

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SECULAR PROPAGANDA.

THAT Secular principles are now gaining ground more rapidly than they have ever done is a fact that impartial observers of the tendency of modern thought cannot fail to recognise. Ample evidence of this has recently appeared in these columns, furnished by the admission of various representatives of the different sections of the orthodox churches. The Secular method of propagandism is now being largely adopted by those religious bodies who strive to keep in touch with the times. The mode formerly relied upon to win adherents to "the cross of Christ" has ceased to a considerable extent to allure people from the things of this world; hence professed Christians have been necessitated, in order to keep up their profession, to ally "worldly inducements" with their worship. This is one of the latest proofs of the advance of the potency of Freethought.

Not only is Secular progress manifest amongst theological believers, but a similar advancement is marked within our own ranks. It was my privilege to be associated with the inception of the National Secular Society, and I have watched its growth with great interest. During its career many are the noble triumphs it has achieved. It has never until recently, however, been in a position to perform such practical service as at the present time. Not only has its roll of membership largely increased, but it has within its organisation men and women who work methodically, and with a zeal born of sincerity and of a desire to judiciously promulgate the truths of Secularism which experience proves is the true science of life. The young blood which of late has been added to our movement imparts thereto a vitality that it was unable to command until the last few years. Many grand old veterans who "have borne the burden and heat of the day" still remain with us to aid and encourage the younger members of the party, who have the enthusiasm of youth and the energy of healthy ambition. In this alliance lies the hope of the still further success of our cause.

The truth of the above observations was forcibly impressed upon me during my recent tour in the Tyneside district, where, under the auspices of the North Eastern Secular Federation, I visited nine places and delivered thirteen lectures. The organisation is doing some splendid work, and is composed of members who know what to do, and, what is equally important, how to do it. Mr. Hubert Richardson, of Tyne Dock; Mr. S. M. Peacock, Mr. George White, and Mr. R. Chapman, of South Shields; Mr. Joseph Brown and Mr. J. H. Summerfield, of Newcastle; and Mr. John Saunderson, of Jarrow, are hosts in themselves. Secular propaganda is to them a labor of love, and, supported as they are by gallant comrades, there need be no misgivings as to the useful results of any movement with which they are associated. To their efforts is due much of the success of my late campaign. Twelve of my audiences were large and enthusiastic; many professed Christians

attended and listened attentively, and at a few of my meetings discussion followed the lectures. At Chester-le-Street a clergyman spoke, but he refused to debate because he thought "no good came of discussing with Freethought leaders." At Jarrow the audience numbered nearly five hundred persons, although the lecture was advertised only two days before it took place. Here a Branch of the N.S.S. was formed, and under the direction of Messrs. Richardson and Saunderson a program for future propagandism is being arranged. At Blyth I was pleased to meet many old friends. One gentleman imparted the information that he had been induced to leave orthodoxy about twenty years ago through listening to my debate with the Rev. A. J. Harrison. Since my return from Canada I have met dozens of Freethinkers who assured me that in consequence of hearing discussions on Secularism and Christianity they had left the Church. No marvel that clergymen will not meet Secular exponents. Theologians may, however, rest assured that the rising generation will draw their own conclusions from Christian persistency in avoiding discussion. Teachings that cannot be defended on the platform have but little chance of impressing the thoughtful minds of this age. Several of the local papers gave fair notices of my meetings; the South Shields *Free Press* devoted a column and a half to a report of my lecture on "Secular and Theological Education."

Notwithstanding the great depression of trade in the North and that men are only working half-time, the sale of the *Freethinker* and of Secular literature in general was very good. Mr. Foote will be pleased to hear that in all my travels I heard nothing but praise of the *Freethinker*. It is pronounced to be the cheapest and most entertaining paper the Freethought party has had. The plan of issuing a special monthly number meets with general approval throughout the country.

I found lecturing every night in the week at different places, and three times each Sunday, much harder work than I found it thirty years ago. Still, the task was made much lighter than it would otherwise have been, through the kind and attentive hospitality of my admirable host, Mr. Hubert Richardson, of Tyne Dock. He has evidently acquired the art of making his guests feel at home. He is a type of a thorough Englishman, a valuable worker in the Secular cause, and a true friend to all honest toilers in progressive movements.

The North Eastern Secular Federation has under its consideration the engagement for one year of a special lecturer to carry on principally open-air propagandism, and to organise the increasing Secular elements in the Tyneside districts. The idea is a good one, if it can be properly carried out. Mr. Peacock, of South Shields, appears to have grasped the situation, and to have definite notions as to what should be done. There is upon the part of the general public a marked indifference shown to orthodox teachings, and a desire to hear an exposition of Secular views. But many of these people do not, at first, find their way to Secular halls,

therefore it is thought that it would be wise to conduct our propaganda in the open-air more than has been the case hitherto. No doubt one of our young able advocates will be pleased to undertake this work. That such a demand exists is an encouraging indication of Secular activity. Fortunately, the public are more disposed than they ever were to "hear both sides of the question," so it thus becomes necessary that our advocacy should be conducted with discretion, and with a due regard to the requirements of the times.

The promulgation of unpopular views necessarily imposes greater care and more circumspection upon the part of their advocates than the exponents of orthodoxy as a rule practise. What Freethought speakers should ask themselves is this: What method would be most likely to influence their minds and to convert them if they were in the place of their opponents. We have no right to assume that any mode of address that would repel us will draw opponents into our ranks. It requires but little effort to enable us to deal with orthodox believers in a superior style to the one they usually adopt towards us. There will be nothing lost to our cause by setting an example to our antagonists of decency in controversy. In doing this it will be desirable to make allowance for temper, education, prejudices, and for that assumption of superiority which is common amongst those who believe that they alone are right and that all the world besides is wrong. The pride of Secular knowledge is to relinquish error, while the pride of orthodox ignorance is to retain it until it becomes bigotry and fanaticism. To be able to admit that they may be wrong is a gift seldom possessed by those whom orthodoxy has familiarised with the delusions of infallibility in churches and books. Conviction of the relativity of knowledge and truth must precede any important change in the opinions of mankind. More particularly is this true in regard to opinions that Secularists have to controvert on the platform and in the press, which for the most part lie outside the region of demonstration and beyond the confines of human knowledge. Thus we agree with the poet that—

Divines can say but what themselves believe;
Strong proofs they have but not demonstrative;
For were all sure, that all minds would agree,
And faith itself be lost in certainty.
To live uprightly, then, is sure the best;
To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.

CHARLES WATTS.

ESTHER AND PURIM.

THE Jewish feast of Purim or "Lots" is celebrated on the 14th and the 15th of *Adar*, and is said to have been instituted in commemoration of their deliverance under Queen Esther from the plot of Haman for their destruction. To the orthodox Christian it must appear curious that one book of the Bible has no mention of religion, God, Devil, heaven, or hell. To the Freethinker it has neither morality nor elevation. It is simply the record of drunkenness, lust, brutality, tyranny, ambition, revenge, and the wholesale murder of innocent men, women and children.

The story of the book of Esther is little better than a dirty tale. Ahasuerus, the king, makes a feast that lasts one hundred and four-score days. At the end of those days he made another drinking feast of seven days to all people that were present in Susa, the royal city. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, in plain English, when he was drunk, he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti the queen before him, to show the people and the princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on. With becoming modesty and dignity, Vashti very properly refused to allow the king to make a public exhibition of her before

the drunken court. Plutarch tells us that the Persian kings, when minded to be drunken and wanton, sent away their lawful wives, and had their concubines and singing women instead. To send for the queen in the circumstances, was to treat her as a concubine. If there is any lesson or meaning in the story, and surely the word of God should have meaning in every page, it is that wives must, as Paul says, be in subjection to their husbands in all things. Vashti, for being averse to exhibiting her beauty to the gaze of inebriated courtiers, is punished as a warning that wives should be obedient; while intriguing Esther, who does not scruple to offer herself to the king's desires, is considered a pattern woman, a saint of the first water. How little scrupulous she was appears from the narrative in the second chapter. Together with many other maidens, "In the evening she went [into the king's house], and on the morning she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name." Esther was selected because she ministered to the king's sensualism, and used her influence with her lord and master to have no fewer than seventy-five thousand enemies of the Jews slaughtered (ix. 16). Yet Jewish women, who are exempt from the study of the law, are bound to read this beastly book as a warning for disobedient wives. Maimonides places it before the prophets.

Dr. A. Kuenen (*Religion of Israel*, iii., 148) says "impossibilities and improbabilities pervade the whole narrative." Only a few can be given here. History knows nothing of King Ahasuerus, "who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia."* Most theologians now say it was Xerxes I. This, however, does not fit chronologically with the statement (ii. 5, 6) that Mordecai was captive with Jeconiah. Some say it was Darius Hystapes, others Ochus, others Artaxerxes Longimanus; others Cambyses, who seems referred to as Ahasuerus in Ezra iv. 6. In fact, he can no more be identified than Pharaoh of Egypt. Then we are told he gave a feast which lasted 180 days, at which the whole official world was simultaneously present. We are informed that Esther, when made Queen, kept her Jewish origin secret (ii. 10) though she came from the house of Mordecai, who was known to be a Jew (iii. 4), and remained in constant intercourse with him, he being able to pass at pleasure into the harem of the jealous and amatory monarch (iv. 2-17). Further, that he grossly affronted the grand vizier without any evil consequences. Then we must believe the cruel Haman gave eleven months' notice of his intention to exterminate the Jews (iii. 12-14); and when Esther averts the danger, the Jews were allowed to put to death 75,000 of their fellow-subjects. Only a Jew could swallow such marvels.

If the book is a romance instead of history, what is its purport? Evidently it is written to explain the feast of *Purim*, or lots. Students of Dr. E. B. Tylor know the tendency to invent stories to account for popular customs. Purim has the appearance of being a very Bacchanalian festival. The Talmud lays it down "A man is bound to get so drunk with wine at Purim as not to know the difference between Cursed is Haman and Blessed is Mordecai."† It is, in fact,

* The nearest approach in history to the story is that the Jews, after going through dreadful persecutions during the Crusades, were protected by King Casimir the Great of Poland (1309-1370), when he took the Jewess Esther for his mistress. Mr. Johnson, author of *The Rise of Christendom*, challenges proof that the story is earlier than this, which implies that Josephus is a forgery.

