

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

FIGHTING AT HULL.

It was nearly eleven when I arrived at Hull station on Saturday night, and I was cold and hungry, but I did not anticipate the treat that was in store for me. On the platform I met Mr. Thompson, a member of the Branch Committee; behind him was Mr. Phillips, the lessee of the Alhambra Music Hall; and behind them both was Mr. Jones, the Deputy Chief Constable of Hull.

In a few minutes I learned that the Portsmouth trouble had reappeared at Hull. Mr. Jones had been sent by the Chief Constable to warn Mr. Phillips, who had warned Mr. Thompson, who was there to warn me. Someone had provided the Chief Constable with a copy of that silly old Act of George III.—of ever pious and blessed memory. He had not mastered the Act, yet he was prepared to go straight ahead like a bull at a red rag. Mr. Jones was to inform Mr. Phillips that if the Secularists charged for admission on Sunday, he (Mr. Phillips) would be proceeded against on Monday. Mr. Foote would not be interfered with; Mr. Phillips would be the sole victim.

I pointed out to Mr. Jones that the Chief Constable did not understand the law. It was not so simple as he imagined. A charge for admission was not in itself illegal unless accompanied by discussion. Mr. Jones, however, could not discuss that. He had his orders, and meant to carry them out. Besides, there was such a thing as licensing day next August, and where would Mr. Phillips be then if he incurred the enmity of the police?

Mr. Jones, whose manner was civil and pleasant enough, strode away, having other business to attend to. The Chief Constable was meditating a raid on a Socialist Club. It was executed on Sunday evening. Thirty policemen entered the Club and carried away all the drinkables, at the same time threatening a prosecution. Such a high handed act, in defiance of law and common sense, will show the kind of man I had to deal with. He was a captain in the army, and his military ideas are carried into his civil functions. Well, I am a volunteer—not a mercenary—in the Army of Freethought. What is more, I am a general in it; and this "captain" may get the worst of the fight before it is over.

Mr. Phillips went with me to my hotel, and asked me what I meant to do. I explained the law to him, as I understood it, and said it was for him to decide. The terms of the agreement gave him power to protect himself, and he would have to lay an interdict upon me against charging for admission. This he did, although it was obvious that he was bitterly annoyed at being forced into such a position; and, of course, I had no right to complain, since it was manifestly unfair to let the battle be fought at the sole expense of Mr. Phillips, who is not in any way connected with the Freethought party, and who might easily be ruined in such a conflict.

As luck would have it, there was no discussion on Sunday. Mr. Billany, the Branch president, who

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took the chair at all three lectures, pressed for it in vain. Not a single Christian would defend his creed. It was so much easier to call the police.

Mr. Jones was outside the Alhambra in the morning with two constables. There was a good meeting, and the lecture was much appreciated. Hats were carried round for a collection, and this was repeated in the afternoon and evening. A surprising amount was realised, but as collections at the very best do not equal the money taken at the doors, and the expenses were very heavy, the net result was a small surplus for the lecturer. He lost something by the trouble, but there was no local loss, and the excitement caused in the town is a decided advantage to Secularism.

After the morning lecture a man was hired to carry a board through the most frequented streets, bearing the inscription "Freethought Lectures at the Alhambra. Threatened Police Prosecution. Come and See. Free Admission." The four shillings given to that man (we didn't sweat him) was a good investment. The afternoon meeting was a large one, and the evening meeting a bumper. A great many people had a dose of "blasphemy" who were really brought there by the Chief Constable.

The evening audience was remarkably enthusiastic. Mr. Billany was in fighting form, and the lecturer was on his metal. Before the proceedings terminated Mr. Foote made a statement as to his intentions. The Branch committee would find an unlicensed hall if possible, and rent it in his name; and he would come down, charge for admission to his lectures, and let the Chief Constable prosecute if he felt in "a coming on disposition." If no hall could be obtained for the purpose, Mr. Foote promised to bring down lecturers from London and have a week's Freethought Mission in Hull; at the end of which the bigots might be sorry they interfered. This statement was tremendously applauded.

Subsequently a meeting of the Branch members was held in a side room. They were all ready for the fray. When I said, "Of course you will stand by the ship in bad weather," their "ay, ay," was perfectly satisfactory. It was resolved that the Committee should look about and communicate with Mr. Foote as soon as possible.

This fight at Hull will involve expense, whatever course we have to pursue, and we should be ready for all emergencies. I therefore invite contributions to a special Fund. Everyone can see that fresh trouble may arise at any moment in other places; and it must be remembered that the National Secular Society has no reserve fund. It has only a current income for current expenses.

The Portsmouth case was easier to fight because the Hall which was threatened belonged to Secularists. We had the proprietors with us in the struggle. There was no division of interest, opinion, or sentiment. It is a lesson of the Hull case, therefore, that the Secular party should have halls of its own. This can be effected through the National Secular Hall Society, if it is adequately supported. We are in possession of the Hall of Science, having paid £1,000

down last summer, and another instalment of £250 at Christmas, and the place is self-supporting, and will soon yield a reasonable dividend, if the shareholders want it. About 2,000 shares are already subscribed. If the number is increased to 3,000 within six months, I have a promise from a generous friend of the cause to give £300, which can be invested in shares for the N.S.S. This should be an incentive to the whole party. If it proves to be so, we may presently have the country dotted with Secular Halls, owned by a strong central body, but used for local organisation and propaganda.

G. W. FOOTE.

FRANCES WRIGHT.

In the National Secular Society's *Almanack* for this year I have given a sketch of the life of Emma Martin, a cultured exponent of Freethought in the trying days of half a century ago. Frances Wright, afterwards Madame D'Arusmont, was a yet earlier lectress on the Freethought platform. Born at Miln's Buildings, Nethergate, Dundee, Sept. 6, 1795, she inherited both intellect and wealth from her father, a Radical, who circulated the works of Thomas Paine, and who boasted the friendship of Adam Smith, Dr. William Cullen, and other scientific and literary men of the end of last century. Early in life Miss Wright became an orphan, and to this cause she attributed the chosen severity of her studies, which soon took a Freethought direction. At the age of eighteen she published *A Few Days in Athens*. This work has gone through several editions both in England and America, and a French translation by Mdlle. A. Sobry appeared at Paris in 1822. Under the guise of a story of the days of Epicurus, it ably expounds and defends the Epicurean philosophy, and was appropriately dedicated to Jeremy Bentham. As the younger generation of Freethinkers can know little of the merits of *A Few Days in Athens*, I should much like to cull at length from its pages. One brief extract must, however, suffice as a sample of its style and boldness.

"The belief in supernatural existences, and expectation of a future life, are said to be sources of happiness, and stimuli to virtue. How, and in what way? Is it proved by experience? Look abroad over the earth: everywhere the song of praise, the prayer of supplication, the smoke of incense, the blow of sacrifice, arise from forest, and lawn, from cottage, palace, and temple, to the gods of human idolatry. Religion is spread over the earth. If she be the parent of virtue and happiness, they too should cover the earth. Do they so? Read the annals of human tradition! Go forth and observe the actions of men! Who shall speak of virtue—who of happiness, that hath eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to feel? No! experience is against the assertion. The world is full of religion, and full of misery and crime."

A Few Days in Athens is assuredly a remarkable work for a girl of eighteen, and although it might not repay reprinting as a whole, I should well like to see the entire discourse of Epicurus at the end reproduced. It is an epitome of Secularism, written in days before the term was known. One of the most striking passages in the writings of John Stuart Mill, that in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, in which he declares he will worship no God who is not good in the sense in which that term is used of his fellow creatures, and if God can send him to hell for not so worshipping him, to hell he would go, is but a mild presentation of thoughts and sentiments expressed in *A Few Days in Athens*. Three years younger than Shelley, like him she had a passion for reforming the world, and by reading Botta's *Italian History of the American Revolution*, was attracted towards the Western Republic, which she first visited in 1818, preferring it to either Greece or Rome. At Philadelphia in the following year she published *Altorf*, a tragedy founded on the story of *Tell*. On her return to England she published *Views of Society and Manners in America*. In 1821 she visited Paris,

at the invitation of General Lafayette. She returned to America to promote a scheme of negro emancipation. She purchased 1,890 acres of land at Nashoba, afterwards Memphis, Tennessee, "founded on the principle of community of property and labor," and settled there a colony of negroes. Nashoba (which was held in trust for her by General Lafayette and others) was restored to her when it was found her plan could not be carried out without conflicting with the laws of the State. Miss Wright had sadly to confess that collective humanity "is alone capable of effecting what I, the weak existence of an hour, have thought myself equal to attempt."

About 1826 Miss Wright threw in her lot with the social community at New Harmony. She edited the *New Harmony Gazette* with R. D. Owen, and started the *Free Inquirer*. Then, as now, there was a "Christian party in politics" bent on bringing God into the constitution. In opposition to these she took to the platform, giving Freethought lectures in various parts of the States from 1827 to 1836, exciting thereby much opposition from the clericals. A number of these lectures were published in 1830, and republished in England in the *Isis* (1833), edited by another brave woman, Eliza Sharples Carlile. By their bold attack on all religion they sufficiently justified the bigots' outcry.

Frances Wright was an earnest advocate of the education and enfranchisement of her sex, and is known in the States as "The Pioneer Woman in the Cause of Woman's Rights," since she advocated these before even Ernestine Rose, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others came forward. In one of her lectures she says:

"Men will ever rise or fall to the level of the other sex. Surely, then, if they know their interests, they would desire the improvement of those who, if they do not advantage, will injure them; who, if they elevate not their minds and meliorate not their hearts, will debase the one and harden the other; and who, if they endear not existence, most assuredly will dash it with poison."

In addition to the works already mentioned, Frances Wright wrote a number of Fables and Tracts, and assisted Abner Kneeland in starting the *Boston Investigator*, now the oldest Freethought journal in the world.

Her last work of importance was published in 1848, and is entitled *England the Civiliser*, where she advocated "the taking the principles of physical truth from under cover of superstition; the taking the principles of moral truth from under cover of the supremacy of the male sex; the taking the principles of intellectual truth from under cover of university logic and scholastic formulas of the Middle Ages; the taking the principles of political truth from under cover of money; and the taking the principles of industrial truth from under cover of government." She died at Cincinnati December 14, 1852, preserving her philosophy to the last.

J. M. WHEELER.

OBITUARY.

