughts and beliefs, to be of any real value to us, must be the result of our own intellectual efforts.

It may be urged that if we only accept that which our reason approves, our creed will be simple and brief indeed. While that is true it is no disqualification to the dictates of reason. Some of the wisest sayings that have been handed down to us from the treasures of ancient literature are short, and simplicity in the presentation of the highest virtues is the distinguishing characteristic of the ablest men who ever lived. If we give the term greatest to men, it should be conferred on those who have deserved most of their fellows. In selecting one of these we should not mention the founder of any theological faith, but rather the one who uttered the first doubt, for it was he who made thought possible and enabled it to reach the mental horizon of others. Man's greatest trait is his ability to think and he who first urged him to exercise his reasoning faculties was the mightiest servant of the human race. Next to him who can utter a new thought is he who can discover means for making it the common property of mankind.

The world has suffered long and wearily from the effects of the credulous tendency of theology, but at last the hour of deliverance for which our ancestors heroically worked has come. Credulity is rapidly giving way to the force of cultivated reason. This is the factor that is now accepted in the realms of thought as a higher guide and a safer counsellor than faith in

any power beyond the confines of nature. The enemies of progress are on the eve of the greatest defeat they ever encountered, dismay pervades their camp, and destruction awaits their trembling power. The era of science and of freedom of thought has happily dawned upon us, and to the potency of the vitality of this modern alliance the theologians must yield their sway. Their altars, their temples, and their supremacy already

I floating see
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

CHARLES WATTS.

A FREETHINKER'S MOTTO.

"The world is my country, mankind my brethren, and to do good is my religion."—THOMAS PAINE.

THIS text, which my friend Mr. Standring has had handsomely printed in gold and illuminated for those who care to adorn their houses therewith, is, I venture to think, more concise and comprehensive than any to be found in the Bible. It is the summary of the creed of the *Age of Reason*, and divides the cosmopolitan humanity of that age from the exclusiveness and intolerance of the past. Paine's great merit as a writer was his simple direct style, which struck the nail on the head with a single blow, and this simple compact sentence might form the groundwork for as many sermons as have ever been founded on any utterance of Jesus. The master of language is known as much by what he leaves unsaid as by what he says. Paine was a Deist, believing in God and hoping for happiness beyond this life; but in this memorable sentence he left aside the unessential, and formulated a practical ideal which Atheist, no less than Theist, can admire. Let us look at it a little.

The world is my country.—This at once puts aside the petty patriotism which is but an extension of parochialism. It proclaims that one's sympathies must be world wide—breaking down the barriers of race, language and religion; that instead of the motto "my country, right or wrong," one must substitute the statement of the Pagan, Terence—

Homo sum; nihil humani a me alienum puto.
(I am a man and feel for all mankind).

Barring God's chosen race, I know no people more needing to ponder this evangel than ourselves. Our insular prejudices has made us enemies all over the world. In her hour of need Britain might find herself friendless simply because "British interests" has been all in all to her sovereigns, statesmen, and people.

Mankind my brethren.—Morality begins in the family, and, like charity, sometimes does not get much beyond the limits of home. But as families enlarge into tribes, and tribes into nations, the federation and fraternity of mankind becomes possible. Ethical laws at first confined to our own race, are seen to be of universal obligation, and a cosmopolitan feels

Never elated while one man's oppressed
Never dejected while one man is blest.

To do good is my religion.—Nothing here about belief in God or hope for happiness after death. Nothing of any dogmas or worship. For creeds it substitutes conduct; for prayers, practice. This is the common ground, the residuum of all the creeds, the one grain of salt which has kept them from putrefaction. "What is virtue?" asked Voltaire; and answered, "Doing good to others." How simple; yet, sometimes, how hard. For to do good we must study the conditions. It will not avail to mean to do good and trust in God. "Give to him that asketh," said Christ, and the good Christians who follow him unintentionally spread and perpetuate beggary. The Freethinker has a harder task. He has to study where and how he can do good. Fortunately light is clearest nearest home, and doing the little daily duties ever at hand opens the road to wider, better service.

May not those Freethinkers who hold and seek to act up to such a motto as this boast, without vanity, that they are the true Catholics?

For modes of faith let zealous bigots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right!

Mankind will never agree on theological questions. They have quarrelled about them for ages, putting aside the weightier matters of love and justice. Tears and blood have followed in the track of supernatural beliefs. Their very magnitude has dwarfed our earthly duties. Remove them all and these still remain. To make the best of this world is a platform whereon every enlightened and rational man can agree. Secularism is the true Catholicism.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. W. H. Loughman, formerly a curate in the Church of England, of "the Close Brethren," will have to refund some of the £132,000 odd which he obtained from the late Henry Hope Morley under the cloak of religion. Mr. Loughman will, we fear, feel this verdict very acutely, as to give up money goes against the fundamental principles of the Close Brethren.

Now that Loughman has been ordered to disgorge that money, we guess the Lord will not enable him to resist Mr. Justice Wright. The judge's summing-up was a scathing indictment of the Loughmans. The chief culprit has been living at the rate of £5,000 a year. His evidence in court was most unsatisfactory, and the judge accused him of destroying documents that told against him. "The money," he said, "was obtained by the exercise and abuse of personal influence and ascendancy established and maintained for that very purpose under a cover of religion and religious brotherhood." Altogether the worthy Loughman must be considered a finished hypocrite and an unscrupulous adventurer.

Commenting upon this case, the *Pall Mall Gazette* says that Loughman is "a practitioner of a peculiarly modern type." But this is nonsense. The type is as old as the history of religion. It was a common charge against the Christian priests of the early Church that they insinuated themselves into the houses of rich people, especially of rich widows, and sucked their wealth like leeches. Later on *mortmain* laws had to be passed to prevent the Church from getting all the wealth of rich sinners on their death-beds. There is no leech like the religious leech. It sucks while there is a drop of blood to be drawn. It never drops off of its own accord. It has to be pulled off. Henry Morley couldn't shake off his leech, so he committed suicide. But the leech has been well sprinkled with judicial salt, and is now under the process of disgorging. And there is some consolation in that.

The Rev. W. H. Jones, rector of Godington, has been ordered by the Bicester magistrates to pay a fine of £5 or go to prison for twenty-one days. He appears to have taken too deeply to heart St. Paul's exclamation, "Doth God care for oxen?" Eight yearlings of his were found in a very weak state, fastened in a shed, which was deep in dung. They had no food and no bedding. They ate ravenously some rotten hay that was offered them. Mr. Jones will continue to shed the light of Christian charity upon Godington.

The *English Mechanic* reports that a "Spook Machine" has been specially invented for that good man gone wrong, Mr. W. T. Stead. It takes the form of a magnetised dial plate, communicating by electric wires with a type writer. Mr. Stead places his hand upon the plate, and the departed spirits begin to use the type writer. Stead expects great things from his "Spook Machine."