† Megillah, fol. 7, col. 2. See Buxtorf's *Synag. Judaic*, cap. xxix., and *Old Paths*, No. 7, where is a good story from the Talmud in illustration. "Rabba and Rabbi Zira made Purim together. When Rabba got drunk, he arose and killed Rabbi Zira. On the following day he prayed for mercy, and restored him to life. Next year Rabba proposed again to make Purim together, but Zira answered, 'Miracles don't happen every day.'"

the festival of the first new moon in spring, and the new moon was supposed to determine the luck of the ensuing year, especially in all that pertained to vegetation and generation. Purim is simply the ancient custom of casting lots at this particular time, and is thus brought into line with the ancient practice of drawing lots on Valentine's Day, which usually falls about the same date. Brady, in his *Clavis Calendaria*, Feb. 14, quotes the following: "To abolish the heathen, lewd, superstitious custom of boys drawing the names of girls in honor of their goddess Februsto, or Juno, on the fifteenth of February, several zealous pastors substituted the names of saints given on that day." In Kent in early times they burnt "holly boys and ivy girls" at this season, which connects it with the propitiation of the spirit of vegetation. Purim, not being referred to in the laws of Moses, was, from its name, evidently a festival adopted while the Jews were under Persian rule. Hence the Persian location of the romance.

According to the LXX, Haman was not hung, but crucified on the tree. There can be no doubt he personified something most hated by the Jews. Lewis, in his *Origines Hebrææ*, vol. ii., p. 622, says: "When the name of Haman was mentioned, the very children were taught to beat upon the benches, and stamp with as much joy as if they had the head of Haman under their feet. They would write his name upon a stone, and set it up before them; and as often as it was repeated they would batter it with stones till it was quite defaced, crying out, 'Let his name be blotted out and accursed for ever.'" Now why should Haman have this execration for so many centuries, and why did Mordecai refuse to pay him that civil respect to which he was entitled as first favorite of the king? We conjecture that the correct answer to these questions is that Haman was originally not the name of a man, but of a god, and that none other than the most widely worshipped god of antiquity—worshipped as Amen in Egypt, as Zeus Ammon in Greece, and Jupiter Ammon in Rome. This is only our surmise, and we throw it out for what it is worth.

When Cambyses conquered Egypt, he essayed the conquest of Ethiopia through the oasis of Ammon. The army sent there was entirely lost. Cambyses, in taking Thebes, displayed particular fervor against the worship of Amen-Ra, whose temples he destroyed and whose statues he defaced. These events must have had a reaction throughout the vast empire. We know that Rameses III. had established the worship of Amen in Palestine. When the Semites conquered Egypt, the worship would be overthrown. In the formula, "Cursed be Amen, blessed be Ishtar" (modernised as "Cursed be Haman, blessed be Esther"), one may perhaps find the nucleus of the historical romance.

Another signification to Purim has been suggested which allies it with the Greek *pur*, fire. Movers *Phænica* tells that the Pura (fires) was a festival at Tyre and Gades in honor of the sun-god.* In order to heighten the general joy, Buxtorf relates that some Jews wore particolored garments and young foxes' tails in their hats. Lucian says: "The greatest of all the festivals which I saw [in Byblus] they celebrate when spring commences. And some call it Para, but others the Lamp. To this feast in particular many men come both from Syria and all the countries all around." But the probability is that the Jews adopted Purim when under Persian dominion.

J. M. WHEELER.

The Good Man (sadly)—"Ah, my son, you have been to the circus; it pains me greatly to think that one so young should have crossed the threshold of iniquity." Bad Small Boy—"I didn't cross no threshold; I crawled in under the tent."

* Isaiah xxiv. 15 should read "Glorify Jahveh in fires." See Revised Version margin, "They shall make a burning for thee and they shall lament thee, saying, Ah! Adonis" (Jer. xxxv. 5).

A MOAN FROM METHODISM.

A SHORT time ago there was a religious census of Birmingham taken, which, according to the *Methodist Times*, "ought to startle the most complaisant Birmingham Methodist into a very agony of prayer and effort."

According to the organ of the "forward movement" (which in Birmingham at any rate is very much of a backward character), it seems that "on the Sunday on which the census was taken there were in Birmingham more than half a million of persons who went to no place of worship." Considering that the whole population of the midland capital is under half a million, the churches may think themselves lucky to have had any congregations at all on that eventful Sunday. "None of the churches," it appears, "had any grounds for boasting," but Methodism seems to have been in a particularly vacuous condition.

"On that memorable day," continues our contemporary, "our Wesleyan churches exhibited 21,662 empty sittings. What a picture of half-empty and two-thirds empty chapels in the midst of dense masses of people. . . . Our Birmingham contemporary believes that this distressing state of affairs can never be cured until 'Birmingham shakes herself free from her lethargy.'" So, let Birmingham proceed to shake herself, then! But it must not be forgotten that although Samson shook himself on a certain occasion, it did not prevent him falling into the hands of the Philistines. Anyhow, we should have thought that Birmingham had been "shaking herself free from her lethargy," and was now pretty much awake to the uselessness of church and chapel-going.

However, let Birmingham take heart (after having shaken herself sufficiently) from the fact that she is "no worse than other places. In many respects she is far better," and that "the hideous facts . . . are probably not worse than what would be disclosed if the electric search-light of the modern press was similarly applied to the social condition of every great town"! Truly we are only very nominally a Christian people after all!

"But nothing," continues the *Times*, "can explain away the fact that most of our chapels are half or two-thirds empty. We wish our ministers and people would rouse themselves from their strange indifference and complacency, and ask themselves honestly in the sight of God what all this means. Our resources were never so great, our opportunities never so favorable, our ministers never so well qualified for their work. There is 'something rotten in the state of Denmark,' and we believe it is to be found in the absolutely irrational ecclesiastical conservatism which refuses to adapt our methods and arrangements to the totally changed circumstances of the time in which we live." With almost absolutely irrational conservatism the writer refuses to recognise the fact that the one great reason of empty chapels is that orthodox Christianity is rapidly dying, and that creeds and dogmas have lost their force and authority. But the writer partially sees that a little Christianity goes a long way with present-day congregations; and among other things which he considers want reforming in order to bring prosperity back to Methodism are "long prayers; sermons, the length and phraseology of which were adapted to the people of fifty years ago, but are utterly out of place to-day . . . and a general jog-trot in deep old ruts," which is a very sensible view to take of the matter. Short prayers and very much shorter sermons are just what the people want, and if they could only be reduced to Euclid's definition of a point, they would suit admirably. What Jesus would think of his present-day followers who wish to supplant prayers and sermons by vocal and instrumental music of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon order, is not difficult to

imagine. If, as Mr. Bradlaugh said, we never see a religion die, we certainly see it change its character remarkably.

But let us see what another Methodist authority has to say about the parlous state of Methodism. Mr. S. P. Myers, a leading layman in the Connexion, who recently brought a charge of heresy against the Rev. Mr. Davison, one of the theological professors, has been reading a paper at Bradford on the causes of the declension in Methodism. "The room," we are significantly told in the report of the proceedings, "was crowded, and the atmosphere was heated in more senses than one"—which means, we presume, that the men of God are very much like politicians and other wordly folk after all.

Said Mr. Myers: "What had become of the spirit and faith of the Puritan fathers of Nonconformity—their unhesitating belief in the inspiration of the scriptures, the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ as a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world, in repentance and faith as essential to salvation? In how many Nonconformist pulpits did they to-day find the word of God assailed and its authority questioned; Jesus Christ spoken of in a patronising spirit as a good man, but the necessity of the atonement denied; faith in himself rather than in Christ set forth as the means of man's moral and spiritual elevation; the doctrine of punishment for sin remitted to the region of exploded theories; the infallibility of the Lord Jesus questioned, and the Bible awarded a place amongst other literature which contained faults and errors? In his opinion . . . the chief cause of the declension of Methodism was in the ministry. What the teaching in the college was to-day, such would be the teaching of the pulpit to-morrow. . . . From being men of one book as they were formerly, they had become men of many books, and in their perusal it was to be feared their faith was not built up, but in many cases undermined. The encouragement given to the higher criticism, he believed, was one of the primal causes of declension in Methodism. If it was necessary to 'suspend judgment in regard to some parts of the Bible,' that certain traditions as to the date, the authorship, and the text of the Old Testament were not so 'trustworthy as had been supposed,' must the young men coming from their theological colleges give a halting, feeble, hesitating message, or frankly tell the people that they will withhold until Professor Davison and those experts who thought themselves as wise or wiser than they, had settled amongst themselves what they might believe and teach? They lived in eventful days. John Wesley taught: 'The scripture therefore of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth: every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess'; but Professor Davison, whilst annually declaring his belief in the doctrines as set forth in John Wesley's sermons and notes on the New Testament, declares there is defect, and that judgment must be suspended. What about the consistency and honesty of such men, who, in using the name of Wesley, only profaned it? The so-called leader of the 'forward movement' tried to solace poor, ignorant creatures by telling them that they were in the dark; that to understand these critical questions it was necessary that they should have a perfect knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, and German, and that it was rather a pity that theological books were not now, as in the dark ages, printed in Latin. That to his mind was anything but a forward movement. It savored very much of a desire to revert to the Papal system that they might be told by a duly instructed and ordained priest what their faith ought to and must be. Wesley emphasised not only justification by faith, but also the doctrine of entire sanctification. . . . Did one minister in a hundred preach it? Did they believe it? They

said they did at every May district meeting, but did they? Many preached against it, some held it up to ridicule, and he heard of its being stigmatised as 'sanctimonious humbug.' Need they beat about for any further cause of declension? How much of the decline of Methodism was traceable to the so-called leaders of Methodism? . . . One after another they had made comfortable seats for themselves in departmental positions. . . . These men devised statistical schedules, put financial burdens on the circuits through their resolutions in committees, until the rank and file in the ministry must be heartily sick of their legislation."

A very suggestive picture indeed, and painted by one of themselves! We can let Mr. Myers and the leader of the "so-called forward movement" fight out the causes of the declension of Methodism between them, merely remarking that we too have our opinion on the matter, which is that Methodism, like Christianity generally, is about played out.

H. J.

THE DEVIL INTERVIEWED.

(Concluded from page 57.)

"LET us come to business, your Highness," we said, and our visitor uttered an "Agreed."

