

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## SPECIAL.

Next week's "Freethinker" will be a Special Number, price Twopence.

## HELL AT HULL.

RELIGION is a beautiful thing if you look at it in the right way. There is nothing like it for "healing," the clergy say, and really it necessitates a good deal of that process. According to the Bible, the first quarrel in the world was about religion. Cain worshipped God in one way, and Abel in another; and they settled the quarrel after the general fashion of religious disputants, by the stronger knocking the other's brains out. This story is typical, and perhaps the author of it was a sly and subtle humorist. Half the rows in the world have been caused by religion, and religion has aggravated most other causes of difference. We have only to look at Belfast just now for a striking exemplification. Race hatred is bitter enough, but in combination with religious hatred it produces devils. With that logic which is peculiar to the Orangeman, the Protestants of Belfast resent Home Rule by beating, kicking, stoning, and almost hanging their Catholic fellow citizens, with a view to showing how the Catholic's heel is going to be placed on the Protestant's neck. It is a practical bull of the first water, a splendid Hibernicism. That is how it strikes us, at any rate; but be it as it may, no impartial observer can help seeing that religious bigotry is the real curse of Ireland. England and Scotland have long become reconciled. Why? Because they had no *religious* difference. England and Ireland, however, are still at variance, and one part of Ireland is in desperate hostility to all the rest. Again, we ask, Why? The answer is, Because the one part is Protestant and the rest is Catholic. The two sections hate each other in the name of God. Even in calling upon the Belfast Orangemen to keep their fighting propensities in check for the proper opportunity, the blustering Dr. Kane must call Mr. Gladstone a "Holy British Pharisee" and allude to Mr. Morley as "his Infidel accomplice." That "Infidel accomplice" is too much of a philosopher to feel anything but contempt for Dr. Kane's braggadocio. It will not provoke him into injustice. He will hold the balance impartially, and endeavor to keep the peace between these hostile religious factions with the least possible bloodshed. When the row is over, the least fanatical on both sides may reflect, with some pain and perhaps some instruction, that it was the "Infidel" statesman who had to prevent them from cutting each others' throats.

Turning from Belfast to Hull, we find a state of things which is a scandalous commentary on the vauntings of Christian Churches. It proves that Christianity is an utterly spent force for good, if it ever possessed such a virtue. No one can pretend that Hull is not a Christian town. Less than three months ago its Chief Constable was interfering with

Freethought meetings, and his action was apparently approved by all other sections of the community; at least it was not (to our knowledge) resented by any of the inhabitants of Hull except the Freethinkers, while the press, with the single exception of the *Critic*, gave the acquiescence of silence. Yes, Hull is undoubtedly a Christian town, and what is it like nearly two thousand years after the birth of Christ? Soldiers and policemen are about as though the place were in a state of siege or under martial law. Capital, on the one side, claims to do as it likes with its own; and labor, on the other side, is in such a passionate state as to resort to arson and murderous violence. Pride, hatred, and hunger are having a fine holiday; and the Christianity, which so recently worried Freethinkers, is as powerless to guide or restrain as a flea is capable of directing or controlling the movements of an elephant.

Religion, as Auguste Comte (the Atheist) conceived it, is an inspiring and regulating influence. But what is it as the Churches conceive it? A mere survival in the present of the ideas and sentiments of a dead past; like an organ out of date, but only half aborted, and in the way of all effective exertion.

Labor leaders have been coquetting with Christianity. Were they better educated, and versed in history—to say nothing of philosophy—they would see that such a course is mischievous. Even at its very best, the sentimentality of the Churches is utterly useless in the complex conditions of modern society; nay, worse than useless, for it induces a spurious harmony, which breaks into the wildest discord under the strain of opposite interests. A true Religion of Humanity would combine the sentiment of brotherhood with the conclusions of science, history, and philosophy. Christianity cannot do this. It can only preach the sentiment itself, in a certain state of dilution; and sentiment without reason is the washiest thing in the world.

We believe that labor disputes might easily be dealt with, without any real violation of individual freedom. Strikes and lock-outs are social wars, fruitful in misery and evil passions. Neither capital nor labor, in the light of a true morality, has the right to "do as it likes with its own." Both sides need the curb of a civilized public opinion. But how is it to be applied? Well, the problem is far from insoluble. We believe that a judicial tribunal would soon prove effective. It should be constituted like a high court, with power to call witnesses. But it should have no policemen or soldiers to enforce its decisions. It should simply declare them, and public opinion would do all the rest.

While the Churches are prating and quarreling about their fabled hell beyond the grave, there is a real hell seething around them. There is a hot section of hell at Hull at this present moment. Surely it would be better if men of brains and influence would set themselves to abolish the real hell on earth, instead of trying to save us from the hell of a diseased imagination.

G. W. FOOTE.

## INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE GOSPELS.

IN 1884, Messrs. Macmillan and Co. published an important contribution to the internal criticism of the first three gospels by Dr. Edwin Abbott (then head master of the City of London School and author of *Philochristus*, etc.) and the Rev. W. G. Rushbrooke. It was entitled *The Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels*. By the simple process of placing side by side the parallel passages in the first three gospels, with an additional column illustrating what was peculiar to Mark, and printing in different type whatever was common to the three, they demonstrated several undeniable conclusions. The first, and in their eyes the most important, was that there was a common tradition underlying all, found in its simplest form in Mark; Matthew and Luke borrowing from the tradition embodied in the second gospel. Next—and this is the part I lay stress on—is that the story common to each of them formed a much smaller narrative of its own; this is made plain by its being printed in different type. Usually this is best preserved in Mark, as, for instance (xv. 37-39), "And Jesus uttered a loud voice and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion," etc. This is amplified in Matthew (xxvii. 50-54) into "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit, And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; And the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; And coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many. Now the centurion," etc.

That in some cases an earlier form exists in Matthew, may be concluded from a comparison of Matt. xiv. 12, 13, with Mark vi. 30, 31. In the first gospel, John's disciples, after his execution bury him, and come and tell Jesus, who slopes by ship into a desert place apart. In the second it is the apostles who tell Jesus, not of this particularly but "all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." Another reason for withdrawing is suggested viz., "to rest awhile." Again the message of John the Baptist is, Matt. iii. 2 "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And this is simply repeated in attributing it to Jesus (iv. 17). But in Mark (i. 15), Jesus *i.e.*, the writer, amplifies this saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Christianity had become a system of belief. The very phrase "gospel" used as a summary of Christian teaching, should open our eyes as much as the word "church." Now Mark opens with this phrase, and whereas both in Matt. xvi. 25, xix. 28, 29, and Luke ix. 24, we have "for my sake" and "for my name's sake," we have in Mark viii. 35, and x. 29, the addition "and the gospel's sake."

The tendency of these researches, as of similar ones conducted by German critics, had been to show that the theory of oral tradition failed; the compilers of the gospels, whether in the first, second, third, or twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth century, having evidently documents before them. A further general conclusion was that the earliest form of the story was that found in Mark, which several critics have affirmed to be originally a Latin gospel. But there are many peculiarities about Mark which preclude the possibility of its being an original gospel, any more than Matthew or Luke. To some of these I must briefly allude, treating them more fully later on. We have noticed his insertion of the term "gospel." According to Matthew x., the design of the apostleship was to preach through the cities of Israel that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But Mark gives them general instructions to preach and heal sick-

nesses and cast out devils. Matthew gives orders not to go to the Gentiles. This, Mark omits. In the story of the Canaanitish woman in Matthew, Jesus says, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Mark leaves this out also. Another sign that he was removed from the time and unacquainted with the facts is calling Herod, who lived at the time of Christ, the "king" (vi. 14) instead of "tetrarch." Herod the King, in whose reign Matthew makes Jesus born, died B.C. 4.

Mr. F. P. Badham, B.A., in his little book on *The Formation of the Gospels*, 1891, carries the matter a little further. He shows by a variety of evidence that "our canonical St. Mark cannot, in whole or part be identified with the document described by John the Elder"—*i.e.*, John *apud* Papius, *apud* Eusebius, *apud* the Church. He holds that "the lowest stratum of the triple traditions is generally to be found in St. Matthew, and that this lowest stratum consists of twin gospels." Doublets or duplicate passages are found in each of the Synoptics, fifty being found in Matthew, twelve in Mark, and twenty-eight in Luke. This result is curious, and deserves more attention than it has yet received. Mr. Alexander Vance, in his extraordinary work entitled *Vox Clamantis* (Dublin, 1868), pointed out that the phenomena of the gospels prove that two separate traditions were embedded in them. He came to the conclusion that the earlier one, including much of the teaching, originally referred not to Jesus Christ, but to his forerunner, John the Baptist. On some other occasion I may show that this is not quite so crazy a theory as it may at first sight appear.\* All I ask the reader now to note is that the very lowest stratum shows a double thread. The second gospel is not Mark's reminiscences of Peter, as represented by Church tradition, but an attempted harmony of two different gospels.

Upon a critical view of the gospels we find everywhere additions, emendations, attempted harmony, and manipulation. Each, when microscopically examined, proves to be a palimpsest in which a new version is written over an older one. One fact stands out clearly. It may be stated in the words of the conclusion of Mr. Badham's little work: "The Catholic Church had existence before the first line of the gospels was written." The Catholics say truly, The gospels rest on the Church, not the Church on the gospels. It existed before them; it selected them from many others; it touched them up to suit its own purposes, and it made them canonical. It must never be forgotten that, in the words of Dean Alford (*Prolegomena to Greek New Testament*, chap. i., § 5, p. 15), "the sacred books of the Christians were not published to the world in general, but were reserved and precious possessions of the believing societies."

J. M. WHEELER.

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\* Meantime let the reader remember that in the Acts of the Apostles (xix. 1-8) mention is made of certain disciples of John who had been baptised into John's baptism, and were re-baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. They did not as much as know if there was any Holy Ghost. They were located at Ephesus, afterwards alleged to be the scene of the labors of St. John the Divine—possibly confused with John the Baptist and John the Elder. Further, to this day, in Syria and Mesopotamia are remnants of the so-called "Christians of St. John"—Sabæans, who do not acknowledge Christ; nay, regard him as an impostor, while venerating John and receiving his baptism.