The Rev. Z. B. Woffendale sends us a letter about "a cowardly, lying, and libellous article" in our last week's issue, in which these words occur—"He sent a letter to my employer to try and get me out of a berth." Mr. Woffendale says that "this is an atrocious lie," and calls upon us to "express regret for having printed and published a libel so utterly false and malicious." Mr. Woffendale is screaming before he is hurt. He is neither mentioned nor alluded to in the sketch by "Lucianus" to which he apparently refers. The minister in that sketch is named Westmoreland, which is not a bit like Woffendale; nor are his initials the same as Mr. Woffendale's. True, his first name is Zephaniah, but there is more than one Zephaniah in the world. We owe Mr. Woffendale no apology; he chose to put on the cap, and we are sorry it hurts him. "Lucianus" informs us that Mr. Woffendale was not in his mind in writing the sketch; and that

quite ready to state that we never heard of Mr. Woffendale's getting any Freethinker out of a situation.

The Rev. J. Page Hopps, one of the defenders of Christianity in the controversy as to whether that belief is played out, gave a very heterodox exposition of his faith in lecturing for the McQuaker Trust at Berkeley Hall, Glasgow. He seems almost to combine Unitarianism with Pantheism. "God," he is reported as saying, "not only incarnated himself in sentient beings, but in all material things. He was the universal cause, if he was anything, not as manufacturer, but as inspirer. In what they called matter they had really God manifesting himself under material limitations." So, when we swallow a mutton chop, we may be really giving the lamb of God a new incarnation.

The Rev. John Robertson, of Glasgow, says that no man can be in intimate communion with God, who is not a total abstainer. He would not only bar out Noah, Lot, David and the prophets, but even Jesus Christ and his apostles.

A new sect known as the Carterites is spreading in Michigan. They are under the leadership of a prophet Carter, who has promulgated an order, said to have been received by him from the Lord, that all members made over to their leader a tenth of their property. The same spirit of true inwardness is found to underlie all religions.

Father Paul, a Catholic priest of Vera Cruz, Mexico, has been sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering his brother.

A new attraction has been started in a Dundee Church, the minister inviting the congregation to write out questions and put them in the collection plate, the man of God undertaking to answer the questions from the pulpit during the service. If this custom extends, it would afford a good opportunity for assaulting the coward's castle with a few posers.

The West Ham Branch applied for the use of a Board school on Sunday for a children's party, on Thomas Paine's birthday, but find that the regulations of the West Ham School Board prohibit the use of a school on Sunday for any but Sunday-school purposes. It is hoped that the Secular members will see that this state of things is discussed at a meeting of the Board.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, speaking at a public meeting in Worcester, said he agreed with Mr. Foote that there was a great deal of humbug connected with Christianity, and that with many professors it was a gigantic sham. We are glad to hear that Mr. Hughes agrees with Mr. Foote about something. Perhaps he will some day agree with Mr. Foote about that Atheist Shoemaker story.

It is pretended that juvenile depravity abounds in Birmingham in consequence of the lack of religious teaching in Board Schools. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., denies this, however, and declares that there has been a great reduction in juvenile offences since the passing of the Education Act in 1870. Mr. Dixon also points out that one of the two girls whose "confessions" have been made so much of, had attended a denominational school.

"The number of souls saved depends on my balance at the bank." So says the Rev. W. Barry in the *Catholic Times*. Yet they send an old woman to gaol for earning sixpence by fortune telling.

Abraham Turner, the man of King Solomon's sect, whose wife stated that he said he had a divine message to live with another woman, after which another of the sect came with a divine message to live her, appeared before Mr. Corser at the police-court to answer her claim for maintenance. The defendant asked his wife about the Lord calling him out as he did to the Gentiles, but Mr. Corser had to tell him that was not the question. The defendant said, "Since we have trusted in the Lord we have had what the Lord has sent." He, however, only gave his wife 1s. 6d. a week to support five children. Mr. Corser adjourned the summons to give him an opportunity of making his wife an allowance. If

the wife entered the union, he hoped the guardians would prosecute him.

Mrs. Turner deposed that she followed him over to a house in Chelsea, and asked him, "Is it true you are sleeping with those women?" The inspired Turner replied, "That is what you have got to find out." Thomas Turner, the brother, deposed that he was "the biggest hypocrite on earth"—"he thinks he's beyond human nature and is indeed Jesus Christ." Poor J. C. ! This is rougher upon him than anything in the *Daily Chronicle* correspondence.

There was a lively meeting called for the defence of the Welsh Church at Merthyr last week, the gas having to be turned out in order to bring the squabble to an end.

Helen H. Gardener, authoress of *Men, Women and Gods*, has been paying a visit to Christ Schweinfurth at his Heaven, near Rockford, Illinois, with a view of studying his mental characteristics and those of his dupes, with the further purpose of using them as the basis of her next literary work. After her return from Heaven she said that Schweinfurth is beyond all question self-deluded—a mild sort of lunatic or monomaniac.

A writer in the *Daily News* points out that on land in Hampshire, which pays £160 for rent, there is a tithe charge of over £80. No wonder farmers are complaining!

Dr. Wm. Price, who died last week at Llantressant, Glamorganshire, at the age of ninety-two, was a strange survival. He called himself "Archpriest of the Sun," and dressed in Druidic costume. When eighty-one years of age, he determined to fulfil prophecy by taking a virgin, who gave birth to a son whom he named Iesu Grist. This child died, and Dr. Price got into trouble through cremating him, but he has since had another son with the same name, so Jesus Christ is still living. Dr. Price has now been cremated himself, Jesus Christ officiating.

Two Jews were last week brought up at Worship-street Police-court, charged with assault and robbery in the synagogue, Church-street, Spitalfields. The magistrate remitted the matter to a tribunal of Jewish rabbis.

The wife of the Rev. Edwin Arthur Barraclough has obtained a decree for a divorce on the ground of her husband's adultery and cruelty. The man of God admitted adultery up to a certain date, but pleaded condonation.

In the case of the Salvationist and the nurse-girl, it was noticeable when the former was asked, "Do you preach morality in the street?" he indignantly replied, "No, I preach about the truth." The truth with these people means religious doctrines, and has nothing to do with what the old Scotch divines were fond of calling "mere morality."

Another curious testimony last week was that of the missionary at the North London Police Court, who, in the case of a man charged with brutally ill-treating his wife, testified that the prisoner "thrashed her on an average once a week whether she wanted it or not." He apparently thought wives are sometimes the better for a dose of the medicine which the wise Solomon so frequently recommended for children.

The Rev. Mr. Macaskill, of Dingwall, has addressed a letter to the convener of the College Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, with regard to Dr. Bruce's new book on Apologetics. He declares it impossible to exhibit in short compass "all the unsound teaching in a volume of 514 pages, the most of which inculcate doctrines in opposition to, or which inferentially undermines all that a true church of Christ should hold sacred." He cites the passages dealing with the Creation, the Fall, the trustworthiness of the patriarchal history, the authorship of the Pentateuch, the idea of God possessed by the chosen people the prophets, the canon of scripture, and the person of J. C., as all antagonistic to the true faith, and asks how long this awful process of perversion of the most sacred truths of our faith is allowed to be taught to young ministers with the Free Church, which he says will soon be "a church of all the heresies."

