

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE MODERN BELISARIUS.

BELISARIUS was a great Roman general, who, in the sixth century of the Christian era, and in the effeminate and degenerate age of Justinian, won many splendid victories and saved the empire. Before his death he experienced the coldness of ingratitude on the part of those whose power he had preserved and extended. It is said that he actually begged by the wayside, with *date obolum Belisario*. The modern Belisarius is the Devil. He won their empire for the clergy, and now they disown him as he begs their friendly assistance.

POTHOUSE ATHEISTS.

MAY meetings are taking place in London by the dozen. All about Exeter Hall the streets are black with the men of God. What they do in the evening is a point we have not investigated. But we presume they go to places of amusement and "snatch a fearful joy." When they return to their congregations the experience will lend a note of actuality to their diatribes against the carnal pleasures of the modern Babylon.

These May Meetings are the subject of an ecstatic article in last week's issue of a certain religious journal, edited by a gentleman whose name (at least in Freethought circles) is a synonym for veracity. "They are the last and greatest outcome," we are told, "of the genius of Christianity." The famous book of Chateaubriand should therefore be brought up to date, and the editor of the aforesaid journal should write the May Meeting appendix. He would certainly be as romantic as the great Frenchman, though a million miles behind him in the matter of style.

Our pious contemporary considers it positively comical, in the light of these May Meetings, that

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there are men who ask, Is Christianity played out? But, alas, the ordinary press has no conception of the importance of these gatherings. For this reason, we presume, it is that there is more joy in heaven over one newspaper reporter that repenteth than over ninety and nine just quill-drivers of religious journalism who need no repentance. The daily press neglects these "stirring celebrations of Christian philanthropy," but is ready to give a paragraph to an "absolutely insignificant gathering of half-a-dozen Atheists in an obscure pothouse."

This is news indeed! When we open our morning paper we find columns devoted to these May Meetings. But where are the reports of Atheist meetings? We look for them in vain. Not a line was given in the whole of the London press to the recent Hall of Science demonstration, which was addressed by the leaders of our party, including the venerable George Jacob Holyoake. Perhaps the demonstration was too large and representative; it *must* have been if our contemporary is right. It should have been a gathering of six in a pothouse, when it would have "secured a paragraph in every newspaper." Of course it is sad to think we must stoop so low to gain recognition, but a paragraph in *every* paper is worth a considerable price.

While the Atheists are considering the advisability of meeting six at a time in a pothouse, the reverend gentleman who appears to know them so intimately should forsake vague generalities and condescend to be explicit. We invite him to indicate the pothouses he believes they patronise; especially in London, for it is evidently the metropolis that he particularly refers to. We are anxious to ascertain these places. But perhaps, like heaven, they only exist in the directory of faith.

Suppose, however, that Atheists did meet in pothouses: whose fault would it be? Christian charity is ever on the alert to close "respectable" meeting-places against them. The disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, the loud-mouthed professors of the "gospel of brotherhood," delight in chasing the Atheists from pillar to post. Only the other day the President of the National Secular Society was obliged to address his friends at Bradford in a small, upstairs, stuffy room, because the police, acting under the instigation of orthodox zealots, had practically laid an interdict on every hall in the town. At Portsmouth and at Hull our party has been threatened and the lessees of halls have been terrorised. This base, brutal, and hypocritical policy is winked at, if not approved, by the rev. gentleman and his friends. Where is the minister of religion who raises his voice, so much as in a whisper, against this harrying of Secularists? We should like to know his name, and be happy to publish his portrait. And until the phoenix appears, we say, without the least reservation or qualification, that Christians who reproach Secularists with the poverty of their meeting-places are contemptible blackguards, who deserve a kicking rather than an articulate reply. Still, our meeting-places are not so very poor, after all. They are a good deal better than the Christians had in the first century, with God to help them.

Ananias Hughes, for this is the reverend gentleman, does not confine his attention to pothouse Atheists—those creatures of his own unscrupulous imagination. He flies at higher game, and scolds "certain literary and scientific individuals who are very fond of writing in denunciation of Christianity and Christians"—Huxley, Spencer, Buchanan, Leslie Stephen, and such persons, we presume. Shameful creatures! They are actually "very handsomely paid." Horrible! Ananias Hughes, of course, is *not* handsomely paid; neither is Dr. Parker, nor the Bishop of London, nor the Archbishop of Canterbury. The poverty of the men of God is a proverb throughout Christendom. What is not proverbial is the poverty of Secular lecturers. Nevertheless we venture to say that the income from lecturing of all of them together does not equal the income of Ananias Hughes.

Not one of these literary and scientific infidels has "so much as lifted up his little finger to make the world better than he found it." There you have the free bold hand of Ananias. Not *one* has lifted a *finger!* Hasty Ananias does not know these men. They do not make him their confessor. It is not their fashion to crow from the housetops when they do a good deed. Nor does Ananias know that the discovery, the promulgation, and the application of truth is the most beneficent work in the world. It will, and it *only* will, in the long run, banish the misery over which Christians are sentimentalising. What the world always wants is "Light, more Light."

Jesus Christ taught his disciples to keep their charity secret. "That be hanged!" cry the Ananias fraternity. "We'll get the full value of our investments in that line." And they do. They are perpetually shouting "We're the finest philanthropists in the world, always denying ourselves, always giving to the poor, always lending unto the Lord." And if you look at them you see that they grow fat enough on their philanthropy. No more unctuous, self-satisfied, prosperous-looking gentlemen are to be met with on this planet, and they all expect front seats in heaven. And the farce becomes all the more flagrant when we remember that these self-advertising philanthropists belong to Churches largely maintained by dead men's money, and that they uphold laws which debar Secularism from all such sources of revenue.

G. W. FOOTE.

FATHER HARDOUIN.

THE revival by Professor Edwin Johnson, of extremely sceptical views of history, should recall attention to the theories of the learned Jesuit, Father Hardouin, who astonished and irritated the world of letters some two centuries ago. No odious comparison is suggested. The living critic has the advantage of several fresh generations of criticism, but the palm for originality must be given to the Jesuit. I do not mean that Prof. Johnson is indebted for his opinions, or even for his inspiration to Pere Hardouin, for I understand he was led to his present views by finding that he came to an *impasse* when, working at his earlier book entitled *Antiqua Mater*, he attempted to reconstruct Christianity from the references in Pagan literature, dated since the Christian era. But to the Jesuit belongs the credit or discredit of first casting doubt on the commonly accepted sources of history.

Differing much as to what they accept and what they reject, Father Hardouin and Professor Johnson agree in ascribing immense literary activity and immense forgery and fraud to the Benedictine monks. A wonderful order were the Benedictines. They took as one of their leading mottoes that "idleness is the enemy of the soul." They produced the Acts of the Saints, the great collections of Universal History, the Art of Verifying Dates, Diplomatica, etc. Every book lover, and I take it all Freethinkers are book lovers, will pause before cursing an order which produced such remarkably learned men as Mabillon, Martène, Sainte Marthe, Durand, Montfaucon, Rivet, Ruinart, Calmet and Cellier.

When this order was at the height of its just fame, Father Hardouin belonged to a rival order as celebrated for its educational and political influence as the Benedictines were for their historical learning. Jean Hardouin was the son of a bookseller at Quimper, where he was born in 1646. He early entered the Jesuit order, and, passing through its curriculum, distinguished himself by his erudition in theology, history, and chronology. He was made librarian to the College of Louis the Great in 1683, and the whole of his long life may be said to have been spent among books. His edition of the Natural History of Pliny, with notes, in five quarto vols., 1685, is acknowledged still to be a vast monument of learning. His peculiar ideas were first ventilated in a work with the title of *Chronology Re-established by Medals*. He held that many medals alleged in evidence of history were really fabricated by the Benedictines, and that most of the works supposed to be ancient—those of the Christian Church as well as those attributed to Pagans—were fabricated by the monks from the thirteenth century downward. He exempted only from this charge the works of Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Cicero, Pliny the Elder, Plautus, Virgil's *Georgics* (the *Æneid* he held to be a Christian allegory), and the Satires and Epistles of Horace (the Odes he held to be monkish), though he confessed he would not have been sorry to live with *frère* Horace and *dom* Virgil.

These views made a great outcry. It was perhaps not so wonderful that the theory should find vent—there are always literary as well as other cranks—as that it should be put forward by a Jesuit when the company of Jesus was struggling for ascendancy. He was attacked violently, not only from within the Church, but by Le Clerc and the Freethinking Bayle, who pointed out the weak places in his system. Had these two learned sceptics, Bayle and Hardouin, calmly consulted together, the world might have profited. But those were the days of violent literary controversies, when to differ on the date of a document aroused as much anger and indignation as though everlasting salvation or damnation depended upon it. The Jesuits disowned, and publicly condemned, Pere Hardouin's thesis, and in 1709 compelled him to retract it. This he did, but in the same spirit as Galileo. He asserted that none of the Canons of the Councils of the Church were genuine before those of the Council of Trent (1545—63). Yet he was induced to supervise an edition of the Acts of the Councils in twelve vols. folio (1714). Asked why he did this, he answered, "God and I alone know." Possibly, how-

ever, the General of the Jesuits knew also. Perhaps Hardouin contrived to impart some scepticism between the lines. At any rate the sale of these Acts of the Councils was prohibited by Parliament on the ground of being ultramontane and anti-Gallican. On another occasion he apologised for his heresy by saying that God had taken away his human faith to substitute *la foi divine*. Among other works, he wrote a Commentary on the New Testament (edited with the text, Amst., fol. 1741). In this he contended that the original of the New Testament was in Latin, and that the Greek Version was an interpolated work. A learned Scotch minister, the Rev. J. Black, of Colyton, Ayrshire, in an anonymous work entitled, *Palæoromaica* (1822), took up quite independently the same thesis, which has never received sufficient investigation. At his death (1729) Hardouin left a number of manuscripts, some of which were afterwards published. In his *Ad Censuram Veterum Scriptorum Prolegomena* (published at London in 1766, but prohibited in France) he reiterates his old positions, and declares that the Benedictines, in their *scriptoria*, or writing rooms attached to each monastery, were provided with ink, parchments, and alphabets, corresponding to the various centuries of the imaginary authors whose works they were producing.

Another singular work published after his death was *Athei Detecti*, in which he catalogues as Atheists those celebrated men who said not only that God was truth, but that truth was God, and includes in his catalogue not only the philosophers, but the Christian opponents of Jesuitism. Jansenius, Pascal, Arnould, Nicole, Victor, and Thomassin, are classed with Quesnel, Malebranche, and Descartes as Atheists. It is satisfactory to know that Hardouin's own name finds place in Sylvain Maréchal's *Dictionnaire des Athées Anciens et Modernes*.

