

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## FORGIVE AND FORGET.

My recent friendly discussion with the Rev. C. Fleming Williams was most enjoyable. It is so pleasant to debate points of difference with an opponent whom you fully respect, towards whom you have not an atom of ill feeling, and to whom you disclose your own views in exchange for the confidence of his. The chairman said that he had visited the Hall of Science many years ago, and frequently heard discussions, but they were generally acrimonious, and seldom profitable. No doubt he spoke what he felt to be the truth; at the same time, however, he probably left out of sight a very important factor, namely, the tone and temper which Christian critics are apt to display on a Secular platform; the assumed superiority, which is not justified by any apparent gifts of intelligence; the implication in most of their remarks that the Freethinker is on a lower moral level than they are, though it would never be suspected by an indifferent observer; the arrogance which is often the undercurrent of their speech, and sometimes bursts forth into sheer, undisguised insolence. Christian critics of this species have, perhaps, stung Freethought lecturers into hot resentment, when it would have been far preferable to keep cool, and continue using the rapier instead of seizing the bludgeon. It is always a mistake to lose one's temper, but it becomes excusable (although not justifiable) under intense provocation. On the whole, it is safe to say that Christians have received more courtesy than they have shown in their controversies with Freethinkers.

So much for the debate itself. What I want to deal with in this article is the plea of the chairman, and also of Mr. Williams, for a more charitable understanding. Christians have abused, ill-treated, and even butchered Freethinkers in the past, but the best Christians are ashamed of it now. Let us then, it is urged, bury the past; let us forgive and forget.

So far as it concerns *men* only I am not insensible to the appeal. Far be it from me to blame Mr. Williams for the follies and malignancies of his Christian predecessors. On a question of character, of merit or demerit, every man stands or falls alone. Imputed wickedness is just as irrational as imputed righteousness. I no more wish to make Mr. Williams responsible for the butcheries of a Torquemada or an Alva than I wish to be saved by the sufferings of Jesus Christ. So far as Mr. Williams is concerned, I have no past to bury. I am not aware that he has ever desired anything but absolute justice for all forms of opinion; and I know that he denounced my imprisonment for the artificial crime of "blasphemy." Evidently, then, Mr. Williams' plea is more than personal. It is really a request that I should judge Christianity, as a great, ancient, historic system, not by what it has in the main taught and done, but by what a select body of its professors say and do in the present generation.

Now this is a plea which I must reject. In the  
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first place, while I admit it is unfair to judge Christianity by its *worst* specimens, I regard it as no less unfair to judge it by its *best*. This is not justice and impartiality. The Chief Constable of Hull is probably as sincere a Christian as Mr. Williams. I have to meet them both, and I must take them as I find them. The one pays me a compliment, and the other threatens me with a prosecution; one shakes me cordially by the hand, the other tries to prevent me from lecturing. The difference between them is flagrant. But how am I to put Mr. Williams to the credit of Christianity, and Captain Gurney to the credit of something else? What *is* the something else? They both speak to me as Christians; is it for me to say that the one is a Christian and the other is not? Is not that a domestic question for the Christians to settle among themselves? And am I not just and reasonable in declining to take the decision out of their hands?

In the next place, since Christianity is, as I have said, not only a great, but an ancient and historic system, its past *cannot* be buried, and should not be if it could. History is philosophy teaching us by example. Without it the present is meaningless, and the future an obscurity. Now history shows us that Christianity has been steady and relentless in the persecution of heresy. We have therefore to inquire the reason. It will not do to say that persecution is natural to human pride in face of opposition; for Buddhism, which is older than Christianity, has not been guilty of a single act of persecution in the course of twenty-four centuries. Another explanation is necessary. And what is it? When we look into the matter we find that persecution has always been justified, nay inculcated, by appealing to Christian doctrines and the very language of Scripture. Unbelief was treason against God, and the rejection of Christ was rebellion. They were more than operations of the intellect; they were movements of the will—not mistaken, but satanic. And as faith was essential to salvation, and heresy led straight to hell, the elimination of the heretic was in the interest of the people he might divert from the road to paradise. It was simply an act of social sanitation.

I am aware that this conception is not paraded by "advanced" Christians, though they seldom renounce it in decisive language. But these "advanced" Christians are the children of a later age, full of intellectual and moral influences which are foreign to, or at least independent of, Christianity. Their attitude is the resultant of several forces. But suppose a time of reaction came, and the influences I have referred to should diminish for a season; is it not probable, nay certain, that the old force of Christian exclusiveness and infallibility, based upon a divine revelation, would once more produce the effects which cursed and degraded Europe for over a thousand years? Such, at any rate, is my belief; it is also, I think, the belief of most Freethinkers; and this is the reason why we cannot forgive and forget. The serpent is scotched, not slain; and we must beware of its fangs.

G. W. FOOTE.

### CHRISTIAN CONCESSIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

THE recent debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. Fleming Williams forcibly brought to my mind how little the modern advanced Christian realises that the concessions he makes affect his own standing-ground, and how correct the late Mr. Spurgeon was in describing the position of rationalist Christians as that of a slippery down-grade. For here was a cultured Christian advocate deliberately repudiating all the past of Christianity, and defining faith, not as the conclusion of the intellect, but as character, and evidently holding, though he did not say so in so many words, that the well-doing Secularist has as good a chance of heaven as the Christian. If this is indeed so, it is hard to see why any mortal should assent to such strange propositions as that the creator of the universe came down to an obscure part of this earth and was born, as a child without a father, of a woman who remained a virgin, though she had a fair-sized family; that this man-god walked on the water and raised others from the dead, yet was betrayed by one of his own chosen disciples and put to death, after which he rose again, only to slink about a short time among his own disciples, and then, after partaking of a meal of broiled fish and honeycomb, levitated to heaven, where he sits on the right-hand side of an infinite spirit. If assent to absurdities does not suffice for salvation, the quicker they are buried the better. If Socrates and John Stuart Mill could get to heaven without believing in Christianity, why on earth should anyone believe it? If we are to take the latest interpretations of modern theologians, why should we go back to Jesus any more than to Moses? The one as certainly believed in demons as the other in witches.

Let us look at a few other of the consequences of modern Christian concessions. Nothing is more common nowadays than to hear that the Bible was not given as a revelation of physical science, but of important moral and spiritual truths. The least consequence of this is that all the generations who believed in the Bible story of creation were deluded, for the Bible gives this story and that of the deluge in the same affirmative style as the narrative of the call of Abraham or the prophecies of the Messiah. If mistaken as to the one, why not also as to the others? If it is not inspired in every word, how are we to test that it is inspired at all? It is not sufficient to speak of its truths coming home to us. The truths of the multiplication table are far more universally recognised, but no one thinks of saying they are God-given. If it is admitted we may use our reason and reject anything inconsistent therewith, suppose we happen to reject what the Christian considers moral and spiritual truths? Suppose we not only reject the story of the sun being made after the earth, but also that any God was concerned in the business at all? If I may discard the story of woman being made from man's rib, why not that of the Fall, and the scheme of redemption founded on it? If the Bible and the Church has been wrong all along in some matters, why should we suppose them divinely guided in others?

It is said, God accommodated himself to the necessities of man in the past. Poor old Deity, with all his omnipotent wisdom he could do no better than tell the Jews to put to death anyone who imitated the priest's holy ointment, and cause the deaths of myriads of his creatures by the decree, Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. Admit that the Bible is a purely human production, and of course no one will wonder that it reflects the imperfections and barbarity of the ages in which it was produced. But then we shall hardly expect to be confined to such savage and imperfect records in our search for moral and spiritual truth.

Rationalists like Canon Cheyne and Dr. Driver say they are prepared to accept the results of historical criticism. But if criticism may be accepted when it leads to the conclusion that Daniel is a forgery, what if it shows that the four gospels are in the same category? If one may honestly hold that Abraham was not an historical character, what if another comes to the same conclusion in regard to Jesus Christ? What if historical criticism shows that monotheism is but an evolution from polytheism and that again from the belief in spirits, so that at bottom "god" represents nothing more tangible than "ghost"?

Then we are told the doctrine is of more importance than the miracles, and that religion is not a matter of historical evidence so much as of internal feeling. Well, then, if I need not believe that Christ was born without a father, why may I not hold that he was purely ideal? If I need not credit that devils went literally into pigs, why need I believe in literal angels? Those who so readily give up hell, surely forget that heaven is based on exactly the same authority. What warrant have they for taking out the brimstone and leaving all the treacle? If hell is a fiction, heaven must be a figment. Many Christians will now argue with the Christadelphians that the Devil is not a real personality, but only a personification of evil. Must not then his antagonist, God, be only a personification of good? But perhaps if liberal Christian ministers saw all the consequences of their concessions, they would cease to make them.

J. M. WHEELER.

### "EVIL: HOW IT CAME AND HOW IT IS TO GO."

THE Rev. Dr. Clifford, the Congregational minister of Westbourne Park Chapel, London, has been much concerned in reference to the recent controversy upon the question, "Is Christianity Played Out?" He therefore recently delivered a series of special sermons, one of which was upon the subject of the existence of evil. He endeavored to show how evil entered into the world and how it is to depart from our midst. In entering upon his task he admitted that the existence of evil and pain is a "mystery" to be approached with "holy awe." Still, said he, "Let us strive to be logical and scientific." It would have been as well if, at the same time, he had remembered what the Bible says upon this perplexing subject. According to this book, the "mystery" is not so much how evil came as it is how a God of "infinite goodness and justice" could have been the means of its introduction into the world. The doctor says "Sin came by man," but such a statement is contradicted by the Bible, which says that God was the author of sin and evil. It teaches that God planned the Fall, and that he arranged all the conditions that culminated in that event. Moreover, we read in Amos iii., Micah i., and Isaiah xlv. that this same God introduced pain and suffering and created evil. Thus it would be accurate to say that, according to the "inspired book," sin came *through*, not *by*, man, inasmuch as he was but a passive instrument in the hands of his alleged maker. Dr. Clifford suggests that we should be "logical and scientific." But is it logical to blame man for doing what he was compelled to do? As the Bible says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath filled to destruction?" (Romans ix.) Is it "scientific" to say that sin originated through man's "transgression of the law" about six thousand years ago, when at the present time fossil men attest the presence of suffering and death in the world long before such a law could have been given?