Mr. A. L. Brown, who is an ex-M.P. for Border Burghs, conducts Sunday missions, and in the course of an address, reported in the *Hawick News*, made the curious statement—"There was no such thing as an Atheist now." We are reminded of an anecdote recorded of Priestley, who, dining with the Baron d'Holbach, inquired if there were any Atheists in Paris, and received for answer, "You have just dined with seventeen."

There are continual complaints of the way in which the clergy seek to thwart the Burials Act of 1880, or to apply it solely to their own enrichment. In a recent case in Carmarthenshire of an aged farmer who wished to be buried as a Nonconformist beside his wife, the incumbent first declined to allow the burial at all; and when it was shown that, as a parishioner, he had the right of burial, he would not allow it at the wished-for grave except upon the condition that he himself should conduct the funeral with the service of the Church of England.

The Rev. F. C. Stebbing, vicar of Featherstone, Kent, objects to Sunday funerals. As, however, people will die when it is convenient to bury them on Sunday, they get a Nonconformist minister to conduct the funeral. The Rev. Mr. Stebbing, however, claims all the fees.

It was made clear by the deputation to Mr. Asquith on the subject of the Burial Laws that the pith of the question, as of many religious questions, lies in the matter of fees. As the law stands, the clergy are entitled to fees for burial in consecrated ground, though they do not officiate and may never have heard of the person interred. That this exaction should be extended from all the old churchyards to the cemeteries paid out of common rates is a grievance demanding speedy abolition.

Mr. Buchanan says of Dr. Joseph Parker's jocularly:—"The Christian religion, if we put aside the miracles, is not rich in humor; even the good old joke about eternal damnation is somewhat too grisly to be entertaining. It is pleasant, therefore, to find that Dr. Parker can jest about 'the divine initials,' the fourteen hundred million gods of humanity, and the Garden of Eden, according to the *Bible pour Rire*. Superstition has got no very tight hold on a man who can settle religious questions by 'wheezes' worthy of a *Lion Comique*."

The Rev. A. Holden Byles says: "There are many signs that men are beginning to believe that there is a God in the world." Rather late in the day for a beginning of this old superstition. What of the signs that men are beginning to cease believing it?

At a meeting at Barcelona, to protest against the opening of a Protestant church at Madrid, violent speeches were made and a free fight between Protestants and Catholics was the result. Another proof that Christianity is not played out. The town guard had to be called on to restore order.

A writer in the *Church Times* says, it needs a capital sum of ten millions of pounds to raise all benefices to a standard of £200 a year. The Church dignitaries who have all the plums of the church cake, think the laity should put butter on the poor parson's bread.

"What penance are you doing in this Lenten season, Mrs. Simper?" asked the Rev. Dr. Thirdly. "Oh, I come to hear you preach every Sunday!" was the cheerful reply.

At the Third Decennial Conference of Indian Missionaries, held at Bombay, Mr. Cursetjee, a gentleman of the Poenah Mission, rather damped the enthusiasm of the meeting by pointing out that, with all the activity of which this conference gave token, it would take ten thousand years to convert the Indian population—a pretty good time to wait for the second coming of Jesus.

As we have before pointed out, the assumption that even the present rate of progress in converting India will be continued is an unwarranted one, because the converts are nearly all made from a certain class, viz., the aboriginal savage inhabitants of India and the lowest castes only. When these are all converted Christianity may find it has come to the end of its tether. This surmise is borne out by the testimony of

the speakers at the Bombay conference, who admitted that their success was among the Pariahs, Shanars, and Santals. The conversion of these races only means the greater difficulty in converting the higher castes, who despise them. The speakers of course did not allude to the great number of their converts who are "rice Christians"—that is, accept the dominant religion for what they can get out of it.

At Victoria, Mashonaland, as the archdeacon was preaching, a baboon appeared at one of the open church windows, and audibly and dramatically jeered at the clergyman. Presently, waxing wroth at the inattention of the congregation, the monkey sprang into the church, escalated the pulpit, and agilely perched himself upon the shoulders of the archdeacon, whose neck he reverently and fondly embraced. From this novel and embarrassing position the archdeacon managed to extricate himself, when the monkey rapidly climbed up into the roof of the church, defying capture until the end of the service. From his post of vantage the baboon continued to address, if not to edify, the congregation, until both he and the archdeacon left the building. It is stated that the archdeacon was shocked; it is rumored that the congregation was scandalised. History is mute as regards the Simian intruder.—*Communicated*.

Cardinal Manning said that the Catholic Church would never persecute. Oh dear no! Not in England at any rate, because it couldn't. But see what it does where it has a chance. Only a few months ago the International Freethought Congress at Madrid was stopped by the authorities for speaking against the Catholic faith. Now the papers report that a Portuguese minister has been thrown into prison at Setubal, and charged with propagating the Protestant religion. According to the penal code he is liable to two years' imprisonment and a ruinous fine. Such is liberty where the Catholic Church can fling aside the mask of toleration.

The Duke of Norfolk is heading a pilgrimage of English Catholics to Rome. Pope Pecci will give them a special audience, and celebrate a special mass for them in the Sistine Chapel, which is adorned by the genius of Raphael. According to the newspapers, it is understood that the Duke is practically a special envoy from Queen Victoria, and bears several presents for his Holiness. No doubt the presents will be accepted. They always are. But we can afford to smile at the "envoy" business. England isn't going to recognise the Pope as a temporal power, and Queen Victoria's taste in politics doesn't count for as much as her people's.

Down at Bristol it is a fashion among Christians who ask "posers" at Freethought meetings to cite the case of Müller's Orphanage as a proof of the efficacy of prayer. It is alleged that Müller never begs for money; he asks the Lord, and it comes. But this is very shallow nonsense. Müller does let other persons know what he wants. Religious journals frequently contain accounts of his establishment and its financial necessities. This is not only an advertisement, but an advertisement in the best part of the paper.

These "posing" Christians forget that when the fever got into Müller's Orphanage, prayer was useless, and science had to be called in to drive out the disease.

It appears that we understated Canon Farrar's income from his pluralities last week. As Queen's Chaplain he should have £300 a year, in addition to his £1,000 as canon, £600 as archdeacon, £600 as rector of St. Margaret's, and £400 as chaplain to the House of Commons. In all £2,900, besides what he makes from his books and as director of assurance companies. He has good reason to be thankful to the carpenter's wife's son.

Little Boy—"Wot's the difference between high church and low church?" Little girl—"W'y, don't you know? One says 'Aw, men,' and the other says, 'Amen.'"

¶ A parson hearing the mate of a steamboat cursing a dock hand, said, "My son, do you not know it is wicked to use such language as that?" "Oh, that's nothing," said the mate of the steamboat, "you should hear me when we're coaling." "But," persisted the parson, "the Bible says, swear not at all." "Just so, just so," assented the offender cheerfully, "they don't a'll need it this morning—only that galoot with the cropped head."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 5, Alhambra Music Hall, Porter-street, Hull: at 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; at 3, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; at 7, "The Doom of the Gods."

Wednesday, Feb. 8, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: at 8.15, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—its Philosophy and Lessons." (Admission free.)