There have not been wanting those who consider that the whole of Hardouin's works were written in the interests of his order. Indeed, so strict is the discipline of the Jesuits, that the company is not unjustly held responsible for publications emanating from any of them. At the time when Père Hardouin's theory was put forward, Père Francois de la Chaise was father confessor to Louis XIV. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Dragonnades, and other incidents show that at that time the Jesuits were preparing for their grand *coup* to subdue Christendom to the rule of Jesus, *i.e.* of the Jesuits. To achieve this it was necessary to overthrow the longer established, wealthier and more respected Benedictines. Though the Jesuits did not compel Hardouin to retract until ten years after the publication of his work on Chronology, it is more probable that his views were the result of his own researches, since he was not supported by learned Jesuits, with the exception of Père Joseph Isaac Berruyer, and a few others.

Hardouin himself is always set down as a man of erratic, paradoxical mind, and an anecdote illustrating this is told in most of his biographies. It is said that a Jesuit friend represented to him how astonishing were his paradoxes. He replied, "Do you suppose I would rise at four in the morning every day of my life only to say what others have said before me?" His friend replied that it sometimes happened that those who rose so early composed before they were well awake, and so set down their dreams. There, however, can be no doubt Hardouin was an extremely well read man. The learned Huet, Bishop of Avranches, said of him that "he had labored hard for forty years to ruin his own reputation without being able to do it."

Hardouin failed to convince the world of letters. There were some few, like Pierre Bayle, competent and impartial, who could come to no other conclusion than that the Jesuit entirely overshot the mark. The instance seems to offer a lesson. Even if the mass of early Christian literature be forged, it is the combined labor of a whole school working together for a common end. To upset it will also need the labors of many; and more effective work may be done by examination in detail than by charges in general. To examine, say, the work against heresies, attributed to Irenæus; the Life of Constantine by Eusebius Pamphilus, and,

the Epistles of Cyprian as carefully as Bentley examined the alleged Epistles of Phalaris, may be more profitable than to make wholesale charges of forgery.

J. M. WHEELER.

SOME OF OMAR KHAYYAM'S QUATRAINS.

(Omar was a Persian Freethinker, poet, philosopher, and scientist, who lived some eight hundred years ago.)

BEHOLD these cups, he takes such pains to make them,
Another, enraged, lets ruin overtake them;
So many shapely feet, and heads, and hands,
What love drives him to make, what wrath to break them?

In synagogue and cloister, mosque and school,
Hell's terrors and heaven's lures men's bosoms rule;
But they who pierce the secrets of "The Truth,"
Sow not such empty chaff their hearts to fool.

If the heart knew earth's secrets here below,
At death 'twould know heaven's secrets too, I trow;
But if you know naught here, while still yourself,
To-morrow, stripped of self, what can you know?

All a long summer day here Khayyam lies
On this green sward, gazing on Houris' eyes;
Yet Mollahs say he is a graceless dog,
And never gives a thought to paradise.

The good and evil with thy nature blent,
The weal and woe that heaven's decrees have sent,
Impute them not to motives of the skies—
Skies than thyself ten times more impotent.

'Twas Allah mixed my clay, he knew full well
My future acts, and could each one foretell;
'Twas he who did my sin predestinate,
Yet thinks it just to punish me in hell!

Whate'er thou doest, never grieve a brother,
Nor raise a fume of wrath his peace to smother:
Dost thou desire eternal bliss to taste?
Vex thine own heart, but never vex another.

Pen, tablet, heaven and hell, I looked to see
Above the skies from all eternity;
At last the master sage instructed me:
"Pen, tablet, heaven and hell, are all in thee."

When life is spent, who recks of joy or pain?
Or cares in Naishapur or Balkh to reign?
Come quaff your wine, for after we are gone,
Moons still will wane and wax, will wax and wane.

Say, did my coming profit thee, O sky?
Or will my going swell thy majesty?
Coming and going put me to a stand,
Ear never heard their wherefore or their why.

I am not one whom death doth much dismay;
Life's terrors all death's terrors far outweigh;
This life that heaven hath lent me for a day,
I will pay back when it is time to pay.

When the great Founder cast me in his mould,
He mixed much baser metal with my gold;
I lift his crucible with all the flaws,
And blemishes and faults you now behold.

Wherefore waste thought on fate and destiny,
And vainly rack thy brain to find the key?
Give respite to thy brain and let fate be;
When fate was fixed they ne'er consulted thee.

Who was it that did mix my clay? Not I.
Who wove my web of silk and dross? Not I.
Who wrote upon my forehead all my good?
And all my evil deeds? In sooth, not I.

With fancies, as with wine, our heads we turn,
Aspire to heaven, and earthly trammels spurn;
But when we drop this fleshy clog we learn
From dust we came, and back to dust return.

Nor you nor I can read our destiny;
To that dark riddle we can find no key.
They talk of you and me behind the veil,
But when the veil is lifted where are we?

A parson spied a harlot, and quoth he,
"You seem a slave to drink and lechery."
And she made answer, "What I seem I am;
But, parson, are you all you seem to be?"

O man, whoe'er thou art, if thou be fain
To seek thy pleasure in another's pain,
Then mourn the funeral of thy pleasant wit,
Which thou thyself with thine own hand hast slain.

SECULAR ASPIRATIONS.

As Secularists, what are our hopes and aspirations? The height of St. Paul's longings appears to have been in a "risen Christ," for we read that the Apostle said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." The fondest avowed hope of orthodox believers for centuries has been contained in the wish to share the "mansions in the skies." True, in most instances these believers have not been in a hurry to take possession of their "heavenly abode." To them "distance lends enchantment to the view." The time was when similar desires and yearnings "to depart and be with Christ" were indulged in by myself. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The foolish idea that happiness here depends upon the belief that a man rose from the dead two thousand years ago has long been eradicated from my mind, and the allurements of a fancied heaven have now no charm for me. Having "put away childish things," my aspirations soar above the beliefs of my infancy. Being emancipated from the slavish fears of theology that were impressed upon my mind in the morning of life, my fervent hope now is to aid in securing that freedom for others which time and thought have brought to me. I no longer regard duty as a penalty imposed by some arbitrary power, but as a natural effort to discharge an indebtedness which we all, more or less, owe to the world. It is pre-eminently a Secular duty to render all possible service to the general community, in order that the sum total of human happiness may be increased.

Secularists believe, with Shakespeare, that "We were born to do benefits"; and the greatest services that can be performed for the good of society is to endeavor to effect such a reformation in thought that action shall be based on the intention to realise useful results in this life, whether there be another or not. The pleasure of doing good is only fully understood in its highest sense by those who do it for its own sake—that is, for the advantages the act will confer upon individuals, and through them upon society in general. The poet aspires to live in his verse, the philosopher in his wisdom, the scientist in his discoveries of the secrets of nature, the warrior in his conquests, and the Secularist in his efforts to free human life from the shackles of theological tyranny. We hope that as the mists of ignorance and superstition roll away from the minds of men, and when the tree of knowledge is allowed to bloom in a brighter atmosphere, juster notions as to what is right will prevail, and a more accurate perception of truth than at present obtains will exist. It is now established beyond doubt that knowledge is progressive, and that in every succeeding age it occupies a higher position and wields a greater influence. Hence its possessors to-day find themselves upon many subjects in advance of their predecessors. May we not therefore reasonably expect that in the future, if the faculties of men and women are properly trained, still further improved views of what should and what should not be done will be acquired?

Secular aspirations are based on the fact that knowledge increases in value in proportion as it increases in quantity and is wisely applied. We do not contend that happiness is either perfect or permanent, but we do urge that pure and lofty aspirations will augment its service to man by reducing the amount of misery which at present mars the condition of the race. Judging from the past, we have confidence in the further triumph of truth, and that through the cultivation of the intellect and the proper control of the passions, the human family will, in time, profit by their knowledge and will not yield, as they have hitherto yielded, to the power of credulity. We desire that persons should learn to adjust themselves to the consequences of all their actions in life, and this can only be adequately accomplished by the acquirement of a knowledge of the facts of existence, and by acting upon the wisdom thus possessed. Our hope is that

it will be more than ever understood that the primary object of each and all is, to make themselves and others happy. Turning from the dry husks of theology, with its groundless hopes, its baseless fears, its mystic dogmas, and its inexplicable enigmas, we counsel the contemplation of nature as the source of all that is or can be cognisable by our faculties. It is from nature that we get the incentive to pursue a bright and heroic career.

The aim in life selected should be sufficiently elevating to satisfy the purest aspiration, and should be of such a practical nature that its realisation is probable. Secularism accepts the lesson of experience that there is no talent however splendid, no virtue however pure, no ambition however lofty, that will not benefit by the diffusion of knowledge and the cultivation of intellectual refinement. These are the agencies that will remove from the social fabric those moral blemishes that have so long disfigured our national character. We aspire to firmly establish the tree of mental liberty, under whose branches every person's convictions may find a safe shelter; and we also desire to have an order of social life in harmony with the laws of our being; an order of an enduring nature, for by such means we should be the better enabled to perform our part in the struggle to secure justice to every member of the State.

The truth has long been apparent that our own tranquillity and moral condition are bound up with the social status of the people at large, and that both depend upon the state of the atmosphere in which we "live, move, and have our being." We want to see courtesy manifested among men who differ in opinion; affection reigning in the home; honor observed in business transactions, and friendship existing amongst all men. Nothing is more inimical to the progress of the world than a religion of Sundays and of churches, and yet this evil prevails, and will prevail, until it is recognised that character must be tested by every-day conduct, and not by Sunday professions. Take away all the theologies that now exist, and leave the virtues of veracity, honesty of purpose, and fidelity to conviction, and with these qualities natures could be formed whose sublimity and usefulness could not be surpassed. If we were disposed to erect an altar we should place upon it the grand emblems of truth, justice and happiness, and its most prominent inscriptions should be the names of those earnest men and women who had worked for the secular welfare of their kind, despite the taunts of orthodoxy and the sneers of bigotry. It is one of the noblest qualities of a brave and good man that he will dare adverse opinions and do his duty, despite the power of fashion and the force of popular clamor. His chief aim is to promote joy and cheerfulness, which are based upon right doing, and to leave gloom and aversion to enjoyment to minds perverted by the fostering of dull and sad notions of life.

In the distant future we can see, as it were, in our mind's eye the Secular ideal man. He will be one free from ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance; his aspirations will be directed to the uplifting of his fellow creatures; his actions will be devoted to promoting the good and lessening the evil that surround him, and he will possess a disposition of love and benevolence which it will be his pride to manifest towards all men, regardless of creed, color, or social position. His watchwords will be dignity, nobility, and honor, and his only religion will be to do good. Fearing no angry God, dreading no cruel devil, and being disturbed by no priestly intimidations, our ideal man will pass his days in serenity, and when the end of his career arrives, he will feel conscious that, having done something to advance the happiness and well-being of his fellows, he can retire in peace, leaving behind a glorious record of Secular aspiration which has been nobly realised in the practical service that he has rendered to humanity. His dying words may well be, think of, work for, the living, although the dead will still survive in the memories of those left behind. These will rejoice in the recollection of the illustrious deeds that had been done for the advancement of the commonwealth, and in the belief that if there be a future life, it will be the better for

those who while here had done their best, and done it well.