The reverend doctor says: "The question has sometimes been put to me by keen young intellects, why God did not create a paradise in this world, and put man in it? The answer to this is, because he wanted to make a world of men and not of mere machines." Now this answer is entirely beside the mark. If the Biblical story is to be relied upon, God did make a paradise and put man into it, knowing at the same time that sad results would accrue through placing him in such a position. Dr. Clifford, in his answer, failed to show how putting man in a paradise amidst pleasant scenes could make him "a machine." We are told that the origin of sin is accounted for through man's "deliberate choice" in the Garden of Eden. The Bible says the contrary, for it alleges that the scheme of salvation was arranged before "the foundation of the world" (Ephesians i. 3-6; 1 Peter i. 20.) Besides, it was not the "man's choice" that he was placed in this garden; that he and his wife should possess certain desires for a particular food found there, and that a serpent should be present to tempt the woman who afterwards induced the man to partake thereof. These were the factors in the story of the origin of sin, and they were the work of God. Adam was but one link in the chain of circumstances that had been produced for him and not by him, and in the creation of which he had no part. The doctor speaks of God "endowing this man with intelligence," but it appears that he did not know good from evil before he "sinned," and that he and his wife were not aware of their nude condition. The one who seems to have had intelligence, and to have known the whole business was the serpent, who is described by Dr. Clifford as being destitute of "conscious reasoning powers." The devil or serpent can at least be credited with doing two good things in this paradise. He was the means of Adam and Eve acquiring knowledge, and of their becoming conscious of their immodest condition.

The rev. gentleman asserts that man has a free will, and at the same time alleges that "the laws which govern cause and effect apply to man also." If this be so, then it is clear no amount of free will would enable a person to choose Christianity as the best religion if that person's judgment decided against it. All our thoughts are conditioned, and if the laws of cause and effect apply to man (which they certainly do), then free agency in matters of opinion is a misnomer. The term "will" is not an entity which enables us to accept or to reject any particular faith. If we choose the wrong, it is our judgment and not our "will" which is at fault. But Dr. Clifford says that, having a free will, we can "break the laws of nature," and that man "is capable of shaping his own destiny, and of choosing deliberately good or evil as a guide for his conduct." This is not true in a scientific sense, for we cannot "break the laws of nature." A man may fall from a window and break his neck, but he will leave Newton's law of gravitation as firm as ever. As to our being able to shape our own destinies and to "choose the right path," the Bible says that we are not able to do either. Therein we are told that the salvation of man is the gift of God (Ephesians ii.), that it is God that worketh within us to will and to do (Philippians ii.), and that we are not of ourselves able to think as of ourselves (2 Cor. iii.) This was the teaching of St. Paul, and it is clearly supported by Jesus, who is represented as saying, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him" (John vi.) Not only is man unable to act apart from God, but he is also liable to be seriously misled by him to the extent of even believing a lie (2 Thess. ii.)

Dr. Clifford has very peculiar views in reference to God's omnipotence when applied to this theory of free will. He says: "God has limited in this respect his own omnipotence, and the delegation of this

wondrous power to man has limited the almightiness of the Eternal. How great are these limitations we see when we consider that each of the 1,400,000,000 human beings in the world is capable of making his own choice. I am prepared to admit that God might, if he chose, sweep man away altogether off the face of the earth." Is not this the very height of theological absurdity? Imagine the source of all power being divided into 1,400,000,000 parts, and the Omnipotent limiting his own omnipotence; while at the same time he retains enough of his "almighty power" to "sweep away man from the face of the earth"! There would be, if this were true, but little chance of our "shaping our own destinies." Sin, we are told, must go out by man's choice, and yet the doctor says, "bad habits and good habits both tend to permanence." If this be so it does not appear that even if man had the choice he could cause permanent bad habits to "go."

Dr. Clifford selects man out of all nature and endows him with a portion of one of the attributes of God, by which he is expected to avoid the causes of pain. But history records the fact that man, from almost his first appearance on the earth, has been ready to inflict pain. He has been notorious through all ages for torturing and slaying, not only the inferior animals, but also his own species. This is an indication that if man were endowed with a part of the divine nature, it did not make him less cruel than are some of the lower animals who are left to their natural instincts. Like many others, the doctor thinks it a great compliment that God gave man an instrument called free will that enables him to go wrong, while he gave to other animals only instincts that compelled them to go right. As Pope says: "When unerring instinct is the guide, what Pope or councils need they else beside?" It is, however, difficult to recognise the superiority of an instrument which is so defective that, according to the plan of the inventor, the majority of those who use it are to go wrong and to incur everlasting misery. "Many are called but few are chosen."

It may be as well to bear in mind the fact that when men have controlled the inferior elements in nature. They have done so not through yielding to the impulse of theology or in consequence of their having accepted the teachings of Christianity or of the Bible. The improvement and elevation of the human race are the result of the indomitable courage and untiring researches of man, whose genius has brought to light the marvellous discoveries of science, the potency of mental power, and the efficacy of ethical culture. The application of these agencies has proved the redeeming feature of the world. But for these elevating and ennobling influences we might have found some sympathy in the words of Byron, who, when counting the hours and days of joy free from pain, exclaims:

Whatever thou hast been,  
'Tis something better not to be.

CHARLES WATTS.

#### THE JEWS.

We have been hoodwinked by priestcraft. Judea and Israel were not little isolated kingdoms, but provinces of a mighty empire, just as they are at the present moment, and just as they have been since the time of Abraham. It is inconsistent with reason to suppose an independent king could hold Judea, the gate of Asia and Africa. Such a position would enable him to tax all merchandise passing through his territory; and taxation is the symbol of supremacy, and can only be enforced by a sovereign power. A king of Judea could not have assumed such a position against the powers of Egypt, Carchemish, and Assyria.—*Philistines and Hebrews*, p. 21; 1892.

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## A MODEL DEBATE.

THE Hall of Science was densely packed on Friday evening, March 10, to hear the friendly discussion between the Rev. Fleming Williams and Mr. G. W. Foote on the subject of "Christian Views of Man and Methods of Progress." Every available inch of standing room was occupied, and though it was evident the supporters of Mr. Foote were in the majority, the popular alderman-minister had a large contingent of admirers, and was received with equal applause. Mr. Williams has a full musical voice, which, it seems to the present writer, he does not always use as effectively as he might, and a good flow of language. He has the gifts of a poetical preacher, and, if he has not the platform experience of his opponent, he is at any rate ready and earnest. He makes, so it appears to me, the very best presentment possible of a Christianity derived rather from such writers as Browning and Martineau than from authoritative Christian sources, in a manner at once so suave yet so earnest, that whatever sceptics may think of his Christianity, they are bound to have feelings of sympathy and respect with its exponent.

Mr. Branch, L.C.C., who had a perfect sinecure, although it was one of the conditions of the discussion that either disputant might interrupt the other if he wished a point made clearer, was in the chair, and briefly introduced the speakers.

Mr. FOOTE, whose followers had equal reason to be content with their advocate, opened with his objections to Christianity. First he dealt with the antagonism between matter and spirit, body and soul, which Christianity inherited from earlier Oriental systems, and which was incompatible with the teachings of an age of practical science and of Darwinism. Christianity, by its misreading of human nature and its misreading of the past, must misdirect our conduct for the future. If it was true that man was a being with soul and body in antagonism, the Christian ascetic philosophy was true. But if men were the slow product of material causes, this could not be. Christianity dwelt on the sinfulness of sin, which was not only a stumbling-block, but a perpetual rock of offence. To the evolutionist sin was the pull of the past against the future. It was simply the power of our brute passions. Their proper place was in the cellar, but they often skip upstairs and gambol in the drawing-room, whilst it was the business of a just man to batten them down again. Mr. Foote then disputed the doctrine of the atonement as the product of an age when fathers had absolute power. We had outgrown that view; we see now that fathers owe more duties to their children than children to their parents; that producing offspring created obligations that could not be destroyed even by children's disobedience. If we are the creation of God, defects are really attributable to him. Man could not sin against the Infinite Creator; but the Infinite Creator, who might have made him different, had sinned against him. He denied that man was a fallen being, or could be saved by accepting the deliberate sacrifice of another. He challenged the doctrine of the merit of faith, which poisoned even the charity of Christianity and led logically to persecution. To say "become Christ-like" was mere sentimentality. Lessons might be taken from many teachers. We should seek good from all, as the bee gathers honey from every flower. In conclusion, Mr. Foote attacked Christian ethics as based on selfishness; its doctrines of future rewards and punishments being but a stimulus to self. The gospel of Freethought was the gospel of humanity, free from the taint of mysticism and the superstitions of theology; which a child could understand and a hero sacrifice for, and gilding with beautiful colors the every-day prose of common life.

Mr. FLEMING WILLIAMS complimented his opponent on his speech, which, he said, left no other feeling than one of admiration and gratitude. If his friend had based his affirmation as to Christianity being handicapped by its identification with Oriental philosophy mainly on the practice of the early Christian Church, he should be compelled to agree with him. But nothing of the sort was to be found in the teaching of Jesus Christ. He would challenge the production of one sentence to show that Jesus Christ taught or practised asceticism. The charge made against him was that he did not. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say He hath a devil, the son of man came eating and drinking, and they say Behold, a man gluttonous and a winebibber. The charge made against Jesus was that he broke from the asceticism of the past. Paul's theory of life was that man possessed body, soul, and spirit, and these stand in relation to a higher intelligence. He knew very well that

Christianity, when taken up, held the mediæval theory of goodness consisting in isolation from the world, but his own opinion was that asceticism is a violation of the central spirit of Christianity. In regard to evolution, he accepted it as the best working hypothesis; but it did not follow that because a man's body was evolved from matter that his whole content was owing to material conditions. Like originates like. Man was not simply an improved monkey, but possessed will, intelligence, conscience. Man's environment may contain forces we may have to evolve much farther before we could understand. He said Amen to the proposition that sin is the pull of the past upon the future. Sin is the subordination of the higher powers of being to the ends of the lower, and hence its constant denunciation by Christians. The Christian does not think of sin as an alienation between man and his Maker, but as an appeal to that Maker for that help without which, sin cannot be resisted. His friend appealed to the obsolete doctrine of the Atonement. He denied salvation by the sacrifice of others. Everyone was saved by that very fact. There was a time within their recollection, when to be a Freethinker was to ensure anger and persecution. One great man had done much to remedy this. Freethinkers owed their present position largely to the reliant and sacrificial nature of their friend, Charles Bradlaugh. Sacrifice is the law of human destiny. To live we must live for each other. Thank God we cannot help it. The doctrine of an atonement founded on the notion of an angry deity, was pretty well played out. You would not judge medical science by its past errors. Christ came not to reconcile God to us, but to win our consent to a notion of God free from all anger, and enable us to go to him in a spirit of trust and affection. Nowhere do you find in the New Testament that man is condemned as a sinner, but for allowing his worsen nature to prevail. This is the condemnation that light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The story of the Fall was a groping after the truth that evil is inherited. It was a pity they only stated one part of that doctrine. But Jesus saw the other side, the transmission of goodness. He says "Be ye wholesome even as your father in heaven is wholesome." The view we are increasingly taking is, that faith is a great moral term, and implies character rather than intellectual belief. We were a long way from being Christians yet, but thousands were trying to become so. Mr. Williams concluded by reading some lines from Browning.