## THE MISSION OF FREETHOUGHT.

FREETHOUGHT is a term representing that mental liberty which enables us to believe whatever commends itself to our judgment as being true, without subjecting us either to social ostracism, or to any other kind of persecution. It should be borne in mind that belief or disbelief, among thinking persons, is the result of evidence or of the lack of it. There are, unfortunately, persons too intellectually indifferent to inquire into the reason for the belief submitted to them; they accept creeds and dogmas on trust without any attempt to investigate such claims (if there are any) as can be logically urged in their favor. This indifference is, no doubt, one of the principal causes why so many individuals are constantly yielding to the influence of dogmatic theology. Such intellectual idlers sacrifice personal judgment to the authority of the church. Professor Playfair once said: "One of the first things to be learnt from science is not to trust to authority, but to demand proof for every assertion." If this excellent advice were acted upon the clergy would need to be more careful than they now are in their pulpit utterances, and we should not have the sad spectacle, which alas, is too often presented, of blind devotees of the orthodox faith accepting as true, without any consideration, the wildest conjectures and the most absurd speculations.

Freethought is based upon three facts, namely, 1, That we cannot really believe regardless of evidence. 2, That it is impossible for us all to think alike upon questions of a purely speculative character; and 3, That such uniformity of opinion is as undesirable as it is impracticable. Freethought further recognises that the ability to think, and the conclusions at which the thinker arrives, depend upon circumstances that are not under his control. It also urges that the belief resulting from such circumstances should be entertained free from all fetters, theological or otherwise.

The first mission of Freethought is to proclaim and to emphasise the fact that men are what they are by virtue of the constitution of their minds and of the external influences that operate thereon. It therefore follows that diversity of judgments and variety of opinions are the necessary outcome of the varied capacities and abilities of individuals, of the amount of knowledge they possess, and of the extent of the wisdom shown in its application. It is only persons who are ignorant of these facts who can fairly expect uniformity of opinion. In all cases, however, Freethought claims for each and all the utmost freedom of thought. Such liberty is not only among the primary rights of man, but it is, as it were, the foliage of mentality and the blossom of intellectuality.

It is to be regretted that, notwithstanding past triumphs in the domain of Freethought, the world is still to a large extent in a condition of intellectual bondage, therefore the mission of the Freethinker is to endeavor to rescue the human mind from this state of mental serfdom and to protect it from the despotic sway of the oppressors of the human race. There is no argument, however weak and foolish, but it is brought into focus to delude the credulous believer. Amidst the general din of confused tongues Freethought has, even at the present time, to encounter incoherent clamor, false reasoning, and fanatical appeals to authorities that are totally unworthy of credit by thinking men and women. It has to face the enormities of despotism, the machinations of tyrants, and the allurements of priests; hence a Freethinker requires to be a man of courage, always prepared to resent any encroachments on the rights and privileges of either the individual or of society. Only bad and servile natures would willingly carry out the behests of oppressive masters whose dispositions are

akin to their own, and who are destitute of those qualities that render mankind noble, independent, and happy. Man is a thinking as well as a breathing being, and both of these functions require certain atmospheric conditions, without which they are unable to operate beneficially. Intellectually speaking there is great significance in those memorable words of the American orator, "Give me liberty or give me death."

Not only are bad men enemies to Freethought, but ignorant men are also its dangerous foes. Forbearance, consideration for the opinions of others, and the duty of according justice to opponents, are virtues unknown to those who are ignorant of the laws of thought, and who consequently fail to recognise that it is impossible that all men should feel or think alike upon every subject. A man must be strangely mistaken, or supremely egotistical, who arrogantly proclaims himself to be the possessor of "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and who assigns all the errors to his opponent. Happily the number of people are rapidly increasing who readily grant that those who differ from them may share in the truth and honesty of the world. Freethought is concerned with all the faculties that influence the function termed thinking, and it designates the attempt to stifle thought as criminal. We would ask those persons who look upon private property as being sacred, the important question—What can a man call his own if not his thoughts? It appears to us to be of far greater service to the community to defend the rights of property in thought than to protect interests in estates left by our ancestors.

It is the mission of Freethought to protect mental growth from those who would obstruct its development by presuming that their opinions are of higher value than those entertained by other people. There is but one force to which thought should yield, and that is truth. Facts, not mere conjectures, should influence us in daily life, for these determine our well-being. The man who walks by the light of truth looks on mankind in general as deserving relief from suffering: he holds that their worth should be cherished, and that their merits should be appreciated as though they were his own. It will be acknowledged by all who are sufficiently familiar with the true means employed in the formation of opinions, that the only logical position to take upon doubtful questions, is to form the best conclusions possible after the freest and fairest public discussion has taken place on the *pros* and *cons* of the subjects under consideration. It should not be overlooked that opinions, laws, institutions, and principles are formed and established on the invariability of the connection between causes and effects as presented constantly to the human mind; the truth of this is seen in all history, for if it were otherwise the records of the past would be destitute of their greatest service for the present. Without this uniformity of law we could neither properly explain the past, nor safely judge the future. Thus the mission of Freethought is not only to break the fetters forged by despotism, bigotry and ignorance, but also to declare absolute personal liberty as a condition of the progress of man and of society.

Our position then as Freethinkers is this: men and women possess different temperaments, constitutions of body, and inclinations of minds, based on the changes called causes and effects, and therefore, they lack the conditions that would be necessary to produce uniformity of opinion. But there is another factor that cannot be ignored, which is that of the conflicting interests that different persons have to serve. So long as this fact remains, divergent views must obtain. The method to be adopted, by which such diversity can be best regulated in harmony with the general welfare is, in our opinion, the application of the principle of

Freethought, for that is the movement which makes inquiry free, knowledge general, and reason the guide and guardian of human life.

CHARLES WATTS.

### THE OCCUPATION OF THE GODS.

THOUGH Christians of various denominations, including Trinitarians, assure us that there is *only one true God*, viz, "Our Father which art in heaven," a study of ancient religions will satisfy the inquiring mind that a large number of deities of various kinds and qualities have been worshipped and are still believed in by the different races of mankind.

John Stuart Mill, who, in all his writings, was particularly careful to state the true nature of a problem with which he meant to deal, in his essay on *Theism*, says:

"Though I have defined the problem of natural theology to be that of the existence of God, or of a God, rather than of gods, there is the amplest historical evidence that the belief in gods is immeasurably more natural to the human mind than the belief in one author and ruler of nature; and that this more elevated belief is, compared with the former, an artificial product, requiring (except when impressed by early education) a considerable amount of intellectual culture before it can be reached. For a long time the supposition appeared forced and unnatural that the diversity we see in the operations of nature can be the work of a single will. To the untaught mind, and to all minds in pre-scientific times, the phenomena of nature seem to be the result of forces altogether heterogeneous, each taking its course quite independently of the others; and though to attribute them to conscious wills is eminently natural, the natural tendency is to suppose as many such independent wills as there are distinguishable forces of sufficient importance and interest to have remarked and named."\*

Not only have men worshipped a multitude of gods at one and the same time, but they generally bestowed the largest amount of homage upon the biggest or most awe-inspiring among their deities. In other words, our early ancestors filled the heavens with imaginary giants, and frightened themselves into the worship of these creatures of their own imagination. And what was the occupation of these gods? I say, what *was* their occupation, because, as the Brothers Paulton say in their extremely funny comedy of "Niobe," "the gods have long since retired from business"? There is not even the ghost of a god left. The old Pagan gods, however, were not altogether inactive. Each had a separate department to himself, and came as little into competition with his fellow gods as possible. Jupiter looked after the electrical department, manufactured lightning, and caused the thunder; while Juno was the goddess of the winds, and she is supposed to have married Jupiter, and the nuptials were celebrated after the most approved fashion. Invitations were sent to all the minor gods to be present, and, most interesting of all, the whole of mankind attended and brought with them a representative gathering of their "poor relations," the lower animals.

A young lady named Chelone was wicked enough to laugh at this ceremony, and for this impiety the great god Mercury effectually silenced her in a manner that should be a warning to heretics who believe in ridicule through all succeeding generations. She was either turned into a tortoise or condemned to perpetual silence, either of which punishment would be regarded by any self-respecting lady as worse than an eternity in hell.

Minerva differed from the god Jesus in this—that while the latter had either no father, or two fathers, or only the ghost of a father, the former had no mother; nevertheless Minerva had a good, stout skull, which was duly opened by Vulcan in order, no

doubt, to test the weight and quality of his brains. Then came the amorous gods, Venus, Adonis, and Apollo, who appear to have started the business of romantic stag-*lovers of cloudland*.

Old Neptune had the sea under his entire control, and other departments of nature were conducted by a long tribe of minor gods. Thus these ancient gods saw to the affairs of this and all the other worlds that revolve in space, amusing themselves often when not engaged in more serious business, but at all times taking a keen interest in the concerns of mankind. Whether the gods ate anything to sustain their existence, there is not sufficient evidence to determine; but that they drank is certain from all the documentary evidence at hand concerning them. Nor do I think that there can be any doubt that jolly old Bacchus presided at the celestial public bar.

Even the dull old Hebrew god, Jahveh, did some work—six days' hard—and then rested on the seventh; but except for the interest old Jahveh took in the preservation of his chosen race, the Jews, it would be difficult to state what useful work he is supposed to have done for mankind. He did a lot of destructive labor, such as drowning the whole of the human race except one family; knocked over the Tower of Babel, because he was afraid the people might build high enough to reach the gates of heaven, thinking, no doubt, that while he was engaged some of them might sneak in at the back door. He burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah with celestial fire, and submerged the poor Egyptians beneath the waves of the Red Sea. It is true that he is alleged to have fed the Israelites with manna from the skies, but the Jews do not appear to have appreciated the heavenly diet as it deserved, but grumbled as vigorously as a Christian pauper in receipt of a free feed.

The occupation of the Man-God or God-Man, Jesus, consisted mainly in retailing old precepts and working wonders that failed to convince even his own disciples. It was all very well to feed five thousand hungry people on five loaves and two small fishes, but the miracle would have been more like a genuine wonder if he had fed them on—well, nothing at all, and satisfied them all that they had had a sumptuous meal. It was all very well to open the eyes of one blind man, but it would have been better to have willed that no more blind people should be born. It was all very well to have raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus would probably have appreciated the kindness of Jesus all the more if he had imparted the information as to how he (Lazarus) might avoid the agony of a second death.

In short, though the ancient gods may have done some useful work in their day and generation, it is also certain, from all the records concerning them, that they wrought a good deal of mischief. But what are the gods about to-day? They do not interfere in the concerns of mankind in the slightest degree. Science, indeed, has rendered them absolutely impotent. One God, it is true, is supposed to exist somewhere even to-day, now, but God alone knows where it is. He is supposed to be doing something for a living, but it would puzzle a Philadelphian lawyer to find out what it is. He does not influence a single vote at the time of election. In fact, even the Christian finds that he can do without his God for six days of the week, and that he only wants him on Sunday, so that he may relieve himself of the "poms and vanities of this wicked world" for a brief while, and cast the weight and burden of his sins upon the shoulders of the "crucified Savior." Even this, however, will soon be of no avail, for the educated are beginning to learn that the crucified Jesus of the gospels was as much a myth as the Pagan gods of antiquity; and so, in absolute despair, Theists and Christians alike will have to exclaim that the "occupation of the gods," like Othello's, is gone for ever.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

\* *Three Essays of Religion*, p. 130, 131.

