

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LABOR LEADERS IN PULPITS.

CHRISTIANITY has a marvellous genius for appropriation. It claims for itself all the good that happens on this planet. All the evil it as cheerfully disowns. Its apologists give a summary of the progress of civilisation during the last two thousand years, and then cry "Behold the fruits of Christianity!" It does not matter to them that their religion opposed, step by step, the very progress they celebrate. They quietly take credit for the labors of men whom the Church insulted, outlawed, imprisoned, and murdered. Few people read history, and the ignorant masses are easily deceived. Hence, in every generation, the Church takes stock of the progress that can no longer be opposed, and puts it all down to the credit side of its own account.

Another trick of the Church is to come in at the eleventh hour in every great movement and claim all the money on the wages-book. Nowadays, for instance, it talks about democracy, and the rights of the people; a hundred years ago it was cursing the French Revolution and persecuting Thomas Paine. Just the same course was pursued by it in relation to Temperance. It sneered at and derided the Temperance reformers, but when the movement became powerful it took up another attitude. Christianity has now appropriated the Temperance movement, and put up a Gospel gate at the entrance of every Temperance Society, to the utter exclusion of Freethinkers; although the Bible contains more texts in favor of drinking than any other book in general use.

The same tactics have been practised in relation to the Labor movement. Trade Unionism was once an Ishmael, with its hand against nearly every man because nearly every man's hand was against it. Churches and chapels were with the majority. They were all on the side of injustice and oppression. Those who spoke up for the rights of labor were heretics like Charles Bradlaugh. The only literary organ that took their side was the *Fortnightly Review*, edited by George Henry Lewes, and contributed to by Mr. John Morley, Professor Beesley, Mr. Frederic Harrison, and other Freethinkers. Now that Labor has become a mighty power, the churches and chapels pay it homage. Parsons and ministers declare that Christianity is the true friend of labor, and prate unctuously about the Carpenter of Nazareth, as though he established the first Trade Union and started the Eight Hours agitation. Bishops, even, have mounted platforms and said "We are all working men"—mopping their consecrated brows by way of accompaniment to the oracular utterance, as though they habitually sweated like Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Christianity is even capturing the Socialist movement, as we prophesied it would. When the capture is completed the Fabians, who now ignore religion, will have to join the Anti-Christian crusade or become agents for the Black Army.

We are getting quite used to the appearance of Labor leaders in Christian pulpits. Mr. Ben Tillett

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has almost shown that he has mistaken his vocation, he preaches with such great "acceptance." Mr. Tom Mann is not overburdened with religion, unless we are badly misinformed, yet he is beginning to follow Mr. Tillett's example. We saw him billed for a Good Friday service in a North London gospel-shop. Mr. Keir Hardie has a soft religious vein in his nature and affects the "Christ that is to be." Mr. John Burns has not joined the pious chorus. He was once a Freethinker, and we do not know that he has changed his opinions. There is a wide independent field for his ambition, and we hope he will cultivate it without casting sheep's-eyes at the fat pastures of faith.

Of course there is no harm in standing in a pulpit, if you do it without false pretences. We should ourselves accept an invitation to hold forth in St. Paul's Cathedral, and be glad of the opportunity. But we should let it be distinctly understood that what we had to say was Secularism and not Christianity. Churches and chapels are consecrated places, they are set apart for religious services and the preaching of certain religious doctrines, and to speak in them without disavowal or explanation is to acknowledge one's self an adherent. It is therefore no rudeness to ask the Labor leaders who speak from pulpits whether they believe Christianity or not, and it would be honest on their part to give a straightforward answer. Do not let them say, "We believe in human brotherhood, and in doing as you would be done by." That is not Christianity. Do they believe in the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Bible? If they do, let them say so plainly; if they do not, let them have the courage to avow their unbelief.