On Jan. 28, after a long and painful illness, died Mr. William Slater (aged 36), who had been for nearly eight years living at the Leicester Secular Hall as manager for the Leicester Secular Society. He was buried on Feb. 1 at the Leicester Cemetery, Mr. John M. Robertson delivering an impressive and helpful address. William Slater was a son of Mr. Thomas Slater (Vice-President of the N.S.S.), and had the advantage of being trained in the principles of Secularism. He was devoted to our cause, and did much unostentatious but very effective work for our Society. He was an exceptionally capable manager, deeply interested in his work and untiring in his efforts to do everything possible to add to the utility and reputation of the Secular Hall. He endeared himself to all the members of our Society, and we mourn the loss of a dear friend as well as a faithful worker.—SYDNEY A. GIMSON.

CHRIST AND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY.*(Concluded from p. 76.)*

THE Rev. John Watson accepts and advocates the position which is popular just now among theological exponents, that Christ did not propose to "change circumstances," but to "change men themselves." This theory no doubt has been adopted by certain professed Christians in consequence of its having been shown that the advent of Jesus failed to rid society of the evils that dominated the world two thousand years ago. But this hypothesis evinces a grave misapprehension of the true method of reform. The lesson of experience emphatically demonstrates that before man can be changed from bad to good the conditions which deteriorated his character must be removed. As Herbert Spencer observes, it is quite impossible to obtain a moral character from immoral surroundings. Nothing is more evident than the fact that men's minds are influenced by their environments. It is these that "change men themselves." Christians act upon this very principle when they erect churches and chapels, appoint preachers, and circulate Bibles. True, such means have not been particularly efficacious in improving the condition of society, but they were employed for that purpose nevertheless, which is an admission that we are right in our allegation that men and women are what they are as the result of the circumstances by which they have been and still are surrounded.

The social reformer who ignores the value of educational institutions, of improved dwellings, and of the observance of sanitary laws, can never solve the social problems that now agitate the public mind. For centuries the efforts made to reform the individual have proved futile, simply because the circumstances which influenced the individual were neglected. This is one of the main reasons why the Church has failed as a reforming agency. Its principal attention has been directed to the "soul," while little or no concern has been manifested for the body; and more interest has been shown in the glory of God than for the benefit of man. The consequence of this lamentable error is that the present generation has to devise some plan to correct the theological mistakes of the past. It is now recognised that if we have "souls," our bodies must claim our first consideration, inasmuch as upon their condition depends the value or otherwise of aught else they may possess. The existence of what is termed "soul" will be of little use if the body is not sound and the mind free from a sense of the infliction of wrong and injustice. Our great difficulty has been the absence of circumstances in which industry may reap its due reward, and where, as far as possible, health and comfort may be enjoyed by the whole of the human race. The hope of the genuine reformer lies in securing conditions in which people will be in a position to escape the blight and pangs of ignorance and hunger, and realise instead the advantages of knowledge and justice. Thus poverty, vice, and misery would be replaced by plenty, virtue, and happiness.

Of course it is desirable to "change men themselves" when they lack moral force, and a desire to be useful in the great hive of human endeavor. But the question is, how is this change to be produced? We know of no more effective plan than seeking to alter the conditions that have been proved to favor vice and encourage indifference. It is only the few among mankind in all ages and in every nation who have been intellectually strong enough, and who possessed sufficient moral courage to enable them to rise above the prevailing influences of their day, and even those few have had their progress impeded and their usefulness impaired by the force of circumstances against which they had to contend. Christ himself was no exception to

this fact in the work of human improvement, for as the Rev. Mr. Watson said, Jesus was unable to achieve certain reforms in his day, because then the state of society was unfavorable to such reformation. To talk therefore of changing men "themselves" without altering depraved and contaminating conditions, is purely fanciful; it is a jingle of words which possibly sounds pleasantly to the ears of orthodox believers who, as a rule, are satisfied with phrases that do not impose upon them the trouble of thinking to any great extent.

The Rev. D. M. Ross considers that the cure for our social troubles would be the establishment of "a brotherhood of man, based on the teachings of Christ." This is another wild delusion taught by the churches. Such a "Brotherhood," instead of consecrating affection and cementing friendship, would sever more than ever family ties and friendly associations. Christ's idea of "brotherhood" would limit it to believers." "He that is not for me is against me." "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven." "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." "Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children . . . he cannot be my disciple." These are the teachings ascribed to Christ, and if they were obeyed, the brotherhood of man would be impossible, for it would make belief, which is chiefly the result of birth and education, the passport to the fold. True brotherhood should be confined to no one faith, and to no one race, but should be as wide as the Universe and as broad as humanity, and this is just what the teachings of Jesus will not permit.

Strenuous efforts have recently been made to represent Christ as a labor reformer and the Church as a friend of the working man. If, however, facts are to be relied upon instead of imagination, such a representation is false and misleading. Christ was no labor reformer, and the New Testament does not record that he gave the subject any serious and practical consideration. Draper points out that in Rome "Labor was despised. . . slave labor was cheaper than animal labor, and work formerly done by cattle was done by men." Yet such wrong was never even alluded to by Jesus, to say nothing of his not condemning it. Such questions appear never for a moment to have crossed his mental horizon, except perhaps when he said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." Instead of work, he preferred the life of a mendicant, and his career was one of asceticism rather than one of manual activity. "Christian Socialism" will never prove an efficient remedy for the evils associated with labor, simply because it is based on a false assumption. It panders to the theological fashions of the day and is an avoidance of the real issue at stake. The panacea for the labor troubles now agitating the public mind must be derived from sources that have not their sanction in the New Testament.

The history of the Church affords an ample refutation that it is a friend to the working classes. The very nature of its government precludes the possibility of its being so. The Church has ever been allied with the capitalists, upon whom it depends for its pecuniary support. It is too much, therefore, to expect that its members will adopt a policy that probably sooner or later would destroy their cherished institution. Hence we find that the clergy have always fought shy of taking part in the struggles of the laboring classes. This was frankly admitted by the Rev. Thory Gardiner, M.A., who is reported by the *Liverpool Post* of November 22 of last year as having said, "He could not decide

whether capital or labor was most to blame in any particular dispute, though he held the Church to be ultimately responsible for such disputes. The Church had neglected her duty to both parties, whilst disastrous struggles had dragged their weary length along, dealing misery and death on every hand. In the past, men had been occupied to a great extent with the salvation of their own souls, when they ought to have been exercised with the welfare of the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed."

CHARLES WATTS.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

II.

Six Months for Blasphemy.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S indictment charged him with uttering blasphemy with a "loud voice," which he never possessed; with intending "with force and arms to bring Almighty God into disbelief"; and with speaking "against the peace of our Lady the Queen." All this was mere rigmarole. Mr. Holyoake's real offence was being of a different religious opinion from the majority, only the prosecution had not the honesty to put it in that way.

In his defence Mr. Holyoake spoke for nine hours and fifteen minutes. The upshot was a verdict of Guilty and a sentence of imprisonment. "The judge admitted," he says, "that, with my views, I could not answer my questioner otherwise than I did, and, being a young man, he gave me six months' imprisonment to encourage me in candor." Mr. Justice Erskine gave him a hint, which he might have taken and gained a mitigation of his sentence. "But my mind," he says, "was set upon two things—one was that I would seek neither favor nor mercy by solicitation or concession; the other was to vindicate the right to say what I did, whatever it might be taken to mean."

Mr. Holyoake was thirteen hours in court without food. A Gloucester lady sent him some wine and birds through a Mr. Fry. "Being a teetotaler, he drank all the wine himself, and, being a vegetarian, he ate the birds," so the poor prisoner was left starving. Being locked up in his cell, and feeling very hollow, he asked for something to eat; but all they could get for him at that hour was a cup of warm water, and an old apple which the warder found in his pocket.

Imprisonment in Mr. Holyoake's case was bad enough, though not so bad as in the case of Mr. Foote, forty years later. He saw no friends except through the bars of a gate, and he was obliged to submit to other indignities, though he resolutely refused to don the dress of a criminal. But he was allowed pen and ink and paper, and he was able to write articles for the *Oracle of Reason*, as well as an excellent pamphlet, *Paley Refuted in His Own Words*.

On the War Path Again.

Having "served his time," Mr. Holyoake went to Cheltenham again and repeated the words for which he had been imprisoned. He had paid the price and purchased the right. "This was not good law," he says, "but good defiance, and that was what I meant."

Mr. Holyoake's trial, the way he bore his imprisonment, and his conduct afterwards, do him infinite credit. But from a worldly point of view it ruined his career. Newspaper editors and publishers looked askance at him, work he might have done was given to less competent men, and all sorts of "superior" persons felt bound to be uncivil to one who had been imprisoned for heresy. He was even denied the credit of his work. His little book on Public Speaking and Debate was actually reprinted in America "with the name of a minister on the title-page, and a preface by the reverend gentleman." The subject is one on which Mr. Holyoake writes strongly and wisely.

"Innovation in theology is more serious than innovation in politics. Politicians are always dealing with new facts; and affairs of years ago are swept out of memory by the current of new interests. Political parties unpopular a few years ago may be in ascendancy to-day, and sedition in the past becomes patriotism in the present. But in ecclesiasticism all is different. The Church forgets no offence against it, and rarely forgives it. The part taken in Liberal policy by the great

statesmen of France and England at the end of last century none but historical students remember; but every fool in the streets, in every town and village, knows that Voltaire and Paine were against the priests. Theology is always in power. The party of reason is always in a minority, and a prisoner for heresy is always under condemnation, though his sentence may have long since expired. Indeed, instead of ceasing at his death, it increases. Charges he might answer if living no one answers for him, since he would himself be suspected who did so. . . . When new truth is regarded as a heresy, he who maintains it may be glad if his fate is to be only deserted, and not driven out, like the passenger in a plague-ship, to perish in the loneliness of the ocean."

Richard Carlile.

One of those in court during Mr. Holyoake's trial was Richard Carlile—a great soldier of freedom, sometimes reviled by persons who inherit the fruit of his sacrifices. Carlile admired Mr. Holyoake's defence, and told him so. Before the six months' imprisonment ended Carlile was dead. He left his body for dissection—a thing that fools laugh at. Jeremy Bentham and Harriet Martineau did the same. Mr. Holyoake remarks that there is "no instance of any distinguished Christian" displaying the same "generous and courageous devotion to science." Carlile, like Bunyan, was by trade a tinker. If he had not Bunyan's genius, he had all his heroism.

"He was imprisoned himself altogether nine years and three months—his wife was imprisoned also—more than one hundred and fifty of his shopmen were at various times imprisoned. He not only resisted the fetters upon the press, but inspired others to resist. He wrote heretical books, delivered lectures, and by his pen, his speech, and in his person maintained the conflict, until he established a free press. Like Paine, recognition and credit have never been given Carlile because of his heretical sentiments. The enlargement of freedom has always been due to heretics who have been unrequited during their day and defamed when dead. No publisher in any country ever incurred so much peril to free the press as Richard Carlile. Every British bookseller has profited by his intrepidity and endurance. Speculations of philosophy and science, which are now part of the common intelligence, power, and profit, would have been stifled to this day but for him."