"Where is Hell?"

At this abrupt question the Devil's eyes widened and his eyebrows lifted. "Well," he exclaimed, "you are plunging *in medias res* with a vengeance."

"True," we replied, "but as the questioner has such an obvious interest in the matter his abruptness is pardonable."

"Well, well," he answered, "I am not complaining, but merely expressing an opinion. And as I have other affairs to attend to presently I don't know that I should be annoyed at your point-blank query. Not to beat about the bush, then, Hell is—a good deal farther than you'd care to travel to night. But you'll make the journey one day, and something should be left to curiosity."

"Is it underground?"

"Well," he rejoined, "I know it is a popular notion that angels fly down and Old Nick pops up. But this is an insular conception; in nature there is neither up nor down. You pigmy men measure all things by yourselves, and the position of your heads and feet decides the topography of the universe."

"But *where* is Hell?"

"You'll know some day," he answered, "and why anticipate? It is outside your field of astronomy; the best directions would be unintelligible."

"Presuming that Hell is your residence, have you been home lately?"

"I was there a few minutes ago."

"Indeed! and the place so far away! What is one to believe?"

"My dear sir," the Devil replied, "I am not subject to your laws of time and space, though I accommodate my speech to your necessities. When I will to be anywhere I am there. It is one of my privileges. I am 'fallen,' as they say, but my essence is indestructible."

Perceiving it useless to probe him any farther as to the locality of Hell, we ventured the question "Is it fire?"

"Do I look scorched?" he queried. "No," he continued, "your countryman, Professor Mivart, is nearer the truth."

"Why did you not correct the popular mistake? Jesus taught a hell of fire, and so have his apostles ever since."

"I know it," said Satan, "and I would not interfere. Their preaching drove all the fools and cowards into Heaven, which prevented their thronging my establishment. I can dispense with the refuse of creation."

"Then if Hell is not a place of fire and torment, and the wise and brave go there, it must be an eligible residence."

"Quite so," he replied. "We have all the philosophers from Aristotle to Mill, all the wits from Aristophanes to Heine, and all the heroes from Socrates to Bradlaugh."

At the mention of that name we sat up as straight as a bolt. "Is he in Hell?" we asked.

"What do you think," said Satan, with a genial smile. "Did you expect him to be loafing around the Throne? Had he gone to Heaven he would have written an *Impeachment of the House of Jehovah*."

This added a new pleasure to the "infernal" prospect. But we did not dwell upon it, being anxious for more information.

"Was it *always* comfortable in Hell?" we inquired, a little diffidently.

"Not always. When I entered it the place was hot enough. It is still warmer than your wet and foggy England. We soon made it habitable, and the climate is now salubrious."

"Why," we asked, "does not Jehovah keep it full of burning brimstone?"

"My dear sir," said the Devil, with a look of pride, "Jehovah is not my master; at least I am not his slave. He has enough to do in looking after his own business. It is not I who have suffered most in our long antagonism. I fancy he would like to sign a treaty of peace. He is clearly losing now that men are becoming civilised. His fierce and peremptory temper is no longer respectable, and his Son's sentimentalities are as little relished by a cultivated taste."

"Is it true that you were expelled from Heaven?"

"Quite true. I was a Republican in a despotic Monarchy. No criticism was tolerated, an independent opinion was treason, though many things were wretchedly managed, as you may infer from the ways of Providence on this planet. I was banished, and all the democrats of Heaven with me, their leader but not their tyrant. Reinforced by all the fine spirits who have left your globe, we are quite able to hold our own, and Jehovah is in no mood to provoke our hostility."

"How is it the Bible and the clergy give you such a bad character?" we asked.

"Well," said Satan, "I am not aware that the Bible does any more than call me ill names; it never brings a distinct charge against me. True, it declares that I tempted Eve, which is a fabulous story; though, if it were true, it would not affect my reputation, for it was fair strategy in the war with my enemy and oppressor, and Jehovah must bear the blame of making it a crime to eat apples."

"But the clergy say you are responsible for all the wickedness in this world."

"Yes, that is *their* account of the matter, but they are in the pay of the rival firm. A moment's thought will show their folly. Was it I who made the world, and its queer inhabitants, some fools, some rogues, and many a mixture of tiger and ape? No, it was Jehovah who created the whole wretched lot; and let him answer for his own failures. Few of his 'sinful' creatures need any temptation from 'the fiend.' They carry temptation enough within their own breasts."

"Turning from that subject," we said, "what do you think of the recent discussions on Hell?"

"I think," said the Devil, "that the old doctrine is rapidly dying. Just as my character was blackened to make people turn to Jehovah, so Hell was depicted as a place of fire and brimstone, and unspeakable torture, in order to frighten people into the arms of the priests. Nor was I much annoyed, as I have said, for teaching like this winnowed the world, and sent the chaff to Heaven. But now the case is altered, and I am happy to see that I and my establishment are getting a large measure of fair play. By and bye I shall be the most popular emigration agent in the world."

"Do you intend to call on Professor Mivart?"

"Some day, perhaps; he is scarcely ready to receive me yet. He describes Hell as a place of ineffable happiness, which does credit to his intellect; but he is still under the dominion of Christian ideas, and I should be sorry to frighten him by a sudden appearance. Besides, I visit no one without an invitation."

"Well," we said, "if Hell and the Devil become popular, the clergy will have to change sides."

"Yes," he replied, "and they will do it with grace and celerity. That is one of my troubles. I dread their nauseous flattery; I hate to think they will ever live as my parasites."

"In one sense," we said, "you were always popular. People called you names religiously, but Jehovah's assistance was asked when they wanted to be mischievous."

"True," replied Satan, "and it is a curious commentary on thousands of sermons. Men never call on me in moments of fury. They say 'God damn you,' feeling that I am not available for the purpose. As I pass through the streets I seldom hear my name taken in vain; it is the name of God that is used in swearing and cursing; and I take it as a real if unintentional compliment."

After this we had a good deal of conversation with Satan, which we may report hereafter. Throughout the chat he smoked his cigar and sipped his tumbler of cold water. When the hour was up, and the interview ending, he rose from his chair and extended his hand, which we shook heartily. Then he disappeared, not gradually, but instantaneously. As the Spiritists would say, he has the power of materialising and dematerialising at will. Of course it may be objected that we are romancing, but we disdain the insinuation.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE DRAGON ECLIPSED.

ONE evening one of Jahveh's quacks
Towards a pub. was making tracks,
Where he might lodge the night,
All day he'd cuss'd and preached and prayed,
As was the manner of his trade,
But money was so tight
That he was fairly at a loss
How he should settle for his doss,
For not a sou had he.
"I swear," he cried, "by ancient Nick
I'll show these village louts a trick—
Will make them lodge me free."
And while he scratched his shining pate,
A troop of boys, with hearts elate
Came bounding out of school,
Shouting and dancing in their glee
That once again they were set free
From pedagogic rule.
An urchin spied the hairless scone,
And thoughtless shouted out at once,
"Go up, go up, bald head."
And all his chummies big and wee
Re-echoed it with childish glee
Nor thought they what they said.
"Ha! ha!" the holy man exclaimed,
"Here is my chance, and I'll be blamed
If I let it go by.
Jehovah has ordained it thus
That I the cheeky brats should cuss,
And smite them hip and thigh."
Like Robin Hood of ancient song
He wound his whistle loud and long,
When lo! there came to view
From out the wood two great she-bears
That nabbed the urchins unawares,
And gobbled forty-two.

T. CLARK.

At a church soiree the vicar created a giggle by announcing that Miss Tabitha Ticklemy would sing "I wandered down a shady lane," accompanied by the curate.

ACID DROPS.

We congratulate the South Woolwich Branch of the Gas Workers' and General Laborers' Union on its sensible protest against the Union-Jackism (or Union-Jackassery) of the London School Board. These laboring men cail upon the Board to "sink the vaunt of racial superiority, and encourage in the young mind the nobler ideals of a reign of universal brotherhood and peace." Excellent! But the Rev. J. J. Coxhead, one of the Board members, stigmatises these "brotherhood and peace" laborers as "persons under the grossest ignorance." Very likely. No doubt they are under the grossest ignorance as to the value of parsons in the education of the young.

Last week the Rev. B. M. Kitson and Mr. Benson Clough introduced a deputation of Churchmen to the London School Board with a memorial praying that the Christian religion should be taught in the schools by Christian teachers. These cool gentlemen wished the application of a religious test to teachers, paid for by the whole of the ratepayers. "Every teacher should be required to declare that he or she was a Christian, believing in the Holy Trinity and the Divinity of Christ." Evidently these gentlemen have a suspicion that such absurd dogmas as these will never be credited unless inculcated in early youth.

The Rev. Mr. Kitson said the religious education given in Board schools was a sham. "It was not religious instruction at all, but Bible education." Evidently Mr. Kitson does not believe "the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." His much-beloved Holy Trinity is not so conspicuous in the blessed volume. The Rev. Athelstone Riley has brought the same matter before the House of Convocation. The clergy know that the question of their hold on infant minds is one of life or death to their caste, and they will fight to the uttermost to retain it.

Catholics, it appears, are not allowed to read the New Testament in Quebec. According to four ministers connected with the local Bible Society, when the New Testament is found in a Roman Catholic family, it is "condemned to the flames as a book which endangers their salvation."

There is something very funny in this. The Protestant cries "Give me the Bible! It shows me the way to Heaven." The Catholic cries "Burn the Bible! It will only lead me to Hell." What a remarkably happy family!

The Rev. John Clifford has been preaching in reply to Robert Buchanan. Dr. Clifford admits the awful misery that has been inflicted on humanity in the name of Christ. He says "it is pathetic and it is irrefutable," and "no story is so black." So far so good. Dr. Clifford pleads guilty as to the fact. He contends, however, that Christianity is not responsible. Its hands are perfectly pure. It had to work through human nature, and it was precisely this human nature which did all the mischief. "Man as man," he says, "is a persecutor to the full extent of his power."

This is a very pretty subterfuge. Christianity comes to redeem mankind; it gets into power, and commits all kinds of atrocities; after a career of many hundreds of years it is found out and denounced; then it turns round and exclaims, "Don't blame me; it was the fault of that damned human nature."