February 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.—February 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, 27 and 28, Glasgow. April 2 and 9, Birmingham; 16 and 23, Hall of Science, London; 30, Sheffield. May 7 and 14, Birmingham; 28, Hall of Science.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

W. TIFFIN.—We cannot give you questions to ask the lecturer. You must do that yourself. Marchant was some years ago, and for a very short time, connected with the West Ham Branch.

W. H. STONE.—What became of Mary, the Mother of God, according to Christian legend and tradition, may be read in Mr. Foote's "Bible Romance," *A Virgin Mother*.

T. HINTON.—We saw the cutting you are kind enough to send. Thanks for your interesting letter.

T. W. HICKS.—Church of England property is national property. If the Church supports itself, it will be able to prove that it does when it is disestablished and disendowed.

F. ELKIN.—Much obliged, but we could make no use of it. The whole question may soon appear in a different light.

RON MAHON.—To hand. Will look through them presently.

FREETHINKER'S WIFE.—We believe yes, but it is so easy to be on the safe side.

W. COX.—See paragraph.

ELECTRIC.—Mr. Foote was imprisoned for "blasphemy"—as the indictment said, for "bringing the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt." This was in 1883.

A. BAKER.—Glad to hear you take two copies weekly, one for binding, the other for giving away.

R. MORGAN.—Mr. Foote edited the *Secularist* in 1876-7; the *Liberal* (a monthly) in 1879; *Progress* (a monthly) from 1883 to its end; and the *Freethinker* from its first number.

J. G. BARTRAM.—See reply to Mr. Walker.

J. M. WALKER.—The printer has received definite instructions on the matter. Members' meetings shall be inserted, but we cannot put committee meetings in the Lecture Notices, though always ready to give a paragraph to anything special.

S. H. A.—Under consideration.

C. HUGHES.—No offence; certainly not.

J. PRICK.—The substance of the cutting from *Reynolds'* appeared in our columns a month or two ago.

P. H. ECHLIN makes the following anagram of "The National Secular Society"—All Atheistic Eye, No Sour Cant. That shows, he says, what's in a name.

A. N. STAIGER.—See paragraph. We hope your committee will be able to beat the bigots.

JOSEPHUS.—(1) W. R. Bradlaugh misled you. When the air is exhausted, so that an electric current cannot pass, there is still ether to transmit light. (2) Scientific men don't discuss Paul's views on any natural subject. (3) We cannot give you the reference. It means searching our file.

SHILLING WEEK.—Porcival 2s. 6d., R. Jacob, B. L. Coleman 5s., Mr. Taylor, per C. Watts 3s., S. Hartman 5s., S. and L. 3s., G. Thackray, Fleming, H. Lynes, W. Wier.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Toby King 5s.

A. B. WAKEFIELD.—The Rev. G. F. Handel Rowo's letter is very patronising. He evidently does not like the idea of debating. He prefers "talkee talkoo."

HARRY GUEST.—Don't pay so much attention to the man's personalities.

R. JACOB.—It is acknowledged this week. Of course rich clergymen should help poor ones before they apply to laymen.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Not time to deal with it this week. Contents of letter shall have attention.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—Mr. R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges:—H. C. B., 5s.; W. L. Branch, 10s.; R. W. Dowding, 5s.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel

—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Echo—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—La Raison—Los Angeles Times—Our Programme—English Mechanic—Leamington Chronicle—Worcester Chronicle—Twentieth Century—Manchester Telegram—Shields Daily Gazette—Dundee Advertiser—Shields Free Press—Boston Investigator—Reading Observer—Hawick News—Whitby Times—Northern Evening News—Wolverhampton Express and Star.

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.

Bristol Christians expected that they had "settled" Mr. Foote for last Sunday. Owing to their manoeuvres he was to have no audiences, or very poor ones. But they were mistaken—as usual. There was a very good morning meeting, a very full meeting in the afternoon, and another first-rate audience in the evening, although, in addition to the Christian "special," there was the counter attraction of the Sunday Society's meeting at St. James's Hall. A considerable number of Christians were present during the day. Plenty of questions were asked, but there was little discussion. In the morning a shallow, bombastic fellow made a great noise because he could not speak for half an hour. He thought his wonderful abilities entitled him to that at least. But the chairman and the meeting thought otherwise, and he was desired to sit down after speaking for sixteen minutes. Instead of doing so he began yelling at the top of his voice, amid the frantic applause of a dozen or so of the baser sort of Christians, who were (like himself) evidently bent on disorder. "Let us march out, boys," he shouted, and the little clique disappeared, much to the satisfaction of the decent folk who remained. Perfect order was thus restored, and the lecturer replied to what had been said to a quiet and attentive audience.

Mr. Keast, the active secretary, took the chair in the evening, and said it was being announced by the Christians that he had been converted. After the evening lecture, Mr. Foote had a long chat with the Branch members. It was evident that Bristol was ripe for a "forward movement" in Secular propaganda, and Mr. Foote promised to see that steps were taken, in concert with the Branch, to strike while the iron is hot.

Mr. Foote's lectures at Bristol are to be answered to-day (Feb. 5). Announcements were out to that effect last Sunday. Perhaps it is easier to reply when he is absent, but is it brave? and is it efficacious?

We are glad to see that the Bristol Secularists are able to counteract the "special efforts" of the Rev. J. M. Logan. "Agnostic," who published an able reply to Mr. Logan's discourse on God, has since published through Harvey, 30 Lower Arcade, a full and spirited reply to another discourse on "Is the Bible Inspired?" We hear that "Agnostic's" pamphlet is being widely circulated. It would be well if it could be read by everyone who heard or has perused Mr. Logan's sermon.

On Monday evening Mr. Foote visited Bath and delivered a Freethought lecture. It was quite a novelty in that fashionable city, haunted by retired generals and colonels, parsons, rich widows and well-to-do spinsters. The weather, too, was very adverse—something like a warm shower-bath in the muddy streets. Nevertheless a very good audience assembled, the lecture was attentively listened to, and often warmly applauded. Several Christians offered opposition, and the meeting, which began at 8, did not break up till nearly half-past ten. Several friends came over from Bristol, including Mr. Keast, the Branch secretary, who took the chair.

After the meeting several persons gave their names and addresses as intending members of a Bath Branch of the National Secular Society. As soon as possible a meeting of these will be convened, and the Branch formally started. Of course it will be uphill work to carry on Freethought propaganda in a city like Bath, but something may be done, and the new Branch can count on assistance from the N.S.S. Executive.

Mrs. Louisa Samson lectures at the London Hall of Science this evening (Feb. 5) on "Is the Bible the Friend of Women?" This is a lecture the ladies should hear, especially Christian ladies. On Wednesday evening (Feb. 8) Mr. Foote delivers a "free admission" lecture at the Hall on Shakespeare's "Hamlet." This is a novelty in the Wednesday evening series.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times last Sunday in South Shields to good audiences, the one in the evening being particularly so. All the meetings were exceedingly enthusiastic, and the friends from surrounding districts gave our colleague a hearty reception.

Mr. Watts has been speaking every night during this week under the auspices of the North Eastern Secular Federation, and to-day (Sunday, Feb. 5) he lectures three times in Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The Finsbury Park Branch had a very good meeting on Sunday last, when several new members were admitted to the Branch. The finances, etc., were considered, and a strong program for the coming open-air propaganda arranged. Mr. Clifton was re-elected honorary secretary, Mr. F. S. Denny was elected treasurer in place of Mr. Finckin, who was compelled on account of business, etc., to retire, and Mrs. Samson was re-elected librarian.

