

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 1893.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE FIGHT AT HULL.

FOR the sake of readers who are new to the *Freethinker* I give a few words of introduction to this week's account of the doings at Hull. On the first Sunday in February I was billed to lecture in the Alhambra Music Hall there. Freethought lectures had previously been delivered by myself and others in the same building, and other halls in Hull had been used for the same purpose, during the past twenty years, by the late Charles Bradlaugh. Yes, and under the very same conditions; a charge being made for admission, and an opportunity being afforded after the lecture for discussion; such, in fact, having always been the common practice of the Freethought party. But for some reason this old practice became suddenly obnoxious to Captain Gurney, the Chief Constable of Hull, who therefore sent Mr. Jones, the Deputy Chief Constable, to meet me on the Saturday night as I arrived at the station, and to warn me that if a charge for admission were made at the morrow's lectures there would be a prosecution under a stupid old Act of the reign of George the Third. The threat did not frighten me, and I should have gone on as though no Captain Gurney existed. But I was told that no steps would be taken against me, and that Mr. Phillips, the lessee of the Alhambra, would be the only person prosecuted; it was also hinted that his license would be endangered; and in these circumstances it was impossible to persist in taking money at the doors, as we did not desire to see Mr. Phillips ruined for the sake of a party with which he had no connection. At the same time the public who attended the meetings were informed that we did not mean to submit to Captain Gurney's dictation; that I should visit Hull again, as soon as possible, and give him an opportunity of fighting, if he had any stomach for a real contest.

ATTITUDE OF THE BRANCH.

The Hull Branch of the N.S.S. has some very sturdy members, notably its president, Mr. N. B. Billany, a veteran reformer who has fought in many a battle for freedom, and is now universally respected by his fellow-townsmen. The Branch committee never hesitated for a moment in deciding to take up Captain Gurney's challenge. They looked about for a hall, but it was not easy to find one. At last they found that a place was obtainable, and the only one in Hull. It was a large room in Osborne-street, intended for a shop, but not yet occupied, and the property of Mr. Edward Robson, the ex-mayor, who happens to be also the proprietor of the Alhambra.

PREPARATIONS.

This room in Osborne-street was taken for a week in my name. The object of this was twofold; first, to avoid all reference to Sunday lectures in particular; second, to avoid throwing responsibility upon the proprietor. The week's agreement made me a *bonâ fide* tenant, fully liable for any illegality during my term of occupancy. Bills were got out announcing a Week's Freethought Mission in Hull, beginning on Thursday evening, March 2, and to be conducted by myself. These bills were put into the poster's hands on Wednesday, as soon as Mr. Thompson obtained the key for me. Meanwhile I was having printed in London a special lot of posters and handbills for the Sunday lectures.

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It would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to get them printed at Hull. They were headed "Despite the Police, who have Threatened a Prosecution," and they bore the usual lines as to the charges for admission and "discussion invited." Only one Hull billsticker would have anything to do with these wicked-looking posters. Some were placed in fairly conspicuous positions, but on the whole the display was not a good one, and the time was very brief.

BEGINNING BUSINESS.

Osborne Hall would seat nearly five hundred persons if there were seats for them, but it was absolutely empty. A few forms were hired to accommodate about a couple of hundred. The rest of the hall was standing room. The prospect was not too cheerful, still it was better than nothing, and in order that we might not lose possession by any trickery I advised the attendance of someone day and night. A trustworthy member of the Branch accepted the job of caretaker, and on Saturday night (the most critical time) he had several supporters. Half a dozen members were there all night to meet any emergency. On Thursday evening Mr. Billany spoke well to an orderly and attentive meeting. I did not arrive till Friday, having been detained in London on account of the special bills, which were of vital importance. When I mounted the platform on Friday evening I confronted a good audience, most of whom were standing. Mr. Billany, who presided, made a rattling introductory speech on "the crisis," which I supplemented. I then began a lecture on "How to Read the Bible." As soon as I picked the "holy volume" up from the table, and held it aloft, a rough fellow on the first seat rose and exclaimed "It's the best gory (he used a synonymous adjective) book in the world," and walked out of the place. The rest of the audience was orderly enough, but roughs outside were heard to say what they would like to do with the "gory infidel." All the blackguards in Hull seem loyal Christians.

CAPTAIN GURNEY'S NEW DODGE.

Captain Gurney, as I expected, was anxious to prevent me from delivering my Sunday lectures; to get me out of the way, in fact, instead of prosecuting me. Accordingly he tried to put pressure on the proprietor of Osborne Hall. This gentleman's agent waited on me on Saturday morning, bearing a letter for me, which ran as follows:—

Re OSBORNE HALL.

DEAR SIR,—The Deputy Chief Constable called on me this morning re making charge for admission on Sunday next. He informs me that this is illegal, and probably if a charge is made the Chief Constable will take action against all concerned. I trust under these circumstances a charge will not be made, but if you persist in so doing the whole of the responsibility must rest upon yourself.

Yours truly,

EDWARD ROBSON.

G. W. Foote, Esq.

I smiled on reading this letter, and explained to Mr. Robson's agent that I came to Hull for the express purpose of taking "the whole responsibility." I told him that Mr. Robson was in absolutely no danger, that I was in possession of Osborne Hall and meant to remain so, and that I certainly should charge for the lectures on Sunday. I would keep Mr. Robson's letter, and produce it on his behalf, if there was any

attempt at worrying him. It also seemed to me, and I told Mr. Robson's agent so, that Captain Gurney was funkng. Why else should he try to frighten Mr. Robson into trying to frighten me?

LETTING THE CAPTAIN KNOW.

Captain Gurney kept carefully in the background in the whole business. Lest he might, therefore, finally pretend ignorance, I asked Mr. Billany to call and leave one of the defiant posters at the Police Office. This he did, and, to make assurance doubly sure, I sent the Chief Constable another poster in a registered envelope.

ON THE EVE.

Saturday's meeting was a good and orderly one, and my lecture on "The Gospel of Freethought" was warmly applauded. Mr. Billany, who again took the chair, invited discussion, nay, pressed for it; but not a single Christian ventured to come upon the platform, or even to ask a question from where he sat or stood. Free meetings did not attract the defenders of the faith any more than paid meetings; a fact which leads us to discount the usual objections that Christian ministers do not reply to our lectures because of Sunday engagements, and that they will not help to "bring grist to the infidel mill."

SUNDAY'S MEETINGS.

Sunday's two meetings (I did not give *three* lectures), in the afternoon and evening, were well attended. One town councillor at least was present. A member remarked that he never saw so many silk hats at Freethought meetings before. Mr. Billany took the chair again as the Branch president, and made an eloquent appeal to the Christian part of the audience for fair play towards Freethinkers. Both my lectures were listened to with close attention, and the applause was extremely hearty. Two policemen were present in the evening. I was told they turned up their noses when I said, before the meeting broke up, that if Captain Gurney did not prosecute he would simply climb down and confess himself a fool in having climbed up.

THE CLOSING SCENE.

Mr. Jones, the Deputy Chief Constable, knew where I was staying if he had to serve me with a writ or summons. I did not see him on Monday. In the evening I delivered my last lecture. At the close Mr. Billany made a brief speech. A gentleman in the audience moved "a vote of thanks to Mr. Foote" for coming down to Hull, as he said he would, and fighting the battle of freedom. This was seconded and carried amidst loud applause. In acknowledging the resolution, I said I had been brought to Hull by bigots, to the serious derangement of my other business. I only did my duty, however, as President of the National Secular Society, and the vote of thanks was an unnecessary kindness. Captain Gurney had thrown down his gauntlet, I had stepped into the arena and picked it up, and I was waiting for him to claim it. I had stayed in Hull as long as I could; the next morning I should be going to London with the Chief Constable's gauntlet in my pocket; and although my policy was defence, rather than defiance, if I did not hear from Captain Gurney I should have to say that, although he bore a military title, he was simply a coward. This remark elicited a storm of cheering. The audience then broke up with a great deal of hand-shaking.

MORAL.

I am now in London awaiting Captain Gurney's convenience. He finds it easy to frighten lessees of halls, whom he could persecute and ruin; but he does not find it easy to frighten Freethinkers. Perhaps he will take no action against me. I have several reasons, however, for hoping he will. For one thing, it would be well to have a legal decision as to the Act of George III.; it would also be well to let the liberal-minded public see that the Act wants repealing. Meanwhile it is possible that we shall be hampered for some time in Hull, owing to the difficulty in obtaining a hall for paid lectures on Sunday. I may add that, of the five lectures I delivered, three were free. Collections were made towards the expenses, but the *three* collections only amounted to one

half the money taken at the door on Sunday afternoon. This will show the importance of maintaining our right in this matter, unless we wish to see our propaganda crippled, at least as carried on by our leading lecturers. And before I conclude I must emphasise my former remark that we shall never be really secure, while this old Act is unrepealed, until we hold our own meeting-places. I therefore invite Freethinkers, from end to end of the country, to take shares in the National Secular Hall Society. Let them apply at once for Application Forms to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. By supporting the Society as they might and should, they will enable it to multiply Secular Halls in Great Britain. Mr. George Anderson has generously promised to give the sum of £300 if the number of shares reaches 3,000 by July. I earnestly hope that I may be in a position to ask him for his cheque, which I am sure he will draw with pleasure.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

If a burglar should burgle your house,
And you catch him whilst bundling the "swag,"
Assist him to pack, call a cab, or inquire
If he'd like you to carry his bag.
And remember! this isn't a joke;
For Christ has proclaimed if a man takes
your coat,
You're to make him a gift of your cloak!

If your wages at end of the week
Your employer refuses to pay,
Present him with all the spare cash that you have,
And contentedly bid him "good-day."
And remember, etc.

If a thief makes a grab at your fob,
And gets off with your watch, ascertain,
If possible, where the self-helper doth dwell,
And remit to him, *gratis*, your chain.
And remember, etc.

If a Shylock your nose should cut off,
And you feel like a Christian inclined,
Then give him an ear, or a piece of your chest,
But, dispense not a "piece of your mind."
And remember, etc.

If your neighbor with buildings obstructs
All the air and the light and the view
From rooms on the lowermost floor of your house,
Bid him damage the upper ones too.
And remember, etc.

If the bigots should beat you at law,
And deprive you of business on Sundays,
Then not only keep your shop shut on those days,
But, for Christ's sake, keep closed on the Mondays.
And remember, etc.