Dr. Clifford overstates the "cussedness" of human nature. It is perfectly true that ordinary men are impatient of contradiction, and too apt to resent a difference of opinion as an insult. But they would never go to the length of racks, thumbscrews, and stakes, if they were not egged on by the professional superstitionists, who have special reasons for hating heresy; first, because it affronts their professional dignity; second, because it threatens their power and profit. Of course it may be replied that the men of God were not true representatives of Christ. But what consolation is that to their victims? Besides, a God who is helpless is as little worthy of worship as a God who is wicked. His only proper course is to get out of the way.

Dr. Clifford also flies in the face of Christian history. Persecution, even to the death, has always been defended on

Scriptural grounds. It also flows with irresistible logic from the doctrine of salvation by faith. If the heretic is tempting people to damnation, he is as much to be extinguished—with or without gratuitous pain—as a poisonous serpent or a man-eating tiger.

Apparently this is perceived by Dr. Clifford. He therefore seeks to explain away the historic interpretation of the words "He that believeth not shall be damned." We are to regard them as meaning that we must miss the advantages of what we don't accept. But, if Jesus meant that, why didn't he plainly say so? This "great law" of Dr. Clifford's is a mere truism. It simply amounts to this—a man does not believe what he does not believe. And this is the "great law" extorted from Christ's words after fifteen hundred years (since Constantine) of bickering and bloodshed. Really the "great law" is not worth the cost of learning it.

"The Atheists," says the *Christian Commonwealth*, "are sadly in want of a poet." Indeed! How much "godism" is there about George Meredith, Algernon Swinburne, and William Morris? And if we turn to France we can find Atheist poets enough to satisfy the most exacting Christian editor.

This same pious journal, after noting Robert Buchanan's statements that he refuses to be labelled a Christian, and that he believes "the Christian faith as preached and practised has been and still is the most powerful enemy of human progress"—this same journal, we say, goes on to charge him with something like dissimulation, and says "it would have been manlier to unmask in the prologue." This is to forget or ignore that *The Wandering Jew* was published before the *Chronicle* discussion began. The discussion, in fact, arose out of a review of Mr. Buchanan's poem. So much for the haughty virtue of our pious contemporary.

The *Christian World* refers to a recent sermon by Mr. R. F. Horton as "the best kind of answer to the questions raised in the recent newspaper controversy on Christianity." Mr. Horton says he does not care about a man's creed or opinions; men who love each other are the true disciples of Jesus Christ. But men loved each other before Christ was born, and would have continued to love each other if he had never been born at all. What is the use of declaring a man to be a follower of Christ simply because he has a good store of the milk of human kindness? Mr. Horton confounds Christianity with Humanity. "Christ" is a name that divides the human race. Humanity is a word that unites them all over the world.

How much reality there is in Mr. Horton's rejection of "creeds" is perceptible in his reply to Mr. Buchanan, whom he condescends to pity—a sentiment which the object of it rejects with disdain. According to Mr. Horton, the ideas of Mr. Buchanan could only be entertained by one who ignores or discredits the New Testament records. It appears, then, that Mr. Horton has a creed after all. His creed is the credibility of the four gospels; as indefensible a creed as any with which we are acquainted.

"Christ," says Mr. Horton, "has not succeeded." Well, that's true. But, adds Mr. Horton, "he has not failed." No? What then? Why, he "is succeeding, and one day his success will be complete." This is a new argument from prophecy. But no man is bound to believe Mr. Horton's predictions. He is probably no more able to see into the middle of next week than his neighbors.

Here is a little incident in the Bottomley-Isaacs trial. Mr. Ernest Day, a shorthand writer, formerly in the employ of Mr. Bottomley, was called to speak to some entries in diaries.

Mr. Justice Hawkins: I see an entry that the Rev. Dr. M'Neill will preach on a particular day. Has that anything to do with the matter?

Mr. Bottomley: That refers to one of my recreations, my lord. (Laughter.)

The vicar of East Leigh (which his name is Thomas) complained recently of the poor way in which the congregation "shelled out." The collections did not average one penny per head, and some persons basely put in buttons. Shocking! The reverend gentleman has our deepest sympathy.

In his latest book *The Great Enigma*, Mr. W. S. Lilly

says: "I cannot conceal from myself that there is a great and growing multitude of cultivated and virtuous men and women, earnestly desirous to follow truth, who, in the increased capacities for doubting which this new age confers, are unable—honestly unable—to use the old religious symbols." These people are not told by Mr. Lilly that his Church (the Roman Catholic) condemns them to everlasting torment. Oh dear no! All they need is to listen to the mild persuasiveness of Mr. Lilly, that he and his Church alone can solve the great Enigma. It is, however, a drawback to Mr. Lilly's performance that he has little to say to the out and out Atheist. The Jesuit's task is so much easier if some form of Theism is admitted.

Mr. Labouchere's speech on Uganda in the House of Commons is thus summarised by the parliamentary reporter of the *Christian World*:—"He showed us how closely mixed up in the recent history of that country were missionaries, gatling guns, and bogus company promoters." It is a most instructive catalogue. We commend it to the attention of the apologists of Christianity. They can add it to their stock list of "evidences."

The editor of a new Christian journal offers a book on Christian Evidence to the value of 6s. for the best reply to the following objection: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father and mother, and his wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). How can this be reconciled with the new commandment, "That ye love one another" (John xiii. 34)? Six shillings in hard cash might evoke some ingenuity; but a Christian Evidence book of this nominal value most people know will not fetch sixpence in the book market.

A new spiritist paper has been issued as the organ of the London Spiritualists' Federation. It bears the rather startling title *Astarte*. This name, the opening address explains, is given partly "for some occult reasons," partly to assert "the feminine principle in Deity." The spirits seem to be getting tired of their bachelor God.

Poor Mr. Stead! No wonder the good man has gone wrong. Since it has been discovered that he is a writing medium, no fewer than three thousand nine hundred and seventy-four living acquaintances seek every opportunity of communicating through his fingers, in the hope of their contributions appearing in print. This is not the worst of it. More than fifteen hundred thousand billion odd departed spirits are all equally anxious to communicate. No wonder his writings exhibit confusion of ideas and extraordinary mental flabbiness. He will have a lot of work for his spook type-writing machine. It is indeed calculated that if the whole world was filled with type-writers they would not suffice for the myriads of departed spirits who all want to say their say through this distinguished medium.

This is the worst of having dealings with departed spirits. Their name is legion, and the spirits are usually unrectified. To illustrate this we will tell a story we heard through a medium. When the late unlamented Charley Peace died on the gallows in the sure and certain hope of being jerked to Jesus, he was disappointed. Charley did not count on the gatekeeper, Peter. Wafted on the prayers of the chaplain to the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, he heard Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and the rest singing "holy, holy, holy" inside. Observing the jewels about, he thought the crib would suit. But Peter, at the gate, reminded him that heaven was a purely Jewish institution, and the chaplain, in preparing his soul for kingdom come, had omitted the one thing needful for salvation—circumcision.

What could the poor spook do? Not knowing that hell had been refrigerated and made into pleasure-grounds for the benefit of Mr. St. George Mivart's scientific friends; in horror lest he should have eternal gnashing of his teeth, Charley naturally hurried back to earth. But here, too, the doors were shut. The only entrances open were by obsessing some crank with a disordered nervous system known as a medium. Charley made his way to one of the most powerful. Of course he did not go in his own name. That was against his habits. He was used to disguises, and presented himself in spirit at the writing table as the late Rev. John Wesley.

The pretended spirit of the late Rev. John Wesley said he had important news to communicate if he only found he was welcome to come when he liked. He said he had occasion to know that there was still a good deal of wickedness upon earth, and suggested that the good medium should go on a crusade against it. Moral impurity was the most crying evil of civilisation. If the medium would only try how easily a girl might be taken from her parents, and publish the results, he would greatly and most beneficently contribute to the cause of moral purity, and, the spirit slyly added, there would be money in it. The good man fell into the trap, not knowing the real object was that the burglar's spook should reincarnate itself in the medium's carcass. Which shows the danger of dealing with unrectified spirits.

Another Anchor liner, the "Trinacria," wrecked, and 31 persons drowned; a fishing fleet destroyed off the Lofden Isles, Norway, and at least 123 fishermen's lives lost; a fire at a lunatic asylum at Dover, New Hampshire, by which 44 helpless inmates perished; disastrous floods in Queensland and New South Wales, occasioning enormous loss of life and property, and further earthquakes in Zante, are among recent manifestations of Divine Providence.

The Rev. Evan Jenkins, rector of Manafon, has had to appear before the beak for being drunk and disorderly. The chief constable affirmed that the man of God threatened him with violence. The case was adjourned for a month, the rev. gentleman paying the costs. He left the court winking his eye and wishing all a good morning.

Pity the poor clergy. Their impecuniosity and impoverishment has been the subject of much talk in Convocation. Nothing was said of reckless marriages and large families, but a resolution was carried "That this House is of opinion that the extreme impoverishment of some of the clergy urgently demands the serious attention of Churchmen." Churchmen, it seems, are appealed to, not the church dignitaries with billets ranging from £1,000 to £15,000 a year, who surely might help their poorer brethren, instead of appealing to the laity.

According to the Archbishop, the average income of the parish clergyman was under £300 a year. This is an alarming state of things. But what is the remedy? The Archbishop did not propose to relinquish any of his own salary. No, no. He called upon the laymen to shell out, and they, alas, seem indisposed to do so. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the lower-salaried clergy will have to go on feeling in their own persons the truth of the text, "Blessed be ye poor."

The fund raised for the widow and family of the Rev. T. Pitt, of Kidsgrove, has been closed, and amounts to £485. "Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." How easy it is to trust in him—if you have plenty of money.

Under the heading of "Highland Heretic Hunting," the *Christian World* publishes an account of the persecution of Mr. Alexander Macrae at Stockton, in the Hebrides. Mr. Macrae was accused of publishing, with free comments, certain extracts from the sermons of the Free Church minister. A member of the congregation went to his employer and demanded his dismissal, which was declined. Macrae was followed about by a threatening mob, who refused to allow him to go to the post office. He was assaulted, and was rescued half dead. On Sunday fortnight he was forcibly kept out of church by the mob, and on the Monday and Tuesday the hostilities were so serious that he had to resort to police protection. On the following Sunday he went to church again—this time guarded by two stout policemen, in whose presence the heretic-hunters judged it discreet to keep quiet. "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness" (Gal. v. 22), etc.