## E A S T E R.

Two letters recently appeared in the *Daily Graphic* on "How to Find Easter." The tendency of the first letter, signed "W." may be inferred from the fact that the writer denounces the scheme by which Easter is determined as "morally wrong." Of course, to the believer in the Christian myth, to keep the correct anniversary of the fictitious resurrection may be a matter of importance; but that an astronomer should seriously set himself to answer so absurd an assertion by theological arguments, instead of showing scientifically and historically that Easter was a festival kept long before Christianity was invented, seems incredible. Yet this is what Mr. E. W. Maccuder, R.A.S., physical assistant at the Greenwich Observatory, does in the second of the letters above referred to!

The very term Easter expresses what it means: what comes from the East, *i.e.*, the sun. The Germans call the season *Ostern*, from the Saxon *oster* (rising), which comes from *ost* (east). The ancient Scandinavians, long before they had heard of Christianity, kept the festival of Ostara, the Goddess of Spring. The French call it *pâques*; the Italians *pasquo*, from the Hebrew *pacha*, or Passover; not a passing over any sea, but the passing over from the bondage of winter to the freedom of summer. The most ancient nations celebrated the vernal equinox, or the resurrection of the sun, preceded by his passing over or crossing (crucifixion) over the equator. The custom of Easter eggs proves the antiquity of the celebration. Indian, Japanese, Assyrian monuments of great antiquity, show us a bull breaking with his horns the mundane egg. Now, in consequence of the precession of the equinoxes, the spring season rather more than four thousand years ago commenced in the zodiacal sign of the Bull, and continued therein for rather more than two thousand years—since the equinoctial points take nearly twenty-six thousand years to perform an entire revolution in the heavens. The Bull, therefore, then was the sign of spring, which is allegorically represented as breaking open the mundane egg, or the earth. Hence also the universal worship of the Bull in those ages, and hence the custom introduced in them, and preserved to this day, of Easter eggs. About two thousand years ago the vernal equinox passed into the sign of the Ram or Lamb; hence the present worship of the Lamb. Till the year 680 Christ was represented as a crucified lamb; Pope Agathus then decreed that he should be represented as a crucified man.

Again, the fact that Easter day has to be found by an astronomical calculation surely ought to be sufficient to show that this Easter is a purely astronomical event, totally unconnected with the death and resurrection of any man. The calculation is somewhat complicated, because the Paschal full moon, by which the Church determines Easter, is not the true astronomical one, but one deduced from the Epact. The object of this device was to prevent the Easter of the Christians from coinciding with the Passover of the Jews, though such coincidence took place in 1805 and 1825, and will again occur in 1903, 1923, 1927, and 1981. But this complication is not such a grievance as "W." would have us believe; no one but an expert desires to make the calculation. The public are told by the almanack the date of Easter for the current year, and for people who wish to know it in coming years, there are tables published which they can consult.

All the other moveable feasts of the year are regulated by Easter, and they, as we have seen depend on the moon, which shows that all those feasts are astronomical, and have no more connection with Christianity than the bishop's apron and gaiters have with piety, but only prove that he is the representative of the ancient priest butchering lambs and bullocks for sacrifice, which necessitated such protective clothing. The full moon which regulates Easter, of course means plenty of moonshine, which, by an unintended irony, shows Christ's resurrection to be moonshine indeed. And no thinking person, remembering that Easter was celebrated in ancient times, as the resurrection of the sun, long before Christianity existed, can for one moment ascribe its origin to the mythical Christ.

It is, indeed, the resurrection of the Sun which is celebrated, and this is the reason it always is kept on a Sunday. Further, in Catholic times the Church, even in this country, whether from an oversight or from trusting to the people's ignorance, ordered all fires to be put out on Easter eve, to be rekindled with a flint. A large wax taper called the Paschal taper, was blessed and kept burning beside a representative sepulchre till the morning. A taper used on

such an occasion in Westminster Abbey, is said to have weighed three hundred pounds. Is further demonstration needed that the Christian Easter celebration is simply a relic of Sun-worship? And so are St. Michael's and Christmas day.  
C. W. HECKETHORN.

## CLINGING TO VIRCHOW.

THE recent arrival here of Professor Virchow and, consequent thereon, the eagerness with which Christians try to make capital out of his attitude, in 1877, towards the doctrine of evolution, is characteristic of the tenacity with which reactionist supernaturalism resists the advent of new truths. On this subject the following may be interesting to some readers of the *Freethinker*. The *Times* published a translation of the lecture in which the Professor's views were defined, and which was delivered at Munich on September 22, 1877. I believe it can still be obtained from John Murray, publisher, Albemarle-street. Professor Tyndall, in the last edition of *Fragments of Science* (1892) refers to the use made of this lecture by those whom he sarcastically notices as possessing "true theologic courtesy." These wiseacres contended, in their classical style, that it proved the acceptors of the doctrine of evolution to be devoid of "common sense." The lecture really only had for its object the inculcation of caution, and was intended, as Professor Virchow himself says in a preface thereto, "to enter an energetic protest against the attempts that are made to proclaim the problems of research as actual facts, and the opinions of scientists as established science." He was also influenced by the idea that evolution favored the Socialistic idea. But the main gist of his argument was, that as he considered the theory to be in its hypothetical stage, it should not be taught in the schools as a scientific fact. At the time Professor Tyndall was particularly singled out, owing to the stir his Belfast and other lectures had made, by those to whom such a supporter as Virchow was a godsend. These gentlemen settled, with their usual modesty, that Professor Tyndall was "rash" and "shallow." The following quotations from that distinguished man's defence of his position I think weighty and instructive. He says: "The basis of the doctrine of evolution consists, not in an experimental demonstration—for the subject is hardly accessible to this mode of proof—but in its general harmony with scientific thought." Comparing evolution with other theories, he says: "From contrast, moreover, it derives enormous relative strength. On the one side we have a theory, which converts the power, whose garment is seen in the visible universe, into an artificer fashioned after the human model, and acting by broken efforts, as man is seen to act. On the other side, we have the conception that all we see around us and feel within us—the phenomena of physical nature as well as those of the human mind—have their unsearchable roots in a cosmical life, if I dare apply the term, an infinitesimal span of which is offered to the investigation of man. Among thinking people, in my opinion, this last conception has a higher ethical value than that of a personal artificer." He quotes from Dr. Hooker's address to the British Association in 1868: "So far from natural selection being a thing of the past [the *Athenæum* had stated it be so] it is an accepted doctrine with every philosophical naturalist."

Writing in 1878, Mr. Tyndall says: "Another decade has now passed, and he is simply blind who cannot see the enormous progress made by the theory during that time. . . the theory is not a complete thing from the first, but a thing that grows, as it were, asymptotically towards certainty. Darwin's theory, as pointed out nine and ten years ago by Helmholtz and Hooker, was then exactly in this condition of growth; and had they to speak of the subject to-day, they would be able to announce an enormous strengthening of the theoretic fibre. Fissures in continuity which then existed, and which left little hope of being ever spanned, have been since filled in, so that the further the theory is tested, the more fully does it harmonise with progressive experience and discovery."

Professor Huxley, in an article entitled "The Coming of Age of the Origin of Species," has the following: "In fact, those who have watched the progress of science within the last ten years will bear me out to the full when I assert that there is no field of biological inquiry in which the influence of the *Origin of Species* is not traceable; the foremost men of science in every country are either avowed champions of its leading doctrines, or at any rate abstain from opposing them." Further on, after stating that "primary and direct evidence in favor of evolution can be furnished only by

palæontology," and that now "our knowledge respecting the mammalia of the tertiary epoch is increased fifty-fold, and in some directions even approaches completeness," he goes on to say, "that if the doctrine of evolution had not existed, palæontologists must have invented it, so irresistibly is it forced upon the mind by the study of the remains of the tertiary mammalia which have been brought to light since 1859."

The religionists who depend on the sixteen-year-old utterances of Professor Virchow to obtain further respite, so that they may for a little longer be allowed to hug their old delusion, only glaringly display the hopelessness of their position; for they cannot hide the antiquity, sparseness, and inadequacy of the residuum of support to which they cling.

A. LEWIS.

## BOOK CHAT.

Messrs. Murray and Co. announce a revised edition of Dr. now Sir William Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, which let us hope will be brought up to date. In the last edition, the editor was so afraid of either becoming the opprobrium of the orthodox or the laughing-stock of scholars that, instead of treating the difficulties of the Deluge Story under D, at Deluge, was inserted, "See Flood," and at Flood, "See Noah."

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From the recently published letters of Heine it appears that he joked upon his Christian baptism to his Jewish friends within three days of having been dipped in the name of the Christian Trinity. The editor has thought fit to suppress the actual words he used, though they might have had a warning for Christians whose proselytism is another name for their persecution.

\* \* \*

A Doctor Johannes Müller has published a little book entitled *The Way to a Reconciliation Between Judaism and Christianity*. As the way lies in the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, it has been open to the Jews for some eighteen hundred years and invariably rejected by them. Dr. Müller's naive method reminds us of the various schemes of Christian re-union put forward, each Church asking that the rest of the sects shall become absorbed in its own. It is a good deal like the whale saying to Jonah, "Come in out of the wet."

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Dr. Alfred Momerie, who wishes it known that he still considers himself a member of the Church of England, though he is surely a very heretical one, is issuing through Messrs. Blackwood a work on *The Religion of the Future*, in which he states how much of the old beliefs he believes to be still untouched by criticism.

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*De Dageraad* for April has a Dutch translation of Dr. Charcot on the Faith-Cure, a review of Max Müller's *Psychical Religion*, and a critical memoir of Hippolyte Taine, in addition to its usual features and its supplementary issue of a Dutch translation of Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*.