Mr. FOOTE, in reply, said that if Christianity was only what had been expounded, it was a great wonder Voltaire, Paine, and Bradlaugh had attacked it, and that he himself should have been imprisoned for attacking it. His friend assumed the right to believe that Christianity is nothing but what Jesus Christ taught. (Mr. Williams: "Hear, hear.") That was an extremely novel view, and he thought it a pity it was not understood during the last eighteen centuries. If Paul, who was miraculously brought into the Christian fold, was to be discarded, much would have to go. It was curious, if Jesus Christ could not be identified with asceticism, that so able and sincere a man as Count Tolstoi should hold that no true Christian can contemplate entering the marriage state, and this Christian came to the same conclusion as himself, for which he could quote an unbroken stream of Christian tradition from Chrysostom to Cardinal Newman. In regard to human evolution, he contended there was no one point where you can say, Here is a break, justifying the assumption of another cause. His friend exhibited how religions perish by slowly changing into something else. The doctrine of the Fall, which he repudiated, was held by Cardinal Newman and Mr. Gladstone. He knew that the progress of the race has been at the cost of its best blood. Many a hero has given his life to save a drowning child; but it would have been better if the child had not fallen. It is noble of a friend to sacrifice himself for another; but how mean and despicable it would be to accept it. He objected to anybody suffering for his demerits. As to faith being a moral act, in the past, when a heretic was tried, did they inquire into his character? No; they tried him for his unbelief. That men should be judged by their character was all that Freethought ever preached or ever wished.

Mr. WILLIAMS, in conclusion, said his good friend was compelled, or at least saw it wise, to draw his evidence from the past. Now he wanted it clearly understood that you can start with the old fathers and come down to the modern sons, and find an unbroken continuity of insanity. In any age we see, not the whole of truth, but as much as our environment enables us to see. The presumption is that the last views must

be truer than the first. Christianity must be judged, not by the interpretations of the past, but by those in conformity with the spirit of the new age. Count Tolstoi was an interesting psychological study. Looking on Russian society with despair he throws up the sponge. He says the only way to improve the race is to wipe it out. You will find no healthy Christian saying that. You do not see a religion die, but on the third day the thing you thought dead rises again. The formulations of religion change, but the religion itself is deathless. [Mr. Foote here remarked that Freethinkers held Christianity to be but one of the formulations of religion.] Mr. Williams said one of the richest blessings of the time is this, that we are coming to distinguish between the forms and the intrinsic spirit. If your objections are confined to an obsolete organism, then I'll help you to the burial, so that you will join me in the spirit we both believe in. The Christian abhorrence of sin was in accordance with the verdict of Nature. For nature has said you must become your best or perish. That is the law of the survival of the fittest. The Christian is so convinced of that power that he seizes on your sin, denounces it, and beseeches you to break away from it. His friend accepted the fact of self-sacrifice, but thought to accept the sacrifice was to lose self-respect. He could not take that position. He could not refuse the sacrifice of the larger soul. So far as you are a larger soul than I, I have to live through you. We are so made, that on the ministry of the larger depends the lesser. Referring to past persecution, he said we want to come closer together—forget and forgive—take the new man and the new spirit and join hands, forgetting the past, press forward to that which lies before. In Christianity the old race ideals would depart, the old antagonism die. Mr. Williams concluded by again reading a poetical quotation from Browning.

On the motion of Mr. Charles Watts, a vote of thanks to the chairman and the two disputants was unanimously carried; and as no room had been found for discussing Christian Methods of Progress, it was announced that the friendly discussion of this part of the subject would be resumed on some convenient occasion. J. M. W.

THE CHURCH OR SECULARISM :

WHICH HAS BEEN THE GREATER FACTOR IN HUMAN PROGRESS ?

THE above question was the subject of debate last week at the large Exchange Hall, Wolverhampton, between Mr. C. Watts and Mr. R. F. Dell, of London Guild of St. Matthew. There was a good attendance and perfect order. Many ladies were present. There was considerable applause, which appeared to be pretty equally divided.

Our friends will be pleased to learn that Mr. Watts has recovered from his rather severe illness, and was on this occasion in his usual good fighting form. Another pleasant feature was that Mr. Dell was an educated gentleman, two elements that go a long way to make any debate agreeable to Mr. Watts.

Mr. Dell confined himself to the Church—that was everything; the clergy and infallible Bible were secondary, for which he had no particular care. He incidentally remarked that God did not make the universe out of nothing, which many people will accept, but that he made it out of himself; a proposition, as Mr. Watts showed, equally as unreasonable and not proved. The Church was founded by Christ, independent of the Bible that did not exist for 300 years, and is the infallible service of truth. Progress he defined as real enjoyment of life, and he did not recognise material causes affirmed by Secularism, except as adjuncts to the spiritual conception. Before 1870 he attributed all to the Church: it educated the people and looked after the poor.

In reply, Mr. Watts laid down the following six propositions, which, it may be regretted, Mr. Dell completely passed over: (1) That no institution can be fairly credited with being a factor in human progress unless it contains the elements of the alleged progress; (2) that the Christian Church does not contain in its authorised principles the factors of modern progress; (3) that Churchmen who have assisted in human progress have done so through developing the Secular features of their organisation; (4) that the elements of Secularism are the factors that have promoted and assisted civilisation; (5) that New Testament teachings are opposed to material progress, and that the Christian Church has been the persistent enemy of progress; (6) that when the Church had supreme power progress was comparatively unknown, and that the greater advance has been made

since scepticism has deprived the Church of its absolute sway. By the elements of Secularism he meant (1) science and its application; (2) reliance on human effort for progress in this world; (3) freedom in all matters of opinion; and (4) cultivated reason as the ultimate court of appeal. These were the four cardinal points in Secularism; human progress depended upon them, but they were to be found in no Church in existence.

Mr. Dell, as is now usual, said Jesus laid down general principles, and left people to apply them, and the small effect he produced in his day he attributed to his having "only three years to do it." Of course some may suggest that he was like the dresses of the ladies of fashion—he began too late and left off too soon. However, Mr. Dell believes in Socialism, and as he finds Jesus favorable to that particular "ism," he takes after him instead of after any other prophet.

Mr. Watts asked for his "general principles." But they were not put in. He also showed that the "principles" of the New Testament related to "above," and not to the earth. Mr. Dell did not anticipate being pelted with texts, or he would have brought a supply with him. But Mr. Watts still wanted to see the "general principles," and also for Mr. Dell to show how those teachings he had quoted to him could be "applied." But Mr. Watts was not favored with a statement about either, and therefore he proceeded to introduce the late Bishop of Peterborough, who maintained that they could not be "applied."

Mr. Dell admitted that individuals could not "apply" them, but that the State could. That was the very thing the bishop showed would bring the State to ruin in a week, and further, that Jesus never intended it should attempt it, either in the letter or in the spirit.

It appears that Mr. Dell has a good many sympathisers, but in my judgment, he failed to supply them with any guidance for realising any particular object in life. He was dead set against Macaulay and Green as "enemies of the Church." Mr. Watts's history did not suit him, or his argument—it did not support the Church, the one basket in which Mr. Dell put all his eggs. CHARLES C. CATTELL.

MR. LABOUCHERE ON SECULAR EDUCATION.

THAT religious education at schools is necessary or desirable for children is one of the most baseless delusions which affect men of otherwise sound understanding. This applies equally to men of all creeds. It is necessary for a man to have religion; but a man's religion, if it is worth anything, is something which grows into him with the insight and experience of manhood. Children—at any rate, within the Board School age—cannot have this kind of religion. It cannot be taught like geography or the multiplication table. All that you can teach is verbal dogma or mere Biblical history.

Those who themselves hold strongly by dogma, whatever their sect, hold also that it is necessary to indoctrinate their children with their own beliefs, in order to make sure of their growing up in the right way. But analyse this view, and what does it come to? That you cannot trust the child to adopt the dogma when its understanding is fully developed; therefore, you should grind the dogma into the mind in infancy, so that belief may become a habit rather than an act of reason. This seems to me like taking an unfair advantage of the child—inoculating him, as it were, with your views at a time when he cannot help himself, lest, when he grows up, he should form views of his own of which you do not approve. It seems also to indicate a distrust of the power of your dogma to convince the adult understanding.

These, of course, are merely my own private views, which I throw out for the guidance of parents. As a matter of public policy I should not of course dream of interfering with the right of any father to have the Athanasian Creed or the Thirty-nine Articles taught in his nursery. What I do strongly hold, as a matter of public policy, is that the State cannot, under any circumstances, be justified in undertaking instruction of this nature. If parents desire their children to be taught dogmatic religion in any shape or form, let the parents see to it. It is not a matter that I should myself delegate to anybody, if I were a parent who favored such teaching; but if parents are to delegate it at all, let them delegate it to the clergy. Let the clergy of all denominations have their religious schools. Let the schools be open on Saturdays and Sundays, when the Secular

schools are closed, and let the clergy of all denominations vie with one another in getting the children in for a couple of hours on each of these days. If they cannot under these conditions indoctrinate the rising generation with a sufficient amount of dogmatic theology to make everybody happy (both now and hereafter), the fault must lie with dogmatic theology.—*Truth.*

#### A HINT TO FREETHINKERS.

THE *Church Year-Book* gives the subscriptions for one year from 12,299 incumbents, amounting to £5,160,820, while 1,263 did not make any return. Thus we may assume a total subscription of six million pounds to one Church alone. To this has to be added the subscriptions received by all the other voluntary Churches, including the Roman Catholics, before we can form an opinion of the total cost of the Christian superstition in this country, and the above does not include the fixed salaries of the bishops and clergy.

It must be within the mark to assume that each of the above incumbents has on an average one curate. This gives 27,144 preachers. We may also assume that the whole of the Dissenting bodies, including the Roman Catholics, have among them three times as many preachers as the Church of England. This would add 81,432, making, with the 27,144 preachers in the Church of England, a total of 108,560 mouths holding forth every Sunday twice a day—and often, too, on week days.

These bodies catch children while they are young, when they are indoctrinated before they can understand. Thus Freethinkers only catch the cream, or those with a more than ordinary amount of brain-power, who can throw off the absurdities of their early training.

I question if we have 50 Freethought lecturers over the entire country, or one Freethought lecturer to every 2,171 Christian preachers. What can one man do against two thousand?

It is true that our great scientific men are mostly Freethinkers; but in their writings they mostly ignore the Churches—they don't write directly against them. There is therefore much to be done by the Freethought lecturers; they should be well supported. Freethinkers should rally round and consolidate their Branches, spread Freethought literature and mental light to the millions in Christian darkness. The weeds of superstition have to be removed before you can grow successfully the seeds of Secular science.