The *Christian World* reports the illness of no less than thirteen ministers who are unable to continue their work for Jesus. They are all showing that they believe that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up" (James v. 15) by adopting all possible human aid. They take precious good care not to trust too much to prayer.

Archdeacon Farrar, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, has written an article on his own income for the forthcoming number of the *Review of the Churches*. He denies that his emoluments amount to £2,600 a year. The figure is £900 in excess of the reality. This leaves £1,700 a year, which is still a pretty tidy income for a disciple of the "poor Carpenter of Nazareth."

Without questioning Archdeacon Farrar's veracity, we beg to observe that clericals are apt to calculate their incomes in a curious fashion. A case once cropped up in a debate in the House of Commons, in which a certain vicar returned his livings as worth £150 a year when they were really worth £1,500. Being interrogated as to the discrepancy, he replied that his wife was delicate and required a carriage to ride in, that his children went to expensive colleges, that he was obliged to keep a horse for his own use, and that by the time everything was deducted there only remained £150 for himself.

Archdeacon Farrar loses his temper as easily as the poor Carpenter. He declares that the amount of his income "can only concern a diseased and malevolent curiosity." Indeed! Dr. Farrar forgets that he occupies posts in a great public department—the State Church. He also forgets that people who are preached to about their "sins" have a right to criticise the preacher, especially when his teaching and his practice are in flagrant opposition.

A fighting Freethinker can always give an orthodox Christian points about his Bible. Dr. Gentles, of Abbey, Paisley, says that with the inconceivable, dense, and utter ignorance, or the scrappy, unsystematised knowledge of scripture that prevails so largely through all the Churches, a minister is really afraid to select his text from any of the minor or less known books of the Bible because of the difficulty he knows a large proportion of his hearers will have in finding the book.

A serious accident occurred at Donegall-street Congregational Church, Belfast. A wedding ceremony was being performed, and a great crowd had assembled on the stone stairs in front of the church. One wing of these gave way, and several people were injured. "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" (Psalms xv. 1).

Hargreaves, the pious engine driver, whose praying was said to have prevented a big slaughter in the Norwood accident, does not seem to be in constant communication with Jehovah. We are informed that, the other evening while driving from Portsmouth to Brighton, he forgot to call at Shoreham. Luckily there was no accident; still, the pious Hargreaves should be more assiduous in his devotions. As the text says, he should "pray without ceasing," and not knock off at Shoreham.

Henry Varley used to spend a good deal of his own time, and no doubt a good deal of other people's money, in urging the prosecution of the *Freethinker* and the exclusion of Mr. Bradlaugh from parliament. Lately he has travelled the world as a revivalist, but he carries his bigotry with him wherever he goes. He complains of latitudinarianism in India. People actually say to him "Well, it matters little whether a man be a follower of Mohammed or Buddha, Zoroaster or Shiva, provided he is a good man and sincere in what he believes." This is shocking to Henry Varley, who, apparently, would rather the Hindus were Christians than good men.

Religious prejudice has showed itself at Marsovan, near Constantinople, by the burning of the American Girls College by a Moslem mob. Some placard placed outside the college, not by the principal's orders, appears to have been the occasion of the outrage.

It has been remarked that the only successful social communities have been religious ones, and the Shakers and Harmonists in America have been instanced as proof. A sufficient explanation, however, is that these communities have insisted on celibacy, the population question proving the ruin of many others. By the adoption of celibacy the Harmonists of Economy, Pennsylvania, founded by Rapp in 1803, have got enormous wealth, the disposal of which is in hands of the elders of the sect. These worthies are now being prosecuted for fraud by other members of the com-

munity. Religion, or worldly interest, may insist on celibacy, but it cannot keep out roguery.

The editor of the London *Daily Chronicle* (Mr. A. E. Fletcher) attended the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Home Missions at a church in the Liverpool-road. He not only attended, in fact, but took the chair. In the course of his speech he remarked that the *Chronicle* discussion on "Is Christianity Played Out?" had alarmed a good many of the weaker brethren. But there was "not the slightest fear that Christianity was going to be extinguished by Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Foote. "Mr. Foote," he continued, "had performed some wonderful feats [a brilliant joke, exciting great laughter] but he did not think he was equal to that catastrophe." We cordially agree with Mr. Fletcher. Mr. Foote will not extinguish Christianity. But he is doing something towards it—which is all he ever pretended to do. Greater men than he dealt Christianity some terrible blows before he was born. Mr. Foote is only one soldier in the great army of emancipation.

Mr. Fletcher need not chuckle so loudly. A great religion does not die in a day, but it dies for all that. If you knock out a man's brains he dies immediately; but if the brains of a religion are knocked out it goes on living for a long while. Brains are not essential to its vitality.

Sir Julian Goldsmid, M.P., appeared in the pulpit of the Jewish Reformed Synagogue recently, and gave some smart hits at his Christian brethren, taking for his text the so-called "golden rule," which, he observed, was as old as the Jewish religion. Applying it, he spoke of the efforts to convert Jews to Christianity. These bodies spent considerable sums on officers and machinery, and perhaps they succeeded at enormous cost in influencing a few self-seeking members of the Jewish community, chiefly drawn from the continent. How, he asked, would Christians like Jews to adopt similar methods towards them? When Christians, remarked Sir Julian, had suppressed drunkenness, vice, and crime among their own people, then with some show of reason they might enter on the luxurious and expensive work of the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.

The *Church Times* strongly denounces "Evening Communion," which the Archbishop of York has recently also censured as showing a lax and indolent spirit. The real grievance of the *C. T.*, however, is mixing the body of Christ up with carnal food; so to take the Lord's Supper at the same time as the Lord and his apostles, is now almost unchristian.

The Roman Catholic *Month* devotes a paper to giving the Catholic view of the famous Massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572. Its contention in its own words is that "The St. Bartholomew Massacre was a great crime committed by persons professing the Catholic faith. The guilt of it belongs to Charles IX. and his mother, with their councillors, and to no one else besides, except the actual executioners." This attempt to exonerate the Church will not do, first because it was accessory before the fact, the councillors of Catherine de Medicis being priests, including the Cardinal Lorraine; secondly, the Pope Gregory XIII. himself was accessory after the murders, holding a feast at the Vatican and issuing a special medal—a copy of which is in our possession—in honor of the event.

Edith O'Gorman Auffray, the "Escaped Nun," lectured last week at St. Pancras on "The Romish School System." She was continually interrupted by clamorous Catholics, who called her the better half of Ananias. Evidently Christianity is not quite played out.

The Rev. F. Hadyn Williams, the Radical Presbyterian minister of Whitby, has got into a row with some of the people of his chapel. He has had to prosecute one trustee for detaining monuments of the chapel, and another member for threatening to give him a pair of black eyes.

A baker's wife, in the Lindenstrass, Berlin, strangled her ten-year-old child in its sleep with a leather strap. When the husband returned from work he found her standing over the dead body. She said the evil spirits had incited her to perpetrate the murder. It was another case of religious mania. Let us take the fifty-fourth hymn—

Religion, religion, thy praises I'll sing.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

Sunday, Feb. 19, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—11.15, "Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill;" (admission free); 7, "Freethought and the Marriage Question."

February 26, Grimsby; 28, Battersea.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Feb. 19, Leicester; 26, Birmingham; 28, Sheffield. March 1, 2, 3, Sheffield; 5, Birmingham; 12, Hall of Science, London; 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, London. —All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

G. E. NÆWIGER.—Thanks for cutting. We shall see you soon again at Hull.

NEMO.—Pleased to hear you are taking shares in the National Secular Hall Society; also that the more you read the *Freethinker*, the better you like it. Instead of doing as you suggest, it might be better to take an extra copy of our monthly Special Number, and circulate it among your liberal-minded acquaintances. See also "Acid Drops."

A. GOODRICH.—The copy was not handed to us. We will make inquiries. Thanks for your words of encouragement. The *Freethinker* is gaining in circulation, though slowly; and we are happy to say that the Special Number sells rather better than the ordinary numbers.

E. W. D. says "I am, with others, very pleased with your Special Numbers, especially with your idea of the portraits, which I have long been wanting."

G. MASON.—Thanks. The book may be useful.

J. S.—We intend to print a first-rate portrait of Thomas Paine in the *Freethinker* shortly.

G. W. B.—The article would possess no novelty for the readers of this journal. It goes quietly over well-beaten ground.

W. COLE (West Cowes).—Johnson's *Rise of Christendom* was reviewed at some length in "Book Chat" by Mr. Wheeler. We are not prepared at present to give a decided opinion. There is much to be said for the position maintained in the book, but there are facts it does not seem to cover. Thanks for the reference to articles in the *Bulletin*.

ECCLECTIC.—Your reasons why the *Freethinker* should be illustrated are indisputable. We cannot, however, undertake the expense at present. Our monthly special will be illustrated, sometimes considerably; and by and bye we may give an illustration in the ordinary penny numbers. You say "Why not make the price twopence? There would be no serious objection." Our opinion is that there would be. "Why not ask your readers' opinion on the subject?" you inquire. Well, we have no objection to hearing what they have to say.

A. C. SLADE.—Packet received with thanks. See "Acid Drops," etc.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Always pleased to learn from you.

J. R. ROBSON.—No use inserting notice for Feb. 16. The *Freethinker* does not reach Jarrow in time.

L. N. CLIFTON.—See paragraph. We wish the Wolverhampton Branch all success. Your energy merits it.

ALPHA.—If each does his best the cause will never be in need.

NIL DESPERANDUM.—See "Acid Drops."

W. A. LILL.—Obliged to shorten a little.

ZEBROC.—You probably refer to Shelley's essay, which, with other matter, is now published as a pamphlet, price twopence. Order of Mr. Forder.

J. ORAM.—Received. See "Sugar Plums."

J. KEAST.—Glad to hear you are going to have a social party at Bristol on March 13. Such functions help to bind the members together.

E. H. JONES.—Pleased to hear from you.

J. FLEMING.—It is a curious argument that Providence is not responsible for the catastrophe at Zante. Providence sent the earthquake, but the people built the houses that were thrown down! You ought to have been a Christian Evidence lecturer.