G. L. MACKZENIE.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: D. Young, 1s.; J. H. Stephens, 2s.

FASTING IN LENT.

ONE of the main roots, if not the very tap-root of religion, is the belief in the return of ghosts. Dreams and visions are largely accountable for this, and since fasting is a means of producing nervous disorder and morbid exaltation which leads to ghost seeing, it has a prominent place in all early religions and in all the great faiths that have continued the practices and superstitions of early man.

Dr. E. B. Tylor remarks: "Among the strongest means of disturbing the functions of the mind so as to produce ecstatic vision, is fasting, accompanied, as it so usually is, with other privations, and with prolonged solitary contemplation in the desert or the forest." The wild hunter often has to undergo involuntarily the effects of such a life for days and weeks together, and in this condition comes to see and talk with phantoms which are to him visible personal spirits. The secret of this intercourse thus learnt, he has but to reproduce the cause to renew the effects.

Fasting is an important rite among the North American Indians. Long and rigorous abstinence from food is enjoined on boys and girls from a very early age. To be able to fast long is an enviable distinction. During these fasts particular attention is paid to dreams. What one sees and experiences at this time is regarded as revelation. Dr. Tylor gives numerous instances from other nations. So thoroughly is the connexion between fasting and spiritual intercourse acknowledged by the Zulus that they have a saying, "The continually stuffed body cannot see secret things." They have no faith in a fat prophet. Hindu yogis have the same probation. The Pythic of Delphi fasted for inspiration. Even the physician, Galen, remarks that fasting dreams are the clearer. All the saints of the Catholic Church practised fasting, and saw their visions of heaven and hell, angels and devils, when in that condition.

To understand the custom of fasting in Lent, which is only a modern survival of more ancient fasts, we must remember that in ancient times the new year commenced in spring, when the sun entered the sign of Aries. All ancient peoples regarded the new year as a period of new life. Much of ancient religion, indeed, is founded on a presumed analogy between the life of man and the course of the seasons. In its lowest efforts it consisted of charms to alter the course of nature to suit human wants. Some survival of this appears in our prayers for rain and fine weather in the Book of Common Prayer. The expulsion of evils, or demons presumed to be their cause, formed a large part of ancient religion, in which mystery, medicine and magic were bound together. The priest is the modern survivor of the mystery-man, medicine-man and magician, and his prayers the modern survival of savage incantations. Devils were sometimes expelled by ringing bells, and in our custom of ringing the old year out and the new one in we preserve a pleasant survival of this superstition. Fasting was found an efficacious method of dealing with some of these demons—such, we may suppose, as had their origin in intoxication, over-feeding, and fever. Christ says of a devil his disciples could not exorcise, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The end of the year was the general time for getting a general riddance of evil spirits, and to make a fresh start in life freed from their malignant influences, as the new vegetation does freed from the frosts of winter. This time was indeed that of the temptation by the Devil, the Christ of the new life having to conquer its own passions and then overcome the temptations of the Devil. A period of forty days was set for this struggle. Moses, Elijah and Christ all fast for that period.

Shrove Tuesday, the day of shroving, when our ancestors used to humble themselves and confess

their sins to prepare themselves for Lent, is the survival now only in name of the Pagan preparation for the expulsion of sins; and on Good Friday (the last Friday in Lent), when nature is supposed to be at its deepest point of mourning—the darkest hour before the dawn—we take the sacramental hot cross-bun as a sign that our redeemer, who symbolises the sun and his fruits in vegetative nature, has passed over the barriers of death, and will return with new life, joy, and gladness to the earth. In Lent, mourning dresses are still considered appropriate; and Easter would not be Easter to many a provincial lassie did it not bring with it new clothes as a sign that nature was freshly arraying herself; the fasting, clothes, and feasting being all charms symbolical of the life of nature.

The object of fasting in Lent is to overcome the devil of winter with all the ills and aches attendant on his train. Doubtless it was also found conducive to health and good morals. The man who could abstain, did something his fellows found difficult. Hence abstinence has ever been associated with ideas of sanctity. Hindus, Chinese, Jews and Mohammedans, all have their religious fasts supposed to make atonement for sins committed, and to predispose for a closer adherence to the rules of right living. Why Mohammedans keep Friday sacred, and why on *dies Veneris* the Catholics eat fish, may be found explained in my *Bible Studies*.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE RECEPTION OF NEW IDEAS.

THERE is an element in human nature that frequently manifests itself when questions of public interest are being considered. In the absence of a better name we may term it the conservative element. It is not always an objectionable feature in mental deliverances, for whenever it takes the form of caution or impartial discrimination it undoubtedly exercises a beneficial influence in checking the tendency to accept as true that which has not been verified by reason and experience. But it is to be regretted that this intellectual factor seldom assumes this function, nor does it limit its operations merely to an impartial examination of the various subjects presented to the human mind. As a rule it either avoids fairly estimating the value of new ideas or it ignores them altogether. Its usual tendency is, particularly in connexion with religious topics, to adhere to what *is* because it *is*, and to observe a custom merely because it is a custom. This slavish prostration to old notions has prompted many persons to seek to strangle truth in its infancy; for where we find one man who has striven to give the world the full light of a new idea, there are hundreds who have evinced a determination to extinguish the newly-discovered light altogether, and thus deprive the world of its illuminating power. Of course, criticism of any new discovery or doctrine is legitimate, and may be useful if conducted in a fair and consistent manner. The attempt, however, to make modern thought agree with ancient speculations, is to seek to deprive genius of its greatest value. We learn from the history of the past that it was the general practice to resort to social ostracism, and sometimes to severe torture, in order to prevent the spread of any new ideas that were opposed to those then prevailing. Opposition, moreover, was not simply confined to those ideas, but it was extended to the persons who enunciated them. Such individuals were frequently persecuted in the most cruel and unjust manner. Instead of a hearty reception being given to the discoverers of new truths, they had to encounter the worst form of bigotry and intolerance.

The perils and drawbacks of genius appeared at the dawn of philosophy, and they lost but little of

their evil influence until the advent of the present century, when scepticism began to reign supreme. The history of the antagonism shown to fresh ideas reveals a state of things most discreditably to the ecclesiastical powers that so long held an authoritative sway over the affairs of the nation. Wars and pestilence have inflicted great injuries on our race, but there is a refinement of cruelty in the act of persecuting for the avowal of honest opinions that is more disastrous in its consequences. The evil has been in denouncing new ideas because they were opposed to old beliefs that possessed nothing but age to commend them. Innovation and novelty, even at the present day, are treated by a large section of society as being inimical to the welfare of mankind; hence the promulgators of new ideas have frequently to share the same kind of odium that is allotted to those who recklessly disturb the general order and tranquillity of society. Yet it should be obvious to reflecting minds that new ideas are of the greatest service to the human race. Truth is the savior of mankind, and they who discovered it were our noblest benefactors, and their memories should be cherished by those to whom the inheritance of the discovered treasures has descended. In the old times it was said, let him that preaches any new gospel be accursed; but if anyone deserved to be so treated, it should be those who sought to prevent the preaching of new truths. There was once a mistaken notion that man could have too much light: happily in modern times the desire is for more light.

It is sad to contemplate the pages of history that record the manner in which new ideas have been received. The sublime teachings of Socrates, in spite of his virtue and intelligence, cost him his life, because they clashed with the old notions existing in Athens. Down to the time of Galileo the word stagnation represented the prevailing conceptions of the planetary system, and he who was brave enough to defy the power of the Church, was persecuted and condemned. The lesson to be learnt and to be acted upon is, that new ideas should not cause persecution but investigation. To question new ideas may not be wrong, but to persecute for the avowal of them is unmistakably so. Every important discovery in astronomy, in chemistry, in physiology, and in geology, was at one time bitterly opposed by the Church, and what was worse, the denunciation came from persons who were not only incompetent to judge of the merits or demerits of the questions at issue, but who were indisposed to investigate their truth. Even the supposed infallible Church and the alleged infallible Bible have been proved to be utterly in the wrong concerning matters of fact within the range of human observation and experiment.

The advent of new ideas has sometimes been attended with very amusing incidents. This was so in connexion with the starting of railways, with the modern stage of navigation, and the introduction of gas. At first it was said that people would not risk their lives behind an engine going at the speed of twenty miles per hour, and it was urged that steamers could not cross the Atlantic because the fire would go out in consequence of the supply of coal being exhausted before land could be sighted. Even members of Parliament, when the House was first lighted by gas, put their gloves on when invited to feel the pipes. When two monks translated the *Principia*, they wrote in the introduction that they were led to do so by a feeling of curiosity. They bowed to the Pope and to the Church as to the teaching of the Bible, but they asserted that their object was to show how absurd Newton would appear if his views were as true as they were manifestly false. Mr. St. George Mivart seems to have been as successful with the Pope as the two monks were. Finding himself denounced by the clerical party when he published

his *Genesis of Species* (which shows that men might have originated from some non-human animal), he sent the book to the Pope, and instead of the supreme head of the Church cursing St. Mivart and placing his book in the famous Index Expurgatorius, the Pope sent the Professor a doctor's hat! (See Mivart's article in the *Nineteenth Century* for February in the present year.) Bruno did not fare so well in his time, for he was burnt for supporting new ideas. It is related that an early geologist was in danger, when he was found hammering the rocks in pursuit of his studies, of being treated as a madman; but the news spread that he was doing penance, and he was in consequence regarded as a saint. Even Sir W. Jones expressed his regret that intelligent and virtuous people in his time should doubt Moses' account of the Creation! Telescopes were condemned as "Atheistical" inventions because they enabled people to see further than God intended they should when he created man with a pair of perfect eyes. Alas! it has been discovered, as many of us know too well, that the eye is far from being perfect, and it has been reserved for man to improve on the alleged perfect creation of his God. It is a singular fact that the term "Atheist" should be applied to almost every new idea even from the days of the early Grecian philosophers. Christianity was so called in its primitive times. With theologians it has been a sort of a trade-mark with which they have branded intellects superior to their own, and specially burnt it in whenever that intellect developed a new idea that these theologians thought was likely to shake their doctrines or to lessen their importance in the estimation of mankind.