In 1845 Mr. Holyoake went to Glasgow as a "Social Missionary." He lectured to the Owenites in a little chapel in Great Hamilton-street, near Glasgow Green. At that time he was an Oddfellow. He gives a most amusing account of the four Orders, and the answers of idiot piety given by the candidates. But a really good thing was done by the Manchester Unity, which offered five prizes of £10 each for the five best essays on Charity, Truth, Knowledge, Science, and Progression. Mr. Holyoake competed and won all the five prizes. The Grand Master handed him five £10 notes, and with this sum he started the *Reasoner*, which he conducted for many years, and in which he first used the term Secularism to denote the positive side of Freethought.

Brewin Grant.

Mr. Holyoake debated with the Rev. Brewin Grant in 1853. Grant was a sort of Christian terrier. He had no sense of scrupulousness or fair play. His one object was to exasperate his opponent. His one weakness was an extravagant opinion of himself. He even boasted that he had "silenced" Cardinal Newman, because Newman took no notice of his yelpings. Mr. Holyoake was of a totally opposite temper. "It is the second person in a dispute," he says, "who begins a quarrel." Grant could not "draw" him. All he could do was to misrepresent, and for that in the end he paid the penalty, being despised by decent and sensible men on both sides.

Fight for a Free Press.

With a justifiable pride Mr. Holyoake tells how he fought in the battle for an unstamped press. At 147 Fleet-street he defied the law, and was often liable for £120 fine before breakfast. By and bye he was liable for an awful amount, which he facetiously offered to pay "in instalments." When the battle shifted to the House of Commons, extracts were circulated from the *Reasoner* to show members what a "free press" might lead to. The same thing was done when Mr. Bradlaugh introduced his bill to abolish the Blasphemy Laws. Extracts from the *Freethinker* were used to terrorise members out of what little capacity they had for considering the matter reasonably.

Parliamentary Candidatures.

Mr. Holyoake has never been a member of Parliament. Many smaller men have sat for seats that he would have occupied if he had not been a heretic. In 1857 he became a candidate in the Tower Hamlets in opposition to Sir William Clay. In 1868 he issued an address to the electors of his native town, Birmingham. In 1884 he offered himself at Leicester, on the retirement of Mr. P. A. Taylor. Mr. Holyoake's addresses on these occasions are not like the ephemeral things which we all read at election times. They are well worth preserving in his Autobiography.

Space is not available to draw upon the many interesting chapters in which Mr. Holyoake gives his recollections of poets, statesmen, and exiles. Those who peruse his Autobiography will find delightful reading in these chapters. Borrowing a famous phrase from the gentleman who was asked what he had done in the French Revolution, Mr. Holyoake might say "I have lived."

Origin of Secularism.

Freethinkers will find Mr. Holyoake's chapter on the "Origin of Secularism" full of interest. Very early he came to the conclusion that it was useless to go to the people with learned disputations as to the origin and mythological character of Christianity. Then he thought it was best to put theology aside as a plainly inadequate guide. "It seemed to me," he says, "that doing good was being good—that it was good to do good, and that if a God of Goodness existed he would count goodness as a merit; and if no such God did exist, goodness was the best thing men could do in this world." Which, by the way, is precisely the position of Marcus Aurelius as stated in one of his noblest passages.

"That this secular form of opinion implies Atheism is an error into which many fall. Secularism, like mathematics, is independent of theistical or other doctrine. Euclid did not ignore the gods of his day; he did not recognise them in geometry. They were not included in it. But if pagan theology undertook to contradict mathematical principle, Euclid might have joined issue thereupon. But his province was geometry. At one time the only two men of note in England who maintained that the Secular was Atheistic, were Dr. Magee (the late Archbishop of York) and Mr. Bradlaugh. Twice I discussed this point with Mr. Bradlaugh—first about 1856, and again in 1870. The reader may see the report of the last debate in *A Little Book about Great Britain*, by Azimat Batuk, an agent of the Napoleonic dynasty, who wrote under a Turkish name. My argument was that a man could judge a house as to its suitability of situation, structure, surroundings, and general desirableness, without ever knowing who was the architect or landlord; and if as occupant he received no application for rent, he ought in gratitude to keep the place in good repair. So it is with this world. It is our dwelling-place. We know the laws of sanitation, economy, equity, upon which health, wealth, and security depend. All these things are quite independent of any knowledge of the origin of the universe or the owner of it. And as no demands are made upon us in consideration of our tenancy, the least we can do is to improve the estate as our acknowledgment of the advantage we enjoy. This is Secularism."

In the main we have always agreed with Mr. Holyoake on this point. Still, we have never been able to see that Secularism can ignore Theology. The time may come—we believe it *will*,—but it is not yet. This is not the time and place, however, for a discussion; and we do not care to close with an expression of disagreement. We prefer to conclude with a sincere tribute of gratitude and affection. Mr. Holyoake's life-work is well-nigh done, and it has been done wisely, bravely, and nobly. Sometimes, perhaps, on a summer evening, he may look out over the sea at Brighton, and watch the sweet, soft dying of a lovely day. May his own end be like that! The light *will* ebb away from his sky, but may its last gleams be tender and beautiful. Fear he cannot have, and may there be no shadow of regret; nothing but peace, and the sense of completion.

In Brazil many churches are without pastors, and the clerical seminaries are becoming deserted since the Republican government will not grant subsidies. The Pope has been asked to excommunicate the Brazilian president, his cabinet and the members of the Brazilian congress, but it is doubtful if such a measure will improve the position of the Church in the great South American Republic.

SUPERSTITION AND MORALITY.

SOME years ago, when Dr. McCann was lecturing at the Hall of Science, he made the extraordinary statement that "if he were an Atheist and worked for a rich employer, and he thought he could rob that employer without being discovered, as an Atheist he would have no hesitation in doing it." When, at the close of the lecture, discussion was invited, I made my way to the platform, and, in the very first sentence I uttered, I made bold to tell Dr. McCann that, though he might not know it, he was at heart a thief. In point of fact, it was only his belief in God and fear of hell that deterred him from stealing.

There are thousands of Christians who are of opinion that Atheists have no moral restraints. Many of them, indeed, believe that people only become Freethinkers in order that they might indulge their passions freely and commit all sorts of crimes with impunity. Belief in the Devil and hell-fire are supposed to act as a wonderful power of restraint upon evil-doers. In his admirable work, entitled *The Morals of Evolution*, an American Unitarian minister named M. J. Savage, a powerful thinker and brilliant writer, puts the case in the following interesting way. He says: "I remember a man out West, a member of my own Church, who said to me one day: 'If there was not any Devil, I do not believe there would be many Christians.' That man was not a good man. He did not choose that which we call virtue, because he recognised the fact that it was lovely and beautiful. He chose it for fear of something to come afterwards. If a policeman should enter one of your houses and force you to give money to a charitable cause, compel you to go out into the street to help a fellow-man, you would say at once that the act on the part of the man so compelled was not a good act. Why? Because it was done under compulsion."

If it is the fear of hell, if it is the fear of God, if it is the fear of the policeman, if it is the fear of society, of public opinion—no matter what kind of fear it may be, or what form the compulsion—if this is the ultimate reason why you do this, and why you refrain from that, then you have not yet risen into the condition of a free moral man or woman. I remember a case of a discussion on the part of a Universalist minister with another of the opposite creed, concerning the subject of future punishment. And in his speech the latter said: "If I believed as this minister does, that there is no hell, then I would *have my fling*. I would take the pleasure of life as it goes along. I would follow my appetites and inclinations. Why should I deny myself?" When it came to the turn of the Universalist to reply, he simply looked the man over from head to foot and said: "Judging your character as well as I can by your looks, I believe that you would."*

Now as a matter of fact, belief in God, or Devil, or hell, acts in a very small measure upon believers in the way of restraint. A large number, probably hundreds, of believers in God and future rewards and punishments have committed murder—the most serious offence recognised by law—in England during the present century; thousands of believers have been sent to gaol as thieves; many of them clergymen, Sunday-school teachers, or missionaries; while large numbers of pious people have been sent to herd with criminals for committing disgusting offences, which are generally indicated by a statement in the papers that they are "unfit for publication."

And yet I am not contending that Christians, on the whole, are any worse in their conduct than any other members of the community; all I am urging is that their belief in future rewards and punishments does not appear to act very strongly as restraints upon their actions, when the inducement for the committal of crime is strong upon them.

Of course the believer will answer that the man who yields to temptation, whatever his professions may be, is no true Christian, just as the teetotaler would say that the man who falls a prey to the curse of drink is no true abstainer, which in both cases is quite true; and in the same manner the Secularist may say, as

**Morals of Evolution*, p. 42.

soon as a professed member of the Society departs from the path of virtue, that he is no true Secularist because he is not acting up to the principles to which he has given his intellectual assent.

The fact is, belief in a good God very rarely acts as a deterrent because it is generally believed that God in his mercy will forgive the most horrible of deeds; while the Devil and hell-fire are too far off to act upon the mind of the believer as restraints in the perpetration of crime. Public opinion is a much more powerful factor in restraining individuals in their actions. Individuals are often deterred from committing crime from their fear of what their neighbors and fellow workers may think of them.

And yet the man who is only restrained from committing evil from fear of being condemned by society is not a virtuous man in the highest and truest sense of the term. Such a man cannot be said to have attained "free moral self-control as yet," although he may be on the road towards its attainment. Real goodness, virtue in its highest sense, consists in acting in a certain definite fashion which experience has demonstrated to be beneficial to the community, not on account of any promised reward, or for fear of any threatened punishment, but because it is right so to act. As Shelley grandly puts it—

The consciousness of good, which neither gold
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.
This "commerce" of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative sign of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain
No balancing of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed—
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.—*Queen Mab*, p. 27.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

BIGOTRY AT LEAMINGTON.

THE report of the committee appointed to investigate the case of Ernest John Sparks, the paralytic, who was summarily dismissed from the Midland Home for Incurables for his irreligion, and afterwards accused of familiarity with the housemaid, has been published and fully bears out what we had to say on the case. The committee find:—1. That there is not sufficient evidence to establish the charge of familiarity with servants. 2. That Mr. E. J. Sparks was very indiscreet in the expression of his religious opinions. 3. That the committee made two errors in judgment; first, in discharging Mr. Sparks on unsupported evidence without hearing him in his own defence, and second, in withholding explanations. Finally they express their opinion that on the whole the Home is very well managed; which is not surprising since they are all interested in it. In consequence of this report, the matron, Miss Osborne, has sent in her resignation. The chaplain, the Rev. Maze Gregory, the principal offender in the matter, who drew up the false charges against Sparks, while telling him personally that he would be discharged for irreligion, "has decided to retain the chaplaincy for the present." He has, however, had the grace to intimate that he will not attend the meetings of the House Committee, or take any part in the management of the Home. There is one question upon which the report gives no enlightenment, and that is, what is to become of the poor paralytic. Another question too is suggested by the case. How many more may be similarly situated to Sparks, without friends able to take up their case.