J. HOOPER.—Lecture Notice already received.

SECULARIST.—The 10s. is devoted as you request, which is all we can do. The case has long been dealt with by the Benevolent Fund Committee. While the Committee is prepared to investigate and relieve cases of distress, it is bad policy to make charitable appeals for individuals in Freethought journals.

S. M. PRACOCK.—All right. No hurry.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY.—G. W. Foote, 10s.; J. Herrington, 1s.; A. Friend, 2s.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. JENNING, £1.

J. HERRINGTON.—Obliged to shorten it. We hope all Freethinkers will join the N.S.S. Ancient differences should be buried and forgotten.

E. G. BILLINGTON.—Yes, we remember. We want a few more Worcester addresses, if possible.

T. SHORE.—Noticed in "Acid Drops." Shall be glad to have the copy you mention. We fear little can be done until the next School Board election is approaching.

J. H. W.—Received, and under consideration.

G. W. M.—You need more practice in composition.

SHILLING WEEK FUND.—M. S. Walker, 5s.; R. S. Hull, 1s.

MILLY.—(1) Fairly correct. (2) "Those mine enemies," etc. occurs at the end of a story or parable. It cannot be cited as a positive injunction, but its spirit has countenanced much persecution.

M. E. WALKER.—Better late than never. We shall have more Freethought in Ireland under Home Rule. The priests will have to defend the faith instead of fighting the "base and bloody Saxon."

HULL FIGHTING FUND.—A. A., 2s.; Alpha, 1s.; St. Albans, 1s. Several correspondents promise subscriptions for this fund.

H. M. RIDGWAY says that a course of Thursday evening lectures is being delivered by a Catholic priest at Myddleton Hall, Upper-street, Islington. Discussion is allowed after the lecture, five minutes being given to each speaker. Freethinkers might drop in and tackle the reverend gentleman.

R. W. HEARNDEN.—Inserted as desired.

H. E.—(1) Read Büchner's *Force and Matter* and Holbach's *System of Nature*. Also, if possible, Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*. (2) Mr. Foote does not call himself a Monist.

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.

PAPEES 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—Islington Gazette—South Australian Register—Morning Leader—Glasgow Evening News—Fur Unsere Jugend—Hull Critic—Printer's Ink—Boston Guardian—Whitby Times.

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.

THE FIGHT AT HULL.

THE date of my visit to Hull is not yet fixed. There is a prospect of obtaining an unlicensed hall, and the matter may be decided before this week's *Freethinker* is in all its readers' hands. I hear that the police at Hull have bought copies of this journal, so they will know what I intend, and I am anxious that they should know, for I want them to prosecute me, instead of backing down as the police did at Portsmouth.

It is high time that this silly old Act of George III. were repealed. There is absolutely no point of morality or public order involved in charging for admission to lectures on Sunday. Any action against us must be prompted by bigotry. It is thought, perhaps, that, as we cannot be argued out of existence, we might be starved out. But it is not the intention of the Secular party to be extinguished in this way. I feel I am interpreting their wishes in boldly defying the Hull police, and defending Secular rights at the point where they are assailed.

The Hull Branch is quite ready to take its share of the fighting and danger, and we shall strike while the iron is hot. Any other engagement of mine will be set aside for this purpose.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's lecture on "Can We Follow Christ?" drew a capital audience to the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. There were evidently a good many strangers present. A collection was taken at the doors on behalf of the Children's Party. After the lecture Mr. Foote met a little party of ladies and gentlemen with a view to forming a strong working Committee at the Hall of Science.

Mr. Foote occupies the Hall of Science platform again to-day (Feb. 19). In the morning, instead of taking the subject on the bills, he will speak on "Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill"—a topic of more burning interest. The admission to this lecture is free. In the evening Mr. Foote's lecture will be upon "Freethought and the Marriage Question." In the course of the lecture he will deal with some points raised in the Marquis of Queensberry's pamphlet. The Marquis has been invited to attend, and has promised to come if he is in town and up to the mark. He has been furnished with a reference to the points in his pamphlet that will be criticised.

An exceptional Wednesday evening audience assembled at the London Hall of Science to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; its Philosophy and Lessons." Brighter auditors could hardly be conceived, and their rapt attention was the highest compliment. Shakespeare himself might have been pleased to witness how his best passages were followed and appreciated. A gentleman who asked a question said he hoped to see Mr. Foote in the part of "Hamlet"—a remark which was heartily cheered. Up to the present we have not heard that the lecturer has engaged a theatre for the performance.

The audience did more than applaud, it put a very good collection in the boxes. Mr. Foote intends to give a few more Wednesday evening lectures on literary subjects. In one sense they are a tax upon him, as he takes no fee, and all the proceeds go to the N.S.S. Out of six lectures he is delivering at the Hall of Science this month, four are entirely gratuitous. This is not said boastfully, but only to show subscribers to the movement that he is doing *his* share of the work, and has therefore a right to ask for support from others.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times in Liverpool last Sunday. The severe storm that raged in the city Saturday night and early on Sunday interfered with his morning audience, but the afternoon meeting was well attended, and in the evening the hall was full. The applause was exceedingly enthusiastic. On each occasion a good supply of *Freethinkers* was on hand, including our recent Special Number, but every copy was sold. To-day, Feb. 19, Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening in Leicester.

We are happy to see that the Wolverhampton Branch is making good progress. Mr. A. B. Moss lectured in the Athenæum on Sunday afternoon, and delivered a much appreciated lecture to a large audience. Mr. Daniel Baker, who was over from Birmingham, was well pleased with the proceedings. To-day (Feb. 19) three lectures will be delivered in the Athenæum by Mr. James Hooper, of Nottingham, who will doubtless meet with a hearty reception. Tea, at nine-pence, will be provided for friends from a distance.

Jarrow was a centre of Freethought activity many years ago, and Mrs. Harriet Law, we believe, used to get large audiences there. Of late years, however, Jarrow has been thrown into the shade by South Shields. Nevertheless there is a good field for Freethought propaganda in "Ja'ow," and we are glad to see that a Branch of the N.S.S. has just been formed in this busy town. Mr. Hubert Richardson is president, and Mr. John Sanderson treasurer. The secretary is Mr. J. R. Robson, 6 Holly-street, with whom persons wishing to join the Jarrow Branch are requested to communicate.

The Hull *Critic* prints a report of Mr. Foote's lectures at Hull signed by "Ixion." Though brief, it is impartial; it draws attention to the police interference, and to the applause which greeted Mr. Foote's declaration of his intention to fight the question out during another visit to Hull.

Mr. E. Anderson, president of the West Ham Branch, attended a "Conference" at Field-road Methodist Chapel on Sunday afternoon, Jan. 15. The subject considered was "Why Working Men do not go to Church." Mr. Anderson gave his view of the matter, or rather he tried to, for he was frequently interrupted, and at last silenced. Happily, he has printed his observations—those he spoke and those he didn't speak. We hope the tract will be widely circulated in West Ham. Copies can be obtained at 6d. per dozen from Mr. Anderson, or from the printer, Mr. G. Standing, 7 Finsbury-street, E.C.

The French government has granted a pension of £240 a year to the widow of the late Ernest Renan. We are glad to see it. The French government honors itself by the act. Renan was true to his genius. He never took part in the sordid scramble for wealth. He gave the best that was in him to his fellow citizens; and recognising this, the state constitutes itself the guardian of his widow. We know there are arguments against *all* pensions, but while the Panama scandal is fresh in the public mind, few will condemn or grudge this modest pension to the widow of a laborious scholar, who gave an intellectual tone to his nation.

Baron Hanstein, who can claim a thorough acquaintance with the social condition of the Russian empire, remarks that the "creed of science" (Agnosticism) has become a sort of Freemasonry among the educated classes of northern Russia, and that at the fashionable supper tables of St. Petersburg the ridicule of orthodox absurdities forms a favorite topic of conversation, even in the presence of government officials. Professional spies, he adds, swarm among the upper ten, but they connive at such indiscretions and limit their attention to the discovery of political infidelities.

The Swedish State Minister of Religion and Education has indicted Professor Harnack for giving expression to Freethought sentiments. The Professor had stated in one of his lectures at the university that he doubted the truth of Christ's miraculous birth.

The *Literary World* of Feb. 10 devotes a leader to James Thomson (B.V.), contributed by Mr. J. Stanley Little.

In a letter to the *Weekly Dispatch* on School Board Theology, Mr. J. Allanson Picton, M.P., points out that on the continent, France, Holland, Geneva, and Neuchatel no longer give religious instruction in school. "In the colonial and North American world the only countries which give such instruction are Cape Colony, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Manitoba, Maine, Michigan, and Oregon. Some few others allow the reading of the Bible 'without note or comment.' But, generally speaking, the newer British races throughout the world, including the whole of Australasia, have adopted secular teaching pure and simple." Mr. Picton notices that children in England may be taught that "Baalam's ass spoke, or that Jonah lived in a whale's belly, or that God cursed the whole world and every succeeding generation on account of Eve's theft of an apple. These notions are not distinctive of any one denomination." He rightly adds that "the privilege of withdrawal from religious instruction is not a very enviable one. Most children would rather hear their fathers called infidels than be themselves treated as lepers."

Mr. Forder lectured to capital audiences at Ipswich on Sunday. He made arrangements for Freethought literature to be on sale at future Branch meetings. A large parcel of books and pamphlets has been sent down from London, and we hope it will be the means of spreading our principles in the town and district.

The Ulster Branch will have a Concert with Readings at Crown Chambers Hall, 64 Royal-avenue, Belfast, on Tuesday evening, Feb. 28. Tickets sixpence; proceeds in aid of Piano Fund. There should be a large gathering.

The annual report of the Ulster Branch notes a steadily increased attendance at the Sunday evening meetings. There has also been an improved sale of literature. The committee hope to see Branches of the N.S.S. formed in the principal towns in Ireland. So do we.

Mr. A. B. Wakefield, of Hipperholme, who is well known to our Lancashire and Yorkshire readers, is to be honored by a life-size (bust) oil portrait of himself in the Holbeck Liberal Club, where it will hang in company with portraits of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Morley, and other Liberal leaders.

A four nights' public debate is to take place in the Co-operative Hall, Downing-street, Ardwick, Manchester, between Mr. Stanley Jones and Mr. George Wise, of Liverpool. Our informant does not mention the dates. The subjects are "Has Man a Soul?" and "Christianity or Secularism."