This, then, is the anchor of our Secular hopes and aspirations. Rectitude and self-reliance are our adamantine rocks, over which the waves of superstition will dash in vain. Upon these rocks we rely for protection from the storms of fanaticism and the fury of theology, while we pursue our even way in the dissemination of that knowledge upon which the Secular progress of the world depends.

CHARLES WATTS.

"THE CONSOLATIONS OF RELIGION."

A STORY, BY A. G.

BESS was dying. She felt it, and her landlady read the fact in the sunken cheeks and lustreless eyes. Poor Bess was only a flower girl, fading away with consumption brought on by exposure to the cold and wet, while standing in the streets. Her father, a "docker," had deserted her mother, and the latter, a drunken slattern, was living with a man who alternately caressed and beat her. This man had turned Bess out, and she, at the age of eighteen, had to earn her bread and butter and the rent of her basement room. She was weakly to start with, but managed to exist thus for fifteen months, and to keep "straight." To be sure, she was not perfect, but the worst thing on her conscience was having kept a florin which a "toff" gave her in mistake for a penny, and that was on a night when she had not earned enough to buy her supper. The early hours at Covent Garden Market and the late hours in the street had done their work. The parish doctor could do no more, and the landlady this morning had gone for the minister, as the proper thing to do.

Presently there walked in a black-coated individual, wearing a white choker and a small, self-righteous smile. Bess turned her face to the wall as she saw him enter, for to her he seemed the messenger of death.

He sat down near the bed, coughed, and asked, "Have you made your peace with God, my dear young woman?"

"I don't know nothing about it," Bess replied.

"Have you repented of your sins and been born again?"

"I'm sorry for what I've done wrong, if that's what you mean," she answered.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," said the man, in a monotone; "you must have a change of heart, or you cannot enter heaven."

"I don't know as I've been very wicked," muttered Bess; "I know lots worse; besides, I've not had no chance like some of you; and as for the toff's two bob—as you've heard about, I s'pose—I did follow him a little way to give it back, but I was that hungry I thought it would do me more good than him."

"Ah! I fear you have not the spirit of repentance. God is love; but it is my solemn duty to tell you that unless you appeal for pardon, he will send you to that place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Bess's voice shook as she asked, "I havn't been bad enough to go there, have I?"

"Alas! yes. Your sins are not against man, but against God. Man may forgive, but God will not unless you accept Christ. If you do not, the wrath of God abideth on you, and—it pains me to say so—you will suffer in hell for ever."

Bess turned her wan face to the preacher, and, with a momentary brightening of her eyes, said huskily, "If this is your 'God of love,' I don't want nothing to do with him, nor you neither."

"Ah! you have a rebellious heart, and yours will be an awful doom if you do not repent those dreadful words. I will offer up a prayer for you," and he knelt down.

Bess pointed with her thin hand to the door, and faintly said, "Get up, and go and pray somewhere else and let me die in peace. I didn't ask you to come, and I don't want your preaching and praying."

With an angry look the man rose. At the door he turned, and, holding up a finger, said, "You will have a terrible reckoning for this treatment of God's servant. I will give you time to repent, and then return." And he was gone.

Bess, exhausted and trembling, wept bitterly, and began to think she must be hopelessly wicked.

Opposite the corner where Bess usually stood with her posies, was a baker's shop kept by a motherly woman who had often dried Bess's shawl when wet with the rain, and given her sometimes a cup of tea. Mrs. Browner had noticed Bess's absence for a few days, and to-day had made it her business to inquire of the other girls what had become of her; with the result that in a short time the good lady had ferreted out her protégé's lodgings.

The girl's face lighted up as she saw the round form of Mrs. Browner. "How good of you to come," she said; "I was waiting for you."

"I could not help coming when I heard you were ill. I've brought you something nice. But you've been crying?"

"Yes, a parson's been in and told me I'm that awful bad I shall go to hell if I don't change my heart, or something. I feel as if I must be the worst girl in the world. Don't let him come back. I shan't last long, and I'm so afraid of him."

"Let him come back, the brute," exclaimed Mrs. Browner—"not while I'm here. Don't you believe such nonsense. What have you done to deserve hell I should like to know. I'll warrant he's not lived half as good a life as you."

"Yes," said Bess, faintly, "but he said something about God not forgiving things as people do, and that our small sins are big to him."

"Don't think about him, dear; he's paid to talk that way," said Mrs. Browner, vainly trying to get Bess to take some nourishment. "If there is a good God, he has no hell to put you nor anyone in; and if God is bad, you would be safer in hell away from him, perhaps. Even your father, who was so cruel, would not punish you so; and so I'm sure a God of love would not."

Bess smiled wearily, and murmured "Thank you ma'am: I feel happy now. Are you one of those that don't believe in heaven nor hell? They used to tell me those people were bad—but I know you're good."

"Yes, dear, I'm one of those people. If there's another life you will be happy if a good being governs it. If there is no other life it will be only a long sleep for you, Bess, on Nature's bosom."

"A long rest" slowly whispered Bess. Then, after an interval, "Don't let him come again."

"No, dear. The door is locked. I'll take care of you. I'll keep you in my arms,—so."

"I'm happy now," said Bess, faintly and with effort. "I'm—not afraid—a bit. Kiss me."

Bess made a slight movement to meet the kiss of the kindly creature that held her. The tiny effort extinguished the last spark of life, and the tears of Bess's friend rained down on the white upturned face of the dead girl.

DEIFIED INHUMANITY.

THE Lord so loved us all that he did give
His second son from somewhere in the sky,
With us for three and thirty years to live,
And then for three and thirty hours to die.

His notion was to open up a way
Whereby, with pride intact, he might withdraw
The foolish curse he sputtered on the day
His first son, Adam, broke his silly law.

God's second youngster thus to death went forth
Because his first, four thousand years before,
Had robbed an orchard somewhere thirty North
And forty East from Greenwich—less or more.

This selfish scheme allowed the artful dad
To save his hide and pride, the heartless prig!
'Twas he that should have died, and not the lad;
But that had been just rather *infra dig*.

God loved us well enough to give his son,
But not enough to give *himself*, to die;
Like man, the Lord looks out for "number one";
All's human nature!—here and up on high!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

THE DIFFERENCE.—For Abraham, upon private instigation or secular motives, to have killed his son, had been hideous and monstrous cruelty, one of the greatest breaches imaginable of the law of nature. But being appointed by God so to do, to have killed his son had been no manslaughter.—Rev. T. Jackson, D.D., "Eternal Truth of the Scriptures."

ACID DROPS.

The recent deputations to the London School Board, on the subject of religious education, supply a good deal of amusing reading to the critical Freethinker. First came Mr. James Rowlands, M.P., at the head of a deputation from Working Men's Clubs in North London. He was all right while haranguing the Board in favor of the existing compromise, but his trouble began when his turn came to be heckled. Mr. Riley, the leader of the Church party on the Board, asked Mr. Rowlands whether he wanted any faith at all taught in the schools, and his reply was, "No sectarian faith." That is, Mr. Rowlands—who, by the way, is not reputed to be overburdened with "faith"—is in favor of religion in general but no religion in particular. To teach the divinity of Christ, he said, was to shock the Unitarians; and to teach the Atonement was to shock another section of believers. Finally, Mr. Rowlands fell back on the blessed "compromise." It was his sheet-anchor in the discussion. But as he is not exactly a fool, we think he must see on reflection that his position was illogical. The logic was on the side of the reactionists. For if you admit that Christianity is to be taught at all in Board Schools, the question is inevitable, What is Christianity? And if this is not to be determined by the majority, it must be determined by the minority; or else you must eliminate religious teaching altogether, which is the only rational alternative.

Next came Mr. Tims at the head of a deputation from the Metropolitan Radical Federation. Mr. Tims is as little burdened with "faith" as Mr. Rowlands, and the Radical Federation has "secular education" on its program. Yet the blessed "compromise" of 1870 was upheld by Mr. Tims. The Federation simply stultified itself by this action. It should uphold secular education, in accordance with its program, and leave the "compromise" to be settled by those who go in for religious instruction in state-supported schools.

Thirdly came Dr. Clifford at the head of another deputation, with a memorial signed by "heads of colleges and ministers of congregations holding Trinitarian doctrines." Dr. Clifford came off as poorly as Mr. Rowlands in the heckling. He also upheld the blessed "compromise." He declined to say whether the divinity of Christ and the Atonement should be reckoned a part of Christianity as it ought to be understood in Board Schools. His position was that the teacher who was authorised to read and comment on the Bible should "do what was right in his own eyes." But the Rev. Stewart Headlam would soon show the Rev. Dr. Clifford the absurdity of this policy. It makes the school teachers the masters in theology for the whole of the English people.

All this squabbling simply shows that religious teaching is out of place in Board schools. Those who talk about teaching religion in general but no species of religion in particular are very foolish or very ignorant. There never was such religion, and there never will be. If a minister or a school-teacher gives religious lessons, in the shape of comments on the Bible, he *must* give them a Catholic, a Church of England, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Congregationalist, or some other denominational turn; and the fact is patent to every man with a single grain of apprehension.

Still, we are glad to see this squabbling. It forces a paper like the *Daily News* to say that secular education is "perhaps the logical conclusion of the whole matter." Yes, to this complexion it must come at last. There is no possible escape. It is only a question of time. Meanwhile the squabbling sects remind us of the Jews in Jerusalem, quarrelling and fighting while the Roman legions thundered at their gates.

Referring to this School Board squabble, the *Pall Mall Gazette* remarks that "the conception of Christianity is becoming less definite every day; it is appreciably wider than it was in 1870, and it will be wider still in 1900." Even the Nonconformist memorialists are twitted with being ignorant of this fact. They say that "Christianity is the sure basis of sound morals," and in this connection "sure" means "only"—which, in the *Pall Mall's* opinion, is "a monumental insult to other people's conscience and their own intelligence."

Professor Drummond, the author of that much over-lauded book on Natural Law in the Spiritual World, has also been lecturing in America on "The Evolution of Man." According to a paragraph in a religious journal, he gave a "wonderful" account of the development of the human embryo, and now forsooth, "Man proves to be an epitome, a summing-up, a recapitulation of the entire universe." One would think that it was reserved for Professor Drummond, that "brilliant and extraordinary" man, to make this discovery. By and bye we shall hear that some Christian preacher has discovered the law of Natural Selection. It is astonishing what these men do discover—about forty or fifty years after all the world knows it.

Evolution was stoutly resisted by all the Churches until it had positively triumphed. Now we are told by these old enemies of the new truth that it "ushers a new hope into the world." In a certain sense this is true, but what a cruel slur on Jesus Christ! The Light of the World left this new hope for the world to be achieved by science and retarded by his own disciples.

Charles Darwin was *the* Evolutionist, and he thought the Design Argument was as dead as Queen Anne. But the clerical gentlemen, who are now patronising evolution, won't have that at any price. Here is Professor Slater, a Methodist, crying out that "Evolution must have had an evolver." No doubt, if you define evolution so as to include an evolver. You will always get in your conclusion what you put in your premises. But if evolution is the process described by Darwin, it is impossible to see where the evolver comes in. Even an evolution which has produced Professor Slater is not necessarily directed by infinite wisdom.