\* \* \*

The last volume issued in Walter Scott's excellent shilling series of "Canterbury Poets" is entitled *Songs of Freedom*, selected and edited with an introduction by H. S. Salt. Mr. Salt states in his modest preface that he has sought to present an adequate collection of English and American poems illustrative of the growth of the revolution ideal during the past hundred years, and to arrange the volume in such a manner as to make it a record of the men no less than of the movement. The volume begins with Burns and ends with Edward Carpenter, and includes some of the finest of liberty's lyrics by Blake, Wordsworth, Campbell, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Emerson, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Whitman, Morris, etc., as well as a host of lesser known singers of Freedom such as Ebenezer Eliot, Robert Nicoll, W. J. Fox, Ebenezer Jones, W. M. Call, Ernest Jones, Gerald Massey, R. B. Brough, W. J. Linton, J. C. Mangan, T. O. Davis, James Thomson, J. B. Leno, Wilfrid S. Blunt, J. L. Joynes, John Barlas, Francis Adams, etc. Many worthy writers who are represented are unmentioned, but we must particularise here a sonnet on "Freethought," by E. H. Guillaume. The volume indeed is throughout interesting to Freethinkers, and it makes a worthy companion to those which have preceded it.

## ACID DROPS.

Mr. Henry Thorne, of Exeter Hall notoriety, in the course of a revival address at Chester, stated that he once entered a Secular hall and was horrified at the expression on the countenances of the audience, which made him feel he ought to button up his pockets. Being pressed for particulars, he said that the hall was at Leeds, and the lecturer was Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who was discoursing on "America," which doesn't seem a very ghastly subject. Mr. Thorne afterwards (but more in private) modified his language, and said the "expression" was only on the faces of some of the audience, who, for all he knew, may have been Christians. In all probability, however, the "expression" was a product of Mr. Thorne's heated imagination. This fact, indeed, seems to have dawned upon him, since he has privately tendered a kind of apology to the Chester Secularists, though it would be more gracious if it were tendered publicly.

Chester is a bigoted city. What else indeed could be expected? Is it not blessed with a cathedral and a garrison? And is not Bishop Jayne a notorious slanderer of Freethinkers—one who libels them and stands upon his episcopal dignity when called upon for proof or apology? In such a city, under the influence of such a bishop, we are not surprised that an active Freethinker is a marked man. We felt it was quite natural on being informed that a zealous member of the Chester Branch of the National Secular Society had been given the alternative of withdrawing from it or losing his employment and facing probable starvation with his wife and children. This is the sort of "charity" one naturally expects from Christians when they are free to display the full character of their faith.

Inspector Littlechild, a Scotland-yard detective, in the course of an interview, makes an important statement on the relation of crime and religion. He says: "I have always found the worst beasts to be those who have committed crime under the cloak of religion. They have been undoubtedly the meanest wretches I have had to deal with. Some of the blackguards recorded in this book of convictions before me have paid their subscriptions to churches, helped to raise steeples or build organs, and have lived upon canting religion; but they have been the blackest and meanest scoundrels that I have ever arrested, and until arrested actually lived lives, perhaps, of apparent respectability. My own record of arrests, and that of almost every officer, will prove it."

Alexandra Park, Manchester, has been refused for the May-Day Labor Demonstration on Sunday, May 7. Mr. Chester Thompson, chairman of the Parks Committee, makes money out of "booze" which is sold on Sunday, but he can't stand working-men's meetings on that day. We hear that the demonstrators are going to the Park all the same, though not in procession; and we presume there will be some "fun" for those who turn up on the occasion.

There was something like a free fight at the Bishop of London's St. James's Hall meeting against the Welsh Suspensory Bill. Although precautions had been taken that admission to this "public meeting" was only by tickets, to be obtained from the Church Defence Association, a goodly number of Welshmen and Nonconformists were present. They listened with patience to the Earl of Selborne's legal maunderings, but when the Bishop of London began to speak, fairly sang him down with the Welsh song, "Land of our Fathers." Several meetings were carried on in the hall at the same time, and altogether Dr. Temple had a pretty clear intimation that bishops are not regarded with the awe and reverence they excited in the good old days.

Canon Knox Little uttered a lot of nonsense about robbing the Church, and so robbing the poor. Why, it is the Church that has robbed the poor all along, a portion of its tithes having originally been devoted to the poor. To talk of disendowment as robbery is as much rot as if the army was to complain that less was being spent on it and more on the navy. The nation cannot rob itself, and when it chooses to transfer money hitherto devoted to the Church to purposes of education, it will no more commit robbery than the man who decides to spend more money on his clothier and less on his publican. Some day we shall have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who will not only see this, but take in hand to

apply the seven millions or so yearly devoted to the Church for the benefit of the whole nation.

Henry Wiggan, the London revivalist, 'advertises himself as "the Weeping Preacher." He also solicits donations. We suggest that they should take the form of pocket-handkerchiefs. Ladies might work in the corner "For Weeping Wiggan."

The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland is having a high old time in Holloway Gaol: a big room furnished by Maple, first-class food sent in by a public caterer, books and papers *ad lib.*, and plenty of visitors. Six weeks of this luxury is her punishment for a grave offence. Twelve months of *real* imprisonment was Mr. Foote's punishment for speaking his honest opinions. A mad world, my masters! There is one law for the rich and the poor, but it works out differently as you happen to be a duchess or the editor of a Freethought paper.

A terrible panic took place in the parish church of Torre Dell Annunziata, near Naples, last Sunday. During the evening service a candle set fire to some hangings, and the flames spread to the woodwork. The church was full of worshippers, but none could calmly await the issue. They rushed to the doors and a fearful crush arose round the narrow exits. Eight women and five children were crushed to death, and a large number of persons were injured.

Up at Islington, the local Branch is having a lively time with its outdoor meetings. Its first was at Highbury Fields, and a second meeting was organised by a well-known clique of Christians, who, although they deny it, are believed to be in the employ of the C.E.S. The second meeting was held on the same spot, but a resident could not stand the repeated dose of the Christian Evidence man's offensive voice and slanderous language, and called the police, who promptly dispersed both meetings. Not to be done, on the evening of that Sunday the Islington Branch met in Canonbury-lane, where the Y.M.C.A. hold forth. No sooner, however, had speaking begun, than the eminent Christian before mentioned commenced speaking from a stool within a yard of our stand, and, by sheer force of lungs, howled down the Secularist.

Last Sunday, by means of a ruse, the Branch carried on their meeting for half an hour peacefully at Tyndale-place. A spy, however, carried to the Christian gang, waiting in Highbury Fields, the news, and they promptly arrived and pitched their stand again close to the other, and created such a din that a near resident got the police to break up the meetings. This resident remarked that the language of the rowdy Christian speaker was not fit for his young listeners to hear.

This fellow, who is accompanied by the rough who made himself so obnoxious last year to the Islington Branch, has been allowed to speak in opposition on our platforms. He recently spoke at the Hall of Science on the occasion of Mr. Foote's discourse on the marriage question. Now, we have debarred one or two of these gentry from our platforms on account of their conduct, and we here warn this man that if the utter disregard of the courtesy of controversialism detailed above—and which is simply directed to the object of preventing, by rowdiness, meetings being held—is repeated, he will be added to the list of ruffians denied the privilege of speaking from our platforms.

The Mormons have dedicated their new Temple at Salt Lake City. It has been forty years in building, at a cost of five million dollars. The *Christian World* calls it "a wonderful monument to the vitality of that system of puerile and pernicious imposture." We should say the same of all the big new churches in Christendom.

Christians are fond of crying out to Freethinkers—"See our many splendid churches and institutions! Don't they prove that our faith is true? Do you think such things are built out of mere delusion?" This is what may be called "the argument from success." But somehow no one is ready to apply it to any religion or sect except his own. The orthodox Christian is not to be overawed by a five-million-dollar Mormon Temple. He looks at it and says "Imposture." Well, just in the same way, the Freethinker

says "Imposture!" before the temples of orthodox Christianity.

Father Ignatius is censured by the *Christian World* for declaring that the end of the world is approaching. "Nothing is cheaper," it says, "than this kind of assertion." Quite so. But it was indulged in by Jesus Christ and his apostles. We presume, therefore, that they were fond of "cheap assertions." This is an opinion we have long entertained, and we are glad to find the *Christian World* agrees with us for once.

The Strand is once more blossoming with the come to Jesus hats and white chokers of sky-pilots up for the May meetings. This year the C.E.S. have neither Exeter Hall nor the Mansion House, nor Sion College for their annual meeting, which year by year seem to decline in interest. We should like to see them making a stir again as their efforts always give a fillip to the Freethought movement.

At a meeting of the Wilts and East Somerset Congregational Union, at Frome, Mr. McClumpsha made some stir by saying there was room in the Church for men who doubted the divinity of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the immortality of the soul. This statement was met with loud cries of "No!" and was emphatically repudiated by succeeding speakers.

The Rev. J. W. Rhodes, vicar of St. Chad's, Everton, would fight, or get others to fight for him, to resist any encroachments on the Church. At a meeting to protest against the present attack upon the Church in Wales he said: "He believed in aggression, and he would say, 'He that has not a Snider rifle, let him go and sell his soul and buy one.' Churchmen had no more right to talk of peace with their opponents than of cultivating the moon." Mr. Rhodes knows the true meaning of the gospel. It is to preach peace to men of good-will; and that means men of good-will to the Church.

The newest religion has been started at Liverpool under the title of The Psychic Church. According to an article in *The Liver*, it is intended to satisfy the needs, not of Christians, who are content in the old religion, but of Atheists, Materialists, Agnostics, Secularists, and others. The Psychic Church, however, which seems the invention of our Spiritist friends, asks rather too much to be swallowed at the outset. Once let in the ghosts, and you may as well admit the whole paraphernalia of theology.

The "fourteenth edition revised" of the *Dying Pillow* is sent to us. The anonymous author does not appear to have revised the mistatements to which we called attention nearly ten years ago. Infidel death-bed horrors are still good enough for his public.

The *Dying Pillow* author boasts of having consulted original authorities. We invite him to give his authority for the statement that Mirabeau said when dying, "Give me opium, so that I may not think of eternity and what is to come." We are sure he cannot do so, but we ask him to try. He will not find it "as easy as lying."

Religious mania, in other words, thinking exclusively and feeling acutely upon Christian dogmas, is assigned as the cause of another suicide at Rushden, that of a young man named Gadeby, who cut his throat. He was a very steady and religious young man, but much depressed on religious matters.

A recent work on *Religion and Myth*, by the Rev. Mr. Macdonald, mentions that in the Highlands of Scotland ministers are still considered unlucky, and tells of one Rob MacLachlane, who had a tempest because he had three sky-pilots on board. This seems to be a survival of early ideas about tribal wizards, the people knowing that the sky-pilot has developed from the sorcerer. The enormous influence of the Scottish clergy, dwelt on by Buckle in his *History of Civilisation*, is probably largely attributable to the old ideas of their supernatural powers.