The Finsbury Branch has arranged for another Smoking Concert at the Hall of Science on Saturday, March 4. The tickets are sixpence, and the proceeds will be given to the London Secular Federation.

The Hall of Science Children's Party takes place on Wednesday, March 1. Applications for children's tickets should be made at once. Adults' tickets are threepence each, entitling them to watch the fun from the gallery. The committee is in need of further subscriptions.

The new Bath Branch of the N.S.S. starts with twelve members. We hope it will carry on as active a propaganda as possible in that "respectable" city.

The North German Lloyd's steamer "Spree" has been open to visitors for several Sundays on payment of sixpence, and the proceeds have been given to local charities and institutes. This is not bad for Sabbatarian Wales. Of course the money has not been refused. Sabbatarianism is mollified by hard cash.

The Grimsby Branch has arranged for another tea-party before Mr. Foote's evening lecture on Feb. 26. There will be a good shilling meat-tea for the price of sixpence; the cost to be defrayed by donations, and the whole proceeds to go to the Branch funds. Only eighty tickets being available, those who wish to be present should make early application to Mr. J. Wittering, 256 Freeman-street.

At the Battersea Secular Hall last Monday about sixty children sat down to a substantial tea, after which they indulged in various games and competitions. A magic lantern entertainment wound up the proceedings. Mr. J. B. Coppock kindly offered the use of his lantern for the occasion. All the juveniles seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, each going home with one or more prizes.

On Tuesday, Feb. 28, Mr. Foote delivers a benefit lecture for the Battersea Branch in the Chatham Hall, adjoining the Battersea-park Station. The subject is "Can We Follow Christ?" and the prices of admission threepence, sixpence, and a shilling. Discussion is invited, and, as Mr. Foote has not lectured in the district lately, there should be plenty of it. Those who want to secure seats should obtain tickets from the Branch secretary.

Printer's Ink says that a certain American firm have increased their list of clients from 75 to 1,500, by their advertisement being headed by the following profane joke, which is a modification of one which originally appeared in the *Freethinker*. "Upon the recent death of an eminent English divine at Cannes, the following bulletin was placed by the family upon the door of his late residence: 'Mr. S—— departed this life for heaven at 11 o'clock a.m.' Some passing wag, possessed of more drollery than reverence, placed beneath the notice a telegraph blank filled out in the following manner: 'Heaven, 12 a.m. Mr. S—— not yet arrived. Getting uneasy. Peter.'" Profane jokes are evidently appreciated in the States.

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.

POPULAR RELIGION OPPOSED TO REASON AND PROGRESS.

THE recent controversy on the principles of those who profess and call themselves Christians reveals nothing more clearly than the necessity of giving a private interpretation to every utterance ascribed to Jesus. It is manifest that a great deal of word-juggling has to be gone through before it can be shown that he who said "My kingdom is not of this world" was specially fitted to guide and control society in modern times by his manifold injunctions. The present situation is complicated by the fact that here and there appears a man with broad sympathies, who breaks through the clouds of darkness in which orthodoxy is enveloped, and explains away to his own satisfaction the hideous deformities of it. But he leaves the great mass of the people suffering the penalties attached to a sincere belief in it. Only those can realise the horrors of orthodoxy who have escaped from darkness into light, got clear of the miasma of superstition, breathe the clear air of liberty, and bask in the sunshine of Freethought. As I showed in a previous article, Christianity never contemplated this. A state of doubt or inquiry it neither initiated nor sanctioned, but prohibited; on its banner was "Believe or be damned." On the contrary, we believe there is only hope for the world that is allowed and compelled to hear both sides; that even the attempt to proscribe inquiry, to control thought, is stifling our highest faculties, and obstructing the progress and welfare of the human race. It is the manifest duty of the friends of progress to oppose and expose all that is found in any system that hinders the development of our reasoning faculties, or puts any sort of gag on free thought and free speech. The best conclusion we can obtain on these questions is the one arrived at after the freest and fairest inquiry to which every human being is entitled, and all impediments thereto must be swept away. We who say this are not flogging a dead horse. In every Catholic community the whole duty of man is to follow the priest; and in the Protestant State-protected Church a faith is placed before us which, if we do not steadfastly believe, we are told we shall "without doubt perish everlastingly." So that, if we escape from one and take refuge in the other, we are only out of the frying-pan into the fire. If we give up an infallible Church and take on an infallible book, it is only a change of masters. The most superficial investigation makes it clear that a religion of reason and the popular religion are totally different things, however some good, honest folks may endeavor unsuccessfully to harmonise conflicting creeds with common sense. All the professions of liberality on the part of Christians are only skin-deep, only fit for public occasions when the general sense of the community acts on the parson like a policeman's bullseye on a burglar in the dark. The priest never hesitates to tell people to put their thinking out to be done as they do their washing or their tailoring. Even a Protestant bishop desires a clergyman in every town in due proportion to "the number of souls" that want looking after.

Since the Reformation, English people have had the liberty to select their pilot to heaven from two sets of boatmen, and in more recent times from many heretical sects. Some may ask, what can be nicer than that? The answer is easy—the right to refrain from selecting any clerical adviser whatever. When that proclamation is issued and acted upon, there is great tribulation among scripture readers and tract distributors. To be an independent man is not unattended by social difficulties.

A neighbor of mine is much shocked at the discovery that I do my own thinking unaided by any of the brilliant talent by which I am surrounded. He considers Christian principles essential for the tran-

quillity of society. But popular religion does not insist on the exercise of reason and justice as essential for social progress, but only belief in and obedience to its own doctrines and ceremonies, which are not even alleged to be founded upon reason and justice. Both priest and parson denounce as enemies of society all who show up their deficiencies and inconsistencies. Fancy an astronomer denouncing every other astronomer for knowing more than himself, or calling upon his hearers to *humbly, and in a prayerful spirit*, believe that the moon shines by a borrowed light, or that certain motions in the solar system cause day and night. But further imagine an astronomer threatening his audience with a roasting near the Equator if they believed not! His sanity would be fairly open to question. But priests knew as much about the value of demonstration and the power and function of evidence, as a toad does of the use of a side pocket. That being so, we need not wonder that a minister should request that one of his congregation should put the *Freethinker* on the fire.

If popular religion is only concerned with liberty and the welfare of man, there is a matter requiring prompt explanation—why has it denounced every new discovery, and placed the lives of discoverers and teachers in peril throughout all history? The priest no doubt was anxious that the sheep should be kept out of the way of the wolf. Why? Because he was afraid there would be none left to shear. I was amused the other day at the report of one of our spiritual advisers. He failed to get all the information he required, when he put a broad question, “is your father a Catholic or a Protestant?” No, he is neither, but he is a gasfitter.

People who do not move amongst the workers have no idea of the consequences of an announcement to these seekers after souls, that your’s don’t want saving. The Bishop told us a few days ago, that the people could not be got inside the church, so the first thing was to get them into a mission hall in their ragged clothes. At the same time, he gave figures showing that if all of us made up our minds to go to church next Sunday, only 8 in 1,000 could get in any building under their control.

The popular religion does not even aim at cultivating reason or promoting social progress. It only aims at multiplying the number of agencies that act as suckers to feed the churches with congregations, to listen to the impoverished discourses of well-paid persons.

CHARLES C. CATTELL.

JOSEPH SYMES ON MAHATMAISM.

There’s poor Mrs. Besant, so completely Mahatmatised that she now says that Jesus was a Mahatma! Why not Mary also? and the ghost who courted her so fatally? Why not fling in Jupiter, Apollo, Juno, Minerva, Venus, etc., also? Ah! are there any female Mahatmas or Mahatmasess? I do not know. Those things are beyond my reach at present; but when I become mad enough, look out for revelations! Really, it seems almost time for somebody, a second Swedenborg, to go mad for the purpose of clearing up the mysteries of ghostism, Mahatmatology (is that the proper word for that very improper stuff?) and all the region of spookdom. You see, it is only a person more or less mad that the ghosts will have anything to do with. Neither ghost nor god, nor devil, nor Mahatma, ever meddles with a sane man or woman. They must be mad in some particular before any revelations are vouchsafed. When sufficiently mad, ghosts and Mahatmas swarm around like flies round a carcass that has lost its sanity—that is, its life and health. Or else some powerful ghost or goblin seizes upon the “prepared” subject and keeps exclusive possession of him, warning all other ghosts to keep their distance as they value their limbs or life. From this stage onwards, revelations (that tell us nothing) are as plentiful as may be desired.—*Liberator*.

CHRISTIANITY AND ANIMALS.

THE book of Genesis in the bill of sale given to Adam, grants him “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Under this comprehensive title the sons of Adam have declared and do now declare that they have despotic power over the lower animals and the unconditional right to do whatever they like with their own. Fortified by this authority, Pius the Ninth proclaimed that it was “error to say that man owed any duty to the lower animals.” He did not mean to assert the duty of men to be cruel, but he did assert the theological right of man to dominion unqualified over the brute creation. This religious view of it has great influence over the peasantry of Italy, as appears from the testimony of an American traveller in that country, who remonstrated one day with a peasant for cruelly beating a donkey. The man replied, “What of it; the donkey has never been baptised.” Had the donkey been baptised, his owner would have regarded him as a fellow Christian, and perhaps have given him better treatment, although it must be admitted that even Christians do not always treat their fellow Christians as mercifully as they might. And this reminds me of a story which I got from that same “gentleman on my right,” the lawyer aforesaid. An Irish priest who had never been outside the rural parish in which he lived, went up to London, and while there visited the Zoological Gardens and became greatly interested in the monkeys, especially in one patriarchal monkey who appeared to take an equal interest in the priest. Whatever his reverence did, the monkey imitated him, and at last the priest became so much delighted at the intelligence and feeling displayed by the simian that he exclaimed, “See here, there’s nobody looking now, and if ye’ll just hand me that cup of water there beside ye, I’ll baptise ye this minute.” Why not? Surely monkeys need spiritual grace as much as any of us. It may not be an orthodox belief, but I will cherish it, that whether baptised or not, a good monkey has a better chance in a future state of existence than a bad man.

—Open Court.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

A PAGAN’S PLAINT.

How, without death, to leave thee, Life! thine ills
Are myriad: hard to bear and hard to fly;—
Thy sweets, kind nature’s beauties, earth, seas, hills,
Stars, circling moons, the sun, the arching sky—
All else is fear and woe—or, taste we bliss?
Then straight we hear the tread of Nemesis.—*Æsop*.