BIGOTRY AND FREETHOUGHT.

Every man who seeks for truth must incur the peril of persecution. Shall we, then, remain in supine obscurity? Must we not rather light our beacon, though envy and calumny rekindle their torches? For my part, I no more think that truth should be concealed before these monsters than that we should avoid taking nourishment lest we should be poisoned.—*Voltaire*, "The Ignorant Philosopher."

Hugh O. Pentecost resumed the Freethought platform at the Paine Celebration in Paine Hall, Boston, on the 29th ult.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. Gladstone, in his labored and futile defence of the Bible, remarked on the fatherly way in which Providence had fitted up the earth for man's habitation. A signal proof of this fact is to be found in the report of the recent earthquake at Zante, the capital of the most beautiful of the Ionian Isles. Scarcely a building has escaped damage, a great many houses are totally wrecked, and there has been a serious loss of life. While the Zante people were trusting in Mr. Gladstone's fatherly Providence, the said Providence set the ground rocking under their feet, played Old Harry with their dwellings, and showed how he moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. Yes, Providence is a beautiful doctrine, when you view it in the proper light.

Two hundred persons have perished by freezing to death in South-Western Russia and Poland. A consideration of such little constantly-recurring facts ought to explode the superstition of a Divine Providence.

Mr. W. T. Stead was always a bit eccentric. He is now following in the wake of Mrs. Besant. What he told the *Christian Commonwealth* interviewer does credit to his imagination. He declared that absent persons sent him messages, and sometimes very valuable "tips." They write the messages with a pen he holds in his hand. The pen moves, of course, but his hand doesn't; which proves that he has nothing to do with it. But the best of the story is that the persons who send the messages are ignorant of the fact themselves. The evidence is therefore all at one end, and that end is Mr. Stead's—which is hardly good enough for the dispassionate investigator.

We advise Mr. Stead, as he says his statements are "verifiable," to submit them to verification. It is not enough to assert that wonderful things *have* happened. He should show an impartial committee that they *do* happen. We don't mind serving on the committee.

Canon MacColl, in the February number of the *Contemporary Review*, holds a brief for the traditional site of Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre. His main argument is that Constantine had the means of knowing the right spot. But as Jerusalem had been twice destroyed between J. C. and Constantine, this is by no means certain. Besides, Constantine probably did not care a curse about the question. If his mother had found the true cross at Jericho he would not have contradicted.

The traditional site no doubt has the best evidence; but that amounts to nothing more than that it has been credited down to the last hundred years, when pilgrims first seem to have begun to wonder how the deuce it happened that Christ got crucified in the middle of the city. The sufficient solution of the whole matter is that pilgrims wanted to see the place and the monks in Jerusalem wanted to make cash by showing it.

The catalogue of those blessed places which possess Holy Coats of Jesus has now swelled to these proportions: Loecum in Hanover, Safed near Jerusalem, Santiago, Oviedo, Mayence, Ghent, Mantua, Mallorca, Halle, Cologne, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Friaul, Moscow, and the Lateran in Rome. Present-day carpenters, of one week-day coat and one go-to-meeting one, can scarce choose but swell with envy.—*Truthseeker*.

The bigots of Southampton are bent on stopping the sale of the Sunday papers. They know well enough that it is the Monday papers that employ Sunday labor. But this is not the real objection to Sunday papers, which is that people stay at home reading them instead of going to church and dropping their coppers in the collection plate.

The French have got as accustomed to seeing Bible characters represented on the stage as we have to the introduction of Jupiter, Apollo, and Venus in burlesque. The question has been raised whether the English would stand a serious biblical drama. Canon Farrar declares that any such attempt "would most deeply wound the feelings of millions of serious Englishmen"—the sort of people who resent others enjoying themselves in a way they don't like. Mr. H. A. Jones, on the other hand, thinks "the English theatre could not pos-

sibly make a worse use of the Bible than the sects have done, or misunderstand it so completely." Perhaps some member of the Independent Theatre, the Playgoers' Club, or the Society of British Dramatic Art will try the experiment. "Samson" would make a good subject, the principal character to be represented by Sandow.

At a meeting of Jersey City Methodists they opened with a prayer that the angels would descend and bring peace and goodwill. Before the proceedings terminated the police were called into requisition.

The *Denver News-Letter* gives a graphic sketch of Christ Schweinfurth and his "Heaven" near Rockford. This modern Christ at an early age showed a taste for revival meetings, became a Methodist preacher, and at last started in business on his own account as inspired prophet, Son of God, and general Savior. One of his believers was a wealthy farmer named Weldon, who left him his estates near Rockford, Illinois. Here he set up his community. His followers are mainly women, mostly under thirty. There are over forty of them in "Heaven," in daily communion with Schweinfurth. They are known as "angels," and are presided over by Angelica or Mary Wildan, a pretty young woman of twenty-six, the mother of a child, said to have been born of the Holy Ghost, but also said to resemble Schweinfurth.

The Rev. Atherstone Riley brought the religious question again before the London School Board, and demanded that the children be distinctly taught that Christ is God, and such explanations of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity be given as may be suited to their capacities. And we suppose not conflict too glaringly with their arithmetic. The question was adjourned for further discussion. Meantime Mr. Riley might be reminded that the 14th section of the Education Act he has to administer, but seeks to thwart, forbids the teaching of any sectarian dogmas.

The London School Board's "Syllabus of Bible Instruction" is a curious document. The teachers are "desired to make the lessons as practical as possible, and not to give attention to unnecessary details." But the Board seems to have a strange notion of "unnecessary details." The children in Standard I. are to get up "a few simple stories from the Book of Genesis." We wonder if this includes the birth of Esau and Jacob, the adventures of Lot and his daughters, and the little affair between Judah and Tamar. Then again, the children are to become conversant with the "History of the youth of David as a shepherd boy"—which seems to us very "unnecessary details" for English children in the nineteenth century; especially as the little ones, if they visit the Zoological Gardens, will find it hard to understand how the boy David chased a lion and a bear, caught them, and knocked their heads together.

We should like to know who drew up this syllabus. Very likely it is the work of a few parsons on the Board. These gentlemen are simply training little children to grow up customers for the gospel-shops. It is a professional affair with them from beginning to end. Some day or other the State will cease to protect their industry, and they will have to submit to fair trade like other persons. Meanwhile it is evident that Freethought and Religion have a big battle to fight in the public schools.

"Anti-Secularist," in a letter to the *Hull Daily Mail*, warned the inhabitants that "one of the bitterest opponents of Christianity is coming"—to wit, the President of the National Secular Society. At the same time he wanted to know how it was that the proprietor of the Alhambra could "help to throw Christianity overboard by encouraging its worst enemies." Now there is no "encouragement" in the matter. The Alhambra is to let, and the Secularists pay for using it. Besides, if "Anti-Secularist" is so cocksure that Christianity is true, why does he fear it will suffer by Secular criticism?

Preaching at Portsmouth, the Rev. Charles Joseph, a Baptist minister, criticised Mr. Foote's letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on the question, "Is Christianity Played Out?" Mr. Joseph said that Mr. Foote had "fallen into the common error of confounding the Christian Church with the nations in which that Church was living and laboring." It was not Christianity which made Europeans drunken, prone to

gambling, and dissolute. But did Mr. Foote say it was? Nothing of the kind. His point was that Christianity did not prevent the immorality of Christian countries. In this respect it is a failure. Mohammedanism makes men teetotallers, and Brahmanism makes men abstain from killing animals. But it would puzzle Omniscience to say what Christianity makes men do. To say a man is a Christian is to say nothing definite about him—except that he wears a certain label.

Mr. Joseph quoted Mr. Foote's statement that civilisation is the result of scientific discovery, but did not say whether he agreed with it or not. "Lukily," he declared, "the great discoverers and inventors had been Christians." But this is nothing to the point. Mr. Joseph has to prove that the scientific discoveries of professed Christians had anything to do with their Christianity. Nor is the statement he makes true. Some scientific discoverers have been Christians, but not all; which knocks Mr. Joseph's implied argument all to smithereens.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has discoursed on the same topic at St. James's Hall. Mr. Hughes, as our readers know, is not an accurate speaker. His statements are reckless, and his epithets superlative. The major part of his discourse was a vehement but feeble attempt to show that Mr. Buchanan knew nothing of the teaching of Jesus Christ. The rest was of the usual "I'm better than you" style of argument. Mr. Hughes referred to the St. Giles' Mission which has "reclaimed thousands of prisoners"—which we believe to be a very extravagant assertion. He then exclaimed, "Let Mr. Buchanan or Mr. Foote try to manage that business without Christianity." Mr. Foote, however, and probably Mr. Buchanan, would not care so much for "that business" as for the general spread of education and intelligence. Prevention, in their philosophy, is a great deal better than cure.

"Will anybody," Mr. Hughes asked, "name one single charity or philanthropic institution in this city which is sustained exclusively by Secularists?" A more ridiculous question was never put to a meeting. Mr. Hughes had no right to put it without first telling his audience that, while Christianity is largely supported by the State, Secularism is in a position of positive disability. A Secular institution, as such, is a sheer impossibility in the present state of English law. Christian churches use dead men's money, but the law will not allow Secular Societies to do so. This law is maintained by Christians merely for our disadvantage, and when they are asked to give us fair play they shrug their shoulders and laugh. Is it not an infamy, then, to twit us with our poverty?

But this is not all. We beg to tell Mr. Hughes that there is a cant of philanthropy in Christian circles. We beg to tell him that Secularists prefer justice to charity; at any rate, they work for justice first. At the same time they relieve their own poor, and give to unsectarian philanthropies, without shouting their benevolence from the housetops. We should also like to tell Mr. Hughes that Christianity causes far more poverty than it ever alleviates. There is a debit and credit account in this matter, and the balance is decidedly on the wrong side. All the Christian charities in London, for instance, do not touch a tithe of the social misery caused by Christian connivance at the reckless breeding of children.