It is evident that the present opposition offered by the orthodox party to Freethought, is based upon the old theological conservative element. If it were not so the attempts so frequently made to arrest the march of inquiry would be meaningless and contemptible. Besides, if the clergy and their supporters were satisfied of the futile nature of our movement, they would not so strenuously advise as they do their followers to avoid us, much less would they endeavor to close the doors of public halls against Freethinkers. The truth is, professed Christians fear that new ideas may be deemed better and more attractive than their old ones, and they dread to face a falling market for their celestial wares. We, however, do not object to competition in the free and open market of the intellects of the world. Protection in trade ceased in England nearly half a century ago, and its sway in matters of religion is now rapidly giving way. It was amazing to see the efforts made to prevent the new idea of affirmation becoming the law of the land, especially by those who profess to obey him who is reported to have said, "Swear not at all." Despite the force of custom, the allurements of fashion, and the power of the conservative nature of theology, new ideas must prevail, and before their inspiring vitality the old landmarks of superstition will disappear, making way for the inception and development of truths born of modern genius, and adapted to meet the requirements of the higher aspirations of the nineteenth century.

CHARLES WATTS.

"Have some salt? There's lots 'ere." "You mean Lot's wife's ear."

A negro preacher described hell as ice-cold, where the wicked would freeze to all eternity. On being asked why he did so, he said, 'Cause I don't dare tell de people nuffin else. Why, if I say hell is hot, some of dem old rheumatic niggers will be wantin' to start down dar de very fust frost."

A teacher in a country Sunday-school had been instructing her class in the Church Catechism, and in order to test their knowledge on the subject of baptism, she asked: "What were you made when you were christened?" A little girl put up her hand, and said, "Please, governess, wet."

THE TRINITY JOKE AGAIN.

REALLY the amount of humbug—sheer, downright, unblushing, rampant humbug—that is poured out at the present day on the religious side is amazing. Every week Talmage shoots several columns full of rubbish on the religious world; Parker is beginning to get his idiotcy into the pages of respectable newspapers and magazines. The intellectual condition of large numbers of people, which this state of things betokens, is positively a serious danger to our civilisation.

However, a little piece of humbug has come under our notice that almost puts to shame the modest flights of Talmage and Parker. There is a publication, issued quarterly, called the *Dublin Review*, which is supposed to be an organ of "literary" Catholicism, and in the current number there is an article by the Rev. J. S. Vaughan on "Vestiges of the Blessed Trinity in the Material Creation" which is awfully funny. Everyone has heard of the old fathers, who used to exemplify the Trinity by the masts of a ship or the two eyes and nose on a man's face. But Vaughan will not stick at petty examples of that kind; he goes in for finding marks of the triune nature of "the great Fashioner" stuck about his entire handiwork. Threes ought to turn up smiling on every hand. And so they do—if you only look for them, and ignore any other less sanctified combination that you chance to come across.

We will try and summarise the various specimens which this father in God reels off. Firstly, there is time of three kinds—past, present, and future. Then there are three kinds of life—vegetative life, sensitive life, and rational or intellectual life. The Rev. Vaughan of course would fall under the third head—in his own view. Other people might be doubtful. Of course—if indeed it be worth dealing seriously with such twaddle—we might mention that the distinctions between plants and animals and animals and man are purely arbitrary. There is no hard-and-fast line; and it is a question whether to rank some extremely low organisms as belonging to the plant kingdom or the animal kingdom.

But to proceed with the examples. A plant, we are told, exists under three distinct forms—seed, stalk, and flower—before it completes the full cycle of its being. Then again, water exists in three conditions—the solid, liquid, and gaseous. Would ye turn your attention to mathematics or look for Jehovah in the pages of Euclid? Yea, it shall be given you then. "Every surface is contained by three lines. The simplest form of surface that we can imagine is a triangle, and that demands as an absolute condition of the existence, at least three lines. As God necessarily contains three persons, so a line necessarily contains three parts, and a surface necessarily contains three lines."

There is a good deal more in the same strain betraying a school-boyish acquaintance with physical science. But we are stimulated by the success of our reverend author. We would like to suggest a little theory of our own. We propose, therefore, to demonstrate the quadruple nature of "the Great Fashioner."

Looking at the earth, we find there are four points to the compass—north, south, east, and west. Taking geometry from the unholy clutches of these heretical Trinitarians, we find that a square contains four sides which surely proves to the hilt the four-fold nature of Deity. Then there are four right-angles contained round any point. Again, this author takes the simplest surface—the triangle—to work out his three. But we go higher and take the simplest solid, which is contained by four surfaces, and cannot be contained by less. Then most animals and men have four limbs. Four itself is a perfect square.

Thus we think we have completely established the quadruple character of the three-faced God.

This, however, is mere fooling. To return to the original article, possibly Father Vaughan believes what he has written, though some of it is so imbecile that if we give him credit for sincerity we can hardly do so for sense. Assuming he does believe it—and indeed whether he does or not—there is one lesson to be drawn from this nonsense: it is that there is great injury done to correct thinking in taking a theory or hypothesis, and then battering and twisting every fact to suit that theory, or only seeing the facts that agree with that hypothesis. The Trinitarian has an eye for "threes." The Theosophist, it appears, has a similar hobby for "sevens," and both pick out and elaborate the examples that suit their respective hobbies. This system creates havoc on every side. The "design" argumentator persists in dwelling only on the facts that suit his argument, and is blind to, or pretends not to see, the facts that damn it. He dwells on the beauty of nature and will not look at the ugliness; he sees the harmony and ignores the discord. The Christian defender, too, exaggerates every advantage that Christian nations possess and expands on every drawback of non-Christian nations, in order to suit his case. Indeed, there is no one more injurious to the forming of sound opinions than the man who is consumed with an idea or hypothesis that he wants to verify. A man who wishes to sincerely find the truth must guard against this; he must distinguish between what are only theories or opinions and what are actual facts, and he must be careful of allowing his desire to verify an hypothesis warp his observation and his judgment.

F. RYAN.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held on Wednesday, Feb. 23. The President in the chair. Present: Messrs. R. O. Smith, G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler, W. H. Reynolds, J. E. Brumage, A. B. Moss, G. J. Warren, C. J. Hunt, E. Bater, J. Potter, T. Gorniot, J. Samson, C. W. Martin, B. Wehrle, W. Heaford, and E. M. Vance, asst. sec.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

The recommendations of the Organisation Committee, that permission be given for the formation of new Branches at Barnsley and Bath, and that a grant of £5 be made to the North Eastern Secular Federation were adopted. The Committee also reported upon the appointment of a working Committee for the Hall of Science.

The secretary announced the result of the Circular ordered to be sent out at last meeting, the Branches desiring to receive the Conference were Bristol, Chatham, Portsmouth, Wolverhampton, Huddersfield, Hanley and Glasgow. South Shields, Manchester and Birmingham, had also requested to be nominated, but were considered to be debarred by rule of practice. Moved by Mr. Hunt, seconded by Mr. Gorniot, that "The towns nominated be submitted to the Branches."

The President mentioned the result of his inquiries concerning the "Liberty of Bequest Bill," and explained to the meeting the condition of things at Hull. He also gave an outline of his plans, and assured the Council of his determination to fight. Moved by Mr. Gorniot "That the Executive fully endorse the action of the President with regard to Hull, and are prepared to support him in the contest"; this was seconded by Mr. Bater, and carried unanimously.

Mr. R. O. Smith thought the attendance at the Executive meetings was being lessened in consequence of the meetings being held on the same evenings as the weekly lectures, viz., Wednesdays; and moved (seconded by Mr. Hunt) that future meetings be held on Thursdays. After some discussion this was withdrawn and notice of motion given in its place.

Mr. Samson drew attention to the list of lecturers issued by the London Ethical Society and the offer to send out lecturers. Several questions were asked, and it was resolved to place the list before the Organisation Committee.

E. M. VANCE, Asst. Sec.

ACID DROPS.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is too wily for some of his flock. Having been asked to issue a form of prayer against Home Rule, he referred his correspondent to one of the Church collects which was quite suitable. But it only beseeches Jehovah to let godliness prevail, and what the correspondent wants is the triumph of Unionism. The Archbishop and Bishops of the Protestant Church of Ireland, however, have risen to the occasion, and have issued a special form of prayer to be used in the churches. But will it have any influence on the course of events? We guess not. Mr. Gladstone is a pious Christian, who believes in the efficacy of prayer; but then it is a game which two sides can play at; so the G. O. M. winks the other eye.

Bethshan Hall, Highbury, is the rendezvous of the faith-healing cranks. Two of these, it appears, have been the victims of a burglary. Mr. Paterson, the male victim, on receiving a telegram, simply shouted "Hallelujah!" Miss Murray, the other victim, said, "I am not sorry to have my possessions lessened somewhat; it makes one lighter for our upward call." This lady should get rid of *all* her possessions; no doubt she would then go up like a balloon.

What a lot of humbug and hypocrisy there is among Christians, and especially among sky-pilots! A beautiful illustration may be seen in connexion with Spurgeon's Tabernacle. There is a division in the establishment as to who should succeed the famous preacher, one section favoring Dr. Pierson, and the other the Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, one of the late oracle's sons. Dr. Pierson is not a Baptist, so he cannot become the permanent pastor; but, says the *Christian Commonwealth*, the report that he "intends to be immersed is steadily gaining ground." Young Spurgeon, on the other hand, who is out in New Zealand, has only undertaken a three months' fresh engagement there. "He is evidently waiting," says the *Sword and Trowel*, "as we are, to ascertain the will of the Lord concerning his future movements." Such is the pious way of saying that it remains to be seen whether Dr. Pierson or Thomas Spurgeon will win in the struggle for the Tabernacle pastorate.

Christian evidences are disappearing one by one, like Arab tents folded up in the morning for a fresh day's march. The very Golden Rule itself is going. Freethinkers have said it was not original, having been taught by Confucius, and indeed (in some form or other) by nearly every great moralist of antiquity. They have also argued that the Rule, although it expresses a good sentiment, is not a safe rule of practice. But the Rev. Dr. W. T. Moore goes still farther. Preaching recently at Northampton, he declared that the Golden Rule "is not Christianity at all; it is only ethical Judaism." "There is no Christ in it," he said; and then he exclaimed, amidst laughter, "Golden Rule, gentlemen! Golden, Golden! Gentlemen, it's not even pewter." Poor old Golden Rule!

Dr. Moore preached another sermon on Christianity, in relation to the *Daily Chronicle* discussion. According to the report, he was very eloquent and forcible, and "Mr. Robert Buchanan and gentlemen of his persuasion had a bad time." Indeed! They were not there to have it. Had they been present, and allowed to reply, Dr. Moore might have had the "bad time."