G. A.

#### ACID DROPS.

When a religious census was taken at Birmingham, on a Sunday evening in last November, it was found that 99,693 people were inside churches and chapels and 569,215 outside. So says the *Methodist Times*, and no wonder the Methodists are stirred up to "do something." One outcome is the formation of a Nonconformist Council for Birmingham. This is protested against by Dr. Dale, who objects to the collective interference of Churches in public affairs, and declares it to be the business of Christianity to influence and regenerate the individual. Dr. Dale's protest, however, is laughed at by the "forward" Nonconformists, who see a fine field for the exercise of their narrow energies in the social and political field, where they hope to play the part of successful busybodies, and coerce all other citizens into accepting the Nonconformist ideal of "how to live."

It is very evident, as we have previously pointed out, that Christianity has lost all efficacy as a "spiritual" power. Ministers are now entering into partnership with the police. They do not pause to consider that sensible men will ask this question—"What is the use of the minister if he has to send for the policeman?" If all the Sunday-schools, churches, and chapels—all the godly lessons and sermons—leave society morally where they found it, why not abolish them altogether, and spend a little of their cost on a further development of the police system? Perhaps if the Sunday-schools and gospel-shops were abolished altogether, we might get a good deal of help from common sense and rational education.

Sixteen or seventeen years ago we saw the Rev. Charles Voysey at South Place Chapel. It was on the occasion of a Conference of Liberal Thinkers, who talked for three days,

then resolved to form a Society to promote the One True Religion, and finally went home and forgot all about it. Mr. Voysey was not a striking figure. James Thomson (B.V.), who was with us during the Conference, called him "a guinea-piggy little man." He was very solemn, however; and nothing could be more impressive than the way in which he uttered the curious, upside-down reflection that "the man who would trifle with his God would soon trifle with his fellow men." After this declaration he decamped. He had had his little say—some would call it his advertisement—and he had no further concern with the Conference; with the exception, perhaps, of a faint hope that they would all come to his church.

Years rolled by and the "guinea-piggy little man" took to blackguarding Bradlaugh. More years have rolled by, and (unless the *Christian World* belies him) he is reviling Gladstone, whom he calls "the crafty statesman now at the head of the government," and charges with being in a Jesuitical conspiracy to destroy the Church of England so that Romish supremacy may be established on its ruins. Mr. Voysey is a proof that a little heresy is a dangerous thing. What he had got him into trouble; he never had the sense and courage to obtain any more; and, as the vulgar would say, he is neither, fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring.

The *Christian World* speaks of *Supernatural Religion* as an almost forgotten book. Our contemporary is in error. It has mistaken its own shop for the world. The "forgotten" book is still in good demand, as may be seen by the price it figures at in any second-hand catalogue.

General Booth's *War Cry* prints a Letter from Heaven, written by the angels who brought Lot out of Sodom. These celestial penmen don't add to the spicy details given in Genesis, but they say that the organ of the Salvation Army has a large and growing circulation in heaven—which, if it be true, proves what a large number of imbeciles are "loafing around the throne."

Commenting on this letter, the *Weekly Dispatch* says it is fortunate for Booth that the Blasphemy Laws are obsolete. They always were obsolete so far as Christian blasphemy is concerned. They are not so, however, with respect to Freethinkers. Our contemporary should remember that persecuting laws are never really obsolete until they are repealed.

The *Sunday Chronicle*, in the course of a vigorous diatribe against Booth's "vulgar buffoonery" and "hideous hysteria," states that the Isle of Man authorities want to suppress the sale of all Sunday papers except this very *War Cry*. It reminds these petty bigots that the real Sunday paper is the one that people read on Monday.

President Cleveland took his official oath on his mother's Bible. It was a touching spectacle. All the Christians in the United States were delighted. But tastes differ somehow, and the London *National Observer* calls Cleveland's performance "a blatant caricature of filial piety," and says he indulged in "the antics of a mountebank."

"Sabbath desecration" is spreading in Scotland, and the Dundee U.P. Presbytery has passed a resolution about it. The *Dundee Advertiser* does not show much sympathy for the said U.P. Presbytery. It rather chuckles over the fact that, on Sundays during the summer, the "steamers will go up and down the river with whole churches of people on board, whose offerings elsewhere would have made glad the hearts of collection-loving elders." "The ministers," it says, "may protest against all this, but they can do no more. They should be thankful things are as they are. If this country knew the art of enjoyment the case might be far worse."

"Board and Bible" was the title of an interesting and valuable article in Monday evening's *Star*. It points out that the Church of England has most of the Training Colleges under its control, and thus places teachers with a Church bias in our public schools. Out of forty-four residential colleges in England and Wales, thirty are attached to the Church, and conducted on the most rigid sectarian principles. All the others are denominational, except two which are avowedly unsectarian. But the *Star* writer does not seem to know that these two are Christian, and that

those trained in them *must* belong to *some* Christian denomination. These institutions are largely supported by the State, none of them has a conscience clause, and they are really Christian endowments at the expense of the taxpayers.

Holy Russia doesn't mean to lose its orthodoxy. The South Western Railway system will shortly be taken over by the government, and it is reported that all the employees professing a non-orthodox faith, and unwilling to be converted, will receive a month's notice to leave. Well now, a month's notice is an improvement on the old style. If some of the extreme orthodox party had their way, the heretical railway men would be put under the engine wheels and pressed into poultices. Yes, they are improving even in Russia.

The Rev. Evan Jenkins, rector of Manafon, Montgomeryshire, who last week was fined £1 and costs for an assault upon a policeman, has since again had to pay another similar fine for being drunk and disorderly. He makes a nice buttress for the Established Church in Wales.

By a curious coincidence, or perhaps by the wickedness of the printer, a report of the above case appeared in the *Times* immediately following protests against the Welsh Church Suspensory Bill. Mr. Jenkins is in the diocese of the Bishop of St. Asaph, who vaunts how much the Church has done for Wales.

"Only," says Principal Fairbairn, "when nature had been completely exhausted is there even a possible apology for an appeal to the supernatural." Good! And when Dr. Fairbairn and his friends have completely exhausted nature, we shall join them in praying for any trifle the world may still be in need of.

Mr. A. R. Webb, the American consul who became a convert to Mohammedanism, is carrying on a vigorous propaganda of Islam in America. He is about to start a Mohammedan paper, publish books, and organise circles for the study of the Koran and Islam in general. He says his great objection to the Christian system is that it is loose. The followers of Mohammed have definite duties as to their prayers, ablutions, and abstinence from intoxicants. The great central idea of Islam, says Mr. Webb, is brotherhood. All Moslems are on a level.

Mr. Webb says: "In the Philippine Islands the Christians are the most ignorant and superstitious people I ever saw." "Read the Bible, then read the Koran; and if any fair-minded man does not say that the Koran is the better book, I'll eat it." It has been said if you strip Christianity of its three errors—the Immaculate Conception, the vicarious Atonement, and the Trinity—you have Islam.

William Ray Clarke, the prominent member of the Wesleyan body at Brixton, who is charged with an unnatural offence with another member of the Dulwich-road Mission, and who is reported as saying it was no sin, has been committed for trial.

From New York the death is announced of Margaret Fox Kane, one of the the Fox Sisters, who in 1848 gave the fresh impetus to the modern revival of ancient spiritism. About three years ago she, with her sister, made a confession that the raps which had occasioned so much excitement had originally been produced by cracking their toe joints. This confession she subsequently retracted. Of late she had been supported by the contribution of friends, chiefly spiritists.

Father Clarke, S.J., has been lecturing on the Inquisition. He says with much truth that the Court of Star Chamber, when engaged on religious cases, and the Commissions to search out Catholics, were as truly Inquisitions as the tribunals in Spain or Toulouse, though we doubt his statement that the tortures and prisons of the Catholic Inquisition were less cruel than those of London and Edinburgh. Both Protestants and Catholics are tarred with the same brush of persecution, for both hold that right belief is essential to salvation.

How little connected with morality are abstract notions of a future life appears from an article in the current number of *Blackwood*: "Only a few weeks before the writer's arrival thirty slaves were killed at a place not fifty miles from Bonny in order that their late master might not be unattended in the

land of spirits; while the relations of another deceased chief, also in the immediate neighborhood, had lately buried alive two of his slaves in his grave, and had hung up two more, head downwards, in which position they remained until the flesh rotted away, and the poor wretches, still alive, fell into a pit full of spikes, on which they were impaled."

Another superstitious rite formerly practised at Bonny was the monthly sacrifice of a virgin to the "shark-god." At the first low water of every spring-tide a victim was led out to the water's edge, there bound to a stake, and left until her agony was ended by the slowly rising tide, or the sharper but more quickly striking fangs of the hungry sharks.

The real inwardness of religion is exhibited by a writer of "Four Rules for Giving through the Weekly Offertory" in *Waifs and Strays*. The first is "That no worship is complete without an offering. None shall appear before Me empty" (Ex. xxxiii. 15). 2. That the first requisite for an acceptable offering is that it should bear a reasonable proportion to the income of the giver (Gen. xxviii. 22). 3. That this offering is not to be discharged by the head of the household for the whole family. Children as well as parents, servants as well as masters, all have some money of their own, and should tithe themselves (Psalm cxvi. 12). 4. That habits of tithing and giving are best formed in childhood. Therefore tell your children, "if you have half-a-crown pocket money, threepence of it belongs to God" (Prov. xxii. 6). The children should be told also that doubtless when God is hard up for the threepence he will apply for it in person.

It appears from a report of the Durban Town Council in the *Natal Advertiser*, that immensely the larger proportion of Kafir thieves have been brought up at the mission stations at Lower Tugela and Inanda.

The *Cape Register* says that both in Cape Colony and pious Prætorias, the complaint of the church is that they do not get as much in the collection plate and bag as formerly.

Dr. M. Lerner pitches into Mr. Claude Montefiore in the *Jewish World*, for giving Jewish orthodoxy away in his Hibbert lectures. He says that if Mr. Montefiore is right in making out that Deuteronomy was the book whose finding is narrated in 2 Kings xxii., Hilkiah was an impudent impostor, and king Josiah a simpleton.

Harold Brodrick, one of America's numerous Messiahs, has just published a New Testament at Chicago. It is "dedicated to my dear Father, the Lord, by his son Harold, the Christ." In his introduction Prophet Brodrick warns unbelievers against the danger of ridiculing his pretensions. In absurdity Harold's revelations are equal to the Book of Mormon and only outdone by cranky John of Patmos.

An inscrutable providence, to use the cant phrase of Christians, burnt to death a woman living at Columbus, Ohio, while reading her Bible.

The Rev. Robert Rice, vicar of Prior's Marston, believes in Solomon's maxims about the treatment of children. Some men gave beer to one of the scholars at the National Schools, aged eleven, and he returned to school in a tipsy condition. The schoolmistress sent for the boy's mother, and he was taken home. On Sunday the man of God heard of it, and on Monday felt it his duty to make the boy kneel down on a chair while he thrashed him most severely on his legs and thigh with a cane. The magistrate at Southam Petty Sessions thought this a little too much, and ordered the man of God to pay 27s. damages.