On one point Mr. Hughes was very ignorant or very disingenuous. Referring to "freedom of speech and pen," he declared that no one had done so much for this reform as "the Christian" William Ewart Gladstone. He might just as well say that Mr. Gladstone is the parent of Home Rule. The Irish cause was carried to the point where Mr. Gladstone took it up (because he couldn't do otherwise) by the courage and devotion of Irishmen. In the same way, Mr. Gladstone is not the creator of our free press. It was won for us by hundreds of brave men who went to gaol for defying restrictive laws; and the majority of them were Freethinkers. In this, as in other matters, the Christians have a rare trick of annexation. They come in at the eleventh hour, and claim all the wages.

Glasgow Royal Infirmary is not in a flourishing condition. Last year's income was £20,852, and the expenditure £32,247. One of the speakers at the annual meeting called the financial report "perfectly disgraceful." It appears that

the working classes "did their part nobly." The citizens who don't shell out as they should are the wealthier folk—the kirk-going respectability, who regard Freethinkers as monsters of wickedness.

The *Glasgow Weekly Herald* states that a West End church, which spends over £250 a year on its choir, raises less than £50 for the infirmaries.

In reply to the "sweeping assertion lately made at Baskerville Hall that Christianity, after 1,900 years test, had proved a failure," Mr. George Lomas, the vicar's warden of Bishop Ryder's Church, states in the *Birmingham Daily Argus* that 2,640 quarts of soup, 2,023 loaves of bread, and 17 tons of coal have been distributed among the destitute poor of the parish during the late hard weather. This is good enough in its way, but it isn't the best of ways. Mr. Lomas and the *Argus* might both ponder the problem, How is it that myriads of poor people need charitable soup and bread after 1,900 years of the religion that was to save the world?

The *Birmingham Weekly Owl* says it is "one of the greatest enigmas of life" that Christians look askance at Mr. Charles Watts if he shows any sign of taking part in the social and political work of the city. Men who never give religion a thought, or never allow it to affect their commercial morality, are "the first to hoot down one of whom it can at least be said that his belief or lack of belief is the result of matured and careful study."

"Apart altogether from any particular case," says Dr. Parker, "I must condemn Plymouth Brethrenism on every ground. It is Pharisaic and devilish in its vanity." How these Christians love one another!

The ever-blessed Virgin Mary has turned up at Milltown, near Killorglin, Kerry. This may be taken as a sign that the persons who have had the beatific vision of the holy mother of God are in want of cash.

Dr. H. Ryle, in his recent work on *The Early Narratives of Genesis*, finds "a trace of early Hebrew mythology in the expression 'Let us go down'" (Gen. xi. 7). We find a trace of mythology all through the book.

One of the funniest interpretations of scripture we have recently met is in a defence of the authorship of the Gospel attributed to John by a Dr. Peabody. He interprets the passage where Jesus says to Peter concerning John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" as meaning that Jesus had a few words to say to Peter privately, and wished John to wait a moment till he had finished. This is a good instance of trying to make the gospel credible by leaving out the supernatural.

When John makes such little blunders as supposing that the high priest of the Jews was an annual office, Dr. Peabody sees no convincing proof that the writer could not have been a Jew. He only allows that the gospel was written in old age, when the writer's memory was defective. Apparently the Holy Ghost forbore to step in and remove these "tokens of senility."

The inquiry held by direction of the Charity Commissioners into the administration of charities at Richmond, which, produce an annual income of between £5,000 and £6,000, reveals a state of matters only too common. The clerk to the trustees admitted that applicants for almshouses were asked what church they attended, and only members of the Church of England had been elected. When charities are administered by sky-pilots, they are pretty sure to utilise them for the service of their church. All for the glory of God.

The *Church Times* strongly deprecates the formation of the Liberal Churchman's Union. It wants all the clericals to rally together for the defence of the Establishment, and knows that the chief danger to the loaves and fishes will come from the democracy.

The Jews at Rome had their synagogue burned, and, believing the event was a chastisement for Sabbath trading, call on those guilty of this desecration to henceforth "shut

up." Evidently they think Jehovah preserves his old characteristics. The impious Jews trade on Saturday, and Jehovah thereupon burns down the synagogue of their pious brethren. This was always his humorous way.

The Church party are up in arms at Lincoln, because it is proposed to establish a School Board in that cathedral town. The Rev. Precentor Venables even had the impudence to say that Secular education without religious instruction, would result in filling the gaols. That our prison population has been diminished since the Education Act is an undeniable fact.

The following relation, from Timbs' second volume of *Abbeys, Castles, and Ancient Halls*, may illustrate how much the Church contributed to the advance of "mere morality":—"At Tutbury, in Staffordshire, up to about the end of the last century a crowd of rural folk used to assemble every year, who, after attending divine service in the church and dining in the castle, amused themselves by turning up a bull, provided for the occasion by an ancient benefaction, and trying to catch him before he should cross a certain river. The animal was turned out with his horns cut off, his ears cropped and his tail diminished to the very stump, his body besmeared with soap, and his nostrils filled with pepper to increase his fury. If the people caught him he was brought to the market cross and there baited, and, after yielding sport in life to his tormentors, he fed them with his flesh in death."

Judge Griffiths, of the West Bromwich County Court, wishes "that oaths were abolished in Courts of Justice altogether." So do we. When a man tells a thumping lie he often clinches it with "S' Help me God."

Some years ago we related in the *Freethinker* a conversation we overheard in the train between two commercial travellers. It was about pills and patent medicines, and one of the commercials who had been in that line said that the religious weeklies were the best medium for advertising the greatest quackeries. This opinion seems to be shared by Mr. C. A. Pearson, of "Missing Word" fame. "When," he says in an article in the *Search Light*, "when a promoter has a scheme by which he wishes to defraud fools, if he is experienced in such rascality, he knows that his best advertising medium is a religious weekly. It makes no difference how barefaced the fraud is, the majority of these papers will take the advertisement and print it as long as the promoter pleases and has money to pay."

Jabez Balfour, of Liberator fame, was a notable pietist. So was Loughnan, who got all that cash—which he has to return—from Mr. Morley. Tarilongo, who is now in gaol in Rome for his share in the great swindle which the Romans call their "Panarnino," was a regular attendant at mass. Not for the world would he miss the punctual eating of Christ's Body—the Catholic wafer; but he was equally punctual in defrauding his fellow Christians, and all other inhabitants of the planet who could be "Jacobbed."

Mother—"I don't see why you and your husband should have so much trouble. You don't belong to different churches, do you?" Daughter—"No, mother." Mother—"Then there is no excuse for fighting like cats and dogs."

Deacon Sharp was never married. He made the attempt once, but his humility and piety worked against him. He was the same long, solemn-visaged chap then that he is now, with what is known as a "gift of prayer." In season and out of season he was ready at any moment to flop down on his knees and tell all he knew of spiritual grace. There were those who said he liked to hear himself pray. On this occasion he asked Jenny Price to be his partner for life, and Jenny, who was a prim little teacher, consented. Then the deacon flopped. He began in his usual strain by invoking forgiveness for his sins. He was everything that was vile, and as he enumerated the crimes laid down in his own imagination, Jenny began to fidget. At last she touched the deacon on the shoulder: "You needn't pray any more on my account," she said. "I wouldn't think of marrying such a wicked sinner! If you are only half as bad as you say you are, I wouldn't have you! I hope you will repent before it is too late." And she left the astonished deacon to his own reflections upon matrimony and grace.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 12, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—11.15, "The New Parliament: What will it do for the People?" (admission free); at 7, "Can we follow Christ?"

Wednesday, Feb. 15, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—8.15, "Freethought in Modern English Poets." (Admission free).

Friday, February 17, Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell-road, S.E., at 8, "Why I Cannot be a Christian." (Admission free).

February 19, Hall of Science; 26, Grimsby; 28, Battersea.

March 5, Liverpool; 12, Leeds; 16, Hammersmith; 19, Hall of Science; 26, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—February 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.

T. SHORE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. STANLEY.—See paragraph. Always glad to receive cuttings. SHILLING WEEK FUND.—"Egypt," £1.

STUDENT.—Tylor's *Primitive Culture* is by far the best work on the subject. It is replete with information, and written in a thoroughly scientific spirit. The third edition, lately published, is very little different from the second. Clodd's *Myth and Dream*, a smaller and cheaper work, is a kind of summary of Tylor. In such cases, always read the Master if you can.

T. HOPKINS.—Jokes are always welcome.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. I., 4s.

J. I. (Worcester) begs us to do something for that pious city. He thinks we should give such priest-ridden places our special attention. Well, we are quite willing to stir up Worcester if there is any "stirability" left in it. As a first step, we ask all the readers of this journal in that city to send us their addresses, so that we may put them in private communication with each other.

ECCLECTIC.—Glad the letter has eased your feelings. Hypocrites are very trying, and 'tis better to let off steam than explode.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON.—Very sorry to hear of the death of William Slater. Hundreds of Freethinkers will sympathise with Thomas Slater in his bereavement.

NOAH LOT.—Not at all bad, but we cannot insert what is being printed elsewhere.

J. COLLINSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." It is a great pity your letter did not appear in the *Chronicle*. The Christian side was much over-represented in the controversy.

QUIZ.—(1) Glad to hear you like our "second special" and have taken six copies. Our last penny number ran out of print, and the twopenny special sold still better; so that our enterprise is not unappreciated. (2) Waddington's *History of the Church* is written from the Protestant standpoint. He was a Church of England clergyman—learned, able, and as fair as could be expected.

R. A. G.—The Marquis of Queensberry's memory played him false, we fancy. We believe he had ceased to sit in the House of Lords before the *Freethinker* started. After such a lapse of time it was easy to confound the *Freethinker* with another journal.

J. KEAST.—Thanks for the Bristol Branch's unanimous vote of thanks for Mr. Foote's recent lectures. He is arranging with Mr. Watts for a week's Freethought mission in your city. Glad to hear you have enrolled several new members. The more active the Christian Evidence people are the better for our cause. Our worst enemy is indifference. Your replies to Mr. Grinstead will do good. "Peg away," as Lincoln said.

M. D.—The advertisement might cause trouble. We can hardly insert it as it stands. Send us your address, and the amount shall be returned.

J. EASTON.—There is nothing new or special in Canon Talbot's view of Baptism. We guess he believes as much as we do in any real change being effected in a baby by sprinkling it with a little Water Company's fluid drawn into a Church font.

PAMBO.—Your disgust is very natural, but the Christian Evidence lecturer's bad manners will injure his own cause instead of ours. His "arguments" at Portsmouth are such as he uses elsewhere. His audience must be afflicted with cretinism to applaud some of his nonsense. It is only fair to say that the regular Christian ministers, wherever he goes, fight shy of him.

J. PROCTOR.—We have handed the amount to Mr. Forder, who will also send contents-sheets. Thanks.

S. M. PEACOCK.—See "Sugar Plums."

C. ROWE.—See paragraph. You are quite right. Christians should not be allowed to ignore Secularists in forming committees for public improvement.