In out-of-the-way parts ministers of God still pose as veritable God Almighty; and even in the towns we may hear the same sacerdotal bray, as in the common assumption that anything given to the Church is given to God, and that

to restore Church property to the nation is sacrilege and robbery of God.

A writer in *Notes and Queries* gives a note from the 12mo. New Testament of 1548 on 1 Pet. iii.: "He dwelleth wyth his wyfe according to knowlege that taketh her as a necessarye healper, and not as a bonde servante or a bonde slave. And iff she be not obedient and healpfull unto hym endeoureth to beate the feare of God into her heade, that therby she maye be compelled to learn her dutie, and to do it." This New Testament contains twenty-seven chapters of the Old Testament to be read as epistles. The rendering of many of these chapters differs from any Bible then in existence.

Dr. Parker has Atheism on the brain, and, judging from his weekly effusions in the *Echo*, he has very little else there. For the hundredth time he explains, to a *Black and White* interviewer, that he is no longer a friend of the Liberationists. Parker's "simple reason"—and it is simple—is that "they welcome any freethinker who can speak with energy and force, utterly forgetful of the fact of his Atheism." Well, why not, Dr. Parker? The Liberation Society is not a religious body. Its object is political—the separation of religion from the State; and this is a policy in which all sorts of citizens may co-operate. Anyhow, Freethinkers have votes, and they will cast them in favor of Disestablishment, whether Dr. Parker likes it or not.

Some curious letters get into the London *Echo* under the head of "Christianity and Ethics." One writer tells of a discussion that was arranged between a Christian minister and an Atheist. The minister began by quoting the first verse in Genesis—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "Now," he said, "prove to me that he didn't." The Atheist said he couldn't do that, and the minister claimed a glorious victory. Logic, thy name is—well, not Christian.

In the Punjaub census report there is an interesting account of the religions of that portion of India. Among the more primitive forms of worship, the Earth (Prithi) is one of the commonest objects of adoration. The ancestral mound (Jathera) is also an early extensive underlying worship. Sun-worshippers, pure and simple, are only numbered 2 000, whereas snake worshippers number considerably over 25 000. River worshippers are returned at 35 375. Shiva and his consort Devi boast combined over 600 000, while the followers of Vishnu number nearly a million and three quarters.

The success of Joseph Smith, T. L. Harris, Christ Schweinfurth, Koresh Teed, and Prince Carter, has given rise to a shoal of budding Messiahs and founders of new religions in the United States. The *San Francisco Chronicle* declares these "frauds" should be suppressed by law. But the difficulty would come in applying a law against new religious leaders, while upholding the old time-honored sacred frauds and consecrated superstitions.

It appears from a return issued by the Local Government Board that the clergy are very lax in making the registrars properly acquainted with the marriages they conduct. Within a year there were 71 entries unsigned by either bride or bridegroom, 137 entries lacked the signature of witnesses, and 264 entries were unsigned by the clergyman officiating.

The necessity for the Welsh Church Suspensory Bill is sufficiently obvious from the facts connected with the disestablishment of the Irish Church. When the Act was passed the number of curates in the Irish Church was 467. Before the Act came into operation the number was increased to 918, at a cost to the country of £40,000 a year. In the diocese of Dublin the curates, numbering 73 and receiving £6,000 a year from their rectors, sprang up, like Jonah's gourd, to 117, drawing, not from the incumbents but from the national funds, the sum of £17,000 a year. On Dec. 28, 1870 (only two days before the Act came into operation), the Bishop of Down ordained 28 new deacons. Up to that period the usual salary of deacons was only £80 a year, but to each of these raw but fortunate divines was granted at once an income for life varying from £100 to £150 a year. Fifty-one new curates were ordained in one church alone (Holywood) in the course of December, 1870. To quarter friends

and relatives on the public purse has always been a leading feature of the true inwardness of the gospel.

In view of decreased clerical incomes it is stated that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, instead of giving increased grants up to £300 a year, will only increase those under £200. They will also, it is reported, restrain the building of parsonages at great cost, putting a building limit of £1,400.

Said the Rev. Canon Thompson, vicar of Cardiff, at a meeting against the Welsh Suspensory Bill, "to say they should have taken from them the gifts given to them and depend on the goodness and mercy of the one loving Father was to talk childish nonsense." The clergy know too well their loving Father is only an idol. No fear of their following Jesus and trusting all to him as long as they can keep hold of the cash.

The Bishop of Zululand is very naive. He says, "Where there is gold the white man is bound to be, and there must the Church be too." Always after the loaves and fishes.

Seven weeks' drought in France has driven the farmers almost to despair. In Belgium, too, the heat has been intense, and the supply of water among the poorer classes in Antwerp is failing.

"No authentic picture of Christ," says the *Independent*, "and no trustworthy description of his appearance has come down to us. It is remarkable that the four evangelists should have agreed in omitting just what every other biographer or novelist is careful to give. Nowhere have we a hint as to his personal figure or as to a lineament of his countenance. Some have guessed that he was fairer than all the fair, and others have presumed that his countenance was marred more than any other man; but no one knows. The conventional picture of Jesus, which seems to us his certain portrait, is not older than Michael Angelo."

The Rev. R. F. Herring, vicar of Toxteth, referred to Unitarians as persons "who despised and rejected the blessed Savior." He refused to apologise though invited to do so by the Mayor of Liverpool, who pointed out that this was not a fair statement of the Unitarian position. Mr. Herring says his business is not to apologise, but to defend the faith once delivered to the saints. The Unitarians can afford to treat Mr. Herring as very small fry.

The Rev. C. L. Wanstall, curate in charge of the village of Mantby, near Yarmouth, made a scene at the Rollesby Petty Sessions last week, where he was reprimanded by the presiding magistrate and turned out of court.

*Nature* describes a hailstorm in New South Wales, which puts us in mind of the days when according to the veracious chronicler in Joshua, the Lord cast down great hailstones from heaven and killed the Amorites. In New South Wales, however, it was only sheep, birds, rats and mice and such small deer that were killed. The hailstones were as large as fowls' eggs, some being 6½ inches in circumference.

The damage by the continuous shocks of earthquakes at Zante has been far greater than stated last week. In the capital, whose population numbers some 20,000 scarce 50 houses are habitable. Of the 150 houses in Gaetani not one was left standing. Quite fifty persons have lost their lives and over a hundred have received serious injuries. Providence is guilty of wholesale murder and destruction.

Asiatic cholera has reappeared in its worst form in Galicia and the early summer season is likely to spread the disease. He doeth all things well.

The way lovers go on with each other at times would be sickening to others not in love. But for downright and absolute fooling, give us a Christian and the Holy Ghost. A look, a word, a thought, a jerk of the head, a smile, and a thousand other equally innocent trifles on the Christian's part will vex or grieve the Holy Ghost, and he pouts and turns away his head. Then the poor Christian is frantic till he puts the ghost in good humor again. Then mark the mutual spooning that follows!



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 30, Arcade Hall, Barnsley:—11, "The Way to Heaven"; 3, "Home Rule: or England's Message of Justice and Peace to Ireland"; 7, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Wednesday, May 3, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—at 8, "Shakespeare's *King Lear*." Admission free.

May 7, 14, Hall of Science.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—30, Bolton. May 7, Manchester; 14, Birmingham; 28, Hall of Science; 29, Battersea; June 4, Hall of Science; 5, Battersea; 11, Birmingham; 23, Sheffield; July 25 and 26, debate at Jarrow-on-Tyne; 27 and 28, debate at Newcastle-on-Tyne; 30, South Shields.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

CHARLES C. CATELL offers 500 copies of his *Against Christianity*, price 1d., at 16s. per 100, carriage paid. Apply to Watts and Co., 17 Johnsons-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

C. DOEG.—Received with thanks.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Pleased to hear the East Finsbury Radical Club has decided to place this journal on the table.

W. BROWN.—See paragraph.

F. DOWDALL.—The Portsmouth Branch has a number of members in the navy, and is always glad to correspond with them when away, or to welcome them on returning home. It is difficult to see how sailors on board different ships could form a common Branch. Perhaps the Portsmouth Branch, after listening to your suggestions, will consider how far they could be carried out.

C. E. SMITH.—Glad to receive your congratulations on *Flowers of Freethought*. We have always said we should like to see George Standring's pen busier in the *Freethinker*. For the benefit of other readers we quote a few of your words as to our Special Number—"I have distributed many copies among my friends, who in each case expressed surprise at the splendid appearance of the paper they had heard much of but never read."

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. Hancock, 2s.

W. CABELL.—The words you quote from the last chapter of Mark belong to the portion of it which is not to be found in the earliest copies. They are put into the mouth of Jesus after his resurrection. Judging him as a human teacher, we preferred to take what he is reported to have said during his lifetime. You say, "perhaps his crucifixion made a cosmopolitan of him." Levity, sir, levity! Where do you expect to go to?

FREETHINKER.—(1) A child dying without having been christened used to be buried with such indignities, but only the most bigoted clergymen would now insist on the outrage. (2) You ask us what we think of christening. Kindly explain, and we will answer.

E. S. H.—(1) There is no kind of religious ceremony at the Registrar's office. The function is purely civil. The only question you have to answer is whether you take the lady to be your wife. You must take two witnesses. A wedding-ring is not necessary; you can use it or not, as you please. (2) Mr. Foote cannot answer your second question categorically. When he has leisure he intends to write fully on the God idea.

F. GOODYEAR.—See "Acid Drops." We have kept back the name for prudential reasons.—Mr. Foote is in excellent health.

G. J. WARREN thanks Messrs. Sancott, Almond, and others for parcels of literature.

A. SIMSON.—Very well; let it stand over till late autumn or early winter.

A. RENNOLS.—It has been stated in Mr. Wheeler's articles.

R. S. DOWDING.—Thanks. In our next.

R. F. FOX.—Don't write "Will you please insert," or other words, on your weekly notices. Model the notices on the printed list. It saves trouble (and expense) in our compositors' room. The same advice applies to some other secretaries.

A. HEMINGWAY writes that Mr. Walter Sickert's portrait of Charles Bradlaugh now on view at the English Art Club is the one that belongs to the Manchester Secular Hall. Mr. Sickert borrowed it for the purpose. We regret that we were misled by the press references.

NOAH LOT.—All right. Will use it.

F. TODD.—See "Sugar Plums."

OPEN-AIR LECTURING.—R. Forder, hon. sec. N.S.S., acknowledges—George Anderson, £5 5s.; J. Akker, 3s.

B. BILLCLIFFE.—See "Acid Drops."

T. HINTON.—Too long.

M. CAYLEY.—Mr. Forder will send contents-sheet weekly. Thanks.

C. ROWE (Reading).—Mr. Foote will try to give your Branch a date in the autumn, but he cannot make engagements so far in advance. Perhaps you will apply again, say in July.