Mrs. Wilbur, of Rowan, Indiana, has been driven insane by a description of hell in a sermon.

Funeral sprees are not quite phenomenal in this Christian country, but they seldom lead to such consequences as the one that happened the other day at Clodock, in Herefordshire. Six Christian gentlemen, after attending a funeral, stopped drinking at a local pub., and growing frolicsome, like Samson, they rolled one man in the snow and dipped another in the river. They then knocked up a man called Prosser, rolled him in the snow, and chased him in his night-clothes. Prosser was found dead the next morning, and

the funeral party are sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for manslaughter.

Dr. Hayman, rector of Aldingham, Lancashire, has failed for £23,000. A tidy figure for an apostle of "the poor Carpenter."

The Englishman at Barcelona, who murdered Senor José Bofill, turns out to be Samuel Willie, recently acting as agent for an English firm of coal merchants, and previously an Evangelical clergyman.

Mrs. Tel Sono, a Japanese convert to Christianity, considers that the way to spread that religion is to build for the girls of the nobility a great school. If one of the higher rank, she says, should become a Christian, so great is the force of example there the conversion would be imitated by hundreds in the lower classes. The fact is that this is the way in which about all of the nations of Christendom have attained their present belief. Cunning ecclesiastics applied themselves to the conversion of the great, whose force and fashion then made a ready conquest of the rest.

The *Times* correspondent declares that the result of the Bishop's manifesto in Hungary declaring civil marriage opposed to the law of God, has only been to drive to the support of the Government a number of waverers who regard the manifesto as wanting in patriotism, and who object to abandon the State to the domination of the Church. Count Andrassy has declared it is not civil marriage that had an unfavorable influence upon religion, but the participation of the Church and clergy in such conflicts as that now being waged.

It is announced from Jerusalem that a fire has taken place in the Armenian church, where they show one of the tombs of J. C. Part of the roof of the church was consumed before the flames could be extinguished. Baxter may take this as an omen of the beginning of the end.

The Rev. J. Agar Beet, delivering a lecture on "The Book of Genesis read in the light of the Gospel and of Modern Science," before the Islington Sunday School Union, at the Finsbury Park Wesleyan Methodist Church, said the story of creation "must have passed down by tradition from the very beginning." Of course Adam could not recollect Eve being manufactured out of his rib; he was under chloroform during this surgical operation; but Eve had a distinct remembrance, and told Cain, who told it to his baboon wife, who sent the story on to her most distant posterity.

The Nonconformists are following the Bishop of London's lead in having a conference on the spiritual needs of the metropolis. Poor London! what a lot of quacks it has, all appealing for subscriptions to distribute their patent panaceas.

Canon Quirk, vicar of St. Mary's, Beverley, has been preaching on "The Sin of Unbelief." Canon Quirk says there is very little Atheism to-day, and as to Agnosticism, the Agnostic means one who knows nothing, and "the word generally admirably applies." After this serious refutation, Canon Quirk attributed unbelief to lack of earnestness and treating life as a jest. On this subject he must be classed with Agnostics.

The Rev. Athelstan Riley has been to Bedford for sympathy in his work of making the Board Schools instruments for teaching Church of Englandism. According to the *Bedfordshire Times*, the meeting called by the Mayor of Bedford on the subject of religious education was not a success. The room was scarcely half full, and the greater number of those present were ladies. When Mr. Riley lamented that they absolutely did not know on the London School Board who of the teachers were Christians and who not, Canon Hadock called out "Shame," and further indignation was vented because they could not catechise teachers as to their qualifications for teaching religion. To see these sky-pilots fighting both tooth and nail for every opportunity of warping the minds of little children, before they are old enough to see the absurdities of their dogmas, should be an incitement to every Freethinker to make unceasing war upon their pernicious nonsense.

*Truth* affirms that at Gloucester recently the very same sermon, word for word, was preached in the morning by the vicar at one of the churches in the city, and in the evening at the cathedral by one of the minor canons. It don't take much brains to be a minister of God when sermons can be purchased for a guinea a dozen.

Some rare old orthodox liars are knocking about in this country. There is a person near Wisbeach who represents himself as having been private secretary to the late Charles Bradlaugh, and declares he was recently offered a similar situation at a good salary by Mr. Foote, who never heard of the person before. As to the good salary, if there is one to be had about the *Freethinker* office, Mr. Foote is very anxious to get hold of it himself. So much for orthodox liar, number one. Number two's yarn is contradicted in our column "To Correspondents." There seems a lot of life still left in good old historic Christianity.

A select set of Saints at Rushmere, near Lowestoft, Suffolk, believe in the nocturnal baptism of infants in running water. A recent ceremony of the kind took place during a violent storm, and when the water was icy cold. This new form of Christianity is probably only a revival of an old Pagan practice.

Fatal cyclones in the United States, killing fourteen people and doing immense damage; a great storm in the Transvaal, throwing the dwellings of the poorer classes into a mass of ruins and rendering them homeless, besides being attended with loss of life and immense destruction of cattle; a plague of wolves in Servia, with several cases in which human beings have been attacked and killed by the rapacious animals; and famine and typhus in the Turkish African province of Barea, are items of the recent chronicle of God's doings.

Dr. T. R. Allinson has lost his action for libel against Mr. Arthur Hills, the proprietor of the *Vegetarian*. It was stated in that paper that Dr. Allinson was "doing his best to destroy his own vegetarian teaching by an open advocacy of immorality." That was Mr. Hill's way of saying that Dr. Allinson advised people to limit their families within their means of subsistence. A fat-headed jury, presided over by Mr. Justice Hawkins, has decided that Mr. Hills was quite right, and that what Dr. Allinson regarded as a libel was only a fair comment. The upshot is that although Dr. Allinson lives an honorable and a laborious life, any malignant jackass is free to call him *immoral*, and he has no remedy. A pretty state of things, indeed, in a civilised country.

Bishop Turner, of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, who is a gentleman of color, tells a *Westminster Gazette* interviewer that the Christian whites in America will never fraternise with the Christian negroes—not till they get to heaven, anyway. Still, he believes that the enslavement of the black man was "tolerated in the providence of God for his Christianisation." But what a queer compliment this is to God as a missionary! Fancy all the horrors of slavery being the necessary concomitants of a plan for converting the negroes, designed by a being of infinite wisdom and power!

"Canterbury"—the Archbishop of that ilk—is taking counsel with his brother Archbishop of York as to what steps should be taken by the Church at this juncture to protect "the solemn interests entrusted to her keeping." *Solemn interests*, we take it, is a clerical euphemism for *loaves and fishes*.

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



**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

Thursday, March 16, Hammersmith Club, 1 The Broadway, Hammersmith, at 8, "The Doom of the Gods."

Sunday, March 19, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—11.15, "Ireland at Westminster"; at 7, "The Breaking of the Bible."

March 26, Manchester; 27, Wolverhampton.  
April 2 and 9, Hall of Science.

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

**MR. CHAS. WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—March 19, Bristol; 26, 27 and 28, Glasgow. April 2 and 9, Birmingham; 11 and 12, Chester; 16 and 23, Hall of Science, London; 26 and 27, debate at Jarrow-on-Tyne; 30, Bolton. May 7, Manchester; 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.

**SHILLING WEEK.**—R. S. Seago (South Africa), £2s. 2s.

**G. E. FULLER.**—There is no "good history of Hypatia," and never can be. All that is really known about her is given in *Crimes of Christianity*, by Foote and Wheeler, pp. 45-47.

**J. H. WISEMAN.**—We have nothing to add to what has already been said in *Freethinker*.

**T. ANDERTON.**—Too late for insertion last week. We do not charge for obituary notices, but we often have to trim them down.

**"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND:**—A. Anderson (2nd sub.), 10s.; W. J. Scottow, 2s. 6d.

**JAMES MARSHALL** is requested to send his present address to Jas. Neate, 385 Bethnal Green-road, E.

**MR. KAPER**, 7 St. Mark's-road, Sunderland, has been elected secretary of the local N.S.S. Branch, in place of Mr. Weightman, who has been obliged to resign in consequence of ill-health.

**C. C. CATTELL** writes that on Sunday, at a few hours' notice, he lectured at Wolverhampton, where he found the Secularists meeting in "a very pleasant room in a good situation." Mr. Cattell hopes the Freethinkers of the district will support the Wolverhampton Branch in its gallant endeavors.

**BARRS.**—Thanks.

**T. FISHER.**—You omitted to enclose the circular. Certificates of membership shall be forwarded. See "Sugar Plums."

**J. TODD.**—See paragraph.

**G. NAEWIGER.**—Many thanks.

**F. LESTER.**—As soon as we can find room.

**O. H. OWEN.**—It is utterly false that anyone ever wrote an essay to fill over fifty pages of the *Freethinker*, which was accepted, but not inserted, because the writer had got converted to Christianity. Your pious friends are taken in by someone with a fertile invention. Still, it is not a good invention, for long essays never were, and never will be, accepted for the *Freethinker*.

We are informed that permission was obtained, some time since, to lay the *Freethinker* on the tables of the three branches of the Battersea Public Library. Will three of our readers instruct Mr. Forder to supply the same?

**W. H. PUTZ.**—We couldn't get the exact figure, but are assured that we were (altogether) under the mark.

**EX-RITUALIST.**—Thanks for your welcome and encouraging letter. Pleased to hear you are "a firm believer in the Special Number, especially with respect to the portraits." We don't trouble ourselves about the opinions, good, bad or indifferent, of the Christian set you refer to.

**W. H. MORRISH.**—The suggestion would be a good one, if we had any right to act upon it.—Glad to hear you appreciated Mr. G. Standing's account of the Children's Party.—The Chief Constable of Hull does not seem of a "coming on disposition."—You wonder how we get "such an endless stream of interesting items" for the *Freethinker*. But there is no magic in it; it simply means hard work.

**N. GAWN.**—Mr. Gladstone admits, with every other competent authority, that Church property is national property; it therefore follows that the clergy are paid by the State. The method of payment makes no difference.

**THE HULL FUND.**—Blyth Branch, 5s.; W. J. Scottow, 2s. 6d.; A. Stanley, 5s.

**W. BAXTER.**—(1) Spontaneous generation is denied by Tyndall, Huxley, etc., as happening now; but, as Darwin observed, this is not its proper place in the course of evolution. Evolutionists believe (at least the majority of them) that the simplest form of life arose naturally at first out of the inorganic world, by virtue of physical and chemical laws in special conditions. (2) What do you mean by "explaining" the existence of matter? Do you mean, How did matter begin? If so, we reply with another question—How do you know matter *did* begin? "Don't know," as you suggest, is the proper attitude of mind towards the question of ultimates.