The Birmingham Nonconformists have organised a house-to-house visitation. Four thousand persons are engaged in the business. They will ask the inmates of the 120,000 houses in Birmingham what church or chapel they are in the habit of attending. "The visitation," says the Birmingham correspondent of the *Methodist Times*, "will give the Freethinkers a grand opportunity of declaring themselves." Nothing of the sort, sir. Nine out of ten Freethinkers would probably regard such inquiries at their front door as an impertinence. Besides, the figures are to be compiled by Christians, who have in such matters been always good at *cooking*.

Every house in Birmingham is to be visited by Evangelists, who will inquire—1. Do you attend any place of worship, if so, which? 2. Would you welcome a visit from the minister or a member of any Church? 3. Are your children in the habit of attending any Sunday-school, if so, which? If a first visit, says the Rev. C. Lemoine, is not successful, the visitor must inquire until the sought-for information is found. The inquisitors are further directed: "Try to get into every house, so as to conduct your conversation to better advantage"—the sort of instructions likely to be issued to tallymen or canvassers in any other branch of business. We should say this was indeed a "forward" movement.

Dr. Crosskey, says this Evangelical forward movement is really an attack upon the Unitarians, and intended to get their congregations elsewhere. Dr. Illsley, the Roman Catholic Bishop, thinks his flock will resent such inquiries as an intrusion. "In the Irish quarters he thought that this would especially be the case, and he would not wonder if in some instances a refusal of information were accompanied by physical force." This reminds us of D. O'Connell's advice, "Don't put him under the pump."

"The man who dares to say, etc. etc. is a liar or a fool." This elegant language is from the Rev. Ananias Hughes's discourse on Bunyan. It shows his exquisite manners; also that he forgets a certain text about calling your brother a fool. Perhaps "the man who etc." is not Mr. Hughes's brother. Just as likely he doesn't want to be.

From what we have read upon the very Christian squabble at Bangor College it seems that Miss Hughes is afflicted with a touch of the same complaint as her brother, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. She is matron of an Anglican college hall for women, which is really a boarding house for female students. One of the students, finding the place too dear, moved into cheaper lodgings, whereupon Miss Hughes proceeded to utter

and circulate cruel slanders about the young lady. Miss Hughes was called upon either to prove or retract her allegations. Like her brother in the matter of the Atheist shoemaker, she refused to do either, whereupon the authorities have withdrawn their license for her college hall, or boarding house, and her brother calls out persecution.

John Hill, the seventeen-year-old negro hanged at Camden, New Jersey, on April 14, for murder, at the scaffold said to his lawyer: "Good-bye, Mr. Rex. I expect to meet you and all my kind friends in heaven. Sheriff West has been very good to me and I'll soon see him in heaven." His last words were, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." And he was jerked Jesusward.

Abraham Martin, an old negro of Atchison, Kansas, has had in a dream a revelation that another deluge is coming. He received commands to build an Ark and freight it with animals. He has been at work on the Ark a year. He expects the animals to begin arriving in pairs in June.

The Bishop of London has caused a pastoral letter to be read in all the churches of his diocese appealing for money for more churches and clergymen. He states that in many parts of the diocese the people are in danger of sinking into practical heathenism for lack of churches to worship in and clergy to lead the worship. What a confession from our spiritual head of weakness in our spiritual arm. London lapsing into heathenism for want of cash. Meantime there are dozens of large city churches almost empty every Sunday.

The Rev. Edwin Barraclough, formerly vicar of West Haddon, Northamptonshire, has been found guilty of adultery with the wife of Mr. Underwood, a farmer in the parish, who has obtained a divorce. The Rev. Lothario used to procure a ladder from the churchyard, which he placed against the lady's room at night, and left with his ladder in the morning.

A new sect, known as the Rayburn Pilgrims, adopt the early belief that matrimony is a hindrance to the higher life, which is one of purity. One of their followers, named Blair, in this conviction deserted his wife, sending her a very pious letter, asking God to lead her to a knowledge of his truth. He forgot to send her regularly an allowance for maintenance of herself and child, and has been sued at Newcastle for a balance of £13.

Judge Seymour tried the case—the same gentleman, we believe, who tried the Loaders for selling Malthusian literature, and took the occasion to air his antiquated prejudices. In the Blair case he was equally indignant. He was shocked, he said, at finding the Savior's name invoked to justify Blair's refusal to live as a husband with his wife. Blair, however, is only practising what Count Tolstoi preaches as the real religion of Jesus Christ. What Judge Seymour has to do is not to denounce Blair, but to answer Tolstoi. But somehow the champions of convenient Christianity fight shy of Tolstoi, who has an awkward knack of giving chapter and verse for his contentions.

The Archbishop of Dublin has been crying up his wares at Ripon. Christianity raised woman, abolished slavery, and cared for the poor as they were never cared for before, were among the assertions he would find it difficult to prove. When some advance is made, after centuries of struggle, the sky-pilots are always ready to step in and say "We did it."

Mr. Horton (he drops the "reverend") the Hampstead preacher is holding forth in America. He is discoursing on Preaching, which he seems to hold in high estimation. "Mr. Horton," we are told, "believes God is still speaking to the world, and that the pulpit exists to understand and to deliver His every living word." This is Roman Catholicism in disguise, only it substitutes for the authority of the collective Church the inspiration of every little pulpiter.

God speaks through preachers, does he? Well, he might have made a better choice. The deity hardly shows himself up to date. He doesn't appear to know that the clergy are woefully behind the other professions in intelligence. May be, though, it is only a fresh proof of his old fondness for babes and sucklings.

We should fancy that some one in the black business must supply the notes from Great Yarmouth to the *Eastern Daily*

Press, judging by a paragraph headed "Perils of Sunday Cycling," detailing how a certain "wheeler" met with several casualties, which, in the opinion of the writer, "will probably convince him that bicycling is not the most pleasurable or profitable occupation for the Sabbath," and which this chronicler of God's judgments further opines, "may well daunt the cyclist who rides on pleasure bent on Sunday." We suppose the cyclist is quite safe who rides to church, even though the road be all down hill.

A native chief in Fiji presented himself for baptism. "How many wives have you?" said the missionary. "Seven," said the chief. "Oh, that won't do; can't baptise you till you have got rid of six of them." A month later the chief came again, saying, "Me all right now; you baptise me now. Only one wife now." "What have you done with the others?" said the missionary. "Oh," said the old cannibal, "me's eaten ebry debble of em."

"The Christian religion does not encourage poverty," says the *Christian Commonwealth*, which ought to know. Still, it doesn't seem to square with the teaching of a certain person called Jesus Christ, who said "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich." Our contemporary also asserts that Christianity "certainly encourages thrift." Perhaps so. But that same person called Jesus Christ said, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth" and "Take no thought for the morrow." We don't say the *Commonwealth* is wrong, but there seems to be a mistake somewhere.

Paul the Apostle advised men and women to have nothing to do with each other. That was nearly two thousand years ago. Men and women still say he was inspired, but they scorn his holy admonition. Right across the front page of a Christian paper last week was the line "Wanted a Wife" in big staring letters. It was the first line of a soap advertisement, drawn up by a gentleman who knew what would catch the feminine eye. Poor old Paul!

Wesley, speaking of his College days, says: "I became acquainted with the Lord, I used to hold communication with Him. On my first acquaintance I used to talk with the Lord once a week, then every day, from that to twice a day, till at last the intimacy so increased that He appointed a meeting once in every four hours."

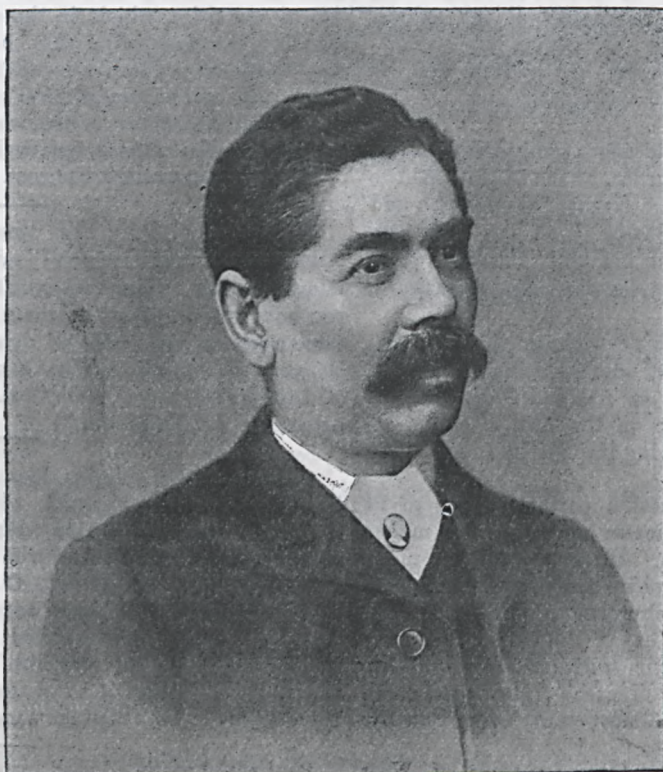
The earthquake at Messina has caused great damage. At Novai the cathedral threatens to collapse. In order to avert further calamity the clergy are praying hard in the churches and getting up religious processions. Such are the clerical pills against earthquakes. They have always proved inefficacious, but they are still "a good line" in the world's market.

"He rides upon the storm." Well, if he does, he has wrought fearful havoc in America. The recent cyclone destroyed houses wholesale and killed hundreds of people. According to the reports, a Roman Catholic priest at Purcell, in Chickasaw County, telegraphs that all the congregation attending his church were killed. This seems a clear case of providence.

The Sunday School Union has new premises on Ludgate-hill. Among the books displayed for sale in the window is Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It is a nice book for a Sunday-school.

Pastor Joseph Jennings, rector of Westfield, New Jersey, has had reluctantly to resign his charge. He was often drunk, beat his wife three months after marriage, pawned her things, struck her senseless, deserted her, and represented himself as a single man. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

At a Congregational meeting in a Glasgow church the other evening, the minister, who is an ardent and explosive teetotaler, but no great favorite with the bulk of his people, launched out into a wild rhapsody over the virtues of the Local Veto Bill, and cried, "Oh, my friends, is it not grand to think that by a simple two-thirds of the vote of the community we may sweep every public-house out of our midst?" "Aye," remarked a dry voice from a distant corner, "an' if twa-thirds could sweep you oot, ye wadna be lang here either." The subsequent proceedings were conducted with less enthusiasm.



SAMUEL MORLEY PEACOCK.

SAMUEL MORLEY PEACOCK.