S. STANDRING.—Pleased to hear your Thursday evening lectures at Rochdale are attracting large audiences. We hope the local Freethinkers will support such work financially.

S. BARTON.—You will find that *Flowers of Freethought* is well printed and neatly bound. The volume is quite presentable. 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—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Fur Unsere Jugend—Bulletin de la Libre Pensée—Post-Club Journal—Northampton Daily Reporter—The Liver—Lincolnshire Echo—Dalton News—Somerset and Wilts Journal—Inquirer—Glasgow Weekly Herald.

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.

Next week's *Freethinker* will be a Special Number, price twopence. It will contain a spirited cartoon, and excellent portraits of Mr. S. M. Peacock and Mr. Joseph Brown, president and secretary of the North Eastern Secular Federation, with biographical notices of both gentlemen. Those who can afford it should take extra copies of this illustrated number for circulation amongst their liberal-minded friends.

Branches of the National Secular Society should be completing—if they have not already completed—their arrangements for being represented at the annual Conference to be held on Whit-Sunday at Hanley. Communication should be made as soon as possible to the secretary of the Hanley Branch, Mr. H. Hansford, 5 Grafton-street, as to the number of delegates other Branches are sending and the accommodation that will be required. We hope to see a large delegation at the Conference, as well as a good number of individual members.

What with the magnificent weather, and the bishops preaching, and the soldiers' church parade, and the labor demonstrations, Mr. Foote's audiences were not very large at Bradford on Sunday. Perhaps they would not have been much better in other circumstances. The room was really too small and uninviting for the outside public. Still, it was the only place available—thanks to the bigotry of the local authorities, who have terrorised the lessees of suitable halls. During the day five new members were enrolled, and eighty copies of the *Freethinker* were purchased. Most of these must have gone into fresh hands, and this should help our circulation in Bradford.

Bradford, in fact, wants working up. For a long while there have been no Sunday lectures in the town by our leading speakers, though the local men have worked very bravely. If the Branch perseveres with open-air propaganda during the summer, and can manage to get a decent hall for Sunday lectures during the winter, we are sure the movement would make rapid progress. Unfortunately the second "if" is a stiff one. But perhaps the local authorities will recover from their bad attack of bigotry.

Happily the Bradford Branch has some good hard workers, notably Mr. John Grange, Mr. Sunderland the new secretary, and Mr. J. W. Gott who is absolutely indefatigable. Were the conditions but fairly favorable, they would soon give a good account of Freethought in Bradford. It speaks volumes for their energy that, bad as the present conditions are, they are able to keep the Branch up to a strength of fifty members.

To-day (April 30) Mr. Foote makes another experiment at Barnsley, where he is to lecture in a nice, commodious hall. Our readers in the neighborhood should do their utmost to advertise the lectures among their friends and acquaintances.

Mr. Charles Watts had two capital audiences at the Hall of Science, London, last Sunday. Both the meetings were most enthusiastic, and in the evening a pleasant discussion followed the lecture upon the question: "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?" To-day, Sunday April 30, Mr. Watts lectures three times at Bolton. No doubt the Lancashire friends will give our colleague a hearty welcome as usual.

The London Secular Federation's demonstration at the Hall of Science, on Wednesday evening, April 19, was attended by the principal workers from all parts of London. Mr. G. W. Foote presided, and gave a brief introductory address on the outdoor propaganda of Freethought. He was followed by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who had dropped in unexpectedly, and whose felicitous remarks were heartily applauded. Rattling speeches were made by Messrs. Watts, Parris, Moss, Heaford, Snell, Cohen, and Rowney, and a collection was taken up on behalf of the open-air work. Before the meeting broke up a resolution was carried, protesting against the action of the Church party on the London School Board, and trusting that the Unitarians and other Nonconformist bodies would rally to the standard of secular education.

Mr. George Standing has a great belief in the efficacy of open-air lectures. He delivers one himself this morning (April 30) at Camberwell on "What Freethinkers have done for Humanity." It is a serious subject, but is sure to be spiced with the lecturer's native humor.

Members of the Finsbury Park Branch are reminded that the meeting at 11 Blackstock-road, on Friday April 28, begins at 8 o'clock.

All members of the Finsbury Branch are requested to attend a special general meeting in the Minor Hall, Hall of Science, this morning (April 30), at 12.15. The business is important.

Mr. G. H. Baker lectures at the Mission Hall, Rosoman-street, Clerkenwell, on Friday evening (April 28) at 8.30. His subject is "Christianity: is it Plagiaristic?" Some clerical opposition is expected, and Mr. Baker would be glad if Freethinkers in the neighborhood would attend. Admission free.

In his work on *Earth, Burial, and Cremation*, (G. Pitnam's Sons) Mr. Augustus C. Cobb does not hesitate to show that it is religious prejudices which stand most in the way of sanitary reform.

*New Occasions* is the title of a new Chicago magazine to appear in May. It will be edited by B. F. Underwood, and among the contributors are several Freethinkers, such as Dr. Edward Montgomery, Dr. Lewis Janes, and Mr. C. Staniland Wake.

Major Arthur Lillie, the author of *Buddhism in Christendom*, has put forward a new work on *The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity*, which we hope to introduce shortly to our readers' notice.

Freethinkers in the neighborhood are requested to attend at the Kilburn Liberal Club, Belsize-road, on Monday, May 1. The object of the meeting is to arouse a greater interest in the open-air propaganda in West London. A deputation will attend from the N.S.S. Organisation Committee.

The Wolverhampton Branch is making headway. Mr. Snell lectured for it last Sunday afternoon, and created an extremely favorable impression. Next Tuesday evening at 8 the first week-night open-air lecture will be delivered by Mr. Cohen. If the weather is wet (doesn't look like it!) the lecture will be given in the Athenæum Assembly Rooms, Queen-street.

We are delighted to hear that Mr. G. J. Holyoake has recovered from his attack of influenza. On Sunday last

he lectured for the new Brighton Branch on Secularism, and the secretary tells us "it was a treat."

Mr. Theodore Stanton, writing in the *Monist* on the religious condition of France, says that though the Catholic Church still has a strong hold, "indifference, infidelity, free-thinking, and atheism are on the increase" Even in the provinces a dozen women attend the confessional to one man. The priests, moreover, are recruited from the faintest-hearted and dullest-headed of the peasantry anxious to escape farm drudgery, not being intelligent enough for the professions or the civil service.

"Bradlaugh for Northampton"—the words of the once famous sang—will adorn the terra-cotta monument of Mr. Bradlaugh to be placed in Abington-square, Northampton.

We are pleased to notice that the Newcastle Sunday Music Society has issued in pamphlet form, price twopence, Mr. Elijah Copland's lecture entitled "Remember the Sabbath-Day to Keep it Holy."

It took only two paid assistants to contribute to the enjoyment of many hundreds of persons who attended the exhibition of the Royal Institute of Water Colors on Sunday.

Mr. R. Coggins, a local Freethinker, was at the top of the list in the recent election of guardians for Raunds.

This evening (April 30), at 7, a lecture is to be delivered at the Godalming Liberal Club, Bridge-street, by Mr. H. Prosser Chanter on "Christianity a Failure." Mr. J. Innes is to reply. Mr. Chanter is a young man, but an ardent Freethinker. Our readers in the neighborhood should try to hear him.

Dr. A. J. Harrison is a man of culture, and a fair and honorable opponent of Secularism. We are pleased to see that he has been appointed the Boyle Lecturer for 1893. The lectures will be delivered on eight Thursday evenings from May 18, in St. John's Church, Bethnal Green, at 8 o'clock. They are eight in number, and their subject is "The Grounds of Certainty in Science and Religion."

## WONDERS, BIBLICAL AND UNBIBLICAL.

[CONCLUDED]

THERE appears to have been some unbelievers who accused the patricians of imposing upon them a ridiculous tale. While these recriminatory remarks were indulged in, one famous for his sanctity of manners and a friend of Romulus, went into the Forum, and on his solemn oath said he had met him on the road in form more noble and august than ever, and clad in bright, dazzling armor. Being interrogated by him, Romulus said: "It pleased the gods that we should dwell with men for a time, and after having founded a city which will be the most glorious in the world, return to heaven, from whence we came. Farewell."

Plutarch remarks that "This is very like the Grecian fables concerning Aristeas the Proconnesian and Cleomedes the Astypalesian." And if he had had a copy of our New Testament, he would doubtless have added another name. But he did not, for the same reason that King James was not blown up by an explosion of gas—it was not invented in his time. He nowhere mentions anything of Christianity. The rev. gentlemen who translate Plutarch suggest that it is possible the darkness referred to may be attributed to an eclipse of the sun. But that does not account for the miraculous birth, death, and appearance to the holy man after. Besides, if once we begin to doubt and philosophise, there is no knowing what it may lead to. But Plutarch relates a still more modern wonder, of vaster proportions, attendant on the death of Cæsar. The same divine power that attended him through life followed him after as the avenger, hunted his assassins over sea and land till not one survived who had any concern in the shedding of his blood. Without noticing all the events that are related to have happened, he feels bound to give some attention to the phenomena. Men were seen in the air, encountering each other in flaming fire that did not burn, and a

great comet appeared that shone for seven days and was seen by all nations, and which was a sign that he had been received among the gods. The sun itself turned pale for a whole year, the air was dark and heavy, and the fruits pined away and decayed. But he says "we have proof more striking . . . in the phantom that appeared to Brutus." It appeared to him twice, and the second time Brutus knew his last hour was near. Like Judas, he despatched himself. He mounted a rock and, presenting his naked sword to his breast, died on the spot. The little wonders that are thought so much of in connection with Jesus are quite insignificant; no more to be compared with these than a child's Noah's Ark with the original gigantic vessel that floated on to the Ararat mountain.

One of the most wonderful exploits of the Israelites was crossing the sea on dry land, and it is said that Josephus referred to Alexander doing the same thing in order to get more credit for his own story among the Greeks and Romans. The march of Alexander through Pamphylia has furnished historians with matter attesting that it was by the interposition of heaven that the sea retired before him, which at other times ran with a strong current. Menander refers to this in one of his comedies:

How like great Alexander do I seek  
A friend? Spontaneous he presents himself.  
Have I to march where seas indignant roll?  
The sea retires, and there I march.