**W. T. GRIFFITHS.**—"Who Carries His Business On?" was printed in the *Freethinker* years ago.

**CEPHAS.**—(1) Read Mill's *Three Essays*. Personally, we do not regard will as a force at all. But if your will is a force in lifting a weight, how can you say that all force is will if the weight slips and crushes your toes? You are talking anthropomorphism, which is only a subtle form of human vanity. (2) Only four of the epistles ascribed to Paul in the New Testament are generally regarded as genuine, even by Christian scholars; but even Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians are disputed by some learned critics.

**OBSERVER.**—Your second letter puts a different complexion on the matter. We will speak to the gentleman as soon as possible.

**A. STANLEY.**—Delay caused by your not sending us direct. Acknowledged this week.

**J. ASHEY.**—We hardly think you would find anyone foolish enough to prosecute you for circulating our Tracts. If you are molested let us know immediately, and you shall not be left unsupported.

**H. JOHNSON.**—Cuttings are always welcome. These Assyrian tablets never turn out to be much of a corroboration of the Bible story. The supernatural yarns of the Old Testament remain where they were.

**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—Waifs and Strays—Cape Register—Midland Evening News—Natal Advertiser—Daily News—Spinning Wheel—Sunday Chronicle—Islington Gazette—Bedfordshire Times and Independent—Beverley Guardian—Hackney and Kingsland Gazette—Watts' Literary Guide—Birmingham Daily Gazette—Staffordshire Sentinel—Labor Tribune—Fur Unsero Jugend.

**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 occupies the London Hall of Science platform to-day (March 19). His morning lecture is a political one—admission free. Under the title of "Ireland at Westminster" he will deal with the retention of the Irish members in the St. Stephen's Parliament. His evening lecture is on "The Breaking of the Bible," and will show how the "blessed book" is being destroyed as a supernatural revelation by the "advanced" clergy. Before the lecture Mr. Foote will give a poetical reading.

Despite the phenomenally fine weather, so inviting for out of door enjoyment to people who had not seen a fine Sunday for months, a large audience gathered in the Coliseum, Leeds, on Sunday afternoon, to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Liberty and Law: their Claims and Conflicts," under the auspices of the local Sunday Lecture Society. The chair was taken by Councillor Charles H. Wilson, who is, we believe, a Conservative in politics. He said he had been told he ought not to take the chair at such a lecture by such a man as the President of the National Secular Society; but he meant to please himself in such matters, and he thought the time had gone by for Englishmen to ostracise each other for honest differences of opinion. This remark was greeted with loud applause. Mr. Foote on rising was cheered with great enthusiasm. His lecture was listened to with profound attention; it would, in fact, be difficult to conceive of a more appreciative audience; and the cheering at the finish showed that, however some of his views might be dissented from, there was no division of opinion as to the validity of his plea for liberty as the indispensable condition of the rational solution of the problems of progress. It is gratifying to note that a common cry of "No" was raised when the

lecturer asked whether the laws against Secular Societies were just.

On Sunday morning Mr. Foote met the committee of the Leeds N.S.S. Branch, and talked over the local situation. He made certain suggestions to the committee, which they seemed to consider worth attempting, and arrangements will probably be made for a reorganisation of the Branch in August or September, to be inaugurated by a special Free-thought mission in the city, and followed by an active winter's propaganda.

Notwithstanding the exceptionally fine weather on Sunday last in London, Mr. Charles Watts had two good and very enthusiastic audiences at the Hall of Science. In the evening he gave his reasons for leaving the Christian Church. Although many opponents were present, no one disputed the adequacy of the reasons given by Mr. Watts for the giving up of the faith of his early life. To-day (Sunday, March 19) he lectures three times in Bristol, where no doubt he will have crowded audiences.

Saturday's *Morning Leader* contained a half-column report of the Friday night's discussion at the London Hall of Science between Mr. Foote and the Rev. C. Fleming Williams. The reporter was perfectly impartial; in fact, he remarked that Mr. Williams began his first reply by "paying a handsome and certainly well-merited tribute of praise to his opponent." He also stated that the hall was "full to overflowing." This *Morning Leader* report is a sign of the times. By and by the other dailies will probably break their old conspiracy of silence against Freethought.

Bigotry often misses its mark, and the following is an illustration. After the Foote-Williams debate circulars were put into the hands of people as they left the hall. These things were of the sort which generally passes for "Christian Evidences"—slandering attacks on leading Freethinkers and libels on the Secular party in general. A gentleman and his wife had one of these specimens of Christian charity thrust into their hands; they read it and were disgusted—but not with the Secularists; no, they were disgusted with the Christians who resorted to such tactics. They had often attended the Hall of Science lectures, and felt the better for the teaching they heard there; so they decided to join the National Secular Society, which they have since done. That pious tract was a bad investment—for the distributor. The incident illustrates the truth of Shakespeare's line about the soul of good in things evil.

The *Hull Critic* prints an admirable letter by "Ixion," giving a full account of the recent antics of the Chief Constable of Hull, and his failure to frighten Mr. Foote and the N.S.S. Branch. "Ixion" advises Captain Gurney "not to challenge people to do certain things, and when his challenge is accepted, slink out of the back door, so to speak. He makes himself look ridiculous in the sight of men—and policemen."

Captain Gurney has not yet taken action against Mr. Foote for "breaking the law" at Hull. We shall give him a few days longer, and then we shall send 20,000 circulars down to Hull for wholesale distribution; and, if necessary, another 20,000 after that. The circular will contain a pointed account of Captain Gurney's vain attempt to frighten the Secularists, of how they defied him, and how he ran away. No doubt it will be very disagreeable to his feelings, but he started the bother himself, and cannot complain if we make the most of it—as we intend to.

We have learnt something since leaving Hull. The boycott was deliberate and comprehensive. The Dock Company warned the bill-posters against putting up any of Mr. Foote's posters, even on their own stations; stations which they rented of the Company, however, and might be dispossessed of at the end of their present contracts. The Chief Constable, too, sent round to Osborne Hall, after failing to frighten the proprietor, and tried to frighten the caretaker, who was told he would be prosecuted and made to pay £20. Captain Gurney's object, of course, was to get Mr. Foote ousted, legally or illegally—he didn't care which. He preferred that to fighting in the open. What a gallant fellow, to be sure!

Camberwell Secularists will be glad to hear that Mr. Richard Seago, formerly secretary of the Camberwell Branch, is in good health and doing well out in South Africa. He has just sent, through his old friend Mr. Angus Thomas, a generous subscription to the Shilling Week fund. "Dick" Seago is a sterling man and an equally sterling Freethinker. Many of his friends in London would like to see his face again.

The Finsbury Park Branch, which commences operations in April, has a preliminary meeting of members at 8 p.m. on Saturday, at 11 Blackstock-road.

The late Mr. Henry Spicer, who has left upwards of £120,000 to be divided among the London hospitals, states in his will that the money is to be applied for the relief and comfort of poor and needy convalescents, and is not to be expended in any form of religious teaching or religious observances, a proviso which we hope will become a common one in such benefactions.

In the *Labor Prophet* Mr. John Trevor gives an account of the founding of the Labor Church, the title of which, he says, was suggested by an Atheist friend.

The West London Branch contemplates holding a tea, concert, and dance on Good Friday, at the West Kensington Park Radical Club. The hall is a commodious one, and the Branch hopes to see a good company there of Secularists from all parts of the West End.

Mrs. Atkey, late president of the Nottingham Branch, is still willing to render it any possible assistance. This evening (March 19) she occupies the Branch platform, and lectures on "The Decay of Belief." On the following Sunday afternoon, at 3, the Branch holds its annual meeting. Tea will be provided at 4.30; tickets 6d., children of members 3d. As the arrangements are in the capable hands of Mrs. Winterton they are sure to be satisfactory.

Next Sunday (March 26) at 3 p.m. the Battersea Branch's quarterly meeting will take place for election of officers and important business. At 5.30 there will be a tea, followed by an entertainment and dancing. Tickets (6d. each) can be had at the hall and at outdoor meetings.

The meeting called in last *Freethinker*, for the proposed Rowing and Athletic Club at Hall of Science, was held on Monday last, when it was decided that such club be formed for members of the N.S.S. and Hall of Science Club. A committee of five gentlemen was elected to prepare rules, etc., which will be submitted to an adjourned meeting on Monday next, March 20. The subscription has been fixed for the present at 6d. per month; no entrance fee will be charged up to April 1, after which there will be a charge of 1s. The promoters hope to meet a large gathering of London Branch members and others interested at 8.30 on March 20.

The proposed Cycle Club which Miss Vance is organising at the Hall of Science is to be strictly confined to members of the N.S.S., and is quite distinct from the Athletic Club organising by Mr. Anderson. Miss Vance will be glad to hear from intending members as soon as possible.

Members of the Huddersfield Branch are requested to note that a special meeting will be held in No. 9 room of the Friendly Trade Societies' Club on Tuesday, March 21, at 8, for the discussion of important business.

A writer in the *Echo* says of the late M. Taine, who was visited shortly before his death by a Catholic dignitary: "Misconceptions have been built on the visit of Monsignore d'Hulst shortly before his death. To the end Taine held to the full lucidity of his unbelief in dogma. As the old friend and the brilliant fellow-scholar, the preacher of Notre Dame went to the bed of death, not wearing the stole of the priest." M. Taine's friends repudiate with indignation, that receiving a visit from a Catholic friend implied any change of opinion.

Another *Conversazione* will be held at the London Hall of Science on the first Wednesday in April. The President of the National Secular Society invites the members to meet him

and his colleagues of the Executive at a kind of "at home," his own house being quite inadequate to the purpose. Every member who can come is heartily welcome. Most of the time from 8 to 11 will be devoted to conversation. At intervals there will be a little good music and some good readings.

Colonel Ingersoll's splendid Oration on Abraham Lincoln is now on sale at our publishing office, price threepence. It is a pamphlet which Freethinkers should make a special point of circulating among their orthodox acquaintances, who might read it with appreciation and be tempted to tackle some of the Colonel's more heterodox utterances.

#### ETERNAL PERSECUTION.

THE seething flames no longer rend with anguish  
The martyr's quivering form;  
No more in loathsome dungeons long years languish  
The scorners of the storm.  
No more the monk, in ecstasy infernal,  
His red thirst slakes with crime;  
Yet Persecution flourishes eternal,  
And mocks the might of time.

The instruments of torture idly cumber  
The antiquary's room;  
The Virgin folds her fatal arms in slumber,  
Mid Nuremburg's dank gloom.  
The hideous Past, distraught with terror, seemeth  
The shadow of a dream;  
And England idly vaunteth, vainly deemeth  
That Freedom reigns supreme!