The N.S.S. Organisation Committee, with the unanimous approval of the Executive, has arranged to have another *Conversazione* at the London Hall of Science on the first Wednesday in April. Probably the weather will be finer than it was on the last Wednesday in December. As on that occasion, the President invites members of the N.S.S. to meet him and his colleagues of the Executive. It will be a kind of "at home." Most of the time from 8 till 11 will be devoted to conversation, with an occasional reading or song by way of variety.

Applicants for tickets for the Children's Party at the London Hall of Science on Wednesday, March 1, should state if they are members of the N.S.S. With respect to the party itself, it has been decided to provide the children with a substantial tea, besides the usual amusements. Of course this involves a good deal of expense, and subscriptions are earnestly requested. They can be sent to Mr. Forder or Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street; or to E. Pownceby, 7 Finsbury-street, E.C.

Mr. A. B. Moss reports that he had good meetings at Ipswich on Sunday, and that the New Branch is going on famously. Mr. Moss also reports that his recent lecture at the Bermondsey Gladstone Club was extremely well attended, partly in consequence of the row made by a few bigots at the club hall being used for such a purpose. Next Wednesday (Feb. 8) Mr. C. Cohen will lecture from the same platform on "What the Universe Teaches."

Mr. C. Cohen lectured at Hull last Sunday. The Branch secretary informs us that he gave great satisfaction, and the members hope to hear him again. The Hull Branch is making steady progress.

Mr. Cohen lectures in the Athenæum, Wolverhampton, this afternoon, at three. Freethinkers in the district are invited to try this first taste of his quality.

The Bradford Branch will have a social gathering on Tuesday, Feb. 7, in the Milton Rooms, 158 Westgate. Meat tea at 6.30; dancing from 8 till 11. Tickets 1s.; social only, 6d. During the evening it is intended to present Mr. John Grange with a complete set of Mr. Bradlaugh's works in recognition of his services to the Freethought cause in the district. Mr. John Grange has just been granted a Special Lecturer's diploma by the N.S.S. Executive.

The *Free Press*, of South Shields, devotes over two columns to a very readable account of "An Evening with the South Shields Secularists." The subject discussed was that of Man's Individual Responsibility, and seems to have been fairly reported.

On Sunday Mr. Foote occupies the stage at the Alhambra Music Hall, Porter-street, Hull, lecturing three times, at 11, 3, and 7. It is now some time since he has visited Hull, and many friends in the district will doubtless be glad to see him there again.

Who knows, judging from recent experience and the evolution of events, but that Mr. Buchanan will, like others, in the course of a few years be accepted as a teacher and a useful member of society? I remember when Mr. G. J. Holyoake and the late Mr. Bradlaugh were treated with contempt and scorn, and avoided by respectable people as if they were lepers. But Mr. Bradlaugh, before he died, silenced calumny and commanded respect, and Mr. Holyoake may to-day rub shoulders with Nonconformists, editors of religious newspapers, and ministers of State, with none daring to make him afraid.—*Echo*.

One of George Jacob Holyoake's friends in the old *Reasoner* days, and probably still, was Francis William Newman, a brother of the famous Cardinal Newman. Francis Newman broke away from Christianity as a revelation and became a Theist. He has written on behalf of many good causes during the last forty years. Though now nearly ninety years of age, he enjoys fairly good health. Professor Newman resides at Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Gladstone, who has been so often cited as saying that the clergy are not State paid, with the inference that therefore Church property is not national property, has sent a letter to Mr. Carvell Williams, in which he distinctly declares that the funds of the Church are national property. The letter runs as follows: "10 Downing-street, Whitehall, Jan. 25th, 1893. Dear Mr. Carvell Williams,—Some of the words quoted in your letter and said to have been used by me (but I am not aware of having myself used ambiguous words) are perhaps of disputable meaning. But I have declared again and again that the funds of the Church, understanding the words as they were generally understood by the Irish Church Act, are national property. And this remains true although it be also true that the Established Church in England does not, like that in Scotland, draw anything as an Establishment from what I may call Parliamentary sources.—I trust that this explanation meets your purpose, and I remain, faithfully yours, W. E. GLADSTONE."

The Westminster Branch inform us that at their half-yearly general meeting a favorable report and balance-sheet were read, and nearly all the old officers were re-elected. Outdoor work will commence in April.

The Leeds Branch has at length secured a nice room for regular meetings. It is in New York Buildings, New York-street. Mr. Sam Stanöring will open it with a lecture this evening (Feb. 5) at 7. Members and friends will previously (at 5.15) meet for tea at the New Waverley Hotel, Call-lane.

The Leeds Sunday Lecture Society is making Sabbath-breaking fashionable. Immense audiences assemble every Sunday afternoon. Mr. Foote will lecture for the Society on March 12.

Mr. J. M. Headley stands on the Secular Education ticket in the School Board contest at Great Yarmouth. The election takes place on Feb. 9, and we shall be glad to hear that Mr. Headley has secured a seat on the new Board.

Little Yorick—"Mother, why do you take the pips out of my lemonade? Will they kill me if I drink them?" Mrs. Yorrick—"Yes, my child." Little Yorrick—"Trees would grow up inside me, I suppose?" Mrs. Yorrick—"Yes." Little Yorrick, with a smile—"My word, mother, wouldn't it be funny? When the angels came to take me to heaven, they'd think they were carrying up an orchard!"

A West-end dude, being asked by his mother what was the text of the sermon, replied: "Why man, he preached about the computable of the improvident son!"

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

WHAT is religion? How shall we define it? Is it the "perception of the infinite"? Is it "seeking after God"? or "belief in the Lord Jesus Christ"? or a right comprehension of the Trinity? or is it "morality touched with emotion"?

In my own view, religion is none of these things. I venture on an entirely new definition. Religion, as I take it, is the mode by which men excuse their breaches of morality; religion is the opiate of the conscience.

The truth is, that the most difficult of all things in this world is to lead a straight life, a life which comes up to one's own ideal of what life should be; such a life as to occasion no pricks of conscience to the ordinarily constituted man. In all ages men have found it difficult, perhaps impossible, to do this. They have lived evil lives, and their consciences have troubled them. They become uneasy because their lives are not good, and yet, being unable to bring themselves to do that very difficult thing—to lead a perfectly moral and irreproachable life—they have cast about for some substitute which may ease their consciences instead.

Owing to the personalising instinct inherent in the human mind, when men begin to ask whence arises the necessity to lead a virtuous life, and wherefore their conscience trouble them when they depart therefrom, they do not find the cause in the inherent necessity of things, but in the will of some superior being or beings. Although, then, they believe that it is the will of this superior being that they lead a virtuous life, yet the superior being, being a person and perhaps somewhat resembling themselves, is open to cajolery, and may be induced to accept some substitute for a virtuous life.