Strabo says where he crossed it was low water and dry sometimes, so that travellers could pass over it; but Alexander would not stay for the flowing tide, but marched his men up to the middle in water. Alexander himself almost spoils the miracle, as he states that he crossed at the spot named, but does not mention any miracle. It has often occurred to me that if we also had access to one of Pharaoh's Epistles, it might, like that of Alexander's, omit all mention of miracle.

The wonderful achievements of biblical warriors, and the number killed in their engagements, find some parallels. In one battle, Alexander killed 20,000 foot and 2,500 horsemen, while he only lost 34 men! Some authorities make him kill only 10,000 of one and 1,000 of the other, but lose 25 friends, 60 horse, and 30 foot. It seems clear that in ancient times there were valiant men like Falstaff, who, in describing their encounters, were given to indulge in a little exaggeration.

Manna, says Mungo Ponton, was probably so named owing to its resemblance to that of Sinai—an exudation from the tamarisk tree which abounds there. It is a kind of mucilaginous sugar; it exudes from wounds made by an insect of the coccus tribe. In modern instances, where what they gathered every morning has been met with, it is traced to the sudden development of the spores of the lichen *siccanora esculenta*. In 1829, when a famine prevailed at Oroomiah, south-west of the Caspian, the ground was found one morning covered, after a violent wind, with this lichen—a welcome supply of food for man and beast. The same thing occurred in 1846, in the district of Jenischehir, four inches deep. It has also appeared near Mount Ararat, in Western Asia, and Northern Africa. It varies from the size of a pin's head to a small nut, and has no attachment of any kind. It has a sweet taste and is a good, nourishing food. The blood color of the Nile and the red tinge of the Red Sea in past times is attributed by Mr. H. F. Carter to the presence of a filamentous silk-weed.\*

C. C. CATTELL.

#### OBITUARY.

THE Secular party has lost an old and zealous friend in Mr. R. V. Taylor, of the Bethnal-green Branch, who died on the 24th inst.

GEORGE HEMINGWAY, father of Mr. A. Hemingway, of Manchester, died on the 20th inst., at the age of 73. He was a worker for social and religious progress in the days of Robert Owen, and for some time treasurer for the Manchester Chartists. His remains were interred at the Southern Cemetery, the Secular burial service being read by Mr. Charles Pegg.

\* See *The Beginning*, pp. 294-5, by M. Ponton, F.R.S.E.

#### THE HUMBUG OF CHRISTIANS.

[CONCLUDED]

ANOTHER of the fraudulent pretences of Christians is that Christianity kept alive the arts for the purpose of ultimately benefiting posterity. Some "reverent Agnostics," who are afraid of the bad odor attaching to them for holding heretical opinions, think we ought to be deeply grateful to the Church for having kept poetry, music and literature alive for the purpose of teaching them to the common people; but it is very questionable if it did anything with that intention. It did preserve them with other agencies, but *for its own purposes*, and not with any view to enrich humanity with the coloring of art.

Many more examples might be given, but enough has been said to show that the slimy trail of humbug is over most Christian apologetics. The majority of Christians act just as other unsaved people. They cant of spiritually produced morality, but they keep out of the clutches of man's laws because of the physical fear of his punishments and their cowardly fear of hell. Abstention here for spiritual gluttony and perpetual laziness elsewhere. Their morality is as pure and unselfish as that of the eunuch who boasts he does not beget children. "Religion is often mere opinion divorced from conduct," yet professing and worldly Christians, who feel they must do something to count against their sluggish lives, often ask, with the air of men who really follow Christ, what better creed can we substitute for Christianity? I do not see why they should be answered, for they would no more follow the new creed than the old. They won't act morally unless strong laws compel them to, despite their faith which, once accepted and believed, is to work such wondrous moral revolutions. But we can say that Freethinkers do not pretend to be "born again"; to be of finer clay than other men; to be Daniels, who sit amid untamed lions and walk through flames unscathed; to have the grain of faith, no bigger than a mustard seed which shall move mountains; to have no thought of the morrow; renounce comforts, yet bask in them, notwithstanding they are the first to brave the king's wrath and the powers that be; to devise schemes which shall make "Christian charity" useless, because it will not be needed. In penury and pain they have preached the gospel of joy on earth; and now the pulpits, for very shame, are taking it up. Christianity is a gigantic octopus, appropriating human ideas which it places to God's credit. Still

Step by step, since time began,  
We trace the steady gain of man.  
And thus the new transcends the old  
In signs and tokens manifold.

The "true faith" is always changing. The immutable will of Almighty God is subjected to the changing conceptions of varying majorities. "What's up, is Faith; what's down is Heresy." Hell is being given up (some turn it into the refined torture of conscience-pricking; the old serpent of persecution slips into a new skin), and heaven made to mean a beatific Socialism on earth. The more the parsons water down the old faith the farther do they depart from the gospels of pure other-worldliness. They have had the Christian teaching in their hands for 1,800 years; and though all things are possible to God, the sects are still wrangling as to what his word really means. Orthodoxies still snarl at heterodoxies, and new Christian cults glare askance at old coteries which they have left. But one and all send round the hat; for, though pretending to live on faith, they can no more exist than other people without money made in the ordinary way. Cash will always buy plenty of Christian brotherhood. It is no use our being told they are only professing Christians. Who are the true? God surely has no pets on earth to whom he gives his powers. By their fruits ye shall know them. They claim to walk with the Holy Ghost, but are as much after the main chance as anyone else; for rooted customs are stronger than the divine spirit. While they lead no nobler life we must reject their claims to be regarded with greater veneration than other men. We cannot "forget and forgive" till they renounce their dogmatic arrogance and their impudent assumption of superior virtue. Meanwhile our faith grows; we know that when the school teaching becomes secular, and men read and think more, superstition will vanish and the great delusion will delude no more, and only arouse the amused interest with which we contemplate older myths. Men will trust to their own

human powers, will try to strengthen them; and, instead of wasting time in bawling hymns about Jesus, will seek to emancipate the oppressed, and make the earth glad and its cities veritable dwellings of the just. Men will strive for the best, the loftiest thought, the greatest effort; in short human nature at its best—earth born and earth shaped.

(CHARLES E. BACON.)

#### COL. INGERSOLL'S VIEWS ON QUESTIONS THAT CONCERN WOMEN.

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL does not exclude woman's suffrage from the list of subjects to which he gives thought. "Personally," he says, "I would not advise women to pay much attention to practical politics, but I do think it the duty of every woman to ascertain what she can with regard to her country, including its history, laws, and custom. Woman, above all others, is a teacher. She, above all others, determines the character of children—that is to say, of men and women.

"There is not the slightest danger of women becoming too intellectual or of knowing too much. Neither is there any danger of men knowing too much. At least I know of no men who are in immediate peril from that source. I am a firm believer in the equal rights of human beings, and no matter what I think as to what women should or should not do, she has the same right to decide for herself that I have to decide for myself. If women wish to vote, if they wish to take part in political matters, if they wish to run for office, I shall do nothing to interfere with their rights. I most cheerfully admit that my political rights are only equal to theirs.

"There is nothing very hard to understand in the politics of a country. The general principles are for the most part simple. It is only in the application that the complexity arises, and woman, I think, by nature is as well fitted to understand these things as man. In short, I have no prejudice on this subject. At first women will be more conservative than men; and that is natural. Women have, through many generations, acquired the habit of submission, of acquiescence. They have practised what may be called the slave virtues—obedience, humility—so that some time will be required for them to become accustomed to the new order of things, to the exercise of greater freedom, acting in accordance with perceived obligation, independently of authority.

"So I say equal rights, equal education, equal advantages. I hope that women will not continue to be the serf of superstition; that she will not be the support of the Church and the priest; that she will not stand for the conservation of superstition, but that in the east of her mind the sun of progress will rise."—*Chicago Tribune*.

#### "WHERE'S YER ORSPITALS?"

Now that our open-air lecturing work has begun again, and the peripatetic purveyors of Christian Evidences will be swarming round our stations—like the flies that follow the poor hard-worked horses in summer-time, buzzing around, annoying and irritating, but never stopping them in their labor for humanity—the above cry will be ringing in our ears with all its beautiful disregard for relevance and Lindley Murray. When these itinerant irritators have exhausted their vituperative violence and expended their scurrilous slanders, when they find that their libels on the chastity of our ladies, and the morals of our men, will not be accepted by any audience as convincing proofs of the divinity of Christ, his miraculous birth and resurrection, and that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be conclusively explained by an attack upon the character of our leaders, then we are certain to hear their reserve cartridge fired off, and we are asked with all the taunting scorn of their pneumatic eloquence, "Where's yer Orspitals?"

Now, apart from the obvious reply that the present state of the Blasphemy Laws prevents the endowment of a hospital by anyone connected with our party, and the also undoubted truth of the assertion that our members do their full share of the charitable work of the metropolis, without blatantly bragging that Freethought should have the credit of their kindly actions, I would point out to Christians in general that, instead of taking credit to themselves for the hospitals of London, they should, in all sincerity, hang their heads in shame. If Christianity is responsible for our hospitals, then the shame is theirs that they are so poorly supported. Just

take up the report of almost any London hospital, and say if the state of these institutions are a credit to the creed that brags so loudly of their existence. What do we find with only one or two exceptions? Every hospital with long rows of empty beds, kept empty for want of funds, while they are forced to turn away from their doors cases of such urgent need, that one can only wonder how it can be possible for any kind hearted human being to give money to build church or chapel, and neglect such pressing want. To quote just one or two instances. The Metropolitan Hospital, Kingsland-road, "find their deficit increased on Dec. 31, 1892, to £5,531, and are obliged to close another twenty-four beds, (bringing the number of beds standing idle for want of funds to 104). many urgent cases having continually to be refused admission. They have obtained a further sum of £4,000 on mortgage (bringing the total amount on mortgage to £10,000), in order to pay the tradesmen as far as possible up to Dec. 31, 1892.

The Charing-cross Hospital "have had for the last five years an annual deficit. These deficits have hitherto been met by the savings from more prosperous years, but the last available investments have now been sold; and unless help of a substantial character is speedily forthcoming, the council must reduce the number of beds (thirteen years ago thirty beds had to be withdrawn); £5,000 is owing to their bankers and £2,000 for the quarter's account, a sum of £10,000 is required within the next three months, and £5,000 before the end of the year, to carry on the work without diminution."