But though the rack has ceased to tear the sinews  
With agonising pain,  
Fell Bigotry relentlessly continues  
To torture heart and brain.  
The Chamber of the Question, horror-haunted,  
No more with blood runs red—  
Yet shame-faced Honesty—by menace daunted—  
In slavish chains eats bread.

Still shalt thou suffer, heretic; the iron  
Shall enter still thy soul  
If thou defy the despot priests of Zion  
And keep thy manhood whole.  
Thy wife and friend shall fearfully regard thee,  
Thy child from thee be torn,  
Thy rights, thy livelihood shall be debarred thee.  
Thy portion, want and scorn!

Against thee shall society be banded,  
A leper thou shalt dwell:  
With two false, brutal names shalt thou be branded—  
Blasphemer! Infidel!  
Thy stainless life shall be defamed by slander;  
And lying lips shall tell  
How the brave soul that could not feign nor pander  
Passed, shrieking, into Hell!

Thou savage creed! Thou counterfeited meekness!  
Wert thou a giant still,  
The blood of outraged innocence and weakness  
Would deluge plain and hill.  
Unchanged thy hate of secular endeavor;  
Unchanged thy murderous lust;  
Thy thirst for vengeance rageth fierce as ever—  
'Tis well thy sword is rust!

Ah! slowly fades the baleful night of error;  
Not yet the mid-day sun;  
Men thrilled by mystery and awed by terror,  
Their fellow creatures shun.  
On feet that fain to other paths would hasten  
The priestly gyves are wrought;  
And obloquy and ostracism chasten  
The pioneer of thought.

EX-RITUALIST.

A celebrated negro preacher was once addressing his profound hearers upon the astounding nature of miracles. He said: "My dear Brethren, the most wonderful miracle of all miracles was 'bout the loaves and fishes. Dere was seven thousand loaves and two thousand fishes, and the disciples had to eat 'em all, and the miracle was dey didn't bust."

I used to call her an angel, glad to own  
She had no wings to fly to heavenly climes;  
But one might think since then those wings had grown,  
To see the way she flies at me these times.

#### MODERN MONKERY.

ONE would have thought that monks had "gone out" with witches and men in armor and other quaint figures of a bygone century. But no. Here we have on a public platform in these days of free education and universal scientific knowledge, a real live monk going about from town to town, passionately addressing meetings with any amount of the old religious zeal, and as full as ever of the desire of his predecessors for the cash which faileth not.

Father Ignatius—God wot—has been addressing meetings of this kind during the past week at Folkestone. On Saturday evening, March 4, as ever was, I dropped in to hear what the holy Father was pleased to call "The Attack on the Bible"—not by wicked Freethinkers and Atheists, the bill calling the meeting hastens to inform us, but by the leading lights of the English Church, "Canon Driver and the Higher Critics, as they call themselves!"

The seats were priced at 1s. and 6d., and, in order to get a good place I planked down a modest tanner to the benignant-looking Sister of Mercy at the door, and thus was enabled to secure a position where I could both see and hear.

Precisely at eight the Father walked on in his flowing sable garments. A silver crucifix hung at his neck, and his rather striking face lighted up by what I supposed to be divine inspiration (or *afflatus*, or something). He asked the audience to pray. This made the Christian part of the hearers thoroughly happy. Nothing better than a good bit of advice to the deity for a start. "Not our will but *thine* be done, and O let thy will be our will, or rather *our* will be *thine*; and if it can't be that way, why do as you like. Amen."

Having risen from our knees much refreshed, we settled back in our chairs to hear the "oration." "The Bible was going to the Devil," the Father averred, "not at the hands of the infidels, but by their own brethren of the Pusey House. God was being made out a liar, so was the Son, and so was the Bird. These men said that Moses didn't write the Ten Commandments at the dictation of the Almighty, and yet they stood up in church Sunday after Sunday and read aloud 'God spake these words and said,' Therefore these men should be cast from the synagogue." Even the *Freethinker* saw the absurdity of it, and he read a paragraph about the Bible cracking up like a nutshell, in which the editors of that profane paper said, "Quite so, holy fathers, the sooner the better." A shudder went through the godly audience at this, which was intensely amusing.

"Then," said the Father, "if it was a pack of lies, if God's truth was to be torn to pieces like that, and proved by these men to be a series of falsehoods, then he would say to the Devil, 'Here is your lying book, take it to hell with ye.'"

Much more was said in the same strain. The Church Association, the Church Union, the Nonconformists all got it hot because they couldn't stop the Bible from going to pot; and after we had sung a hymn, we "went every one unto our own homes."

QUIP.

#### CROWNED PHILOSOPHERS.

Under the reign of King Humbert and his Freethinking advisers, Italy has progressed at a rate unparalleled during the fourteen centuries of monkrule. In Austria, too, the most important reforms of feudal abuses were effected by the heretic Kaunitz and his pupil, the Emperor Joseph II., whose private theory about the vicar of Christ may be inferred from his letters to the philosopher *Alembert* and the curious memoirs of the Prince de Ligne. Bernadotte, the adoptive king of Sweden, was a confirmed Agnostic, and the resolute Rationalism of Frederick the Great had more to do with the revival of German literature and science than the Prussian parsons like to admit. "The fact that Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' could pass the censor," says Arthur Schopenhauer, "can be explained only by the circumstance that since the time of the Dives Julius and the Dives Julianus" (Cæsar and the Apostate) "it was the first time that a philosopher had mounted a throne of absolute power. But the moment the great king was dead we see Kant seized with dread of his orthodox enemies, and mutilate his masterpiece, or endeavor to explain away its heresies by all sorts of pitiful concessions to the champions of the dominant creed."—*Truthseeker*.

## A LETTER ON SPIRITISM.

MEIN LEIBER FREUND,—I found your letter on the claims of spiritism and the prospect of establishing a telephonic and telegraphic communication with another world very entertaining. You are an enthusiast, and forget that if the premises of your own position are correct, this ought to have been done long ago. How many millions have gone down into the grave without the "sublime consolation" of which you speak? But, as you say, there is no arguing against facts. Authentic facts, not stories, are what I want to obtain. I think they are not quite so numerous and self-evident as you imagine. "Seeing," you say, "is believing." Pardon me, but have you ever visited a conjuror? A much safer motto would be "Not seeing is not believing." The mischief with you spiritists is that *believing is seeing*. I have, for my sins, wasted much time at your séances and in the investigation of occultism generally. Mrs. Fox Jenkin, one of the revivers of modern spiritism, said she saw fire coming out at my fingers' ends; I looked, but saw no fire. I always found the most wonderful stories of what had happened when I was not there, but the presence of a sceptic invariably spoiled the phenomena. The spirits resembled Jesus Christ in that they could do no mighty work because of unbelief. How is this? Scepticism never disturbs the working of the electric telegraph. Does it not indicate that believing is seeing? . . . Those who believe in ghosts see them. Those who believe in imps, fairies, witches, horned demons, or shining Mahatmas, see *them*. Fraudulent mediums know that the mass of their sitters are eager to believe. *Populus vult decipi et decipietur*. The phenomena to which you refer is, in a word, subjective. No doubt it demands study; but the study, to be of value, must come from a trained pathological psychologist, vulgarly known as "a mad doctor." I fancy, too, that hypnotism, to which you refer, is mainly subjective, depending, like somnambulism, more on the patient's disordered nerves than on the operator's passes. If diseases and bad habits could be cured by suggestion, good might be effected; were it really efficacious, it would soon be put to universal use. A medium or clairvoyant should be at the head of Scotland Yard, and another the chief of the diplomatic service.

I have looked at the communications of W. T. Stead, to which you refer. More cranky, conceited stuff I never read. The ordinary methods of nature's laws are altered that Mr. Stead may not be anxious because a train is late, or to satisfy his trumpety curiosity on some other triviality. His communications are so valueless and purely personal as to be evidently the reflex, if not of his own mind, of a mind curiously similar to his own. We all have latent in us far more than we know, and Mr. Stead's latent selfhood speaks, perhaps unconsciously, through his pen. Such is my theory, founded only on his own communications and giving him credit for honesty, though there is no man's honesty I feel more convinced of than I do of the uniformity of nature's operations. The new journalism would soon take a new phase if instantaneous communication could come from all parts of this and other worlds. All foreign correspondence could then indeed be done at Fleet-street, and the *Delirium Tremens* might report "Paradise Day by Day."

But the prospect opened up does not seem to me quite so sublime and delightful as it does to you. I recollect that the mass of departed spirits must have been little better than savages. I have had, too, a sad experience of gay deceivers among them. From what I have seen of the sublime communications coming from the presumed spirits of Shakespeare, Shelley and Milton, they have sadly retrograded in the next world. Milton, I found, had forgotten Latin, Voltaire his French. Even John Wesley once wrote to me, *via planchette*, "Come next week," which I found was the medium's own way of spelling "week." Perhaps after all, my friend, it may be just as well for us not to be endowed with the wisdom from above, but have instead to work out our own salvation.

Of course there are more things in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in any philosophy. But this is no more a reason for believing in spooks than in seraphim. It is only a reason for keeping our minds open, and not presuming that, like the Pope, we have reached infallibility and finality. There is one thing, my friend, also incumbent on us. If we wish to enjoy and make the best of the world, if we seek to leave it better than we found it, we must attend to the conditions of our bodily health. Investigate spiritualism if you must, but take care it does not interfere with *mens sana in corpore sano*.—Yours secularistically, M W J.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## THE MAHATMAS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

I'm delighted to have the assurance of Mr. H. T. Edge, B.A., F.T.S., that the marvellous Mahatmas are not confined to Thibet. Having done so much for their headquarters, it is natural they should think of operating elsewhere. I wonder they did not get Mrs. Besant out of her snowdrift, and transport her from place to place, like the spirits removed the late Mrs. Guppy, in some more striking manner than that open to common folk. These glowing gentlemen who, by long and severe contemplation of the tips of their own noses, are able to project letters without contributing to the inland revenue, and whose Manas and Buddhi are so evolved they can discern the Mulapraktiki in a bed-bug, are, it seems, here, there, and everywhere. The English specimens are, I believe, carefully preserved in asylums. The late H. P. Blavatsky conveniently placed their headquarters in Thibet, *en route* between Russia and India; but the report of the Society for Psychical Research cast such a suspicion of doubt on all that lady's proceedings, I don't wonder Mr. Edge claims other evidence. Pity he does not produce it. We are told Plato and Pythagoras were adepts, but there is no more evidence for it than for the assertion that Secularists "laugh to scorn" these ancient philosophers. The writings of Plato are extant and read by Secularists, who, instead of finding that he claims to be an adept, find that he attributes much of his philosophy to Socrates. But possibly Mr. Edge is himself a reincarnation of Plato, and so perhaps speaks with authority, and not as the Theosophic scribes.

CRISTOFOLU DYHANI CHOHAN.