OBITUARY.

I REGRET to record the death of a staunch veteran in the Freethought party, Mr. J. Gray, on Jan. 19, aged 73. He was a firm adherent to his principles to the end. He was a great admirer of Mr. Bradlaugh, and an enthusiastic expounder of Secularism, both at Dulwich and on Clapham Common, where he would fearlessly advocate his principles in face of strong opposition. His body was interred at Norwood cemetery, where several working men attested their respect for him by following him to the grave.—J. HERRINGTON.

THE Maidstone Secularists have lost another veteran and faithful sympathiser in the person of Mrs. Jane Martin, who died on the 1st inst., aged 74. Her last brave wish, for a Secular funeral, was solemnly carried out, the service being conducted by Mr. F. Haslam.—R. W. H.

WE in Sheffield have lost a staunch friend in the person of Mr. Isaac Worster, who died on Feb. 5, at the age of 68, and was followed to the grave on Feb. 9 by sorrowing relatives and by friends of the Secular party, amongst the latter being Mr. Woodcock, president, who gave a short but appropriate address. For the last three or four years he has been (through physical weakness) comparatively inactive, but was previously a frequent and favorite lecturer in the Secular halls of Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, and most neighboring towns.—W. A. LILL.

DIED at his residence, William Henry-street, Liverpool, on the 13th inst., Mr. John Sisson. Deceased was about 60 years of age, and had for many years been a consistent Freethinker and a supporter of the local Branch. Almost his last expressed wish was to have a Secular funeral, and to have Freethought papers enclosed in his coffin. The interment was arranged for Anfield cemetery on the 16th, and as far as possible—the family grave being in consecrated ground—our departed friend’s wishes will be complied with.—C. D.

BOOK CHAT.

The chief curiosity of *Curiosities of Christian History prior to the Reformation*, by Croake James (Methuen and Co.), is that there is hardly anything like history in the book. The first story in the book—that of the Sibyl having shown a vision of the Virgin Mary and her child to the Emperor Augustus—is like those that follow, merely a sample of the easy credulity of early Christians.

Whatever be Mr. Croake James's object, he has certainly succeeded in showing how legendary and superstitious is the character of Christian history. The second item, for instance, relates that Simeon was one of those chosen to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus (about 260 B.C.) When he came to Isaiah vii. 14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," his mind doubted, and he rendered the Hebrew word *Virgin* by a Greek word which signifies merely a *young woman*. But when he had written it an angel effaced it and wrote the right word, and it was revealed to him that he should not see death till he had witnessed the miracle. Therefore he tarried on earth nearly three centuries till that which he had disbelieved had come to pass. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word in Isaiah vii. 14 was "young woman" and not virgin.

Another good story—it must be borne in mind that in the palmy days of Christianity these stories were considered as true as gospel—is that St. John, after being boited in oil without any hurt to his skin, ordered his own grave and went to sleep there. That he was only sleeping was proved by the heaving of the earth over him as he breathed. This was to fulfil the saying of Jesus that his beloved disciple should tarry till he came. *Curiosities of Christian History* may do something to show people how much Christian history is merely another name for monkish legends.

Messrs. Williams and Norgate publish a work in two volumes on *The Supernatural: Its Origin, Nature and Evolution*, by John H. King. The first part deals with "The Origin and Nature of Supernal Concepts," the second with "The Evolution of the Supernatural."

Dr. Westbrook, of Philadelphia, has published a new work, entitled, *The Eliminator; or, Skeleton Keys to Sacerdotal Secrets*. Speaking of America, he says: "More than two hundred and fifty thousand priests and ministers are maintained at an annual expense of more than five hundred millions of dollars, and yet the secular daily newspapers are doing more to instruct the people in living truths than the whole brood of ecclesiastical parrots."

The Liberty and Property Defence League sends us its Annual Report for 1892-3. The League regrets the loss of Lord Bramwell, who died last year; but it congratulates itself on the gain of the Hon. W. W. Astor, of New York and London, and a millionaire is certainly a catch, though, as the Report is not accompanied by an account of income and expenditure, we are unable to see how the League is really financed. There is an impression abroad that the League is a mere agency for the protection of rich men's privileges, and a balance-sheet might help to dispel the misconception.

No. 6 of the *Transactions of the Cremation Society* (8 New Cavendish-street, W.), 1893, gives a view of the Crematoria at St. John's, Surrey, and diagrams illustrating the furnaces. It also gives a useful list of works on Cremation and dangers attending earth burial, as well as of works relating to ancient and modern funeral customs.

Dr. Alice Vickery has translated, and published as a twopenny pamphlet (G. Standing: London), Condorcet's essay on "The Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship." Of course the essay has little intrinsic value now, but it is valuable in another sense, as a landmark of progress in the ideas of representative government. Dr. Vickery says she does not remember seeing any allusion to Condorcet's essay; as a matter of fact, it was mentioned by Mill and John Morley, as well as by several writers of the preceding generation. Justice compels us to say that Condorcet overlooks, as Dr. Vickery does, the strongest objections urged against Woman Suffrage at present. We say this in no carping spirit. Even good causes must not ignore their opponents' arguments, especially when they

affect a considerable number of people whose support has to be obtained.

Mr. Ernest Bowden's excellent little compilation of extracts from the Buddhist scriptures entitled *The Imitation of Buddha* (Methuen and Co.), has now reached a third and revised edition.

In the old Anti-Slavery days I lectured in Cincinnati. At the same time there was a convention of ministers in session. The next morning I took the cars, seating myself quite near the door. The car was full of white cravats, so that it looked like an adjourned session of the convention. Presently a sleek, well-fed man bustled on to the platform, and addressing the brakeman, asked:

"Is Mr. Phillips on board?"

"Yes," was the reply, "there he sits back of the door."

The man came into the car—he was evidently a clergyman. In a loud voice he cried, pointing his finger at me:

"Are you Mr. Phillips?"

"I am, sir."

"Are you trying to free the niggers?"

"Yes, sir, I'm an Abolitionist."

"Well, why do you preach your doctrines up here? Why don't you go there?" pointing towards Kentucky, just across the Ohio River.

"Excuse me," said I, "are you a preacher?"

"I am, sir."

"Are you trying to save souls from hell?"

"Yes, sir, that is my business."

"Well, why don't you go there?"

There was a roar, and my critic vanished in the next car.

—From *Wendell Phillips*, by Carlos Martyn.

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, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Forgiveness of Sins" (2d. and 4d.); social after the lecture. 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. J. Hunt, "Christ: God, Man, or Myth?" (free). Saturday at 9, concert and dance.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, H. Snell, "Is Christianity Played Out?" Friday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Fate of Religion" (free). Free science classes (hygiene and astronomy) every Friday evening at 7.30.

East London Ethical Society, Assembly Rooms, Cottage-grove (near Grove-road), Mile End-road: 7, Miss A. Henry, "Justice and Humanity."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, C. Cohen, "The Meaning of Secularism."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Freethought and the Marriage Question" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8.15, J. Rowney, "The Bible Creation Story" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, Mr. St. John, "Has Man a Soul?" (free).

North Kensington Branch S.D.F., Clarendon Coffee Tavern, Clarendon-road, Notting Hill: 8, Mr. St. John, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, F. Parson, "Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

South London Ethical Society, Chepstow Hall, 1 High-street, Peckham: 7, Dr. Bass, "Religion and Ethics."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. James, "What must I do to be Saved?"

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Gods, Ancient and Modern."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Building (Hall No. 5, upstairs): 6.30, debate between John Harkiss and James Maitland on "Is Atheism Possible?" (free).

Belfast—Crown Chambers Hall, 64 Royal-avenue: 7, Mr. Lambert, "Christianity and Secularism."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, G. Bayliffe will lecture; 7, miscellaneous concert.

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, S. Wood, "A Criticism of the Labor Program and Policy"

Derby—Mission Room, top of Green-lane, Normanton-road: 8 important meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick street: 12, discussion class, H. Wishart, "English Spelling and Spelling Reform"; 6.30, Zosiemus, "Embryology: a Chapter in Evolution" (with special lantern illustrations).

Glasgow—St. Rollox Eclectic Society, Toynbee Hall, Parson-street: Tuesday at 8, Mr. Wright, "Bible Immoralities—a Reply to the Rev. J. Deans."

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Cox-lane: 7, members' meeting.

Leeds—Waverley Hall, York Buildings, New York-street, Kirk-gate: 7, J. Badlay, "Of what Utility are the Gods."
 Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 3, philosophy class; 7, Mr. Jackson, "In Search of a God Worth Knowing."
 Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Stanley Jones, 11, "Hell going to Ruin, Escape of Damned Souls"; 3, "Noah and Lot—Flood and Fire"; 6.30, "Is Christianity Played Out?"
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, meeting of sub-committee of N.E.S.F., important business; 7, J. Clare, "An Analysis of Genesis."
 Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.
 Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 8, mutual improvement class; 7, Mr. Walters, "The Value of the God Idea."
 Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, J. Slyfield, a reading.
 Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Touzeau Parris, 11, "Religion and Science"; 13, "Occultism: is it Wisdom or Folly?"; 7, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless—a Reply to the Rev. Dr. Cook."
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, a business meeting; 7.30, D. Bow, "Temperance Reform Necessary to Secular Progress."
 Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, J. Miller, "A Reply to Mr. Foote's Pamphlet, Was Jesus Insane?"
 Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: James Hooper, 11, "Concessions of Theology to Science"; 3, "The Birth, Life, and Death of Christ"; 7, "How I Became an Atheist, and why I Remain One." Free.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Feb. 19, Sheffield; 26, Hall of Science. March 26, Hall of Science. April 2, Camberwell; 16, Bristol; 30, Hall of Science. May 7, Camberwell.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Feb. 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. 19, Walworth Radical Club; 26, Camberwell. March 5, Hall of Science; 12, Walwarth Radical Club; 19, Hyde Park. April 2, NewBrompton; 16, Hyde Park; 23, Hammersmith.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Feb. 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. 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, Manchester; 26, Wigan. March 5, Sheffield; 10, Beverley; 12, Hull; 16, 17, Swansea; 19, Plymouth; 26, Birmingham. April 2, Reading; 30, Aberdeen.

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