As a matter of history, the rituals of all religions have been the means by which men have endeavored to propitiate the gods, and to soothe their consciences, so that they may continue to lead their evil lives. Ritualistic practice and theological belief—both infinitely easier than to love one's neighbor as oneself—have ever been the substitutes for this last. It was easy for a Jew to abstain from pork, to rest on the seventh day, to practise circumcision, and to keep himself ceremonially clean; but it was difficult for him to exorcise the demons who occupied the citadel of his heart—greed, lust, and cruelty. I think it will generally be found that the most religious nations are the most wicked; and although the Romans and Greeks had their vices in abundance, yet they had more redeeming virtues than were to be found in the superstitious race, whose credulity was a byword among the Romans. "Credat Judæus," says Horace—"Let the Jew believe it"; as we say, "Tell it to the marines."

Paganism, although no doubt thoroughly superstitious in its origin, had spent its venom by the time of Augustus Cæsar, when all the leading men were almost openly unbelievers. Superstition had no part in the mild and beautiful character of Horace, who said of himself "No man is more free from religious prejudice than I." But as the pagan superstition was dying, the Christian superstition was born; and indeed in the making of Christianity, Paganism had at least as large a share as Judaism.

New substitutes were now found for morality—that was all the change. A Christian, especially if he be ignorant, finds no difficulty in believing that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost, that he rose from the dead, and passed bodily through the clouds and out of the solar system, or in believing that three Gods may be rolled into one. All this is easy to an ignorant man who has heard nothing else from childhood. It is easy too for him to go to church regularly, to make Sunday a day of boredom to himself and as far as possible to other people, and to take the communion, etc. All these Christian duties are easy, and if a man performs them faithfully, surely the three-cornered God whom he flatters so unctuously every Sunday, will overlook such trifles, as lying, stealing, (within the limits of the law of course, and so as not to be found out), oppression of his fellow-men, grinding the faces of the poor, and such other little trifles, that must be forgiven to the wealthy pew owners. Verily the Bible is the source of England's greatness, for the Bible has enabled Englishmen to stifle their consciences while they pursue the course of brigandage and cozenage, which they call colonisation and trade.

J. W. B.

Who was the rudest girl in the Bible?—Ruth; because she uncovered Boaz's feet, and trod on his corn.

No, anxious mother, the sun that stood still at Joshua's command was not having his hair cut.

"What can you tell me about Esau?" queried the pedagogue. "Esau," responded the youth, with the glib alacrity of one who feels himself for once on safe ground, "Esau was a writer of fables, who sold his copyright for a bottle of potash."

Maud—"What is God, mamma?" Mamma—"God is a spirit." Maud—"What is a spirit?" Mamma—"Why, Maud, I can't explain it to you; you would not understand if I did." Maud—"Oh yes I should." Mamma—"Well, then, a spirit is something you perceive but don't see. Now you don't know any better than you did before." Maud—"Yes I do; it's a 'kunk!'"

THE SECRET.

I HAVE heard a fearful secret;
To the Shah I will not tell it;
I will hide it from my sweetheart,
From my merry, dear companions,
When they ask.

This it is: The clod I trample
Was the skull of Alexander,
And the waters of the ocean
In the veins of haughty princes
Once ran red.

And the dust clouds of the desert
Were the lips of lovely women;
Where are they, and they who kissed them?
Power dies, and beauty passes—
Naught abides.

Where is Jamshyd, and his beaker?
Solomon, and where his mirror?
Which of all the wise professors
Knows when Kaus and Jamshyd flourished—
Who can tell?

They were mighty, yet they vanished;
Names are all they left behind them;
Glory first, and then an echo;
Then the very echo hushes—
All is still.

Oh, my Shah, ask not my secret!
Sweetheart, I must hide it from you.
They who hear it are not merry:
Power dies, and beauty passes—
Naught abides.

W. R. THAYER (in *Atlantic Monthly*.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held at the Hall of Science January 25; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. V. Roger, R. O. Smith, S. Hartmann, E. Truelove, G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler, W. H. Reynolds, J. E. Brumage, E. Bator, C. Quinton, J. Fisher, J. Potter, W. Heard, C. W. Martin, W. H. Baker, W. Hoaford, and the Assistant Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Treasurer's report received. The principal business before the meeting was the discussion of the Organisation Committee's work. The Council approved of the recommendation with regards to the N. W. London Branch. Amongst other matters the Committee had considered the question of the formation of a Temperance Section, remitted to them by the Conference; and whilst recommending teetotallers to join unsectarian societies, thought the Executive—in the event of its taking the matter up—should appoint a special sub-committee. The minutes were unanimously confirmed.

The President reported that Shilling Week had realised (subject to an audit by the Society's treasurer) £78, and the previous Special Fund £33, and also informed the meeting he was making inquiries concerning the introduction of the Liberty of Bequest Bill, and hoped to be able to report at the next meeting.

The Secretary reported that mammoth posters, advertising the Hall of Science lectures, had been purchased out of the fund specially raised by the President, and were being displayed on the public boardings. It was resolved that the Secretary send out circulars asking Branches who were able to accommodate the Conference to communicate before the next meeting.

E. M. VANCE, Asst. Sec.

OLD CAT UP YAR.

A story is told of a somewhat eccentric parson in Southern Virginia who was intending to preach from the text, "And the spirit of the Holy Ghost descended like a dove." It occurred to him that it would illustrate the text forcibly to have a dove let down with a string from the ventilator above the pulpit just as he uttered the words. So an old negro servant was brought to the church on Saturday, and sent up into the garret to rehearse letting down the dove. It worked to perfection, and on Sabbath morning the old darkey was again sent to the garret before the opening hymn. The preacher reached the words, "And the spirit of the Holy Ghost descended like a dove," but the dove didn't descend. The text was repeated, and still no dove appeared. A third time the parson repeated the words, and then glanced up at the ventilator to see what was wrong. Slowly the ventilator opened, and in the space appeared a woolly head. "Say, massa!" said the darkey, "I 'se 'fraid de Holy Ghost can't show up to-day. Ole cat's bin up yar an' don't 'bawed his whole dawnded head off."

A CHAT WITH A JEW.

"YOU must be an obstinate race to resist for so many years the accumulation of Christian evidences," I remarked one Sunday to Mr. Kohn, as we were both on the outskirts of a small gathering around one of the outdoor lecturers of the C.E.S.

It was not my first acquaintance with my Jewish friend. I had frequently noticed him at the *al fresco* gatherings where Secularists meet Christians. His race was apparent from his physiogomy. He was of a fine type, being a poor but learned Jew of Sephardim descent. I observed that he always relished any hits from Freethinkers against Christianity, so long as they did not reflect on the Old Testament. I made my introduction to him one morning by courteously asking him if he could oblige me with a literal translation of Gen. iii. 15. Aware that I was a Freethinker, he pleasantly obliged, although for a reason, as I afterwards discovered, he only rendered the confusion of that text worse confounded.

"Yes, ve are obstinate ven ve know ve are right?" he answered to the assertion reported above. "Vot nonsense they talk. They have learned their traditions as I have learned mine. But joost suppose you vas Yiddish, and heard for the first time that the great Got—blessed be his name!—had gone vif ze vife of a carpenter and got a son. Vot could you say to a religion founded on such detestable nonsense?"