Mr. H. S. SALT, hon. sec. of the Humanitarian League, points out a misprint in our notice of its publication on *Vivisection*. Mr. Carpenter's argument is that in the long run vivisection must lead to the *aggravation*, not *alleviation*, of human suffering.

F. V. T.—Dr. Legge's *Confucius and his Doctrine*, though written by a missionary, will give you pretty full information; also *Confucianism*, by W. K. Douglas.

W. HOLLAND.—Thanks. The extracts may prove useful.

B. MUNTON.—(1) Atheist means, etymologically, without God. The Agnostic is in precisely the same position. Colonel Ingersoll calls himself, indifferently, Agnostic or Atheist. (2) We intend to keep the *Freethinker* at the people's price. Those who grumble at having to pay twopence once a month for a Special Number are not numerous. We fancy you have met most of them yourself. They must pardon us for thinking a little of our own burdens and obligations.

H. BRYCESON.—The secretary of your Branch will be able to give you the address. It is not by us at the moment.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Sorry to hear Mr. Watts has been suffering from pleurisy. We hope he will take a little rest. England's climate is dreadfully trying. Take care of *yourself*, too. We print your acknowledgments for N.E. Secular Federation:—Peter Weston 3s., W. Auckland Branch 5s., H. Richardson 5s., M. Weatherburn 5s., Newcastle Friend 5s., S. M. Peacock 1s., A. J. 2s., Jarrow collection 8s., Newcastle collection 8s. 4d., T. Wilkinson 2s. 6d., W. Hall 2s. 6d., J. Menzies 2s. 6d.

W. T. G.—(1) "The Devil Interviewed" will appear again next week. Something sterner takes its place. When the trumpet sounds to battle we doff the cap and bells. But you shall have your laugh out, for all that. (2) Enclosure under consideration.

JOSEPHUS.—(1) Our account of the so-called vacuum is quite correct. Ask the editor of any scientific journal. W. R. Bradlaugh's knowledge of science is—well, equal to his knowledge of most of other things; of law, for instance, and writes for libel. (2) Contents-sheets shall be sent.

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—New York Herald—Denver News Letter—Lucifer—Rocky Mountain American—Post—Hereford Times—Leamington Chronicle—Church Reformer—Hampshire Telegram—Retford and Gainsborough News—Commonweal—Lincolnshire Echo—Glasgow University Magazine.

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.

Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science this evening (Feb. 12) on "Can We Follow Christ?" In the course of the lecture he will reply to some points in the article with which the *Daily Chronicle* wound up the discussion on "Is Christianity Played Out?" In the morning Mr. Foote delivers a political lecture. On Wednesday evening (Feb. 15) he occupies the platform again, his subject being "Freethought in Modern English Poets." Admission to this lecture is free.

Mrs. Louisa Samson occupied the London Hall of Science platform on Sunday evening. She had a good meeting and a very hearty reception. We should be glad to see her upon the Secular party's platforms more frequently.

Mr. Charles Watts' ten days lecturing tour in the Tyneside district has been in every way a great success. All his meetings have been very enthusiastic, and, with one exception,

largely attended. Last Sunday he lectured three times in Newcastle to capital audiences, the theatre in the evening being well filled. Mr. Watts will write a report of his tour for our next issue. To-day (Sunday, February 12) Mr. Watts lectures three times in the Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool.

Mr. S. M. Peacock and Mr. Joseph Brown both send us reports of Mr. Watts's tour, but as he will write a special account of his tour for next week's *Freethinker*, we keep the ground clear for him.

The London Secular Federation's Council, at its last monthly meeting, had before it the result of a Conference of Lecturers and Branch Secretaries. The Federation was asked to formulate a scheme for centralising the lecture system. After discussion it was resolved—"That the Federation Council is in favor of centralising the lecture system, but cannot formulate a scheme in the absence of agreement among the Branches; it therefore decides to call another gathering of Secretaries and Lecturers to meet the President and the Council of the Federation." Due notice of this will be given.

Another enterprise of the Federation's is the annual Children's Party at the London Hall of Science on Wednesday, March 1. Donations are earnestly requested. Other funds have lately taxed Freethinkers' pockets, but the little ones must not suffer on that account. Mr. Forder and Miss Vance will be happy to receive subscriptions; or they can be sent to us, and acknowledged in our columns. We must ask the London Freethinkers to "shell out" without delay. The children must have their treat (bless them!) if we beg, borrow or steal the money. We begin by begging. And as example tells, we plank down our own half sovereign first. Next, please.

Under the auspices of the London Secular Federation, the Camberwell Branch has arranged for a series of Free Lectures in its Hall on Friday evenings. Mr. Foote opens next Friday (Feb. 17) with a lecture on "Why I Cannot be a Christian." He will be followed by Messrs. C. Cohen, G. Standing, and J. Rowney. Secularists in the district, as there is "nothing to pay" and full opportunity for discussion, should induce their Christian friends to attend these lectures.

The Federation has arranged for another course of Free Lectures on Thursday evenings in March at the Hall of the Hammersmith Club, Broadway, Hammersmith. Mr. Foote takes one evening, and Mr. Cohen and other lecturers the remainder.

The Battersea Branch has taken the Chatham Hall, adjoining the Battersea Park Station, for a lecture by Mr. Foote on Tuesday, Feb. 28. The subject chosen is "Can we Follow Christ?" As the hall is within easy distance of Westminster and Pimlico, and the lecture is on behalf of the Branch funds, a large audience is anticipated. Tickets (1s., 6d., and 3d.) can be obtained at the Sunday meetings, or from Mr. Fisher, 48 Park-grove, Battersea.

The Ipswich Branch is working hard for success. Mr. Forder lectures for it to-day (Feb. 12) at the Co-operative Hall. After the morning lecture he will be pleased to see friends from Colchester and Harwich, with a view to forming Branches in those towns.

The Camberwell Branch charges no admission fee to its Science Classes, which meet on Friday evenings at 7. Mr. Coppock is a very capable teacher, and a number of pupils will doubtless flock around him when they understand the advantages that are offered them.

Free lectures on political and social subjects are given every Friday at the Battersea Secular Hall, and any amount of discussion is allowed. Mrs. Thornton Smith lectures this Friday (Feb. 10) on "Women and Politics."

Mr. S. M. Peacock informs us that some influential gentlemen, who have not hitherto identified themselves with the Freethought movement, have recently joined the N.E. Federation; and the result is that an effort will be made to engage a lecturer for six or twelve months in the district, chiefly for out-door propaganda. £30 is already promised, besides regular weekly contributions.

The initiatory subscription of the South Shields Branch to the School Board for providing Free Breakfasts to poor children attending school has brought about a good result. About 1,500 are now being provided with something to eat and drink, and we dare say they prefer it to the prayers and the Bible lessons. Mr. S. M. Peacock has been elected treasurer of the Fund, and we are happy to say that his being a notorious red-hot Secularist does not interfere with the success of this benevolent enterprise.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures to-day (Feb. 12) in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. No doubt he will have good meetings and a hearty reception. In the afternoon he lectures at Wolverhampton, in the Athenæum. Friends from a distance can be provided with tea at 9d. per head.

The Reading Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday. The following officers were elected: J. Slyfield, president; G. Fraser, vice-president; C. Rowe, secretary; Mr. Mitchell, treasurer. It was resolved to meet every Sunday evening, instead of monthly; also to bring the many sympathisers in the town (if possible) within the Branch. Mr. Rowe is to represent the Branch on the Oxford Extension Committee at Reading.

The Finsbury Branch's concert at the Hall of Science on Saturday evening (Feb. 4) was a great success. There was a large attendance, and the function will yield a good balance for the Benevolent Fund. Great praise is due to Messrs. G. Ward, J. Anderson, and W. G. Renn.

Dr. Stanton Coit has gone back to America to organise a Social Guild to purify what he calls Darkest New York. He is, he says, disproving the assertion of General Booth of the Salvation Army, that no other organisation than that will raise the fallen. He is being assisted by Professor Felix Adler, of the Society of Ethical Culture. He will furnish, instead of gospel, soap and water, food, clothes, shelter, and education. He will first attack the Tenth ward, which he says is twice as densely populated as any part of London. The society will sell coal, groceries, etc., etc., at wholesale rates; establish swimming baths; create parks; provide tenements with roof gardens; institute social and temperance societies with coffee and reading and billiard rooms, and gymnasiums and dancing parlors, with lectures and classes, and dramatic, musical, and art societies; and keep the streets clean and the houses in a sanitary condition.

Mr. Sydney Grundy—himself understood to be a Freethinker—having, in the controversy on Church and Stage in the *Morning*, spoken of his friend Mr. Buchanan as though he were still essentially a Christian, that gentleman explicitly says: "I not only disbelieve in Christianity, but have placed it on record elsewhere that I believe the Christian faith, as preached and practised, has been and still is the most powerful enemy of human progress." Mr. Buchanan adds that he attributes the failure of Christianity to the fundamental errors of its Founder.

Mr. H. A. Jones, the dramatist, seems to have no more respect than Robert Elchanan for ordinary Christianity. In his *New Review* article he speaks of "the cobweb dogmas spun by priests to veil the Infinite," and of "the stale, withered husks that over two hundred sects fodder themselves on"!

Mr. G. J. Holyoake, like another eminent person, still goes to and fro and up and down the world. He has been speaking at Manchester and Stockport. From the latter place he writes us a welcome letter, in which he thanks us for the "very effective portrait and generous notice in the *Freethinker*." "I found the number in Stockport," he says, "in unexpected hands. Everybody speaks well of the execution and literary effectiveness of it. The Autobiography is new in conception, and a work of labor and art." Well, it was labor, anyhow; but a labor of love.

The *Twentieth Century* (New York), concluding a long review of Mr. Holyoake's Autobiography, says: "To his uncounted friends in America it will be good news to hear that Mr. Holyoake, despite his burden of seventy-five years, is hale and vigorous. 'Whom the gods love die young'—even when they live to be a hundred."

IN THE MAGAZINES.

FREETHOUGHT is fairly well represented in the magazines and reviews this month. There are a couple of very pretty stanzas entitled "Experience" in *Scribner's Magazine*, the last of which we venture to quote.

O, Death, we come full-handed to thy gate,
Rich with strange burden of the mingled years,
Gains and renunciations, mirth and tears,
And love's oblivion, and remembering hate,
Nor know we what compulsion laid such freight
Upon our souls—and shall our hopes and fears
Buy nothing of thee, Death? Behold our wares,
And sell us the one joy for which we wait.
Had we lived longer, life had such for sale,
With the last coin of sorrow purchased cheap,
But now we stand before thy shadowy pale,
And all our longing lie within thy keep—
Death, can it be the years shall naught avail?
"Not so," Death answered, "they shall purchase sleep."