Here is a cutting from an American paper:—"The Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal church will hold an auction social at Union Hall on Tuesday evening, Jan. 17. Forty beautiful ladies will be sold at auction, and the gentleman who bids the highest will escort to partake of a sumptuous repast, which will be prepared for the occasion. One of the most enjoyable times of the season is anticipated."

These are nice little capers. We commend this matter to the attention of the *Methodist Times*. The "anti-infidel" papers might also give it a corner.

Countess Tolstoy's brother, Mr. Behrs, in some "Recollections of Count Leo Tolstoy," says his brother-in-law is thoroughly honest, and lives up to his ascetic Christianity, but his former gaiety of temper has entirely disappeared. Hardly anything makes him laugh. But this is thoroughly

Christ-like. Jesus wept, but who ever saw him smile? The fact is, these fanatical gentlemen who found religions and sects are never humorists. The least sense of fun would save them, and the world after them, a great many mistakes. Persons who cannot laugh have lost all sense of proportion.

In Glasgow, a city of seven hundred thousand people, you cannot get a newspaper or any other necessary article on Sunday. But you can see more drunkenness, more ruffianism, more brutal disorder Saturday and Sunday nights than among any other equal number of people in this world. We were three months in the great city of Paris, with its two millions of people, where the Exposition was opened every Sunday, and newspaper and other useful avocations go on on the streets Sunday, the same as any other day. Yet in the three months in Paris we saw but one intoxicated man, and he didn't look like a Frenchman. In the three hours of a Sunday in Glasgow we saw more drunkenness and ruffianism, of both men and women, than we thought existed on this globe.—*Gate City* (Keokuk, Iowa).

The presents for his jubilee and birthday have enormously added to the wealth of the Pope. If he has not J. C.'s "pearl of great price," he has at least one worth five thousand pounds. Jewelry, like this, is indeed bought with a price, the payment being the poverty and drudgery of credulous Catholics.

Go where you will, you find the same evidences of religion. The priests living in mansions, and their most devoted followers in cheap tenements or poor cottages. The church is gorgeous and grand; the home squalid and poor. This is the result of religion that proclaims "Blessed be ye poor."

The clericals are kicking up a fuss at the threatened disestablishment of the Church in Wales, and are rallying all their forces to the defence. They are now swearing that Wales is an integral portion of the Anglican Church. When disestablishment is an accomplished fact they will protest there is no connexion and the disendowment of the one Church is no precedent for the other.

What fun it is, too, to see Church of England clergymen sticking up for the establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland, regardless that their arguments would tell for the establishment of Catholicism in Ireland and Methodism in Wales.

Baxter always trots out his coming end of the world bogie towards Easter. This week he is having a preliminary conference at the Memorial Hall, where a fine collection of cranks have been on view.

Light endorses the Theosophists so far as to say the end of the century will see a great recrudescence of psychical phenomena. An instance has just occurred at Broughty Ferry, Forfarshire, where a spook has for some time past scared the servant girls. A Freethinking youth, who has had some experience of physical phenomena in his training in the art of self-defence, got some of the servants to dress him up, waited for the ghost, and went for him when he appeared. The ghost was "laid" after a few stirring rounds.

The *Methodist Times* is down upon the Government's Temperance Bill. "Her Majesty's Government," it says, "have thrown away one of the greatest temperance opportunities which Divine Providence ever gave to statesmen." Poor old Providence! Men do just what they like with him, and he seems able to do nothing for himself.

Hugh Price Hughes is a Prohibitionist! He belongs to the strait-waistcoat school of reformers: Everything should be handed over to the policeman. Surely it is an ignominious position for a Christian minister to take up after boasting so much of the "moral and spiritual triumphs" of his religion: But this reflection is lost upon Mr. Hughes. At the present moment he is perfectly rabid! He complains that under the new Bill there is "no interference whatever with the sale of liquor at railway refreshment bars, eating houses, and hotels." Sad, very sad! Perhaps it would be best to station a Methodist minister at all these places, with power to examine people on oath, and stomach-pumps to ascertain if applicants for a glass of sherry or a half of bitter have any traces of

liquor in their abdominal regions: Or perhaps it would be well for everyone who wishes to drink a glass occasionally to take out a license from the Methodist Church:

Mr. Hughes calls Local Option a "miserable retrograde proposal." When it was previously brought before the House of Commons its tellers were "Mr. Labouchere and the late Mr. Bradlaugh." The Government is therefore accused of "sacrificing the deep convictions of the Christian and humanitarian section of their supporters to the cynical and secular wing of the Liberal party." Cynical and secular is good, only it means nothing. Mr. Hughes is one of those who regard every man as a cynic if he takes the trouble to reason. He is a mere sentimentalist. And just as cowards are prone to be cruel, so sentimentalists are prone to be mischievous. Sooner or later they have to be tied up by their more rational fellow citizens.

Historic Winchester is to blaze with festivity at Easter, when the cathedral will be 800 years old. Grand sacred concerts will be given, but you must subscribe a guinea to gain admission. The cathedrals are part of the nation's property. We do not object to their being turned into concert halls. But we do not see why this should be done exclusively for the benefit of the rich.

Mr. W. T. Stead is coming out as a full-fledged Spiritualist. Next Tuesday he gives details of his psychical experiences to the members of the London Spiritualist Alliance. None but those fully initiated into the mysteries of modern necromancy will be admitted, so he may be sure of a sympathetic audience.

Instances of divine Providence crowd the papers. Floods in Guatemala have swept away six villages and drowned hundreds of persons. In Canton unprecedented cold has destroyed all vegetation, and the very fish in the fish-ponds. Upwards of three hundred houseless beggars have perished from cold. In Russia the renewed cholera epidemic is severe and widespread.

A Bible League has been formed with a view of defending the inspiration of the old book and finding berths for a few disengaged sky-pilots. At a two days' conference at Rochester, the Rev. J. Urquhart, editor of *Word and Work*, one of the promoters of the league, lamented that "many inside the Church of Christ had taken up the testimony of the infidels. People in high position were taking up the work of Charles Bradlaugh. The result was the Churches were disorganised. Twenty years ago they presented an unbroken front to the infidels, but to-day they did not." However, the Bible League is going to face the situation, and bring back the good old days when the Bible was unquestioned. It has some work before it.

The late Bishop Wordsworth, of St. Andrews, left personalty to the value of £21,000. Not much for a Scotch bishop; still pretty fair for a follower of the poor carpenter.

The *Daily News* reports that one day last week a friar was holding forth in the Church of Jesus at Rome, on Secular education. He declared in aggressive tones that owing to Secular education, the present age is conspicuous beyond all others for the looseness of its morals. This was more than one of the congregation could stand. "How about the time of Pope Borgia?" he shouted. His name and address were taken, and a summons applied for. He will probably be punished, but the Roman people will not soon forget his question, "How about the time of Pope Borgia?"

At Myddleton Hall, Islington, some Catholic priests have been advancing the claims of their church, and actually allowing opponents a five minutes speech. What a changed attitude! One of the lectures was by Father Vaughan, a nephew of a Cardinal of that name. He addressed himself to the task of proving the existence of God. Mr. Guest, of the Islington Branch, invited him to debate the subject with Mr. Foote, but the priest was not to be caught. He excused himself by saying he had received "so many challenges" that he must decline to accept any.

For all the suave manner of these priests, they could not prevent the talons peeping out. One referred to the *Church Times* as notorious for its cheek, presumption and lies, and as to those who could not see the truth of his arguments,

"why, turn them out," said he with undisguised bitterness. Some collisions occurred with the Protestant element—one man retiring with a black eye—at least an eye which must have been black in the morning.

The Rev. E. Jenkins, rector of the parish of Manafoa, Montgomeryshire, has been fined £1 and costs at Welshpool for an assault on a police-constable, whose face was covered with scars.

The Rev. O. Cookson, vicar of Holbeck, Leeds, has made a composition with his creditors, who accepted 2s. 6d. in the pound. His liabilities are said to be £1,600.

The following amusing sample of cheek is found in the *Sydney Bulletin*. It is characteristic enough to be genuine. "A young Christian man, non-smoker and abstainer, wishes accommodation where his society will be considered equivalent to his lodging."

The *Church Times* has found the best way of keeping Lent. It is to make Lenten offerings to the Church and clergy.

Under the heading "How to Keep Lent" a well-known American caterer advertises all kinds of piscatorial and other delicacies of the most tempting description in the Transatlantic papers. A "full line of cheese" is mentioned among other toothsome compromises by means of which the letter of the spiritual law may be obeyed. Washington society enjoys Lenten lunches, dinners, and even theatre parties, but insists that the ladies who attend them shall wear penitential colors—another form of compromise.

Dr. A. K. H. Boyd, in *Longman's*, tells of a Scotch rustic who, when he brought his child to be baptised, was catechised by the parish minister, "But how do you know there is a God?" This might have been a poser to the sky-pilot himself, but the father answered, "It's the clash o' the kintra," or the common talk of the people. We guess few could give any better reply.

Professor Virchow's visit to England has stirred up the orthodox zeal of the *Methodist Times*, which first calls him "by far the most celebrated of German scientists," and then goes on to cite him as an authority against Darwinism. It would be more to the purpose if he could be cited in favor of the old rib-story in the book of Genesis. Even as against Darwinism he is not a crushing authority. He belongs to an old school, like Sir Richard Owen in England. Wonderful anatomist as he was, Sir Richard Owen did not prevent the triumph of Darwinism in England, nor is Professor Virchow able to prevent it in Germany.

George Eliot, the great novelist, was a Freethinker. She also ran counter to orthodox proprieties by allying her life with that of George Henry Lewes, whose legal wife had left him and his children, and left them for ever. No priest blessed their union, and of course it was not even notified to the registrar. But George Henry Lewes and Marian Evans were true man and wife, according to any rational view of marriage, and their union was one of mutual encouragement and helpfulness in all good work. At first they were severely boycotted, but when George Eliot became famous as a great writer the most "respectable" society was proud of the honor of being invited to her "at homes."