The secretary of the Royal Free Hospital has lately pointed out that six and a quarter million pounds are annually subscribed to London charities, but one half of that amount goes to missionary societies, and only £680,000 finds its way to medical charities. Of course, while Christianity teaches that man's soul is of more importance than his body, so long will poor suffering humanity be neglected. Only last month a lady dying, left £11,000 for building one church, repairing another and maintaining the incumbent, and the comparatively insignificant sum of £500 to be divided between two hospitals; plainly showing that she thought the saving of souls of more consequence than the caring for bodies. All this horrible neglect of hospitals I attribute entirely to the teaching of Christianity, whose priests are employed constantly impressing upon their hearers the necessity of seeking the salvation of an impossible soul from an imaginary hell; so that, when death draws nigh, the poor deluded, frightened creature thinks to make it right with an awful and malignant Judge by emptying his coffers into the treasury of the church or chapel, and suffering humanity may go on suffering.

The Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn-road, that suffers as much as any from want of funds, has standing next door to it, as a huge disgrace to Christianity, a large building for the manufacturing of cartridges, where Christian men employ their ingenuity, and a Christian Government expends vast sums of money, in devising and constructing missiles for maiming and killing their fellow creatures. Christians' money is squandered for this purpose, while next door they are gallantly striving to save life and ease pain, but cannot get Christians to find sufficient funds for their needs. Yes, Christians ought to boast indeed. If ever a shameful stigma rested on the name of Christianity, it is this neglect of our hospitals. The fact is, no creed can take any credit for human feeling. The thought that prompts the kindly act to our fellows springs from a far sweeter, purer source than Christianity; human pity, human love, are above all gods and dogmas. Let us, as Freethinkers, go on gallantly doing our best for our fellow beings, gaining our reward, not in boastful notoriety, but in the knowledge that we have done our best quietly and unostentatiously. And when we are assailed with the cry from some rabid Christian of "Where's yer Orspitals?" just leave him to point with all the pride he dares to his own.

GEO. WARD.

Mr. E. T. Craig, the veteran co-operator, who is close on the age of ninety, has published an account of the profit-sharing experiment he conducted at Rulabine some sixty years ago in the form of a letter addressed to Mr. Gladstone, and entitled "The First Example of Profit-sharing and Home Rule." Mr. Gladstone might do worse than accord a pension to this pioneer of reform in his extreme old age. The brochure may be obtained from Mr. Craig, 10 Andover-road, Hammersmith, price sixpence.

NO TEARS IN HEAVEN.

In glorious regions far beyond the sky  
In Heaven, sweet and blissful home on high,  
The tears are wiped away from every eye,  
And none shall weep.

Many are called but few will chosen be,  
Yet, though our loved ones we may never see  
But know their lot is endless agony,  
We shall not weep.

No; though the mother who for our poor sake  
Made every sacrifice that love could make  
Be cast for ever in the burning lake,  
We shall not weep.

No; though the friend who staunchly, bravely came  
To share our danger, poverty, or shame  
Be tortured for all time in quenchless flame,  
We shall not weep.

Though from the gulf their wild request has rung  
For just one drop to cool their burning tongue,  
Think not our psalms would be less blithely sung—  
That we should weep.

With loud hosannas we will drown their cries,  
And to the God who blasts them raise our eyes  
And praise him as All merciful and wise,  
But never weep.

Ah! blessed perhaps will be that long repose,  
But still more blessed will be the fate of those  
Who share for ever all their loved ones' woes,  
And with them weep.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A SECULAR SICK AND TONTINE SOCIETY.  
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In Nov. and Dec. of last year you published two letters from Mr. Simons under the above heading, appealing to Secularists to support the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society, the result being that a number of applications for membership were made, sufficient to warrant the existing members to carry on the Society this year.

I have been a member of the above Society from its birth, and I can safely say that there is not, financially, a safer one of the kind, and if you would do me the favor of publishing this letter, I would appeal to my fellow Freethinkers to join this Society. It may be made an objection by some that the title is too local, but those who hold such objection may drop it, as the title is about to be altered. Most societies that share out at the end of the year are not registered societies, but the above Society is registered under the Friendly Societies Act, and is in its seventh year of existence; the subscriptions are small and the benefits are good, being, sick pay with medical attendance and a payment at death which is guaranteed by the members being insured through the Post Office Assurance; there is also a Relief Fund from which distressed members may have a loan to pay their arrears and thus be prevented from losing any benefit; the limit of age for proposals of membership is from 18 to 45.

Applications for membership should be made to Mr. W. Simons, 12 Wolsey-road, Mildmay Park, N., where he would be glad to receive any prospective members on Thursday evenings between 9 and 10. I am firmly of opinion that such a Society must tend to strengthen the bonds of friendship among Freethinkers, and I trust I am not making this appeal in vain.

DAVID COLVILLE.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 8, free entertainment and dance. Monday at 8, Marlowe Dramatic Company, etc. (tickets 3d. and 6d.) Tuesday at 8, dancing (free).  
Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, G. B. Shaw, "Progress in Freethought."  
Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "Animals and Plants: a Chapter in Evolution" (illustrated by oxy-hydrogen light); followed by distribution of prizes to successful students of the science classes. Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

Finsbury Park Branch, 11 Blackstock-road: Friday, April 28, at 8, business meeting.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Touzeau Parris, "Caste, or Class Distinction" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Touzeau Parris, "The Dissolution of the Word of God" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's King Lear" Lambeth—Mr. Roger's, 114 Kennington-road: 8, members' meeting.

West Ham—Mr. Fulcher's, 33 High-street, Plaistow: Tuesday at 8, special general meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Is Christ Dead and Buried?"

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, G. Standring will lecture. Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, C. James, "What must I do to be Saved?"; 3.30, C. J. Hunt, "Faith."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8.30, H. Courtney, "Holy Liars."

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, C. J. Hunt, "The Resurrection."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "The Book of Common Prayer"; 3.30, J. Rowney, "Christ's Teaching—II." Wednesday at 8.30, C. Cohen will lecture.

Islington—Newington Green: 3.15, E. Calvert, "Human Progress."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Is Christianity a Failure?" Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, H. Snell "The Ascent of Man."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Christ's Teachings—II."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, E. Calvert, "The Darwinian Hypothesis"; 3.15, H. Snell, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Man and Evolution."

The "Queensberry" R. and A. Club: 10.30, at Reader's Boat-house, Lea-bridge, rowing. Monday and Friday at 8, at the "Central" Baths, Clerkenwell, swimming. Wednesday at 8, at the hall, gymnastics.

COUNTRY.

Barnsley—Arcade Hall: G. W. Foote, 11, "The Way to Heaven"; 3, "Home Rule; or England's Message of Justice and Peace to Ireland"; 7, "Who Wrote the Bible?"

Bath—Corridor Rooms: 8, J. Keast, "Something Better than Christianity."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street Mrs. Anne Besant, 11, "Theosophy and Christianity"; 3, "Democracy in America"; 7, "Giordano Bruno: his Life and Teachings."

Bolton—Spinners' Hall, St George's-road: Charles Watts, 11, "The Labor Question and the Churches"; 3, "Happiness in Hell, Misery in Heaven"; 6.30, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?—the Question Answered."

Brighton—Eagle Hotel, Glo'ster-road: 7.30, Mr. Medhurst, "The Resurrection" (free).

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: W. Heaford, 11, "The Consolations of Religion"; 7, "God and Morality"; Sunday-school for children at 2.45.

Derby Mission Hall, top of Sacheverel-street, Normanton-road: Monday at 7.30, Mr. Whitney, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, D. G. Lindsay, "Stoic and Epicurean Philosophy"; 6.30, R. Shaw, "Christ and his Cross."

Godalming—Liberal Club, Bridge street: 7, H. Prosser Chanter, "Christianity a Failure." Replied to by J. Innes.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, A Friend, a reading.

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Cox-lane: 7, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches." Monday at 8, C. Cohen, "Religion and Freethought."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, T. E. Wing, "Cameos from English Life."

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

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

Luton—Rudd's Room, Bute-street: 7, R. Forder, "Bible History Unreliable."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, monthly meeting; 7, G. Selkirk, "Why we Attack the Christian Religion."

Nottingham—Shortland's Café (bottom of Derby-road): 7.15, W. D. McSiccar, "When the Shadows Flee Away."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, I. Slyfield, a reading.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: Sam Standring, 11, "Are Protestants Christians?"; 3, "The Beauty of Secularism"; 7, "The Prayer of Faith"; tea at 5.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, T. Thompson, "Will the National Adoption of Malthusianism Improve the Economic Condition of the Wage-workers?"

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 7, A Member, "How to Marry and Live Well on a Shilling a Day" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bradford—Market-ground, Godwin-street: 6.30, John Grange, "Secularism, Destructive and Constructive."

Brighton (on the Level): 3, Mr. Bell, "The Plagues of Egypt."

Hanley—Market-square: Wednesday, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Morality." Thursday, C. Cohen, "The Fate of Religion."

Ipswich—The Knolls Promenade: C. Cohen, 11.30, "Evolution and Creation"; 3.15, "Christianity and Morality."

Pendlebury—Fair Ground: Friday May 5, at 7.30, Sam Standing, "The Sin of Wages."

Rochdale—Town Hall square: Thursday at 7, Sam Standing, "Is Spiritualism a Blessing?"

Wolverhampton—Lichfield-street (near the fountain): Tuesday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Meaning of Secularism."

### LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—May 7, m., Wood Green; e., Lambeth; 14, m., Battersea; a., Islington; 21, m., Camberwell; 28, m., Midland Arches; e., Lambeth.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—April 30, Ipswich. May 1, Ipswich; 2, Wolverhampton; 3 and 4, Hanley; 7, Sunderland; 8, Harton Colliery; 9, Blythe; 10, Jarrow; 11, West Auckland; 12, Chester-le-street; 13, Sunderland; 14, South Shields; 21, m., Leyton; a., Victoria Park; e., Hall of Science; 25, Hammersmith; 28, m., Clerkenwell; a., Victoria Park. e., Edmonton.

J. FAGAN, 18 Church-lane, Upper-street, Islington, N.—May 21, m., Midland Arches. June 28, m., Battersea

G. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 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.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—April 29, Arbroath; 30, Aberdeen. May 7, Edinburgh; 14 m., Mile End Waste; e., Swaby's Coffee House; 21, m., Finsbury Park; e., Battersea; 28, Ipswich.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Botherhithe, London, S.E.—April 30, m., Wood Green. May 7, m., Camberwell; 14 e., Camberwell; 21, m., Westminster; a., Finsbury; 28, m., Wood Green; e., Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—April 30, Hall of Science. May 7, Camberwell.

J. ROWNY, 7 Park Villas, Newington Turning, N.—April 30 to June 25, m., Regent's Park; a., Hyde Park.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—April 30, m., Westminster; a., Victoria Park. May 7, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Woolwich; 14, m., Camberwell; 28, m., Hyde Park; a., Regent's Park.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M, Manchester.—April 30, Sheffield.

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

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