MR. S. M. PEACOCK is president of the North Eastern Secular Federation, and has for many years been the chief pillar of the Secular cause at South Shields. He was born in the neighborhood of the Forest of Dean, whose inhabitants are a people by themselves, and certainly Mr. Peacock is a man of pronounced individuality. His father was an active local preacher among the Wesleyans, but young Peacock was mainly brought up in the Church of England. Always enterprising, he took a prominent part in the formation of the first Trade Organisation in the Forest of Dean. The young reformer soon found it necessary to shift, and he migrated to the North, where he found more congenial society and greater opportunities for education. His studies brought him certificates in geology, geological surveying, mineralogy, and other branches of applied science. In 1886 Mr. Peacock, believing in education above all things, aspired to a seat on the South Shields School Board. The official Liberals would have nothing to do with him on account of his pronounced Secularism. "It is needless to say"—wrote the local *Gazette*, owned by Mr. J. C. Stephenson, M.P., a strict Presbyterian—"it is needless to say that no such candidate can be accepted as one of the six." Mr. Peacock, however, was not discouraged. He fought the bigots and Bethelites single-handed and won the fourth place on the list—two of the sham "unsectarian" candidates being left out in the cold. At the next triennial election he came in at the top of the poll, with 5,189 votes. In 1892 he won the same proud position, with 5,522 votes. Mr. Peacock has steadily opposed the introduction of the Biblical Syllabus, but Church and Dissent have joined their forces against him and borne down all independent opposition. Mr. Peacock is a man of restless energy. Besides being President of the N.E. Secular Federation and also of the South Shields Branch of the National Secular Society, he is vice-president of the N.S.S., treasurer for the Children's Free Breakfast Fund, and chairman of one of the School Board centres of School Managers—besides carrying on a large and absorbing business as insurance agent, etc. As a speaker Mr. Peacock is lucid and forcible; he makes no pretensions to be an orator, but he knows what he wants to say and says it, and is always listened to with that attention which the flightiest people will give to a man whose head is known to be screwed on firmly. He is apt to be impatient with unbusiness-like people, but his temper is essentially sound, and good-nature is written plainly upon his face. His character commands universal respect, both among friends and foes. Secularism may well be proud of such a good man and stout fighter as Samuel Morley Peacock.

A bright-eyed little girl, on being taught by her orthodox mother that Jesus was God, and that he was in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, said, "Why, mamma, how can God be on the right hand of himself?"

THE CHICAGO FAIR—AN INFIDEL VIEW.

To boss the world's fair every Puritan itches;
The same thing over again;
For love of the Sabbath they'd burn us like witches;
The same thing over again.
Their Sunday blue laws would curtail a man's life,
In fact, he'd be punished for kissing his wife;
If he dared to insist there'd be war to the knife,
The same way over again.

'Tis a positive truth that Sabbathites think
The same same thing over again;
To down us they've joined with the dealers in drink;
The same thing over again.
So rum and religion have formed an alliance
To battle with truth, art, invention, and science;
And to all common sense they're bidding defiance;
The same way over again.

Those rumsellers, bigots, and Thugs now propose
The same thing over again.
They're determined to lead us about by the nose
The same way over again.
On Sunday they swear none shall go to the Fair,
For the Devil a bit of religion is there.
'Tis best to imbibe a good whiskey and prayer;
The same thing over again.

In closing the fair they're mighty uncivil,
The same thing over again.
They claim if its open we'll go to the Devil,
The same way over again.
So in grogshops and churches we've got to be jammed,
With musty old dogma we've got to be crammed,
We must mix it with whiskey or we will be damned,
The same way over again.

—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"My brethren," said Swift, in a sermon, "there are three kinds of pride—of birth, of riches, and of talents. I shall not now speak of the latter, none of you being liable to that abominable vice."

"Weel, Janet, ye ken when I preach you're almost always fast asleep before I've well given out my text; but when any of these young men from St. Andrews preach for me, I see you never sleep a wink. Now that's what I call no using me as you should do." "Hoot, sir," was the reply, "is that a'?" "I'll soon tell you the reason of that. When you preach, we a' ken the word of God is safe in your hands; but when these young birkies tak it in hand, ma certie, but it tak's us a' to look after them."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 7, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :— at 7.30, "Labor Leaders in the Pulpit."

Wednesday, May 10, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :— at 8, "Shakespeare's *Othello*." Admission free.

May 14, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—May 7, Manchester; 14, Birmingham; 28, Hall of Science, London; 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. CATTELL offers 500 copies of his *Against Christianity*, price 6d., at 16s. per 100, carriage paid. Apply to Watts and Co., 17 Johnsons-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

G. W. BLYTHE.—If the Spiritists want their "facts" investigated, let them submit to the tests of an independent committee. They have done this once or twice, and fared very badly. For our part, we don't accept every man's statement of "spiritual" experiences as a fact. It is certainly a fact that he states it, but it may not be a fact that he states.

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

E. MCCARTHY.—Not up to the mark for publication.

A. M. says it was the late Duchess of Sutherland, the mother of the present duke, who patronised Prophet Cumming, not the present Dowager Duchess.

G. J. WARREN.—See paragraph.

JOSEPH BROWN.—We say nothing at present, as you desire; but space shall be afforded you whenever you wish to expose the tactics of those gentry.

JAMES BLACKER.—We have the fear of the libel laws before our eyes. It is the business of medical papers to expose quack medicines. We have enough to do to expose spiritual quackeries; a work which sent us to gaol and has kept us poor.

QUIZ.—It was a blunder on Mr. Moss's part, which he would doubtless have corrected if he had seen the proof of his article, and we were too busy to read it carefully for him. Of course it was Jupiter's skull that was tapped to let out Minerva, the goddess of wisdom.

EX-RITUALIST.—Received with thanks.

A. ISZATT.—You cannot do better than get Colenso's *Arithmetic*. Any Ready Reckoner will give you interest tables.

T. BARNETT.—All the articles in *Flowers of Freethought* are from Mr. Foote's pen. Some day or other, as you suggest, we may publish a collection of the best verses that have appeared in the *Freethinker*.

C. E. SMITH.—Thanks for enclosures. Yes, we have an edition of Voltaire's theological works on the stocks, including a large number of pieces now specially translated into English.

F. TODD.—No need to send "will you please," etc., with lecture notices.

J. H. SUMMERFIELD.—No time this week, as we go to press early with the Special Number. Will deal with the matter next week.

E. COPLAND.—Arrives as we are going to press. Next week.

JAS. NEATE.—We cannot insert an obituary twice. We note that Mr. Taylor was *not* a member of your Branch. It was kind of Mr. J. F. Gould to officiate at the graveside.

J. M. HEADLEY, Yarmouth, has changed his address to 21 North Howard-street, where he continues to sell this journal and other advanced publications.

B. BRODIE.—Thanks for cuttings. Pleased to know that your conversion to Freethought began through a lecture by Mr. Foote; also that a friend of yours, who takes the *Freethinker*, says he "cannot do without it." We know of readers who walk miles to get their weekly copy.

F. HAMPSON.—Glad to hear that Mr. Watts had such a good evening meeting, and that his lectures "cannot but improve" your position in Bolton. Mr. Foote will pay you another visit as soon as possible.

A. GUEST.—See "Sugar Plums."

T. W. B. TURNER states that he is a candidate for a seat on the Birkenhead School Board, the elections for which take place on May 10. As he runs on the "secular" ticket, he hopes the Freethinking voters will plump for him.

T. BARNETT.—(1) We see no inconsistency between Mr. Wheeler's article on Pagan Baptism and Mr. Heckethorne's on Easter. More than one circumstance may have contributed to the worship of the Lamb. Mr. Wheeler only referred to the baptism of blood in the Tauribolum as illustrating the phrase "washed in the blood of the Lamb." (2) You are doubtless right in assigning the belief in spirits as largely due to dreams.

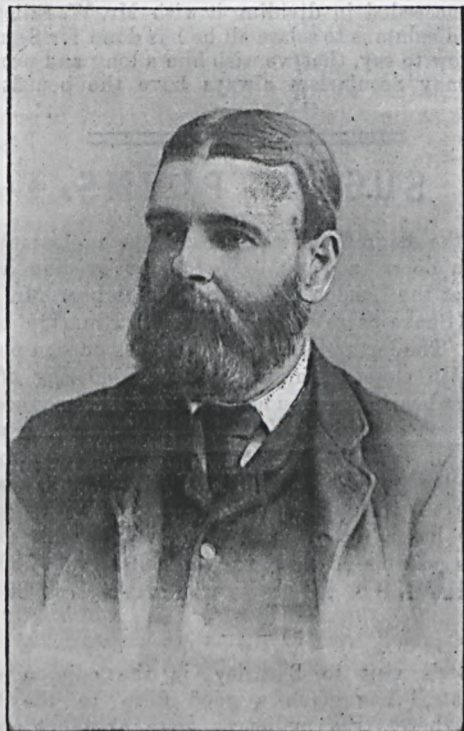
CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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—Catholic Fireside—Church Reformer—Jarrow Guardian—Weekly Times—Modern Thought.

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.



JOSEPH BROWN.

MR. JOSEPH BROWN, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, is Secretary of the North Eastern Secular Federation. He was born in the city of Durham in 1850. His father was a small tradesman and able to give him a fair education. Young Brown imbibed a little science at school, which made him sceptical of a good deal he read in the Bible. At fourteen he went to serve his time as an engineer. During his apprenticeship he took an active part in political and municipal contests. His father was an ardent Radical and Trade Unionist, who, on giving up business, took the secretaryship of the Tailors' Society, and was at the time of his death, which occurred a few years ago, president of the Seaham Harbor Liberal Association. To return to Joseph—at the age of 21 he took an active part in forming a Durham Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and was elected its president, a position he held till he removed to Sunderland in 1874. After some painful experiences as a labor "agitator" he removed to Newcastle in 1881, and has ever since been in harness there. He was elected one of the Liberal 500, and as a member of the Elswick ward committee has been an energetic politician. As a zealous Trade Unionist he sometimes got into trouble. During one strike the employers resolved, "That Mr. Brown have no more employment in the district," but the men stipulated that he should go back with the rest. In 1881 Mr. Brown joined the Newcastle Branch of the National Secular Society, becoming a very active member and presently a vice-president. In 1885 he undertook the organisation of the Engineers' section of the great Franchise Demonstration, and secured a splendid turn-out. In 1886 he was one of the conductors of the great strike at Armstrong's, and was the means of the telegram being sent to Mr. Morley, which brought him to Newcastle and led to a satisfactory settlement of the dispute. Soon afterwards Mr. Brown set about form-

ing an Eight Hours League, which soon had a thousand members paying one penny per week; but Socialists got upon the committee, and succeeded in changing both the name and character of the organisation. In the same year Mr. Brown was elected by his Branch of the Engineers to represent them on the Local District Committee, in which position he assisted in redressing several grievances on the part of the workmen in friendly conference with the employers. In 1892 he represented his Branch at the Newcastle Trade Union Congress. It is as a Secularist, perhaps, that Mr. Brown feels most of all zealous. In 1886 he undertook to reorganise the Newcastle Branch of the N.S.S., and worked it up into a high state of efficiency. He was chairman of the committee which arranged the Bradlaugh-Gibson debate. When in March, 1888, at a meeting which Mr. Foote attended, it was resolved to form the North Eastern Secular Federation, Mr. Brown consented to act as secretary *pro tem*, which has lasted ever since. Mr. Brown has started, and still "runs," the Newcastle Sunday Music League, which has done excellent work in opposing the local Sabbatarians. He also took a very active part in defending Mr. and Mrs. Loader, when they were prosecuted for selling Malthusian literature. Mr. Brown is an omnivorous worker, with a big appetite in that line and a big digestion. He often writes a capital letter to the local press, and is a good platform speaker, with an earnest ring in his voice. Two or three years ago he competed for the prize offered by the *Newcastle Weekly Leader* for the best essay on the Eight Hours Question, and succeeded in dividing it with Mr. W. Elliott. We should need columns to relate all he has done for Secularism. Suffice it now to say, that we wish him a long and prosperous life, and may Secularism always have the benefit of his services.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Despite the magnificent weather and the unpleasant warmth within doors, a capital Wednesday evening audience assembled at the London Hall of Science to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Mr. J. Brumage being in the chair. The lecturer's own observations on the play were followed with close attention, and his rendering of select passages was heartily applauded. Mr. Foote announced that he would continue his Wednesday evening lectures on Shakespeare. The next play (for May 3) would be *King Lear*, and the following (for May 10) *Othello*. The admission to these lectures is free, and as Mr. Foote takes nothing for his services he has a right to ask those who attend to be as generous as possible in regard to the collection, which helps to enable the N.S.S. to pay its way in the Hall of Science tenancy.