Since her death many a little pulpiteer has had his say against this "wicked," or, as they sometimes phrase it, this "abandoned" woman. Here, for instance, is the Rev. R. McOheyne Edgar, in a recent volume of discourses, declaring of George Eliot—"It is time, I think, that the moralising of such an individual, whether in novel or in essay, should be discounted and set down at its exact worth." Well, we don't think minister Edgar is capable of settling George Eliot in this or in any other way. Her writings will quicken the seeds of truth and goodness in thousands of minds long after minister Edgar's discourses have sunk into oblivion.

Mr. Hurst, a London merchant, married his deceased wife's sister. Thereupon his parson, backed up by the Bishop of London, treated him as "a notorious evil liver" and refused to give him the Communion. Still, the parson came in due course and demanded 8s. 11d. tithes due to the

Church of St. John the Evangelist. Mr. Hurst refused to pay, but the parson went to law and made him shell out. He can't have the body and blood of Christ, but the "notorious evil liver's" cash is extorted to maintain the gospel-shop where other folk obtain those articles.

In the early days of the "Salvation" movement, when the "music" was supplied by street players, one of these men played a cornet solo greatly to the satisfaction of the captain, who greeted him with the usual salutation, "Hallelujah, comrade, Jesus is in your instrument." "I know he is, cap'n," replied the man with a solemn air, "and I'll blow the beggar out if I can."

The *Athenæum* of March 4 notices a disgusting relic which used to be kept in Exeter Cathedral. A certain Grace Harris was hanged for murdering her infant. Instead of the criminal's body being buried, the skeleton was articulated and exhibited as a show in a chapel at the east end of the south aisle. The right hand, with which she cut her infant's throat, was dried and entire. How long this hideous object was permitted to disgrace the cathedral is not known. It was there in 1797.

Mr. Waugh and the Bishop of Chester are singularly unfortunate. These two gentlemen, a couple of years ago, publicly declared that the worst ill-users of children were working-class Secularists. They were challenged to prove their assertion, but they took refuge in a "dignified silence." Since then the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, on whose behalf they were speaking, has brought some shocking cases before the magistrates, and in no single case that we are aware of has the culprit been a Secularist. Some of them, however, have been devout Christians. Mrs. Montagu, for instance, killed her child while "correcting" it for the "good of its soul." And now we have a similar case of pious correction at Pershore, though it did not go to the length of manslaughter. It is reported at great length in the *Worcester Daily Times*, and our readers shall have a full account of it, which they may keep by them for future use against the slanderous devotees of "Christian charity."

Laura Dowty, wife of William Dowty, chemist, Holy Cross, was prosecuted at the instance of Henry Jones, Inspector of the Worcester Branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, on a charge of ill-treating her servant girl, Edith Ladbrooke, under sixteen years of age. Considerable interest was taken in the case, and a crowd of women gathered outside the court, who greeted Mrs. Dowty with groans. Edith Ladbrooke deposed that she had been in Mrs. Dowty's service for months without wages, receiving only board, lodging, and clothes. After Christmas she was to receive fourteen pence a week; she received it for about three weeks, but since then it had all been taken away in fines. She had been beaten with a strap, struck in the mouth, made to stand barefoot on damp stones while she cleaned seven pairs of boots, tied to the bedpost and thrashed, made to sit in a tub in the scullery in December while seven buckets of water were poured over her, and kept without food on four different days. She had been knocked down and kicked, and her face bled through being scratched against the pins in her mistress's bodice. Mrs. Dowty said she would cure her, and got a lump of salt and rubbed it into her wounds. All this is bad enough, but the worst is to come. On January 31 she forgot to fill the boiler; for this offence Mrs. Dowty burnt her left arm with hot curling irons, Mr. Dowty holding her during the operation.

Mr. T. P. Gostling, surgeon, said he examined Edith Ladbrooke on February 10. He found two scars on her left arm, one an inch and a half and the other three-quarters of an inch. They might have been caused by a hot iron; if so, he thought the iron must have been used at red heat. There was a bruise at the back of the head and another on the elbow. They might have been caused by a kick.

Miss Elizabeth Kerr, a friend of Mrs. Dowty's, said the girl had been well treated; but she admitted on cross-examination that she did not think it particularly cruel to burn a girl's arm.

Mrs. Dowty herself next gave evidence. She is the daughter of a Wesleyan local preacher. She denied nearly

all the girl's allegations. But the scars could not be sworn away, so she admitted that she had used the curling irons, only they were not very hot, and she merely "touched" the girl's arm. The fact was, the girl told untruths, and this is what follows in the *Daily Times* report:—"Witness asked her whether she knew if she told untruths she would be burnt in a lake of fire, and whether if she felt what burning was like she would tell a lie again. Witness then said that if it occurred again, she must let her feel a burn or send her away."

Counsel for Mrs. Dowty wisely appealed to have the case dealt with summarily. His client was in a delicate state of health, and had acted conscientiously. It was not for them to condemn the religious opinions a woman might hold, however much they might deplore that such opinions existed. Upon this the Bench retired, and on returning to court found that cruelty had been exercised, and fined Mrs. Dowty the mitigated penalty of £20 and £5 5s. costs. Her precious husband was bound over to be of good behavior.

Here you have a woman guilty of the most diabolical cruelty to a poor girl, and defending her conduct on grounds of religion. We commend this case, as we have commended others, to the attention of Mr. Waugh and the Bishop of Chester. Let them either admit that they were mistaken, or be branded as infamous slanderers.

We have also a word to Christians in general. It appears to us that Mrs. Dowty is both orthodox and logical. She burnt her servant to teach her that hell was very unpleasant, and if there be a hell, it was a most practical lesson in theology. And if there be a God who made hell, and will burn his own children in it, Mrs. Dowty was only trying to be perfect even as her Father in heaven is perfect.

The Rev. J. P. Bacon-Phillips, rector of Crowhurst, Sussex, writes to the *London Echo* on the subject of School Board Theology. He rejoices that "Christianity and not Unitarianism" is to be "taught in the London schools." "As the vast majority of electors are Christian," he says, "they have a right to say that the Christian religion shall be taught." But this is not good logic. No one denies that Christians have a right to see their children taught Christianity. This, however, is not the question at issue. The question is, Should their children be taught it by lay teachers paid out of the public funds—that is, out of the money of Jews, Deists, Secularists, Agnostics, and Atheists? Mr. Brooks-Phillips should discuss this question, and not assume an answer which favors his own views and interests.

Mr. Brooks-Phillips imagines that "the tiny minority of children of non-Christians could take advantage of the conscience clause, if they were so disposed." Oh yes! But we should like to see Church people's children in this predicament. There is something inexpressibly mean in throwing the odium of the conscience clause on children who feel the martyrdom without understanding why they suffer.

OBITUARY.

Died, on Feb. 28, Ada, the beloved wife of Mr. James Rowney, a prominent and well-known London worker. The funeral, which was a silent one, took place at Abney Park Cemetery, several Freethought friends attending to testify their respect.

M. Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, who died at Paris last Sunday (March 5), in his 64th year, occupied a distinguished position in the world of letters, both as literary critic and philosopher. In this country he was chiefly known by his *Notes on England*, and especially his standard *History of English Literature*, which applied to that history much of the method of Buckle, tracing the source of its greatness in the ancestry and environment of its producers. His Freethought led Bishop Dupanloup to a violent attack when, in 1864, he was appointed Professor of the History of Art at the Ecole des Beaux Arts; and on this account he was long kept out of the Academy, to which he was elected in 1878. His most profound philosophical work is *De l'Intelligence*, in which he analyses the whole mechanism of the mind. M. Taine shared with M. Renan the art of making scientific criticism interesting.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 12, Coliseum, Leeds; at 3, "Liberty and Law: their Claims and Conflicts."
 Thursday, March 16, Hammersmith Club, 1 The Broadway, Hammersmith, at 8, "The Doom of the Gods."
 March 19, Hall of Science; 26, Manchester; 27, Wolverhampton.
 April 2 and 9, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHAS. WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—March 12, Hall of Science; 19, Bristol; 26, 27 and 28, Glasgow. April 2 and 9, Birmingham; 16 and 23, Hall of Science, London; 30, Bolton. 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.

W. T. LEEKEY.—Thanks. How Jahveh must smile at the frantic fanaticism of his followers.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND:—Pte. Knight (Lucknow), 7s. 9d.

W. W.—It is not easy to give unquestionable statistics of religion, since they are only arrived at by treating all the inhabitants as of the prevailing faith. The Chinese are often classed indifferently as Confucians and Buddhists. The Roman Catholics claim two hundred millions, but only get these figures by including the population of France, Italy, Spain, etc., where Freethinkers abound. The English Church claims about thirty million, and other Protestant sects some seventy-five millions. There are probably nearly ten million Jews, whose numbers often help to swell the Christian list. It is quite safe to say that not a quarter of the world's inhabitants are even nominally Christian.

H. BALCK.—The suggestion has already been made of printing two editions of the *Freethinker*, one at a penny and the other at twopence, on different colored papers. There are, however, some serious objections to the proposal. For the present, at any rate, we intend to go on with our monthly specials. Those who desire to help us might take extra copies of the twopenny special numbers, and circulate them among their friends. Being illustrated, these numbers are more likely to attract attention.

R. DAVIES.—Cancelled as desired.

A. WHEELER.—See paragraph.

C. LEWIS.—We are obliged. See "Sugar Plums."

J. M. HEADLEY.—(1) Mr. Nash was incorrect in what he said of Thomas Paine at the Yarmouth Liberal and Radical Club. Paine did not die a drunkard; it is a Christian calumny. He was deserted by some of his orthodox friends, but that was on account of his Freethought. (2) Other matter shall be dealt with in our next.

OBSERVER.—We want Christian newsagents to display *Freethinker* bills, and don't see how we can complain if a Freethought newsagent displays a Christian bill. Perhaps you will agree with us on second thoughts.

A. TRIPP.—You forgot to send your name with the subscription. It is acknowledged this week.

S. H. ALISON.—See paragraph.

H. JOHNSON.—Thanks; next week.

J. D. STUART.—A similar joke has appeared.

THE HULL FUND.—J. Garvon, 1s.; Mr. Simpson, 5s.; E. Steel, 1s.; H. T., 1s.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY.—A. Tripp, 5s.

A. B. WAKEFIELD (Hipperholm) says he has received the bronze bust of Mr. Bradlaugh from Mr. Gott, of Bradford, for being the largest purchaser of the "Bruno cloth." He thinks Mr. Gott cannot receive too much support from his fellow Freethinkers.