We should also like them to tell us what they hope to gain by coquetting with Christianity if they are not Christians. There may be profit in it to themselves, for faith is still the passport of respectability. Sir Charles Dilke is a shrewd man, and when he wanted to rehabilitate his reputation he went to church and took the sacrament. But what will be the gain to Labor? The working classes are in an overwhelming majority, and are easily able to insist on any legislation on which they are agreed. When the Labor leaders have converted *them* they have done all that is necessary. Churches and chapels cannot really help them. They are almost exclusively patronised, at least in the towns, by the employing and middle classes; and the only real interest such people can have in the Labor movement is to misdirect and confuse it. Dissenting bodies want the Labor vote for two reasons; to promote Disestablishment, and to maintain the present compromise with respect to religious education in Board schools. The Church of England wants the Labor vote for two opposite reasons; to stave off Disestablishment, and to give the Church a greater influence in the training of the young.

Mr. Ben Tillett rather affects the Church party. He has stood on a Church Congress platform with Bishops. They stroked and patted him, and what

did Labor gain by it? Mr. Tillet should be above such wretched alliances. A man of God, with thousands a year, is the worst of social parasites. All the good the Church he belongs to can do for the workers is to disappear.

We are quite aware that the new Labor leaders are young men. They cannot possibly know everything. But before they help to strengthen Christianity they should learn something of its history. It would do them good to take counsel of the Labor leaders in France and Germany. They would then discover that Christianity—in any honest sense of the word—is the historic enemy of liberty and progress.

Agitating for better pay and shorter hours of labor is excellent in its way. It is a splendid secular movement, and we wish it a speedy and glorious success. But the material movement is not everything. It is not enough to realize what Carlyle called the Pig's Philosophy, in which the universe figures as a great swine's-trough, with every pig's nose and foot in it, and no other pig to push him away. The material movement is nothing unless it assists the ideal movement, and helps to lift the race to higher levels of thought and feeling. Now the ideal movement cannot be followed without coming into contact—we might rather say *conflict*—with religion. Our views of man's origin and destiny, of the relation of the sexes, of the family, of society, of the State, of freedom and organisation, will color every moment of our lives; and to suppose that we can hold these views without regard to the truth or falsity of the religion which is in possession of the field, is to display ignorance or muddle-headedness. If the Labor leaders, then, are bent on a philosophy which takes in the brain as well as the stomach, we invite them to determine their bearings in relation to Christianity. They may need a good deal of time to do it, and perhaps as much honesty and courage; but it is worth doing, and worth doing well. In the meantime they should carefully keep out of pulpits, and leave the "sweet by and bye" business to the regular practitioners.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

Who was Matthew? In the gospel *according to*, but certainly not *by*, him, he is spoken of in the third person as "Matthew the publican." He is introduced in the ninth chapter in this style: "And as Jesus passed from thence he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him." That any Jew, sitting at the receipt of custom, deserted his business in this fashion certainly deserves place among the miracles of the gospel. But this incident comprises the sum total of our information concerning this remarkable man. We know nothing as to how he came to write, or where he got his particulars of such events as the miraculous birth of his hero, Mary and Joseph's dreams, the visit by the wise men, the destruction of the children, the temptation by the Devil, etc.

The early Church credited Matthew with writing a gospel. But every father who mentions it says it was written in Hebrew. Our first gospel is a Greek one. There is no sign of its being a translation. Most of its quotations from the Old Testament are taken not from the Hebrew but from the Greek. There is not a shadow of evidence that the Matthew who is said to have written a gospel for the Jewish Christians in the Hebrew language had anything to do with our Greek one. But there are abundant signs in our gospel of a later writer working over older materials.

Among the earlier signs may be mentioned the references to the destruction of Jerusalem, the declaration of Jesus that he was sent but to the lost

sheep of the house of Israel, that he came not to destroy but to fulfil the law, and the mention of his brothers and sisters. Among the more prominent signs of late date may be mentioned the references to the Church; the founding it on Peter, with a pun on the Greek form of a Jewish fisherman's name; and reference to baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*

In xxiii. 35, Jesus is made to declare that the Jews of his generation shall suffer for "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Now Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, iv. 4, § 4) tells how Zacharias, son of Baruch, one of the best and most eminent citizens, was slain in the temple at the time of the siege of Jerusalem, more than thirty years after the death of Jesus. Christian advocates endeavor to annul the force of this anachronism, by saying that Zecharias, the son of Jehoida, is meant. But this is not only at the expense of the Holy Ghost's inspiration, but against common sense, for is it likely that Jesus, beginning with Abel, would stop with Zecharias (B.C. 840), when there was a flood of righteous blood shed among the Jews after that date.