"Well, sir, there are difficulties in all faiths."

"But this is a monstrous absurdity—a blasphemy."

"Was not your Messiah to be the Son of God?"

"Only as ve are all sons of Got."

"Well, it seems to me that if your Messiah has not come, you must be very obstinate to expect him now."

"Vot have ve always wanted but a king and a leader? Ve have been oppressed by Babylonians, Medes, Greeks, Romans and Christians. Vot has sustained us but the hope of our Messiah to redeem Israel? Vot did ve vant vith a crucified carpenter?"

"But, Mr. Kohn, that is not a spiritual interpretation of your sacred books."

"Vere the books given to you? Who should interpret them if ve cannot? Do you tink Got sent his Messiah to make his own people lepers?"

"Yes, but the Christians say that it is a punishment for putting the Messiah to death."

"Ve put him to death! Vy, by your own books the Romans vere in power. Vat nonsense to suppose our Sanhedrin sat at night, or spat on any prisoner. Lies, lies—all lies."

"Well, your race has had to suffer for your supposed crimes."

"You Christians (I here repudiated the term) have made us outcasts; you have disfigured, tortured, and burnt us; but I tell you ve would go through it all again rather than unsay our Shema Israel, rather than acknowledge your cheese and crust."

The old man had raised his voice, and a crowd gathered round us. This, just then, was neither to his taste nor mine, and, after a parting assurance of my respect for his convictions, we went our several ways. I, however, met Mr. Kohn again. He even took me to his home, where I saw his books and his dark-haired daughter Rachel. But of all this, and of his extremely curious views on his race and its mission in ancient and modern history, I may perhaps tell on some other occasion.

LUCIANUS.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

THE precise locality where the mysterious God shall, with an invisible pocket-handkerchief, mop up all the briny tears from our spiritual faces, has been a knotty point ever since J. C. did the celebrated vanishing trick, and turned his daddy's hand into an easy chair. We are told that we shall all go there some day, if we only wash ourselves white in his red blood; but such a lot of people have washed in it, and it must have got so fearfully thick with spiritual dirt, that we want to have a few more particulars before we try it on. First of all we want to know where heaven is, and how long it will take us to get there if we make a start. Then we should like to know what it is like, for if the Bible description is correct we would rather not go there, especially as we cannot relish the idea of associating with some of the villainous rogues who are said to have taken tickets for the journey, and who are expected to sing in the choir. However, if we can only find out where it is, that will be something, and we can leave it to the heavenly house agent to find us a mansion in a respectable street, or a villa in the suburbs.

The Rev. Thain Davidson, D.D., has been having a heaven hunt, and thinks that he has found it. He tells us, in the goody-goody *Quiver*, where he believes it is, and if he is right, then goodbye to any hope of eternal bliss, for we would sooner join the Salvation Army (and that is saying a lot) than travel such a distance. If it is where he says it is, poor old J. C. must find it hard work getting there since he went up with his clothes on. He will want a rest as soon as he gets to the half-way house, or even before, if he comes upon one of the stories in the heavens. We wonder if the apostles cautioned him to avoid bumping his head against the stars! What a long arm Jahveh must have to have been able to let J. C. sit on his right hand when he started on the trip. Dr. Davidson bases his article "Where is Heaven" on Ephesians ix. 10, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." He says that "the correct interpretation of this passage has perplexed many expositors," and we believe him, for the whole of the Bible is perplexing. "The idea of a sevenfold heaven," he says, "with successive stages of felicity and grandeur, finds no support in any passage of scripture"; and that St. Paul's statement that he was caught up to the third heaven merely meant "that his spirit was raised and enlightened to understand holy mysteries that we hidden from other men." St. Paul was a lucky man; but why should God have such holy mysteries if he really wants us to become harpists up above? Dr. Davidson says that it is noticeable that the text says that Christ ascended "far above all heavens," and that this means that he mounted to the highest spot in the universe to the peculiar dwelling place of God; so high that he could go no higher.

This is satisfactory so far. We now know that Christ is close to the roof of the universe, and that he is not sitting on the top! Now we want to know what part of the roof, and this is what Dr. Davidson proceeds to tell us. He says that it is a reasonable belief that all the stellar suns have a common centre; and that that central pivot appears to be within the constellation of "the seven stars," or the Pleiades. Then he says: "In the midst or heart of the Pleiades it may be argued that there must be an enormously massive sphere, not a blazing sun, and therefore not visible to us: a world incomparably larger than any known globe. Indeed, such a sphere must exist to account for the prodigious force of gravitation issuing from that centre; a force which cannot be accounted for by any objects that are seen. That world, in addition to its peerless magnitude, must possess a splendor and glory all its own, being illumined by many suns, which revolve round it. Is it a monstrous and extravagant conception that possibly that mighty sphere in Cimab, that central world in the bosom of the Pleiades, the very pivot of the starry universe, is the peculiar residence of Jehovah, the metropolis of creation, the palace of the king of kings?"

In our opinion such a conception is no more extravagant than that which accredits the making of this world by a God, placing in it creatures whom he told to be obedient, and then permitting them to be tempted beyond their resistance by a serpent. It is no more a monstrous conception than that a loving and just God would make a hell for the reception of the sinful, whom he permits to be born in that state. It is no more extravagant and monstrous than these, but it is equally ridiculous. Besides, how does a world "illumined by many suns" correspond with Revelations xxi. 23, when it says "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"? He next goes on to speak of two photographs, recently taken, of the Pleiades, which have revealed a unique and mysterious sphere, with a remarkable glory or luminous haze around it. The sphere has since been observed through the telescope, and the halo pronounced to be faintly discernable. Then he says, "Can this be heaven?" Ah! that is it. There is one great objection to the idea, and that is the size of the sphere. So very few are going to heaven, according to all account, that they would feel lonely

under such circumstances. "How strange," says he, "to think that some of us who have spent hours to purpose in one of the great observatories, and have swept large portions of the sky with eager and inquiring gaze, may even have caught upon the retina, the image of our eternal home." How strange, indeed, we may add, that the heaven of Dr. Davidson's imagination should, like the religion he preaches, be one mass of darkness edged with an almost imperceptible light. How strange, too, to find that we shall "rise again with our bodies," and be wafted into the centre of the Pleiades, there to sing Hosannah until we are sick of it. Strange? Yes! what is there which exists in connection with Christianity which is not strange?

Dr. Davidson says of his imaginary heaven: "Why may we not believe that grass will grow, that flowers will bloom, that fruit will ripen, forests wave, rivers flow, and streamlets dance, high mountains tower, valleys wind, and plains expand—ay, and that beyond them all, as far as the eye can reach, blue oceans will roll and sparkle in the sunlight of eternity?" Why not? Because such a heaven is out of concord with the "holy mysteries" of Christianity. Because for flowers to bloom and fruit to ripen, would mean decay as well. Because the grass that grew would either die or have to be cut for hay. Because eternity is an immaterial thing which has no sunlight in which an ocean could sparkle; and because pure imagination is unhealthy ground for the growth of belief. Let Dr. Davidson revel in his imagination of the position and beauties of heaven; nay, let him even prove that he is right, and we shall then even more strongly discredit the possibility of the existence, in such a glorious sphere, of a God so unjust, unmerciful, callous, and brutal as the god of the Christians.