E. T.—When we say "Christianity did" so and so, we mean that it was done by Christians, systematically and for a long while, and defended by them as agreeable to their faith. Whether it was so, it was for them to decide. We do not enter into their domestic quarrels.

R. GARNELL.—We did not keep the letter. Perhaps you will send us another copy.

W. T. GRIFFITHS.—Under consideration. We noticed the *Standard* cutting some weeks ago.

A. JOHNSON.—Subscriptions for the Hull Fund should be sent to Mr. Foote direct.

T. MAY.—May find room in our next.

RON MAHON.—Shall appear.

G. J. WARREN.—Will deal with it next week.

A. DAY.—We never heard of any Secular hall there.

J. WADDINGTON, newsagent, 4 Crown-street, Manchester, S.W., offers to deliver Freethought publications to order, to any address in Hulme, Manchester and Salford.

Mr. Foote's visit to Hull, and late return to London, causes a good deal of correspondence to stand over till next week. CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Echo—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—La Raison—Lucifer—Secular Thought—Printer's Ink—Natural Food—The Post—St. Pancras Guardian—Spinning Wheel—Echo—Hong Kong Telegraph—Lamp—Pall Mall Gazette—Daily News—Labor Prophet—South Wales Daily Post—Essex Courier—Chatham and Rochester Observer—Leeds Evening Express—Modern Thought—Islington Gazette—Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News—Nantwich Chronicle.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. It being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

The *Freethinker* (including the twopenny special number for the first week in each month) will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 7s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 9d.; Three Months, 1s. 10½d.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (March 12) for the Leeds Sunday Lecture Society in the Coliseum. Councillor Charles H. Wilson takes the chair. The lecture begins at 3 in the afternoon. The subject is "Liberty and Law; their Claims and Conflicts." As it is just possible that so pronounced a sceptic as Mr. Foote may frighten away a few who would hear another lecturer, we hope the Freethinkers of the district will more than make good any such defection by their own attendance.

The *Weekly Notes* issued by the Leeds Sunday Lecture Society writes as follows on the subject of Mr. Foote's visit:—"The editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society is one whose name on the list of the Leeds Sunday Lecture Society's second course may shock and alarm some of our good friends and sympathisers. His life has been a fighting one, and his words have not been veiled. Some of us may strongly differ with his opinions, and perhaps still more with some of his methods of propaganda; but let us remember he has been willing to suffer by imprisonment for his principles what his persecutors, perhaps, would not have suffered for theirs; and has fought bravely for freedom of thought, of speech, and of the press. A man with a mind of his own, and who is not frightened of expressing it, is worth listening to; and if we stand at the opposite pole of thought, either socially or religiously, all the more reason we should hear him. It is not a sign of strength or of courage either to persecute or to run away."

This week's *Freethinker* will be in our London readers' hands before Friday evening (March 10), when the friendly discussion takes place at the Hall of Science between Mr. Foote and the Rev. O. Fleming Williams. Admission is free, and there is likely to be a crush, so that those who want seats, especially ladies, should make a point of coming early.

Mr. Charles Watts' four lectures in Sheffield last week were in every particular a great success. Nearly a thousand persons assembled in the Vestry Hall each evening, and the utmost enthusiasm was manifested throughout the entire proceedings. No representative of the local Christian Evidence Society put in an appearance, but several opponents gave their own views of Christianity in a very gentlemanly manner. Their opposition, however, was of the personal experience meeting style. One speaker insisted that Christianity was true because he was "converted from a very wicked life in the middle of the night." We are informed that the Sheffield friends are very much gratified with the results of Mr. Watts' visit.

Last Sunday Mr. Watts lectured twice in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. A good audience assembled in the evening, when Mr. Daniel Baker presided. This was the seventy-eighth birthday of the veteran, and the audience passed a

hearty vote congratulating Mr. Baker upon his age and the valuable services he has rendered to the Secular cause. There was a great demand for the special number of the *Freethinker*, and although extra copies were on hand, every one was sold, and much praise was bestowed upon its "splendid appearance." To-day (March 12) Mr. Watts lectures, morning and evening, at the Hall of Science, London.

On Monday last, at the West London Branch meeting, Mr. Henley (secretary) tendered his resignation, which was accepted with regret. Mr. F. Todd, of 59 Tunis-road, Shepherd's Bush, W., was unanimously elected in his place. Secretaries and lecturers are requested to note this.

The bust on Mr. Bradlaugh's grave at Woking was unveiled on Sunday last without any other ceremony than the laying of flowers on his grave. The *Star* reports that about 150 admirers were present, including Mr. Verheyden, the sculptor, Mr. E. Truelove, and Mr. George Anderson.

Senors Esquerdo, Salmeron, Pi y-Margal, and Zorrilla, the Republican deputies who have come to the front at the Spanish elections, are all well-known Freethinkers. Should the Republic return, as is not unlikely, the days of Church supremacy in Spain will be numbered.

Colonel Ingersoll's recent Sunday evening discourse on Abraham Lincoln drew a big audience to the Broadway Theatre, New York. Every seat was filled, all the standing room was occupied, the stage was crowded, and hundreds were turned away from the doors. This oration lasted an hour and a half and was listened to with rapt attention. We are printing it in pamphlet form, and hope to have it on sale next week.

Next Sunday Mr. Cohen pays his first visit to Manchester, lecturing morning, afternoon, and evening. We hope the Manchester friends will try a taste of his quality.

The *Nantwich Chronicle*, under the title "A Hero's Record," devotes nearly a column to the death of Mr. Wm. James, engine driver of Crewe, a Freethinker, whose obituary was briefly given in our column last week. Mr. James on one occasion had his ribs battered in, after reversing his engine, in an unavoidable railway collision. When ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have jumped off he kept to his post and saved the lives of his passengers. Mr. James was an Atheist and had the words *Nescio Deos* (I know not God) put on his coffin-lid. The *Chronicle* reports the words spoken by Mr. Charles Lewis over his friend's coffin.

Next Sunday, at 7 p.m., the members of the Finsbury Park Branch meet at Mr. Ward's, 91 Mildmay Park, for the transaction of important business.

The *Independent Pulpit* of Texas is now ten years old, its first number being issued March 1883. It is a live cultured Freethought magazine, and we hope it will yet reward Mr. J. D. Shaw, who has experienced much trouble with its rearing.

Mr. Foote's benefit lecture for the Battersea Branch drew an excellent audience to Chatham Hall, and all his strongest points were enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Fisher, who took the chair, repeatedly invited opposition, but all he could elicit was a few questions. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the lecturer.

Next Thursday Mr. Foote delivers a free lecture on behalf of the London Secular Federation, at the hall of the Hammersmith Club, 1 The Broadway, his subject being "The Doom of the Gods." Friends in West London, Shepherd's Bush and Hammersmith should attend and bring their Christian friends with them.

The Bristol Branch celebrates its first anniversary on Monday next, at 7 p.m., with a Tea and Social gathering at Mr. Parker's, Bridge-street. Tickets, 10d. each, may be had from Mr. W. Harvey, Lower Arcade, or J. Keast, secretary, 32 Morgan-street, St. Paul's. After a brief career the Branch has over sixty sound workers for Freethought, and, with the secretary, we trust another year's work will greatly increase the number.

Mr. James M. Walker, secretary of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch, asks us to call attention to the meeting of members held this Sunday, as well as to the lecture by Mr. Mitchell, the latest recruit to the Newcastle Freethought platform.

On Tuesday evening Mr. Cohen lectures in the Athenæum, Queen-street, Wolverhampton, on "The Fate of Supernatural Religion." Admission free. As this is a new venture to have week-night lectures, we trust the Branch will be supported.

We are pleased to notice that Mr. Joseph Spencer Ellis, of Toronto, editor of *Secular Thought*, has been carrying Freethought into Winnipeg and other of the back parts of Canada. There, as elsewhere, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers few.

Professor Huxley was once sitting at dinner beside a lady who, in impassioned tones, asked him whether he did not think it a very terrible thing that Rev. Mr. Jones, the vicar, should have adopted the eastward position in administering the sacrament. "My dear lady," he replied, "I am told by Sir John Herschel that to drop a pea at the end of every mile of a voyage on a limitless ocean to the distance of the nearest fixed star would require a fleet of 10,000 ships, each of 600 tons burden, all starting with a full cargo of peas. Now, do you really suppose that the maker of the fixed stars considers this new position of Mr. Jones a serious thing?"

Mr. S. H. Alison, who has applied for a special lecturer's diploma, is to occupy the London Hall of Science platform next Wednesday evening (March 15). His subject is a lively one, "His Satanic Majesty." Members of the Executive, as well as others, should go to hear him.

The Finsbury Branch's concert in aid of the funds of the London Secular Federation was a great success. This Branch will hold its annual concert at the Hall, as usual, on Good Friday, on the principle of the better the day the better the deed.

The Lambeth Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday. Mr. V. Roger was re-elected president, Mr. H. Rowden secretary, and Mr. C. Pattison corresponding secretary. It was decided to commence the open-air work on the first Sunday in May at Kennington Green, near the Vestry Hall. The Branch begins the new year with a small balance in hand, but it will need all the support it can obtain from the local Freethinkers.

Mr. James Anderson, the manager of the London Hall of Science Club, has undertaken to organise an Athletic Club in connexion therewith. A first meeting of intending members is to be held at the Hall on Monday, March 13, at 9 p.m. Mr. Anderson thinks that Freethinking cyclists, for instance, might be very effective propagandists if they circulated our literature on their rides.

The members of the Leeds Branch have arranged for a tea on Sunday afternoon (March 12) at the New Waverley Hotel, Call-lane, for friends and visitors from other Branches. Tea on table at 5 o'clock. At the close of Mr. Foote's lecture the friends will meet under the colonnade of the Coliseum. At 6.30 the Leeds Branch holds its annual meeting in the Waverley Hall, New York-street, Kirkgate. Important business has to be discussed. Mr. Foote has been invited to attend, but is sorry to say he cannot, having to return to London in the evening for an unavoidable engagement on Monday morning.

A FACT.—At Rye, in Sussex, some time ago the Wesleyans held a grand bazaar, and the opening hymn was printed on the programs. The verse contained a printer's error, and the good people were shocked to read:

Come let us join our cheerful songs,
With angels round the throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are gone.