In the same number Mr. W. H. Russell, the famous war correspondent has a vivid article in the "Historic Moments" series on the Fall of Sebastopol. One is impressed by the thought of the terrible slaughter that took place during the siege. Mr. Russell says: "The allies, it is true, paid a terrible price for the temporary possession of the south side of Sebastopol. England lost 22,000 men, made a substantial addition to her national debt; France lost, it is said, nearly four times as many soldiers as her ally." And Mr. Russell says it is estimated that Russia's total loss throughout the war was 500,000. So that after eighteen hundred years of the "religion of peace" Christians send Christians by a quick route to glory in hundreds of thousands.

In *Chamber's Journal* there is an interesting article on "Building Superstitions." When commencing any building, many races believe that sacrifice is necessary to ensure the stability of the structure. From the article we take the following:—

"Traces of this curious and gruesome idea are to be found not only in the East, but also in Europe, and much light has been thrown on this subject of late by such students of early history as Mr. Tylor and Mr. G. L. Gomme. It seems to have had its origin in the desire to appease the wrath of the earth-spirit for the intrusion by digging into its domain; and blood, especially human blood, was considered the highest offering it was possible to make. In primitive societies it held its place as one of the most cherished institutions, and it is still practised by many of the modern representatives of the first and rudest congregations of men. In Borneo one is not surprised to find that it is, or was until quite recently, still in operation. At the erection of an important house a deep hole was dug, and the first post was suspended over it; a slave-girl was then placed in the hole, and at a given signal the post descended, crushing the girl to death. In New Zealand, human beings were first killed and then placed in post-holes; while in the Sandwich Islands it was the custom to bury children. The Fijians, who were in many respects the most advanced and intellectual of all barbarous races, varied the custom in a not unexpected manner, for they killed and ate men when setting up the pillars of a temple; and again held a similar feast when the building was complete. The unfortunate victims were, as a rule, criminals or prisoners taken in battle; but the noble savage was not ever-scrupulous in his methods of obtaining the necessary victims, and would quickly make what anthropologists call in the matter of marriage an 'exogamous selection' in default of the usual supply. The Siamese used to adopt the rough and ready way of seizing the first unlucky pedestrian who passed the newly completed excavations. The Japanese, on the contrary, if we may credit a certain seventeenth-century account of these interesting people, believed that it was necessary to build on the body of a willing victim; and it is said that when a great wall was to be built, some wretched slave, tired of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, would offer himself as a foundation, and 'lie down to pleasant dreams' in the trench, to be crushed by the heavy stones."

The writer of this article in another part freely admits that "during the dawn of Christianity in these Isles, the priests of the new religion, it is known, often had to effect a compromise between their own doctrines and heathen customs, in order to facilitate the introduction of their Creed."

Father Clarke pitches into Professor Mivart in the *Nineteenth Century* for his "happiness in hell" vagary, which is declared to be opposed to the teachings of the Church. The Catholic Professor Mivart says people are happy in hell; the Catholic Father Clarke says they are not. Both gentlemen, it may be remarked, are eminently fitted, theologically to discuss the matter in so far that they know as much about hell as we of the artistic tastes of the inhabitants of Mars.

In the *Contemporary Review* the Rev. T. W. Fowle asks, "Why do men remain Christians?" and goes into a long dissertation—interesting enough in its way though strictly professional—on Rationalism and Idealism presumably to answer the question. But we fancy the explanation may be found in a very much simpler way, though Mr. Fowle may not think so. Very probably—though it be very realistic to say so—the typical Salvation Army captain who prates loudly of "Christ and him crucified," might fancy Idealism was a new kind of boot-polish if you asked him. As a matter of fact the ordinary man in the street isn't a Christian, because Christianity satisfies the idealistic aspirations of the mind. Nothing of the sort. He is a Christian just because his father was a Christian before him, and because Christianity was drilled into him while his mind was unformed.

"A Bishop on Buddhism" is the title of an article in the *New Review* by Professor Max Müller, dealing with a book by the Bishop of Colombo on Buddhism. At the outset the professor regrets the wasted opportunities of missionaries in not collecting information on disputed questions in geography, anthropology, comparative philosophy, and comparative theology; and there is a remark which might be taken as slyly sarcastic, that "serious scientific studies are quite compatible with the discharge of a missionary's routine duties." Professor Max Müller says: "The bishop admits (p. 170) that the credit of having first founded hospitals belongs undoubtedly to the Buddhists." The bishop also says, as quoted by the professor: "Nor can any reader who has before him the passages which we have been considering claim for either Old or New Testament the exclusive communication to men of the theory of disinterested kindness and the law of love." The bishop remarks of one Buddhist legend, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the story of Saul and David, that "it is one among many indications that the Old Testament narratives as well as the Greek myths had reached the India of Buddhism." To which his learned reviewer replies: "It may be quite true that there is no physical impossibility, but there is no historical evidence for the bishop's suggestion that either Greek or Hebrew myths had reached India before the rise of Buddhism. Besides, if we were to adopt the mode of explaining coincidences between Buddhism and the Old Testament, how should we account for coincidences between Buddhism and the New Testament? For that the Buddhist canon existed before the completion of the New Testament is readily admitted by the bishop." The professor complains of the bishop's attempts to cry up Christianity in contrast to Buddhism, and generally defends the latter system against the stone-throwing of people who live in very thin glass-houses themselves.

FREDERICK RYAN.

SPENCER AT BILLIARDS.

Apropos of Herbert Spencer, a correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* recently reported the following anecdote: "Mr. Spencer spends some of his afternoon leisure in the London Athenæum, the famous club for scholars and literati. He will regularly play his game of billiards. One day a young man who had been introduced to him asked for the pleasure of having a game with him. The philosopher started the ball, but when his young acquaintance seized the cue he proved to be such an expert on the green cloth that he finished the game by one run, so that Mr. Spencer found no further occasion for using his rod. Darker and darker grew the clouds that gathered on the scholar's forehead while he was apparently following the game with great interest. When finally the young man, after the last shot, smilingly turned to his opponent to receive the philosopher's compliments, the latter, in the most serious manner remarked:—'Sir, moderate proficiency in such sport is a sign of good education; such mastership, however, as you exhibit is the proof of illspent youth.' Thus speaking Mr. Spencer took his hat and disappeared."

THE PENALTY OF TRUTH-SEEKING.

PERHAPS the greatest of all dangers which beset the path of him who departs from the beaten track of thought, is that he will fall into despondency and pessimism. Just in proportion as we penetrate the common superstitions of belief and conduct, and approach the bedrock of fact, we find the persons whose society we enjoy growing fewer and fewer. We can no longer listen with pleasure to the religious teacher, or political speaker, or halfway, poultice reformer. The old literature—essays, novels, poems—so full of paint, putty, and tinsel, is no longer devoured with the old relish. We run quickly against the limitations of our old friends—the limitations, the points beyond which they do not wish to or cannot think, and so the ways get lonesome. People draw away from us, and we draw away from them. Our intercourse with our fellows becomes reduced to inquiring the price of butter or remarking that it is a fine day. Now, when the road becomes lonesome, when the gods, angels, fairies, baseless hopes, butterfly fancies, old books, old friends, and even old pictures, no longer go with us; when there is little left us of the old life but the forest, the streams, the flowers, the birds, the insects, what may be found on the mountain side of truth itself, we are apt to get melancholy, morbid; we see strange, weird creatures on every side, and darkness falls upon us. To go back is impossible, but so dear to man is the companionship of man that to go onward all alone we are afraid, and then we are in danger of sinking down in despair.

Then pessimism—the black horror—comes, and whispers to us that this is the worst possible world, that death is better than life. And all this because we have been so accustomed to live in a world of falsities that a world of truth seems unbeautiful to us. In spite of our ability to see the ugliness of the false, we do not yet see the beauty of the true. The very idea of a supreme being becomes impossible to us, but we do not yet see how much better it is that there is none. The idea of heaven or hell becomes unthinkable, but we do not see the beauty of a universe without either. The illusions of the poets, like the fancies of the fairy tale writers, become nonsense to us, but we do not yet see how much more desirable a world of reality is than a world of romance, notwithstanding that the course of history and the discoveries of science are constantly showing us that as romance declines happiness increases and that the wildest fancies of the supernatural world do not equal the splendors of the one we live in.

The darkness and pessimism into which the earnest fact-hunter is apt to fall is but the accompaniment of our non-adjustment to the facts of life, and it is to be resisted by the conviction that we may reasonably expect the truth to produce more happiness than error. If we have not yet cultivated a taste for facts, such a taste is to be fostered, under the encouraging belief that to find the truth will surely increase our happiness as soon as we get over our old troublesome liking for fiction. HUGH O. PENTECOST.

SMALL UNCONFORMABLE ACTIONS ARE NECESSARY!

To sometimes act *contrary* to our better insight in the affairs of *custom*; here to yield in practice and reserve one's intellectual freedom; to do as all do, and thereby to bestow a courtesy and a kindness upon all, as a recompense, so to speak, for the divergence of our opinions—that is held by many tolerably free-thinking people to be not only harmless, but "genteel," "humane," "tolerant," "not pedantic," and whatever the fine words may be with which the intellectual conscience is lulled to sleep; and so this one brings on his child for Christian baptism, while he is an Atheist; that one submits to military service, like all the rest of the world, while he condemns international enmities; and a third hies himself to church with his little wife, because she has pious relations, and offers his vows before the priest without being ashamed. "It is not *essential* if we do what all always do and have done." Thus runs the vulgar *prejudice!* the vulgar error! For there is nothing *more essential* than when that which is already powerful, long established, and unreasonably recognised, is once more ratified by the action of one acknowledged as a man of sense; thereby it receives, in the eyes of all who hear of it, the sanction of reason itself. All honor to your opinions! But small unconformable actions are worth more.—F. Nietzsche.

ONCE TOO OFTEN.

PARSON MERRIMAN lived in the country of coal,
And the story of him I've heard tell
That his flock every Sunday he faithfully warned
From a certain place ending in L.

And having solemnly thus his duty fulfilled
For the rest of the week he felt free,
With sweet spirits in secret communion to dwell,
Though they sometimes led him on the spree.

Now one evening it happened, by these spirits moved,
That abroad for a walk he went gay,
By the same spirits moved in the gutter he rolled
Where he soon sleeping peacefully lay.

A party of miners to their work came along,
And their pastor asleep there espy.
By ready hands lifted betwixt two he's then borne,
As away to the coal-pit they hie.