Mr. Foote's visit to Barnsley, in the opinion of the local "saints," has given a good fillip to the Secular movement there. His audiences were excellent and very appreciative. Judging from the applause there must be a considerable number of undeclared Secularists in Barnsley. A few fresh members were enrolled on Sunday, and we hope more will be enrolled during the next few weeks. Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture was a political one on "Home Rule." Mr. Councillor Holden presided, and a vote of thanks to the lecturer for his etc. etc. was proposed by Mr. James Birtell, seconded by Mr. D. Pattison, and carried with enthusiasm.

After the evening lecture Mr. Foote had a long chat with the Barnsley members in their own meeting-place. The Branch is making fair progress, and now that a nice hall is obtainable, arrangements are being made for visits by other London lecturers. The town is strongly Radical, and there seems to be every prospect of a good Freethought harvest in it, if the work is only carried on with skill and spirit.

We are pleased to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had three excellent audiences last Sunday at Bolton. Our colleague was in splendid form, and was most enthusiastically received on each occasion. An interesting debate followed the morning and evening lecture, which was highly appreciated by all present. Many hopes were expressed that Mr. Watts would again visit Bolton at an early date. Every copy of the *Freethinker* on hand was sold. A pleasant feature of the meetings was the many ladies present. To-day (Sunday, May 7) Mr. Watts lectures three times at Manchester.

Colonel Ingersoll, we are happy to see, is now on a lecturing tour. It began on April 18 at Buffalo and ends on May 7 at St. Louis. Every intervening night the Colonel has been

lecturing at a different town. His discourses will stir up the spirit of Freethought in the places he visits.

In acknowledging a resolution of the East London Branch N.S.S. the Rev. E. Schadhorst, a member of the School Board, says—"You and the friends associated with you in your National Secular Society can wish for no better method of bringing about secular education pure and simple than the scheme developed by the High Church party who have seats on the Board. I have always said, and shall I hope continue to say, that the State has nothing whatever to do with my religious convictions, nor is it at liberty to blame me if I have none whatever."

Through the continued and well-directed efforts of Captain R. C. Adams and G. Martin, it is now the law of the Dominion of Canada that any witness can affirm instead of taking an oath. In following England in this respect Canada has placed herself ahead of several of the United States.

Mr. Joseph Brown informs us that the Newcastle Sunday Music Society has received the adhesion of Mr. Smith, who leads one of the best military bands in the north of England. There will now be ten consecutive concerts for certain on the Town Moor.

The North Eastern Secular Federation has arranged for a lecture tour by Mr. C. Cohen. The appointments are as follows:—May 7, Sunderland; 8, Hartford Colliery; 9, Blyth; 10, Jarrow; 11, West Auckland; 12, Chester-le-Street; 13, Sunderland; 14, South Shields. As the Federation's annual meeting takes place in June intending subscribers are requested to remit without delay to the hon. sec., Joseph Brown, 86 Durham-street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Shelley's writings continue to command good prices in the auction room. At Sotheby's a first edition of *The Masque of Anarchy* sold for £1 7s. This poem first saw the light several years after Shelley's death.

M. Zola, the great French writer, is to address the General Association of Students at the annual banquet at Paris, on May 13. According to a press announcement, he intends to deal with the restlessness of the age, which is characterised, in his opinion, by a tendency to revert to the past and to revive antique religious and philosophical doctrines. He will warn his youthful hearers, he says, against the dangers of illusion and mysticism, and will proclaim his devotion to positivism and his hope in science.

Mr. Robert Ballance, the late premier of New Zealand, was, like Sir Robert Stout, a Freethinker. He recently gained much commendation by suppressing the Kanaka traffic, which under pretence of engaging labor often led to man-stealing. The Freethought statesman showed himself more conscientious than his Christian predecessors and more moral than the Bible heroes who sanctioned slavery.

We receive from Barcelona *La Republica*, which advocates a Republic in Spain, with universal secular education. It is edited by J. S. Anton, and one of the leading writers is Odon de Buen.

In the *Weekly Bulletin* for April 29 appears an extraordinary open letter addressed to Mr. Gladstone by the editor, Kenneth Ffarrington Bellairs, who avers that Domesday Book never existed before the days of Henry VIII. "There never was a Magna Charta (the silly document is an equal forgery) or a battle of Hastings, and William the Conqueror had as much a real existence as had the imaginary Saxon kings or St. Augustine. The Old Testament is a garbled, strung-together, Jewish legend (mostly forgery); and as to the New Testament, it was invented about 450 years ago in Italian monasteries and brought to this country. It is as worthless a forgery as is Domesday Book, and written for the same purpose, and about the same time, by the same gang of scoundrels, who, in the name of this new religion, practically seized the land from the people, and who, with their descendants or successors, hold it to-day!"

Mr. H. S. Salt lectures on "Richard Jefferies" before the Society of the New Fellowship at 337 Strand, on Tuesday, May 9, at 8 p.m. Visitors will be welcome.

The pious bully who has been annoying the Islington Branch received a check on Sunday. Pitching his stand close to the Secular lecturer he commenced his shouting. The Rev. Mr. Waterman, of the Christian Evidence Society, happening to be present, mounted the Secular stand and declared that the fellow was not and never had been connected with that Society. Presently the police came up, and the Secularists shifted their stand, the pious bully immediately following them. This was enough. The police objected to such "disorderly proceedings," and after some altercation the pious bully and his friends slunk away, leaving the Secularists in enjoyment of their right to be heard.

Miss Vance has arranged to resume the open-air lectures at the Midland Arches to-day (May 7) at 11.30, on behalf of the London Secular Federation. The N.W. London Branch opens fire in Regent's Park in the afternoon at 3.30, with a lecture by Mr. Heaford. Branch members should attend and support the station.

The Bethnal Green Branch opens its out-door campaign at the "Salmon and Ball" to-day (May 7), at 11.15. Local Freethinkers should make a point of attending, so as to check the disorderly Christians who are apt to give trouble at this station.

The Edmonton Branch has had a very successful indoor season. The Sunday evening lectures have been given to good audiences. The Branch starts its outdoor lectures to-day (May 7), Mr. James occupying the platform. A rough element sometimes gathers at this station, and the local Freethinkers should be there to support the lecturer.

The Borough of Nelson has its School Board elections on May 6. The "secular" candidate is Mr. E. Johnson, a member of the N.S.S. Our friends who have votes should plump for him. His address to the electors is thoroughly satisfactory.

Members of the Liverpool Branch should all attend the annual meeting to-day (May 7) at 11.30. The committee has a favorable report to present. We believe the question of open-air propaganda will be discussed. There is a difference of opinion as to its advisability in a city cursed with a large section of rabid Orangemen and bigoted Catholics.

Now that Hungary has got rid of its clerical nightmare it is advancing swiftly in the path of secular progress. All marriages are to be registered civilly, and neither Catholic priest, Protestant clergyman, nor Jewish Rabbi will be allowed to keep the registers. The Jews are placed on an equality with the Christians. Formerly the law did not permit a Christian to embrace Judaism. Now both sects are equal before the law.

TION.

The proverbial schoolboy has heard how Dr. Dodd, who was executed for forgery, on one occasion gave some students an excellent sermon on the one word "Malt." A popular preacher resolved to outdo him, and took as his text the last portion of several important Bible words ending in *tion*. We reproduce the synopsis of the sermon, leaving our readers to supply the *tions*, lest our printer should run "out of sorts."

Dearly beloved brethren,—Creation implies inten, inven, delibera, calcula, considera, medita, addi, separa, seggrega, accumulata, infla, origina, propaga, approba, administra, determina, and predestination.

Predestina implies selec, elec, obla, substitui, ordina, eleva, ilumina, permea, mystifica, transmogrifica, regenera, reconcilia, redemp, exemp, justifica, jubila, sanctifica, and eternal salvation.

But predestina also implies stipula, prohibi, opposi, ruc, obstruc, interdic, afflic, investiga, ratiocina, specula, educa, bothera, insurrec, infec, dejec, viola, repudia, abomina, aggrava, detesta, depriva, consterna, desola, lamenta, tribula, and eternal damnation.

The railway through the Holy Land is called a desecration. The promoters say it won't be a desecration if it pays four per cent.

PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

THIS week's *Freethinker* contains the Agenda of business at the approaching Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, which is to take place at Hanley on Whit-Sunday (May 21). There are no very exciting questions for discussion, and one may hope that a practical spirit will pervade the proceedings. There is no reason why this year's Conference should not inaugurate a real Forward Movement. Signs abound throughout the country of a fresh movement in the more bigoted circles of Christianity, and Secularism may before long be involved in a fierce battle for its existence. In such circumstances it behoves the party to sink all internal differences (there are none at present of much importance) and show an unbroken front to the common enemy.

After the matters on the Agenda are disposed of, other matters will probably be introduced by the President, if time permits. It was impossible to include them on the Agenda, as the most important of them depends on the decision of the Executive at its last meeting before the Conference.

The Hanley Branch has secured the use of the Town Hall for the Conference. This is a matter for congratulation, and should help to bring a large attendance of individual members as well as of Branch delegates.

The Executive's report for 1892-3 will be printed in the *Freethinker* account of the proceedings. No confidence is violated in stating that it will not be a discouraging document. An endeavor will be made to get a summary of it inserted in the newspapers.

Many N.S.S. Branches are poor, and it is a tax on their resources to send delegates to the Conference. I venture to appeal to them, however, to strain a point on this occasion. Personally, I lose a Sunday, besides paying my own expenses; and this gives me a right to ask others to do their utmost to make the Conference successful.