Husband (to wife, home from church)—"Service interesting this morning, my dear?" Wife—"Not particularly so. Mrs. Carlton-Pell's baby was baptised, and they say its baptismal robe of lace cost £50. I think there is such a thing as being too religious."

PAGANISM.

WHAT is Paganism? Since the days when we attended a Methodist Sunday-school, and read the illustrated missionary tracts, we have been unable to disabuse our minds altogether of the notion that "pagans" were those unfortunates who lived in lands where the only clothing necessary was a dark skin, which served all the useful as well as the æsthetic purposes of a sealskin sacque and a chemisette. But we have latterly come to the conclusion that we, as well as our Christian friends, even when wrapped up as a temperature 20 or 30 below zero necessitates, might fairly, not only be without shame if we owned to being pagans, but might reasonably be rather proud of the appellation, and we are rather confirmed in our opinion when we find an English lawyer, Mr. R. C. Carton, Q.C., bewailing the spread of Paganism among the English poets. What is Paganism? Well, according to Mr. Carton, and the orthodox crowd who think with him, all is Pagan that does not fit in accurately with the dogmas of orthodox Christianity. And well may they bewail the spread of Paganism among the poets. It is impossible to blink the fact that the day has gone—gone forever, we hope—when new hymns could be written after the style of:—

There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must for ever dwell
In darkness, fear and chains,

and meet with the approval of any large section of the church. Even hymns like—

Washed in the blood of the Lamb

have become popular, we believe, rather on account of the sing-song tune and chorus attached to them, than from an appreciation of the sentiment involved in them.

But it is undoubtedly true that, among the large number of poets who to-day are filling the pages of all classes of our literature with evidences of a widely-spread, if not a very high-class literary culture, the majority are distinctively non-Christian and humanitarian; not, perhaps, aggressively anti-Christian, like Byron and Shelley, but simply natural and human; a reference to some idea of deity being generally dragged in as a sort of sop to Cerberus. This modern world of ours, indeed, is perhaps to-day showing more true signs of recovering from the dreadful nightmare which, under the name of Christianity, has afflicted it for so many generations with every form of physical and mental horror, than have been seen at any former period. And, as might have been expected, the poet—the man of genius whose mental acuteness enables him to see two grains of wisdom in every word where the commoner mortal only sees one, or none at all; whose double eyesight shows him visions of goodness where we duller mortals discern but a mere work-a-day piece of business—the poet, we say, is among the first to catch and to interpret the stray gleams of that scintillating, but soon to be a steady and a brightly gleaming light, which is coming to chase away the shadows of the gruesome night, whose departure we ourselves are hastening to the best of our ability.

Apart from the poets of real genius, as Tennyson and Longfellow, Whittier and Whitman, whose works have marked the age now passing away as distinctly an age of advancing mental freedom and of good-will to man, the works of even Moody and Sankey, Lowry, etc., serve, by their very popularity, to show the change that has taken place among the mass of professed Christians. They have begun to see the absurdity of creed hatreds, to feel the need for promoting the idea of the brotherhood of man. They may not have the genius that would make them cry with Tennyson—

What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so well?

Infinite wickedness rather, that made everlasting hell,—
Made us, foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what he will with his own;

Better our dead brute mother, who never has heard us groan.

But they do not trouble us with verses like—

But vengeance and damnation lie
On rebels who refuse his grace;
Who God's eternal Son despise,
The hottest hell shall be their place.

They still may ask the children as well as the parents to sing—

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God.

But they are becoming imbued with the advancing tide of knowledge which also induces them to cry,—still under the false notion that unbelief is a bad or distressing thing,—

Free from the load of fear and grief
Man fashioned in an ignorant age;
Free from the ache of unbelief
He fled to in rebellious rage.
No church can bind him to the things
That fed the first crude souls evolved,
But, mounting up on daring wings,
He questions mysteries long unsolved.

Above the chant of priests, above
The blatant tongue of braying doubt,
He hears the still small voice of Love,
Which sends its simple message out.
And dearer, sweeter, day by day,
Its mandate echoes from the skies:
"Go roll the stone of self away,
And let the Christ within thee rise."

We can forgive the "blatant tongue of braying doubt." By and bye, perhaps, "E. W. W." will be able to see the equal justice of talking about the "blatant tongue of asinine faith." Our poets have been among the first to interpret the sounds of the distant but rapidly advancing song of triumph. Some of them still talk of fighting, but their fighting—except among those of the Salvation Army and Roman Catholic stamp—has lost all connection with sword or gunpowder. The poets are becoming Pagans. They are losing their Christianity. They will, we believe, before long give us some songs that men can sing without feeling like savages.

—*Secular Thought.* J. SPENCER ELLIS.

INGERSOLL DEDICATES A THEATRE.

IN the last number of the *Freethinker* an account was given of a new theatre, founded by an American Secularist, Philo D. Beckwith, at Dowagiac, in Michigan. The building has been dedicated by Colonel Ingersoll, whose speech on the occasion we reprint from the *Truthseeker*. He said:—

Nothing is nobler than to plant the flower of gratitude on the grave of a generous man; of one who labored for the good of all, whose hands were open and whose heart was full.

Praise for the noble dead is an inspiration for the noble living.

Loving words sow seeds of love in every gentle heart. Appreciation is the soil and climate of good and generous deeds.

We are met to-night not to pay but to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to one who lived and labored here, who was the friend of all, and who for many years was the providence of the poor. To one who left to those who knew him best the memory of countless loving deeds—the richest legacy that man can leave to man.

We are here to dedicate this monument to the stainless memory of Philo D. Beckwith, one of the kings of men.

This monument, this perfect theatre, this beautiful house of cheerfulness and joy, this home and child of all the arts, this temple where the architect the sculptor, and painter united to build and decorate a stage whereon the drama with a thousand tongues will tell the frailties and the

virtues of the human race, and music with her thrilling voice will touch the source of happy tears—this is a fitting monument to the man whose memory we honor; to one who, broadening with the years, outgrew the cruel creeds, the heartless dogmas of his time; to one who passed from superstition to science, from religion to reason, from theology to humanity, from slavery to freedom, from the shadow of fear to the blessed light of love and courage; to one who believed in intellectual hospitality, in the perfect freedom of the soul, and hated tyranny in every form with all his heart.

To one whose head and hands were in partnership constituting the firm of Intelligence and Industry, and whose heart divided the profits with his fellow men. To one who fought the battle of life alone without the aid of place or wealth, and yet grew nobler and gentler with success.

To one who tried to make a heaven here, and who believed in the blessed gospel of cheerfulness and love, of happiness and hope.

And it is fitting, too, that this monument should be adorned with the sublime faces, wrought in stone, of the immortal dead, of those who battled for the rights of man, who broke the fetters of the slave; of those who filled the minds of men with poetry, art, and light; of Voltaire, who abolished torture in France, and who did more for liberty than any other of the sons of men; of Thomas Paine, whose pen did as much as any sword to make the New World free; of Victor Hugo, who wept for those who weep; of Emerson, a worshipper of the Ideal, who filled the mind with suggestions of the perfect; of Goethe, the poet-philosopher; of Whitman, the ample, wide as the sky, author of the tenderest, the most pathetic, the sublimest poem that this continent has ever produced; of Shakespeare, the king of all; of Beethoven, the divine; of Chopin and Verdi, and of Wagner, grandest of them all, whose music satisfies the heart and brain and fills imagination's sky; of George Eliot, who wove within her brain the purple robe her genius wears; of George Sand, subtil and sincere, passionate and free, and with these, faces of those who, on the stage, have made the mimic world as real as life and death.

Beneath the loftiest monuments may be found ambition's worthless dust, while those who lived the loftiest lives are sleeping now in unknown graves.

It may be that the bravest of the brave who ever fell upon the field of ruthless war was left without a grave to slowly mingle with the land he saved.

But here and now the Man and Monument agree, and blend like sounds that meet and melt in melody—a monument for the dead—a blessing for the living—a memory of tears—a prophecy of joy.

Fortunate the people where this good man lived, for they are all his heirs—and fortunate for me that I have had the privilege of laying this little laurel leaf upon his unstained brow.

And now, speaking for those he loved—for those who represent the honored dead—I dedicate this home of mirth and song, of poetry and art, to the memory of Philo D. Beckwith, a true philosopher, a real philanthropist.

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

The nineteenth annual Children's Party took place at the Hall of Science on Wednesday, the 1st inst., and was in every way a conspicuous success. The multifarious preliminary arrangements were made by a committee appointed by the London Secular Federation. Thanks to the generosity of friends, they were able to provide liberally for their juvenile guests.

About 300 little ones gathered at the Hall, and at 6 o'clock they were provided with a substantial tea. This was followed by a formidable program of sports, including skipping-rope contests, walking-matches (warranted to strike only on the floor), battledore-shuttlecock contests, "three-legged" races, songs, instrumental performances, etc. The youngsters made the best of the good things provided for them, and kept up a never-ceasing chorus of laughter, prattling, and shrill shouting, compared to which the confusion of tongues on the Tower of Babel must have been as a Quakers' meeting. The members of the committee were busily occupied during the evening in "fixing up" the various amusements and attending to the comfort of their excessively large family. As they

walked about, communicating with one another where necessary in dumb show, their faces wore a far-away look that was infinitely pathetic.

The chief novelty of the evening was the "Mechanical Windmill," invented and produced for the distribution of toys, which crowned and concluded the feast. A huge mill—in the construction of which Mr. George Brown and Mr. J. Anderson jr. labored with diligence and ingenuity—was erected on the platform. A party of girls and boys marched down the Hall singing a verse set to the tune of "The Miller of the Dee." They then summoned "The Miller" (Mr. Geo. Ward), who jovially sang and promised to grind them out some toys if they would "raise the wind." The youngsters accordingly departed, and soon returned (to the strains of the "Marseillaise"), bearing on their shoulders bags of "corn." The three-year-old "Captain" (Master Frank Foote) then put the sails in motion by puffing lustily, and the sketch concluded with a merry chorus. The children, who had been carefully trained by Miss Vance and Mr. Ward, did their work splendidly, and the performance was loudly applauded by the paternal and maternal "gods" in the gallery. The pranks of Mr. J. Anderson jr., as the monkey "Jacko," were greatly relished by the older children. At the close of the entertainment the toys were delivered singly down a "shoot" from the mill, and every child took away some tangible memento of an exceedingly enjoyable evening.