## PROFESSOR VIRCHOW AND THE "METHODIST TIMES."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In this week's "Acid Drops" you refer to the *Methodist Times* and Professor Virchow's visit to England. The Professor is a poor find for the religious organ, and if the editor had tact, he would be chary of referring to him. In the *Daily News* of Jan. 30, 1892, there was a summary of a speech delivered by this Professor in the German Parliament against the Government educational measure. The following extracts from the summary should now be quoted by the *Methodist Times*:—"In all attempts to place the State upon a religious basis the priests had forced themselves into the foreground, and this was shown by history from the ancient Egyptians up to this day. . . . The Bill meant the division of power between Government and clergy. It required deep historical knowledge of the development of mankind to understand what this would mean. This development had always been retarded by such periods of theocracy and by the exuberant overgrowth of the priesthood. . . . Morals and religion, moreover, were not identical. There were confessions, but there was also a purely human moral sense, which rested on the character and mind of man, and was quite independent of religion or confession."

The Professor may disagree with Darwinism, for which he is to be pitied; but if he agrees with Christianity, I would like to see his definition of it.

A. LEWIS.

## PROFANE JOKES.

"It's a poor way to get people into the church to throw cold water on 'em," as the baby said to himself when he was christened.

Had Adam let the apple be,  
Had Eve kept clear her skirts,  
To-day we would not know the bliss  
Of wearing flannel shirts.

"The Garden of Eden could not have been located in this blamed place," growled Brown, as he paddled through the mud. "How do you make that out, dear?" came from Mrs. Brown, paddling behind. "No dust here, not a blamed bit," came the answer, and the silence that ensued became oppressive.

"No, sir," said the good young man, "I do not believe in fighting. If a man should smite me on one cheek I would turn unto him the other one." "Best thing possible for you to do," responded the reprobate of the club. "No man who had run up against your cheek once would risk his knuckles against another just as hard."

## BOOK CHAT.

A Rationalist Bibliography, issued for the Rationalist Press Committee (Watts and Co.), is announced as a preliminary list. Why even a preliminary list should give the name of Paul Carus four times, while one looks in vain for F. W. Newman, Harriet Martineau, or Winwood Reade, is not easy to determine.

*A Critical Essay on the Philosophy of History*, by Thomas Whittaker, B.A. (Watts and Co.), is worth reading. Mr. Whittaker does not speak out quite plainly, but we should think he holds that Christianity was, on the whole, a retrograde movement in history.

No. 5 of the Humanitarian League Publications (Wm. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street), is entitled *Behind the Scenes in Slaughter-houses*, and gives evidence that private slaughter-houses, beside being insanitary to their neighborhood, are the occasion of much needless cruelty. At the public abattoirs at Manchester every animal is inspected before being slaughtered. The League are circulating a petition upon the subject.

A book on *Hebrew Idolatry and Superstition: its Place in Folk-lore*, by Elford Higgins, has just been published.

Messrs. Stevens and Sons, the law publishers, announce a second edition of *Oaths and Affirmations in Great Britain and Ireland*, by F. A. Stringer.

Scotch readers of French may be glad to hear that Messrs. Hachette et Cie. have published a really able study of their national poet by M. A. Angellier. It is entitled *Robert Burns, sa Vie, et ses Œuvres*.

Funny things sometimes occur in catalogues, as when Ruskin's *Construction of Sheepfolds* was put under "Agriculture." The *Library* calls attention to the following extract:

*Heaven and Hell*, by E. Swedenborg.  
— Guide to. 1860.  
— Our Home.

Messrs. Macmillan and Co. are issuing the collected works of Frederick Denison Maurice. These form a readable exposition of Broad Church Christianity, but, like the rest of that school, Maurice beat the bush a great deal without ever starting the hare.

We receive from C. P. Somerby, 28 Lafayette-place, New York, formerly publisher of the *Truthseeker*, a copy of a new weekly magazine entitled *Commonwealth*. It consists chiefly of telling extracts from writers on sociological and economic questions. We notice that Mr. Bernard Shaw's Fabian Essay on "The Basis of Socialism" is being reprinted in its pages.

In the March *Fortnightly* Professor Sully writes in popular style on "The Dream as a Revelation." The dream, says Professor Sully, is the outcome of a maimed consciousness. The latest conception of the brain is of a hierarchy of organs, the higher and later evolved seeming to control, and in a measure to repress, the functional activities of the lower and earlier. Translated into psychological language, this means that what is instinctive, primitive, elemental, in our mental life, is being continually overborne by the fruit of experience, by the regulative process of reflection. By throwing the higher centres *hors de combat* you may bring back the earlier state of things in which sensation, instinct, and a rudimentary animal intelligence have it all their own way. Sleep is one means of stupefying the supreme controlling organs. Hence in sleep we have a reversion to a more primitive type of experience, an upwelling in vigorous pristine abundance of sensation and impulse. Something very similar to this was advanced nearly a hundred years ago by Thomas Paine in his essay on dreams in the *Age of Reason*.

Since his elevation to the French Academy, Lecomte de Lisle has been much pestered by young poets who submit their verses to him. One called after sending him his book and said, "Tell me frankly, monsieur, if I have any excuse for publishing these verses." "Certainly," said the Freethinking poet; "it would be some excuse if you did so to escape death."

## OBITUARY.

It is my sad duty to record the death at the London Hospital on Thursday March 2, of the beloved wife of Charles J. Hunt. Mrs. Hunt had been ill and in great physical pain for many weeks, during which time she never for a moment wavered from the Atheism she had so long professed, and which, in illness as in health, formed the basis of her life-action. She died a few hours after a very severe operation had been performed, but, so long as consciousness lasted, her thoughts were entirely for others—never for herself. Her own future gave her no concern, the future of those dear to her did, and her last conscious moments were spent in thought for these. "As the life so the death," and thought for others was the keynote of Mrs. Hunt's life. She was interred at Paddington Green Cemetery on March 8. Mrs. Besant, Mr. H. Burrows, and about eighty members from West London, N.W. London and Finsbury Park Branches, were present. Secular service was read at the grave by the undersigned, who in life she had called "friend."—THORNTON SMITH.

THOMAS ANDERTON died Feb. 25, 1893, aged 62 years, and was interred March 1, in Dob-lane Chapel burying-ground, Failsworth. Mr. Anderton was one of the pioneers of the Failsworth Secular Schools, having been an attender and constant worker in the cause for upwards of fifty years. He was a busy worker in connexion with the Liberal cause, and one of the originators of the Failsworth Co-operative Society. Though his good works will live hereafter, his loss will be felt most keenly. Mr. Percy Percival (our now resident speaker) gave a most suitable Secular Service in the Unitarian Chapel (whose kind permission we appreciate) at the burial. A Secular Service was also held at the Secular School on Sunday last. Several members testified to Mr. Anderson's work and unceasing energy in our Secular cause. Mr. Percival read Mr. Holyoake's Funeral Service from the "Secular Manual," which closed the service.—T. A.

## 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, S. H. Alison, "Hell's History," and recital (2d. and 4d.); social gathering after the lecture. Monday at 8, entertainment and dance (3d. and 6d.) for benefit of member in distress. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, C. J. Hunt, "Gods, Ancient and Modern"; 9, special members' meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 2.30, children's party; 7.30, H. Snell, "The Ascent of Man." Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

Edmonton—North Middlesex Hall, Fore-street: 7, C. Cohen will lecture.

Finsbury Park Branch, 11 Blackstock-road: Saturday, March 18, at 8, members meeting.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "Ireland at Westminster" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "The Breaking of the Bible" (3d., 6d., and 1s) Wednesday at 8.15, C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death" (free).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday at 8, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches" (free).

Progressive Association, Penton Hall, 81 Pentonville-road: 7, Miss Hammond Hills, "Links which Connect Ancient Britain with Rome" (free); preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

South Essex Secular Society, 67 Woodgrange-road, Forest Gate: 12 noon, council meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. James, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Wonder Workers."

## COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Hall No. 5, upstairs): 6.30, William Diack, "Freethought and the French Revolution." Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, John Grange, "Demonology."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11, J. H. Ridgway, "Land Nationalisation," a Paper for discussion; 7, a concert.

Bristol: Charles Watts lectures three times.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, reading and debating circle; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, Robert Forder, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Dulsgate Liberal Club (near Todmorden): 6.30, A. B. Wakefield, "Ernest Jones, the People's Friend."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, James Gilbert, "Free Education: is it Beneficial?"; 6.30, Zosimus, "The Ignoramus on Secularism."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, Mrs. Saunderson (member of the Hull School Board), "Women, Priests, and Marriage."

Jarrow—Co-operative Hall (small room), Market-square: 7, business meeting.

Leeds—Waverley Hall, York Buildings, New York-street, Kirk-gate: 7, Mr. Fisher, "Prayer and Fasting"; business meeting after the lecture.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Booth, "Matter and Motion."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 3, annual meeting; 6.30, cantata, Sherwood's "Queen." Tuesday, debating circle, Miss Clegg, "Byron."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, J. Brown, "Who was Jesus Christ?"

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: 7, E. A. Atkey, "The Decay of Belief."

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

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Mercer, "The Idea of God."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, O. Joseph, a reading.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Whitewashing of Christianity"; 3, "Life Without Religion"; 7, "What did Jesus Teach?—a Challenge to Neo-Christians"; tea at 5.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, R. Chapman, "Josephus: a Chapter of Christian Evidences."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, Mr. Kaper, "The Eight Hours Question."

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 7, a meeting.

### 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 19, Camberwell; 20, Blackheath Liberal Club; 26, Libra Hall. April 2, Manchester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—March 19, Hyde Park. April 2, New Brompton; 16, Hyde Park; 23, Hammersmith.

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

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—March 19, Bethnal Green; 26, m, Hyde Park. April 2, m, Bethnal Green; a, Victoria Park; 9, m, Islington; 16, m, Mile End; a, Finsbury Park; 23, m, Battersea; 30, m, Hyde Park; a, Finsbury Park; e, Hammersmith. May 7, m, Bethnal Green; a, Victoria Park; e, Walthamstow; 14 to 21, annual tour; 28, m, Islington; e, Kilburn.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—March 19, e, Battersea. April 9, m, Wood Green; 16, Manchester. May 7, m, Wood Green; 14, m, Battersea; a, Islington; 21, m, Camberwell.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—March 19, Plymouth; 23, Birmingham; 30, Hammersmith. April 2, Reading; 12, Hall of Science; 24 and 25, Sunderland; 29, Arbroath; 30, Aberdeen. May 7, Edinburgh.

ST. JOHN, 8 Norland-road North, Notting Hill, W.—April 2, e, Hammersmith; 16, m, Finsbury Park; 23, m, Victoria Park. May 14, m, Hyde Park; 21, m, Victoria Park; e, Hammersmith; 28, m, Bethnal Green.

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

J. GREEVZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—March 19, Leeds

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