ASHLEY SLADE.

BOOK CHAT.

Admirers of Mr. J. A. Symonds, the poet and historian of the Renaissance in Italy, will be glad to see his new prose essays entitled, *In the Key of Blue*.

Mr. Leslie Stephen, who is recovering from his recent illness, has just issued a half-guinea volume entitled, *An Agnostic's Apology*, and other essays.

Mr. Charles Watts has just published (Watts and Co., 3d.) a new pamphlet on *Evolution and Special Creation*. It is an excellent summary of the question, and is written with vigor and lucidity.

Mr. W. H. Reynolds, the energetic secretary of the Malthusian League, and publisher of its pamphlets, has just issued a *Malthusian Handbook*. It is written very clearly and plainly, but with greater delicacy of expression than is sometimes found in population essays. The social and domestic part of the question are most fully treated, and the medical part is reduced to merely necessary proportions. It is certainly preferable to some other pamphlets of considerable reputation.

The only argument brought against cremation which deserves any consideration is that as to the possibility of its removing traces of crime. The Cremation Society of England (8 New Cavendish-street, Portland-place, W.) has published a pamphlet on this aspect of the case by its President, Sir Henry Thompson, F.R.C.S. Sir Henry reiterates that cremation is the only safe sanitary method of disposing of the dead, and states the practice of the Cremation Society, viz., to remove the stomach, a portion of the liver, and one kidney, placing them in a jar with spirit, sealed in the presence of a witness, and committed to safe custody to be produced when required. This and other precautions, including doctor's certificate, taken by the Society, we think reasonable people will agree amply obviate objections.

We have scant sympathy with ladies who, while wearing for their adornment plumage which has meant the death and desertion of beautiful birds, yet shriek against scientists as though they were monsters of cruelty. No. 6 of the Humanitarian League's publications on Vivisection, by Edward Carpenter and Edward Maitland, has, at any rate in its first portion, nothing of this hectic strain. Mr. Carpenter's contribution is entitled "Medical Science: the True Method and the False." In arguing that in the long run vivisection must lead to the alleviation of human suffering and to human progress, he attacks the whole medical superstition of treatment by drugs, which, in palliating the effects of disease, allow the causes to go unnoticed. Mr. Maitland's portion is "An Appeal to Hearts and Heads." On such a question there

should be little need of an appeal to hearts. Every humane person must agree that the practice of torturing animals is a horrible one, unless it can find its justification by affording greater relief of suffering than it occasions. Whether it can be so justified is a point upon which we are as sceptical as Mr. Maitland, but it is a question for the intellect to decide. Whether we agree or not with the writer, there can be no question that this last publication of the Humanitarian League deserves the attention of the thoughtful and humane.

OBITUARY.—Dr. Gustav Volkmar, who died at Zurich on Jan. 9, at the advanced age of eighty-three, was one of those rational critics who, while not entirely breaking with the old faith, did much to undermine its alleged supernatural foundations.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

(Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.)

Secretaries may send in a month's list of lectures in advance.

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The History of a Star," with lantern illustrations (2d. and 4d.) Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class. Friday at 8, public discussion.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, J. Rowney, "The Bible Account of the Origin of the Universe." Wednesday at 9, C. Cohen's class in "Spencer's Ethics." Thursday at 8.30, open discussion (free). Saturday at 8.20, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless."

East London Ethical Society, Assembly Rooms, Cottage-grove (near Grove-road), Mile End-road: 7, Charles Read, M.D., "Conduct as a Fine Art" (free).

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, C. James, "Immortality: does Man Survive Death?"

Finsbury Branch: Feb. 4, at 8, smoking concert in Minor Hall of Science. Sunday at 12, members' meeting.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Stanley Jones, "The Cooling of Hell" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Mrs. Louisa Samson, "Is the Bible the Friend of Women?" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's 'Hamlet': its Philosophy and Lessons" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, J. Rowney, "The Resurrection."

Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: 7, A. Guest, "The Bible: does it show evidence of authorship by a being all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful?"; preceded by music.

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Politics of Women" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

South London Ethical Society, Chepstow Hall, 1 High-street, Peckham: 7, Graham Wallas, M.A., "Robert Owen."

West Ham—33 High-street, Plaistow: Saturday, Feb. 4, at 8, members' quarterly meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Devil a Gentleman."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, J. Rowney, "The Bible Opposed to Science and Morality"; 3.30, Stanley Jones, "Noah and Lot—Flood and Fire."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs) 6.30, concert.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: C. Cohen, 11, "Charles Darwin"; 7, "The Fate of Religion."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, A. B. Wakefield, "Atheism Examined—a Reply to the Rev. G. F. Handel Rowe (of Halifax)."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, annual memorial service to Charles Bradlaugh.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, P. Shaughnessy, "Why I am a Sceptic"; 6.30, J. Robertson (President, Glasgow Spiritualists' Association), "Spiritualism Before the Modern Movement."

Grimsby—Hall of Science, Freeman-street: 7, C. H. Bogen, M.B.A.A., "Astronomy."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, social evening.

Harton Colliery: Monday at 7.30, Charles Watts, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

Hull—Alhambra Music Hall, Porter-street: G. W. Foote, 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; 3, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; 7, "The Doom of the Gods."

Leeds—Waverley Hall, York Buildings, New York-street, Kirk-gate: 7, Sam Stranding, "The Probable Truth about Jonah"; tea at New Waverley Hotel, Call-lane, at 5.15.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Small, B.Sc., "Organic Evolution."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Non-Christian Religious Systems"; 3, "The Morality of Reason; or Utilitarianism"; 6.30, "The White Washing of Christianity."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Grainger Theatre (above old Lecture Room), Nelson-street: Charles Watts, 11, "Cromwell and the Commonwealth"; 3, "Man: his Origin, Nature, and Destiny"; 7, "Happiness in Hell, Misery in Heaven."

Nottingham — Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, C. J. Pillier, "Anarchy: its Aims and Objects."
 Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.
 Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, mutual improvement class; 7, Mr. Yeaxlee, "Hobbes's 'Leviathan'"; Mr. Loveridge will give a recitation.
 Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, annual meeting.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: John Grange, 3, "The Coming Slavery: a Study in Politics"; 7, "Unbelief, the Main-Spring of Progress"; tea at 5.
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7.30, Capt. W. B. Duncan will lecture.
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, C. Cohen, "Evolution v. Special Creation" (3d. and 6d.); 7, E. Mills, "Christianity and Progress" (free).

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—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 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 12, Birmingham; 26, Camberwell. March 19, Hyde Park. April 2, NewBrompton; 16, Hyde Park; 23, Hammersmith.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—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.—Feb. 19, Bethnal Green. March 12, m., Battersea; 19, Bethnal Green; 26, m., Hyde Park.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Feb. 5, m., Hall of Science; a., Hyde Park; 16, 17, 18, Hanley; 19, 20, 21, Manchester; 26, Wigan. March 5, Sheffield; 10, Beverley; 12, Hull; 16, 17, Swansea; 19, Plymouth.

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

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

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