The thanks of the young ones may be here returned vicariously—first, to those friends who generously provided the funds, and to Messrs. R. A. Cooper, Parkes, Church, Caspari, and C. Carwardine, from whom most acceptable gifts "in kind" were received; second, to those who devoted so much time and trouble to the work of organising and carrying the party to a successful issue. Foremost amongst these were Miss Vance and Mr. Ward, whose ingenuity and energy were truly inexhaustible. They were ably and actively assisted by Miss Robins, Miss Brown, Mrs. Foote, Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Standing, and other lady friends; and Messrs. Pownceby, Drew, Renn, Bater, etc. The editor would strike me with a club were I to set down here the names of all who took a more or less prominent part in the work; but we must all surely find our chief reward and gratification in the knowledge that our efforts gladdened for at least one night the hearts of three hundred little ones.

G. S.

CHILDREN'S PARTY DONATIONS.

Collected by members of Committee: Mrs. De Young, 7s. 8l.; Mrs. Staudring, 8s. 6d.; Miss M. A. Robins, £2 10s. 4d.; Mrs. Guest, 11s.; Miss A. Brown, 9s. (including 4s. from Mr. Cheese-wright); Miss E. Robin's, 6d.; Mrs. Sleigh, 4s. 6d.; Mrs. De Young (2nd), 4s. 6d.; Mrs. Nicholson, 3s. 6d.; Miss M. A. Robins (2nd), 8s. 6d.; Miss Vance, 19s.; Mr. Fox, 2s. 6d.; Miss Ward, 6s. 3d.; Mrs. O'Donoghue, 4s. 6d.; Mr. J. Searle, £1; Miss M. A. Robins (3rd), 2s. 2d. At Hall of Science: Mr. Davis, 1s.; Mr. Bailey, 1s.

Per Mr. Forder: A. J. Marriott, 2s. 6d.; B. Dundas, 1s.; J. Brockbank, 2s. 6d.; T. Bird, 2s. 6d.; Mr. McLeish, 1s.; Mrs. Thompson, 2s.; R. Gibbon, 1s.; Mrs. Marks, 5s.; Dick Edwards, 2s.; Mrs. Edwards, 2s.; Miss Edwards, 1s.; R. H. Side, 5s.; T. Bullock, 2s.; A. Watkin, 1s.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MAHATMAS AND THIBET.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue for Feb. 19 appears a paragraph to the following effect: "Madame Blavatsky placed the Mahatmas in Thibet, which happened to be one of the most unexplored parts of the world, and therefore a safe place to put things you didn't want discovered. Recent travellers, however, have told us that Thibet is dirty, ignorant, and vicious. Captain Bower stated the other evening before the Royal Geographical Society that the Buddhism of Thibet is nothing like the pure morality preached by Gautama Buddha, while the gross superstition of the multitude is 'little better than African fetishism.'"

Fortunately, however, the faith of Theosophists in adepts does not depend on what travellers may discover in parts of Thibet. In the first place, they believe adepts to have existed in the past, and that evidence for this can be found in historical records and writings on occultism. They consider Plato, Pythagoras, and others whom Secularists would laugh to scorn, to have been adepts. There is also plenty of

historical evidence that schools of occultism existed in ancient Egypt, Alexandria, and other places; and certain Greek philosophers are credited with having derived their knowledge from Egypt, India, and other parts of the East. There is plenty of evidence for the existence of what we call the "Wisdom Religion" in the past, and of schools of occultism with initiates or adepts at their head, for those who have made up their minds to treat the subject seriously and give to the records of occultism the same amount of attention that they would to other records.

Moreover, Thibet is not the only place where modern adepts are claimed to exist; it is only one of the various places. Says A. P. Sinnett in the *Occult World*, 4th ed., p. 14: "There is reason to believe that such adepts have existed in all historic ages, and there are such adepts in India at this moment or in adjacent countries. . . . They constitute a brotherhood or secret association, which ramifies all over the East, but the principal seat of which, for the present, I gather to be in Thibet. But India has not yet been deserted by the adepts, and from that country they still receive many recruits."

Again, those who are acquainted with our theosophical literature may know that we have testimony from other persons besides Blavatsky as to the existence of adepts; see, for instance, *Five Years of Theosophy*.—Yours, etc.,

H. T. EDGE, B.A., F.T.S.

19 Avenue-road, Regent's Park, N.W.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. J. Addington Symonds, the poet and historian of the Renaissance in Italy, gives in the March *Fortnightly Review* an excellent *resumé* of the great intellectual movement of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, under the title of "The New Spirit." This movement, which was truly that of early Freethought in Europe, and which was also of more significance than the much-extolled Reformation, dated from the countenance to Arabian philosophy given by the Emperor Frederick II. Mr. Symonds finds as the basis of the New Spirit "the resurgence of personality in the realm of thought." Curiosity led to the revival of learning, and that produced criticism. Valla criticised the documents on which the Papacy founded its pretensions, and Machiavelli proclaimed that the monastic virtues of humility and obedience sapped virility and character.

* * *

Mr. Symonds remarks: "The paganism of the Renaissance may be described as moral and religious indifference; an attitude of not ungenial toleration towards believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners. In like manner, the rationalism of the Renaissance was intellectual indifference, interest in thoughts without regard for the sources whence they came or the particular shade of opinion they denoted. The naturalism of the Renaissance was sensuous indifference, an attitude of sympathetic observation towards everything in nature, without false shame or loathing, an openness of sensibility to all impressions."

* * *

The following on the conservatism of the reformers is also worth noting. "Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, differ as they might in minor details, agreed in preserving the main features of the Christian faith intact. For the authority of the Church they substituted the authority of the Bible. Less logical than the Italians, they were not conscious of the weakness of their own position. They did not surmise that their critical method must lead inevitably to Voltaire, Renan, and the science of comparative theology. Luther would have been indignant had he been told that he was playing the part of pioneer to coming Comtes and Huxleys. Yet this was the fact, and the Church in Italy perceived it. Luterano became equivalent to infidel."

* * *

Mr. Symonds also shows to what a large extent Giordano Bruno, who embodied the new spirit, anticipated, not only the philosophies of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Hegel, but also the most recent conclusions of natural science. He denied that any Paradise or Golden Age preceded human history. In his view, the fall of man from a primal state of innocence and happiness is an absurdity, contradicting all we know about the laws of growth. He sketched in outline the comparative study of religions, regarded none as final, or specially divine.

Mr. W. H. Burr, the author of *Thomas Paine: Was he Junius?* has sent us from Washington, America, a little pamphlet on Junius, Casca, Common Sense, and Thomas Paine, in which he replies to Mr. M. D. Conway's strictures on his theory that Paine was Junius. Mr. Burr contends that Paine re-visited England in 1775 to procure munitions of war for the impending revolution, and while there wrote in the *English Crisis* as "Casca." He does not make much of differences of style, which he says "was varied to suit the circumstances. Junius wielded a Damascus blade; Casca a butcher's cleaver; Common Sense a broadsword." We fancy the differences go deeper, and affect not only style but mind and character. Mr. Burr also contends that Paine's duties as excise-man gave him ample time to write the letters of Junius, and that he spent much of his time in London. We have before now expressed our dissatisfaction with Mr. Burr's theory, but there can be no doubt he states it ably, and does much to make it appear plausible.

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): 7.45, H. Snell, "Religion: the Slum and the Doss-house"; preceded by dramatic recital (2d. and 4d.); social gathering after the lecture. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free dramatic entertainment by Miss Vance's amateur dramatic company.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, W. Heaford, "Why did Christ Die?" Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, Joseph Hyder (Sec. L.N.S.), "The Why and How of Land Nationalisation."

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Forgiveness of Sins."

Finsbury Park Branch, 91 Mildmay Park: 7, important business meeting.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "A Social and Political Outlook" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Why I Left the Christian Church" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8.15, S. H. Alison, "His Satanic Majesty" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, G. W. Foote, "The Doom of the Gods" (free).

Islington—Milner Lodge, 18 Waterloo-terrace, Upper-street: 3.30, general meeting.

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, Arthur Brooks, "The Agricultural Crisis" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "Gods, Ancient and Modern."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Mr. St. John, "The Shelving of the Gods."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs): 6.30, Charles Addie, "Popular Delusions and the Scientific Testing Pot."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 85 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, A. B. Wakefield, "Are Prince, Peers, and Parsons Worth their Cost?"

Bristol—Mr. Parker's, Bridge-street: Monday at 7, tea and social gathering.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' meeting; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, vocal and dramatic entertainment.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: J. M. Robertson, 11.30, "Theism, Pantheism, and Christianity—a Reply to Principal Caird"; 2.30, "Modern Unbelief—a Reply to the late Principal Caird"; 8.30, "The Program of Christianity—a Reply to Professor Drummond."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, W. Fryer, "Socialism Up to Date."

Jarrow—Co-operative Hall (small room), Market-square: 7, business meeting; 7.30, T. Pearson, "Anarchy."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11.30, Tontine Society; 3, philosophy class; 7, Mr. Smith, "The Bible and the Marriage Question."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: C. Cohen, 11, "Evolution v. Special Creation"; 3, "What the Universe Teaches"; 6.30, "Christianity and Morality." Tuesday, debating circle, T. Griffiths, "Malignity and Fraternity."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, business meeting; 7, Mr. Mitchell, "The Love of God."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, T. Colley, "Municipal Colonisation and the Unemployed."

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, mutual improvement class; 7, Mr. Skipton, an Address.

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: F. Haslam, 3, "Is Christianity Played Out?"; 7, "Bible Stories: are they True?"

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, a lecture or reading.

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, important business meeting.

South Shields.—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, D. Bow, "Liberals Considered as the Practical Friends of the People."

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: See Saturday night's *Express and Star*. Tuesday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Fate of Supernatural Religion" (free).

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—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.—March 12, Walworth Radical Club; 19, Hyde Park. April 2, New Brompton; 16, Hyde Park; 23, Hammersmith.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—March 12, Manchester; 19, Edmonton; 26, Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—March 12, m., Battersea; 19, Bethnal Green; 26, m., Hyde Park.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—March 15, Hall of Science. April 9, m., Wood Green; 16, Manchester.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—March 12 and 13, Hull; 14, Beverley; 19, Plymouth; 26, Birmingham; 30, Hammersmith. April 2, Reading; 12, Hall of Science; 24 and 25, Sunderland; 29, Arbroath; 30, Aberdeen. May 7, Edinburgh.

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