From Rochdale I learn that the local Secular Hall Company will probably be wound up, and the Hall sold to outsiders. The news is disagreeable, but not surprising. For a long while I have been convinced that, until the Blasphemy Laws are repealed, the only way in which we can hold property securely for the use of our movement is by keeping it all under the control of a strong central Board. Every locality has its ups and downs, and when a time of adversity comes there is always a danger of any local property being lost; and, in such a case, once lost is lost for ever. Were the property one of the possessions of a national organisation, it could be kept until local prosperity was restored, even if its retention involved a loss; for a temporary loss in one place could be balanced by success in other places.

For this reason, among others, I venture to press the National Secular Hall Society (Limited) upon the attention of Freethinkers in all parts of the country. When the London Hall of Science has been adequately dealt with the Directors will be happy to undertake other projects. A generous friend of the movement has promised to give £300 if the Society is able to raise its list of shares to 3,000 by the end of July. This is a handsome offer, and should encourage Freethinkers to take up shares immediately. Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, will be happy to send application forms to any address. A postcard will be sufficient for the purpose. I strongly appeal to hundreds of friends who know me personally to assist this enterprise. To the party at large I say, it is essential to the highest success of your movement. The Portsmouth and Hull troubles have taught us the absolute necessity of having halls of our own; and this Rochdale experience, following on so many others, teaches us that such halls can only be secured to the movement by being in the possession of a National Society with a strong central Board.

G. W. FOOTE

(President N.S.S.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL
CONFERENCE,
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HANLEY, MAY 21ST, 1893.

A G E N D A.

1. Minutes of last meeting.
2. Annual Report (by President).
3. Treasurer's Report.
4. Election of President.
Notice of motion by Finsbury Branch—
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
5. Election of Vice-Presidents.
(a) Notice of motion by Executive—
"That the previous list of Vice-Presidents be re-elected."
(b) Notice of motion by Executive—
"That Messrs. John Samson, William Heaford, and Charles J. Hunt* be elected Vice-Presidents."
* Also nominated by Ox Hill Branch.
6. Election of Treasurer.
7. Election of Auditors.
Notice of motion by Executive—
"That Messrs. J. Early and H. A. Lupton be re-elected."
8. Election of Honorary Secretary.
Notice of motion by Executive—
"That Mr. R. Forder be re-elected."
9. Notice of motion by Battersea Branch—
"That some steps be taken to bring Secularism into touch with the social movements of to-day."
10. Notice of motion by Mr. G. W. Foote—
"That the Executive have drawn up and printed, with the General Principles and Objects of the Society, a detailed statement of its immediate practical objects in the political and social field—taking care to include nothing that does not command a general agreement; and that the said statement be first published in the Freethought press with a view to general criticism and possible emendation before being incorporated in the Society's prospectus."
11. Notice by Camberwell Branch—
"To call attention to the delay in issuing the Monthly Magazine, which was authorised at a previous Conference."
12. Notice of motion by Mr. G. W. Foote—
"That every Branch shall send into the Executive, at the beginning of January, of April, of July, and of October, a careful, succinct statement of its work and progress during the past three months, together with the number of *bona fide* members on its books, and the number of lost, lapsed, and new members; and that the Executive take steps to have these statements properly edited and published, either fully or in summary, in a way to make them accessible to all the Society's Branches and members."
13. Notice of motion by Executive—
"That Messrs. Foote and Watts be authorised to represent the N.S.S. at the Chicago International Freethought Convention."
14. Notice of motion by Executive—
"That the Executive be allowed to decide the place where the Conference should be held."
15. Other business, by consent of Conference.

The morning sitting of the Conference is from 10.30 to 12.30; the afternoon sitting from 2.30 to 4.30. A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7, and addressed by Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. Charles Watts, and others.

THE ADVENT OF FREETHOUGHT.

ALL hail! Freethought, all hail! like morning sun arising,
And bursting through the clouds of a long and dreary night;
The pathway is still upward, and ere thy course is ended,
Our darksome world thou wilt illumine with glorious beams of light.

Ah, long, too long! thy advent with patient hearts awaiting
In sadness, we have watched through the banks of breaking cloud
The twinkling of a star—the star of hope and freedom,
While all around dark superstitious faith still held the crowd.

But we have seen thy light, and with the aid of freedom
Its glorious beams we'll scatter through a dark benighted land,
The sword of science grasping, the shield of reason bearing,
With confidence we'll march to meet the soul-destroying band.

Our ranks, then, let us close, our banner bright unfurling.
We'll cheerily march to battle, our hearts all true and brave,
The priest—his hell and Bible and denunciations scorning—
We'll thrust aside while struggling still our fellow-men to save.

No longer do we fear the rack, the stake, the dungeon;
No more we reck anathema, or shrink at priestly pride;
We'll turn our swords to plowshares, and work for human welfare,
The Brotherhood of Man shall be our watchword and our guide.

No longer do we dread the pains of hell eternal;
No more we look for endless bliss of visionary birth;
With calm and trusting hearts we seek the truths of Nature,
And strive, as ages roll along, to make a heaven on earth.

With firm and steady step we've marched to join the battle
Between the bigots and the men with souls as free as air;
The enemy's retreating, yet still his drums are beating
The call to charge our serried ranks with fanatical despair.

Then courage! brothers, courage! our ranks are still advancing
For we know full well our cause has in truth and right its goal.

The sword-blade of an Alva, the fires of Torquemada
Can naught avail to-day against the pen of Ingersoll.

—*Secular Thought.*

EDWARD PANTON.

JONES SAYS NASTY THINGS!

THROUGHOUT that great perpetual comedy which the Spirit of the Universe provides for the infinite delectation of his elect, in the present condition of religion and religious affairs and professors in England; throughout that constant succession of most varied scenes, here a Bishop of Lincoln judgment, and there an epileptic dance to General Booth's pipes and tabors; here a churchyard riot over a dead Dissenter, and there low comedian Spurgeon railing at the stage; at one moment a Church congress fixing its barometer at rain or fine, and piously imagining that it regulates the weather; at another, Mr. Gladstone and Professor Wace swallowing the whole herd of Gadarean swine with the ease of a conjuror swallowing a poker—"Oh, my brother Englishmen, do step out of the ranks for a moment and look at this medley, motley rout of your own notions and whims that you have deified and called by the name of religion! Do look at yourselves! See what tricks and antics you are playing before High Heaven!—throughout all this whirling march of fantasy, and humor, and comic incident, beyond all conception of play-wright's brain, no group gives a keener relish to the cosy observer than the group of British art and literature blessed and anointed by the dew of British Gospel grace, and the oil of British godly zeal!

It never could be to the advantage of the English drama to make one of that group and get itself blessed and anointed along with the religious magazines and religious etchings and engravings. Though doubtless there would be a huge harvest of wealth and popularity to be reaped, if by chance our great religious public took to saving their souls through the medium of religious melodrama as they now save them through lithographs of the Crucifixion and serial stories in the *Sunday at Home*. One cannot contemplate such a development of our theatre without a shudder.—*Henry Arthur Jones in the "New Review," February.*

"NOT A REGULAR ATTENDER."

LATE one autumn afternoon a negro entered a village carrying a cornet, and to the delight of the rustics played a few well-known airs. Having collected what coppers he could, he came to a good comfortable-looking farmhouse with the usual out-buildings. It being now almost dark, the negro asked and obtained permission to stay in one of the out-buildings. The farmer conducted him to a comfortable hayloft reached by means of a ladder through an opening in the floor of the loft. Being very tired, the negro was soon sound asleep. The farmer removed the ladder as a precaution after the ascent, thus practically making his lodger a prisoner. After a while the negro's slumbers were disturbed by hearing a number of people singing. The place beneath the hayloft, it seems, was used by the members and friends of some humble religious denomination, and this happened to be the night on which they held their usual week-night service. At the close of the hymn the officiating "brother" engaged in prayer, during which he made use of the expression "O Lord, blow thy trumpet in Zion; blow thy trumpet in Zion." Hearing this, the negro took up his cornet and gave a good blast, which completely electrified the congregation. After a pause the "brother" went on with his prayer, saying, "Show thy face, oh Lord; show thy face to thy people." At this point the negro protruded his head and shoulders well through the opening by which he had entered the loft. Catching sight of the face, the worshippers were seized with terror, and along with the "brother" bolted out of the place. Astonished at the consternation he had caused, the darkey lost his balance, and fell at the feet of a poor woman who was lame, and unable of herself to hobble away. Much frightened, she exclaimed, "Good Mester Devil, do have mercy on me, for I am not a regular attender."

Courtier (Cannibal Islands): "Here come some more missionaries." King (espying a detachment of the Salvation Army with tamborines): "At last these foreign nations are getting sense. With this lot they have sent along some plates."

"THRICE IS HE ARMED WHO HATH HIS
QUARREL JUST!"

FOR the past few months a discussion under the heading "Is Spiritualism True?" with the sub-heading of "Agnosticism and Christianity," has been raging in the correspondence columns of a local contemporary, the *Consett Guardian*. One of the principal combatants of this controversy—whose letters, all of them, I fear not to sum up by stating them to be simply a reiteration of assumption, misconception, groundless assertion, and illogical inference, to which may be added knowingly false representation—writing over the signature of "Light v. Darkness" in the issue of this paper for March 24, gave currency, in the course of a long, higgledy-piggledy, rambling sort of a communication, to the ensuing story:

"IS CHRISTIANITY PLAYED OUT?"—The late Charles Bradlaugh once gave a stirring lecture on Secularism, denouncing the Christian religion. At the close no one present seemed to be able to cope with him. A considerable pause took place; still silence reigned. A poor working man then got up, and stated that he was not able to answer the statements advanced by the lecturer; but said that once his life was wicked and wretched and his home miserable, but now his life was pleasant and joyous, and his home happy, and he attributed this change to Christianity. If not, he asked Mr. Bradlaugh to account for this change upon any other ground. Mr. Bradlaugh was silent in turn. The poor working man took the meeting by storm. No other power in this wide, wide world can make a bad man good. In this respect Christianity stands pre-eminently *alone*, and Atheism offers in substitute cold, heartless, lifeless opinions, based upon stupidity and defiance. . . ."

On the publication of the foregoing, my very good friend Mr. John Robinson, of Sunnyside, R.S.O., Tow Law, ever on the alert in regard to defending Secularism and its leaders, past and present, promptly brought to book the story of this ebullient correspondent's effusion, in the issue of the Friday following, March 31, by having inserted a timely minute which reads thus:

"Though not at all improbable, I still more than half suspect that the childish story told by your correspondent, 'Light v. Darkness,' at the end of his letter, which appeared in your last week's issue, is nothing more than a pious myth. Certainly Mr. Bradlaugh during his career had some of the most ridiculous questions put to him it was ever the misfortune of anyone to listen to, and this, if true, is one of the number. In order that the accuracy of the statement may be verified, I invite your correspondent to supply the following data: Name and address of the 'poor working man' who is alleged to have put the question, together with the name of the place where it happened, and the date, likewise the source from whence he ('Light v. Darkness') got the story."