Having placed parson Merriman safe in the cage—
"Now a lesson we'll teach him," quoth they.
And with laughter and mirth into dark depths of earth,
The good parson they lower away.

An hour or two's slumber, then the parson awakes,
And around him he looks in surprise.
Then bolt upright he sits, for strange noises he hears,
Then he vig'rously rubs both his eyes.

"All is black as the grave; where oh where can I be?"
In an awe-stricken whisper he asks.
Sees he strange lurid lights which are moving about,
Of the miners engaged in their tasks.

Now moves one towards him, and with fear trembles he
As high 'tis suspended in air,
By a creature as black as the blackness around,
Who fiercely glares down on him there.

Roars he in loud voice, "So you've reached here at last.
Now, my fine sir, just tell me your name."
In a terrible fright the good man scrambled up,
And his answer scarce audible came.

"Parson Merriman, sir, was my name when on earth,
And to no man have I o'er done ill.
But since by misdoing I my post there have lost.
Mr. Devil, I'll now do your will."

Then loud laughed the miner, and loud laughed his crew,
When the parson thus humbled they found.
And the good man he swore he'd ne'er touch liquor more,
If again he might rise above ground.

MORAL.

As the story I've told you is founded on fact,
Of moral I bid you take warning:
If from dinner with spirits you'd seek to commune
Don't venture abroad till next morning.

MRS. W. S.

WHAT CHRISTIANS CAN AND CANNOT DO.

Christians can build churches, but they cannot save their theology.

They can pray, but they cannot make people believe in the efficacy of prayer.

They can call upon God, but they cannot prove his existence.

They can scare the timid, but they cannot convince the intelligent.

They can profess faith in Jesus, but they cannot follow in his footsteps.

They can get out a crowd to hear good singing, but they cannot get out a hundred to hear a poor sermon.

They can condemn unbelievers, but they cannot convert them.

They can worship God, but they cannot find him.

—*Boston Investigator.*

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* new 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.

HYPNOTISM.

THRILLING descriptions of the inscrutable phenomena of the hypnotic science, once yeleft mesmerism, are constantly startling the reading community in every civilised corner of our globe. Many of these accounts are so flavored with the spice of hyperbole, and the exaggerations therein so offensively apparent, as to repulse the candor of even those few unprejudiced readers who would lend a willing ear to any new theory that might appear on the metaphysical tapis. When the wish of some unscrupulous professor of hypnotism is father to an incipient *thought*, the bastard *idea* gets endowed with legitimacy, and—continuing the metaphor—formally registered, baptised (or circumcised), vaccinated, reared, academically graduated, and duly palmed off upon the gullible multitude as the honorable scion of a long ancestral line. Of such is the realm of fraud and mystery.

We frankly admit there are hypnotic subjects and operators; that some weak-minded persons can be somnified and made, unconsciously, to perform publicly peculiar feats and antics which, in their normal state of mind, no amount of collusion could induce them to attempt. We have seen them assume attitudes wherein they have displayed marvellous muscular rigidity, such as would be utterly impossible under ordinary conditions, and undergone, unflinchingly, ordeals of torture—by burning and pricking—without betraying the slightest symptoms of discomfort. But, when these physical phenomena of elementary hypnotism are over-ridden by purely imaginary or fictitious spiritual phenomena of an advanced type, our credulity relaxes, we pause to consider, and we very naturally get bewildered to that extent that we find it exceedingly difficult to determine where our doubts begin or where our credence ends. We are, however, somewhat certain that the operators come in for all the cream of the joke, while the second fiddles (the subjects) may think themselves fortunate if they get the blue milk.

This state of things prevails amongst the hypnotists of the modern school. But of the ancient school of hypnotism, clairvoyance and thought-reading, the subjects are compelled to remunerate the operators for bamboozling them. In Kent, a celebrated hypnotist makes about £290 per week. A somewhat less noted operator in Yorkshire draws close upon £200 weekly; while about a score of still smaller fry clear annually from £3,000 to £5,000 each. The most uninitiated hypnotists of this school can readily command from £3 to £8 per week. Oh, yes! it is a paying game, there's no mistake about it. The seers of old discovered lost cattle by clairvoyance and propheted by it. The art is very easily acquired. There are in this country three or four huge establishments for the special purpose of training hypnotic students. These centres of hypnotic dissemination are maintained by the public at an enormous cost. Here, they teach that system of hypnotism that was first promulgated in Asia Minor and the adjacent countries to the south. The *modus operandi* is recorded on very antique parchments, written in quaint characters, in an obsolete and very abstruse language by the pens or fingers of the first pioneers of Semitic hypnotism. These sacred documents were so extremely difficult to decipher, that on one occasion it was deemed necessary to hypnotise seventy professors of hypnotism before a reliable handbook could be drawn up from them. Even this work is incomprehensible to any person who is not a fit and proper subject of hypnotism. This is only natural, considering that the original professors were all submitted to an intense influence of hypnotism at the time they wrote the particulars of their mystic art. The first hypnotic subject had a rib extracted from his side. This rib was transmogrified by the operator into a human being. This ancient system of hypnotism evokes speeches from serpents and asses, it changes women into salt, sticks into serpents, water into blackpuddings, wine into wine, wine into blackpuddings, hailstones into tapioca, stale crusts into mutton chops, repugnant children into amiable cherubs, frivolous undergraduates into pious saints; it sanctifies buildings and land, it gives dying people the means of returning to life at the approach of the clairvoyant boss's agent-in-advance, it gives a corpse the power to upheave several tons of superjacent clay, and to appear with a clean-shaven face in a white, shining nightshirt. This hypnotism was engendered and born of blighting priestcraft; it was fostered and roared by the groans and sweat of the down-trodden sons and daughters of ignorance and humiliation; it still fattens at the expense of the honest industry of stultified human beings, who maintain a proportion of two men to five women, and it is everywhere practised by sleek, leechy, two-legged beetles, with white chokers and long heads, and it is commonly called

FAITH.

P. W. BALDWIN.

Modern Thought, of Bombay, has entered on its third year. We hope Freethinkers in India will do their best to support Mr. Balfour's bantling in its tender and trying years, and we are sure it will grow and do a good work for the cause in India.

PROFANE JOKES.

"Er—lemmy see. Who was it that was clothed in a little brief authority?" "Adam, I guess."

Visitor—"Is that your little son in the next room whistling, 'I want to be a soldier of the cross?'" Fond mother (making for the door)—"Yes, he trying to drown out the sound of the key turning in the pantry lock." Moral—When a person talks of the Savior's love, look well after your pockets.

Parson Bluff—"Remember you must give an account of all your actions and deeds when you go to the other world." Jimmy Fastboy—"I'm glad you mention it. I am studying a new system of improving the memory. I guess I'll drop it now."

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.]

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, A. Johnson, "Christianity Played Out" (2d. and 4d.); social after the lecture. Monday at 5.30, children's party. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class. Friday at 8, public discussion (free).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, C. Cohen, "Idols and Ideals" (free). Monday at 9, C. Cohen's science class. Saturday at 8.30, concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, C. J. Hunt, "Gods, Ancient and Modern." Friday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Why I Cannot be a Christian" (free).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, T. O. Bonser, M.A. (late Fellow Clare College, Cambridge), "Too Many Babies."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, Mrs. Thorn-ton Smith, "Women and Freethought."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "The New Parliament: what will it do for the People?" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Can we Follow Christ?" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8.15, G. W. Foote, "Freethought in Modern English Poets" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, Touzeau Parris, "Job's Perplexity; or the Failure of Providence" (free).

Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: 7, H. Snell, "Tennyson and Modern Thought"; preceded by music.

Notting Hill Gate—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street: Monday at 8, monthly meeting.

West Ham—Councillor Fulcher's Room, 33 High-street, Plaistow: Friday, Feb. 10, at 8, fourth annual juvenile party; members invited to attend later in the evening.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Mr. St. John, "Christian Theism Immoral."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs): 6.30, James Leatham, "The Press and the Pulpit."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: A. B. Moss, 11, "Shelley on God and the Bible"; 7, "Why Christianity is Played Out."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, Badlay, "Christianity: its Birth, Development, and Decay."

Derby—20 Newland-street: 7, important members' meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, J. Wallace, "The Holy Fair"; 6.30, A. Paul, "Jesus and the Prophets."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, A. Friend, "Political Principle" (free). Monday at 8, J. M. Robertson, "The Meaning of Atheism" (3d. and 6d.) Thursday at 8, Stanley Jones, "Hell going to Ruin." Friday at 8, Stanley Jones, "Noah and Lot—Flood and Fire." Saturday at 8, Stanley Jones, "Atheism or Theism: which is the More Reasonable?" Admission to Mr. Jones's lectures, 3d. and 6d.

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Cox-lane: R. Forder 11, "The Jesus of the Gospels"; 7, "The Exodus from Egypt."

Leeds—Waverley Hall, York Buildings, New York-street, Kirk-gate: 7, John Grange, "The Coming Slavery: a Study in Politics."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: Charles Watts, 11, "The Church and the Labor Question"; 3, "Is Christianity Played Out?"; 7, "Happiness in Hell, Misery in Heaven."

Luton—Rudd's Rooms, 57 Bute-street: F. Haslam, 2.30, "Modern Science and Revelation"; 6.30, "Who was Jesus: God, Man, or Myth?"

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: J. M. Robertson, 11, "Theism and Atheism: the Design Argument"; 3, "The Science of Society"; 6.30, "Life Without Religion; with some Words on Positivism."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, members' fortnightly meeting; 7, Mr. Robertson, "An Exposition of Socialism."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, Mr. Charlesworth, "Anarchism and Socialism."

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: Touzeau Parris, 11, "The Value and Use of the Bible"; 3, "The Rights of Labor"; 7, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless—a Reply to the Rev. Dr. Cook."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, a meeting.
 Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road; Sam Standing, 3.15, "What is Marriage?"; 6.30, "A Trip to Heaven and Hell" (this lecture followed by an entertainment); tea at 4.30.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, T. Garbutt, dramatic and other recitals.
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, a business meeting; 7.30, entertainment.
 Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, W. R. Stansell, "The Population Question."
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, A. B. Moss, "Jesus: God, Man, or Myth?"; preceded by a dramatic recital; 7, H. Wootton, "Miracles." Free.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Feb. 12, Portsmouth; 16, Hammersmith; 19, Sheffield; 26, Hall of Science. March 26, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Feb. 12, Battersea; 19, Camberwell; 26, Libra Hall. March 12, Battersea; 19, Camberwell; 20, Blackheath Liberal Club; 26, Libra Hall. April 2, Manchester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—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. 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. 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. GREEVZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Feb. 12, Bradford.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M, Manchester.—Feb. 12, Rochdale. April 16, Hull.

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