Still in *seriatim* of publication, April 7, "Light v. Darkness" appears responsible for the subjoined:

"In reply to Mr. John Robinson . . . I beg to say that as he is pleased to style the account given [re Mr. Bradlaugh and the 'poor working man'] as a 'childish story,' embodying, he considers, a 'ridiculous question,' and suspects it to be 'a pious myth,' I shall briefly answer in my own way and not his, as I am not at all amenable to Mr. J. R. First, if the story be 'childish, ridiculous, and pious myth,' why trouble about it? But it cannot be what he professes to designate, otherwise it would be unworthy of notice, whereas he wants all particulars respecting it; therefore it must be a story of considerable importance, moreover one which no Atheist can grapple with. I therefore elect to give Mr. R. a different answer to the one he asks for, but in substance the same, and instead of going further afield for the proof required, I will come nearer home, and instead of one isolated case, I will give several," etc.

This, of course, is only an excerpt, but let it suffice, for in itself it is an onus of proof that this "Light v. Darkness" defender of the faith, whose consummate fatuity blinds him to all knowledge of right and wrong, is, in its entirety, composed of fraudulent and deliberate falsehood; although, be it observed, he would have us understand, or rather believe, that he has an implicit faith and trust in the works and writings of the Bishop of Llandaff, the "ever-memorable" Watson, and he who it was in his *Apology for the Bible* that maintained, "The assertion and defence of Truth is incumbent upon everyone"; but really can it be by this that the gentleman of our attention is guided in his wanderings over the grave of our noble dead, who cannot answer him?

O folly! worthy of the nurse's lap;

Give it the breast—or, stop its mouth with pap.

But, sir, the narration of this confident and perfectly self-satisfied Christian's adduction is only, after all, a variant of the old, old story—a story which probably

emanated from the brain of some human biped after *his* kind whose reasoning faculties were perhaps a little over-balanced by the decaying dust of what we only know as the dressed-up end of the greatest delusion, the bloodiest, the most persecuting institution ever founded on earth; and here we are still at it, lame, footsore, hobbling after these unscrupulous lies the wide world over, with, however, the one hope, as in this hair-brained case, that they will be run to earth at last. But why all this trouble? These stories are usually the development of the superior instinct of a Christian schooling, or else the fanciful notions of a vainer, half-educated aggregate of nobodies. Why? Your readers know.

It is only necessary to add that, although "Light v. Darkness" declared that he would not only supply Mr. Robinson with one isolated case, but many, he entirely failed to do anything of the kind, and that the conclusion of the letter from which I have quoted is in perfect harmony with its effrontery.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

DESIGN.

DR. A. K. H. BOYD, in his *Twenty Five Years of St. Andrews*, gives from J. A. Froude a good illustration of the design argument, and at the same time of how a man will look at the so-called "intentions" of nature from a one-sided point of view. A youth at Oxford in Froude's day, being examined in Paley's *Natural Theology*, was asked if he could mention any instance of the Divine goodness which he had found out for himself. "Yes. The conformation of the nose of the bull-dog. Its nose is so retracted that it can hang on to the bull and yet breathe freely. But for this, it would soon have to let go." The bull's point of view was not regarded at all. Though an extreme instance, this illustration supplies the *reductio ad absurdum* to Paley's argument. It is one thing to show that certain natural arrangements are adapted to certain ends, but another to say we understand the intention therein. The fangs of a tiger are adapted for seizing the antelope; the legs of the antelope are adapted for escape from the tiger. Is it the "intention" that the animal shall be caught or that it shall escape? The timidity of the mouse is matched by the cunning and celerity of the cat, that prolongs with delight the agonies of its victim. Where is the intention here? Is it more reasonable to credit an all-wise and all-good being with deliberately devising the countless forms of rapine and cruelty, whereby a large proportion of animals pass their existence in hunting, tormenting and devouring other animals, or to say that the structures have been evolved by the exercise of destructive activities during immeasurable periods of the past? In the case of a watch we infer a designer, because we know they are made, that they serve an end with which we are fully acquainted, all the parts being subservient to that end. But who can say he knows the purpose of the universe. The assumption would demand a God. How can any man know that any of the phenomena of nature constitute the purpose of a designer, external to the universe? When these phenomena exhibit, as they do, deliberate cruelty, it is surely reverential not to attribute them to any deity. Plutarch, alluding to the fables told of the gods, said he would rather people denied there was any Plutarch, than allege that he devoured his own offspring. Yet this is exactly what must be attributed to any deity alleged to preside over Nature.

LUCIANUS.

Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a distinguished Hindu Orientalist, claims from astronomical data found in the Rig Veda that certain of its hymns were written as early as 4,000 B.C. No doubt such a theory is sure to encounter a deal of scepticism from scholars, most of whom incline to place the hymns between 1,500 and 1,200 B.C.

OBITUARY.

On Monday afternoon, April 24, the grave received the mortal remains of Mr. John Humble, jun., of Wolsingham, Co. Durham, who died on Friday, April 21, at the age of 33. Mr. Humble was a staunch though retiring Freethinker, an ardent admirer of Mr. Bradlaugh from his early manhood, and was highly respected by all who knew him. A large number of persons assembled to pay their respect to the worth of our departed friend.—J. C.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Mr. St. John, "Secularism and the Labor Question"; 9.15, social gathering. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, G. Spiller (Ethical Society), "After Christianity, What?" (free).
Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "Bloody Sacrifices." Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Labor Leaders in the Pulpit" (3d. 6d., and 1s.)
Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's *Othello*" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, A. Guest, "The Bible and its Authorship."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Book of Common Prayer."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Wandering Jew."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, H. Snell will lecture.

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. James, "Does the New Testament Teach Eternal Torment?"

Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Is the Book of Genesis Worthy of Credit?" 3.30, F. Haslam, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8.30, J. Rowney, "Th—Sermon on the Mount."

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, Lucretius Keen, "The Atheism of Christianity."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, W. Heaford, "God and Morality." 3.30, J. Rowney, "The Bible Account of the Origin of the Universe."

Islington—Newington Green: 3.15, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

Kennington Green (near the Vestry Hall): 6.30, S. H. Alison, "The Bible Critically Considered."

Kilburn (corner of Salisbury-road): 6.30, W. Heaford, "The Moral Difficulties of Christianity."

Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, C. James, "The Gospel of Secularism."

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, Mr. St. John, "Christianity and Progress."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Bible."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "The Bible Account of the Origin of the Universe"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "God and Morality."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, R. Rosetti will lecture; 3.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Resurrection."

Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, J. Hunt, "Faith."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, S. H. Alison, "The Bible and Modern Thought."

COUNTRY.

Brighton—Eagle Hotel, Gloucester-road: 7.30, Mr. Ford, "What is God?" (free).

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 7, annual meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, annual business meeting; 6.30, social re-union of members and friends.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11.30, annual meeting of members; 7, Mr. Doeg, "Thoughts on Theology."

Manchester N.B.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Charles Watts, 11, "The Holy Bible"; 3, "Happiness in Hell, Misery in Heaven"; 6.30, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?—the Question Answered." Tuesday at 8, debating circle, Mr. Stockton, "Has Machinery Benefited the Working Man?"

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, Mr. Sturt, "The Ten Commandments."

Nottingham—Shortland's Café (bottom of Derby-road): 7.15, Mr. Lord will lecture.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. James, "The Shadow of the Cross."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, I. White, "Man Not Immortal."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, W. A. Lill, "My Pathway from Calvinism to Atheism."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting; 7.30, T. Thompson, "What are the Causes of National Prosperity and Poverty?"

Sunderland—Co-operative Hall, Green-street: C. Cohen, 11, "The Meaning of Secularism"; 3, "The Fate of Religion"; 7, "What the Universe Teaches."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bradford—Market-ground, Godwin-street: 6.30, a lecture.

Brighton (on the Level): 3, Mr. Ford, "Some Reasons for Rejecting Christianity."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—May 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

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—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.—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, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—May 7, m., Camberwell; 14, e., Camberwell; 21, m., Westminster; a., Finsbury; 28, m., WoodGreen; e., Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—May 7, Camberwell.

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

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—May 7, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Woolwich; 14, m., Camberwell; 28, m., Hyde Park; a., Regent's Park. June 4, m., Clerkenwell Green; e., Edmonton; 10, Hotspur Club; 11, e., Camberwell; 18, m., Battersea; e., Lambeth; 25, m., Westminster; a., Regent's Park.

ST. JOHN, 8 Norland-road North, Notting Hill, W.—May 7, e., Battersea; 14, m., Hyde Park; 21, m., Victoria Park; e., Hammersmith; 28, m., Bethnal Green. June 4, m., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn; 11, m., Finsbury Park; 18, m., Bethnal Green.

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Patients visited in London for a fee of 10s. 6d. Patients visited in the country. Fee according to distance and the time occupied in going and returning. Advice Given by post.

5 TWEED DRESS LENGTHS FOR 25s. ARE NOW SOLD OUT.

If any one of the 266 purchasers of the same are in any way dissatisfied, we shall be pleased to take the goods back or return a part of the money paid.

THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE UPON WHICH WE DO ALL OUR BUSINESS.

SOME MORE SPECIAL ODD LOTS

WHICH YOU WILL DO WELL TO TRY. ALL AT ABOUT HALF THE ORDINARY PRICE.

- Pure Wool Scotch Tweed Remnants, for Suits and Trousers, 2s. 9d. per yd., 28in. wide.
- Pure Wool Corkscrew Worsted Coating, Black, for Coat and Vest or Full Suit, 6s. per yd., 56in. wide.
- Three Trousers Lengths, one Scotch Tweed, one West of England, and one Worsted, for 20s.
- Four Tweed Trousers Lengths, either light or dark colors, for 20s.
- A Thoroughly Waterproof Scarboro Mackintosh, good in quality, light in weight, for 20s.
- A Splendid All-Wool Black or Indigo Serge Suit Length for 18s.
- A Pure Wool Scotch Tweed Suit Length for 18s.

A LARGE QUANTITY OF ODD DRESS LENGTHS,

Which include Stripes, Spots, Checks, Shots, and Mixtures, in all the Best Makes and Most Fashionable Colorings. Cashmeres, Serges, Bajes, Amazons, Granites, Whipcords, Diagonals, Folios and Tweeds, in all colors. We are making these up into parcels, each containing three Dress Lengths, and will send them, carriage paid, to any address for 21s. Name the colors you prefer, and you will be delighted with the goods.

WE WILL RETURN 24s. IF YOU ARE NOT PERFECTLY SATISFIED WITH THE VALUE.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, we have just purchased about 300 yards of Plain Botany Wool Black Serge, and offer the same at 12s. 6d. per Dress Length. To show the confidence we have in this lot, we offer to return money in full and allow the purchaser to keep the Serge if it does not give PERFECT SATISFACTION.

J. W. GOTT, 2 UNION STREET, BRADFORD.