Some remnants of the Pauline and Petrine controversy may be found in Matthew. Paul was known as the ravening wolf of Benjamin, so the writer of one part of the first gospel puts in, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (vii. 14). Again, we may see a glance at Paul in the saying that Those who break one of these least commandments shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven (v. 19). The mention of false Christs must also be put among signs of late date.

In the ridiculous story of the Jews getting a watch set at the sepulchre, and then bribing these men who had witnessed a most astounding miracle to say they had slept at their posts, although to do so meant death to Roman soldiers, we have the phrase, "This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Now we find in the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* a story of Judas hiding the body of Jesus, "because I feared lest perchance his impious followers might steal him from the tomb";† so that "until this day" may even extend to the days when the *Toldoth Jeshu* was concocted.

In a previous article (*Freethinker*, April 23) I mentioned that the silly story of Christ feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fishes in chap. xiv. is followed in the very next chapter with a similar story of feeding four thousand men, besides women and children (who did not count), with seven loaves and a few fishes, which story seems but another version of the former, because they agree in the order of the speeches and events, and almost in the words; and in the latter story the miraculously stupid disciples appear not to have the slightest remembrance of the first miraculous feeding, but ask, "Whence should we have bread in the wilderness to satisfy so great a multitude?"—and Jesus, in his reply (xv. 34), shows the same unconsciousness of any similar occurrence. "Ab," says a Christian Evidence critic, who evidently has not sought to apprehend my argument, "Mr. Wheeler's memory is at fault. Does not Jesus say, 'Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand?' etc." Certainly he does, but in another chapter and under other circumstances. The fact is confirmatory of my contention that in the gospels we have a patchwork of discrepant legends which cannot be made to fit. The further passage in question (xvi. 9—10) shows that its writer considered there were two separate occurrences, while an exami-

* We gather from the Acts of the Apostles that baptism was in the name of Christ, showing that the formula "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" was not original.

† *Jewish Life of Christ*, p. 33.

nation of the stories themselves show they are but slightly varying versions of one myth.*

Were there no other signs of duplication, it might be contended that the feeding of five thousand was followed by another miracle of exactly the same character. But Mr. Badham, in his little book on *The Formation of the Gospels* (1891), gives a list of no fewer than fifty instances of duplication in this gospel. Every reader must have noticed such duplicate sayings as "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" xx. 26, and xxiii. 11; also those in Matt. v. 29, 30, compared with xviii. 8, 9; x. 38, 39, with xvi. 24, 25; v. 32, with xix. 9; x. 22, with xxiv. 9, 13. Many must have felt, too, the difficulty of reconciling "Blessed are the peacemakers, etc." (v. 9), with "Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father," etc. (x. 34, 35).

In like manner incidents are often repeated. Twice do the disciples, demand a sign, and twice they are told that no sign shall be, save that of Jonah xii. 3^d, xvi. 4. Twice do two blind men receive their sight (ix. 9, 30; xx. 30, 34). Two demoniacs in the same fashion meet Jesus near Gadara. So fond is the evangelist of duplication, that mistaking the repetition in Zechariah ix. 9, he makes his hero requisition two animals, and ride into Jerusalem on both of them! Canon Sanday, in his work on the gospels, admits that Matthew is full of inaccuracies. He mentions them (p. 152) as numbering 944; which, as there are only 1,031 verses, is pretty fair for an inspired writer.

The elements of our gospel are so incongruous they cannot be mixed. How strange to hear of J. C.'s mother venturing to interfere with him after the account of the nativity; to have two announcements of the Passion almost simultaneous (xvii. 9, 22, 23); to find John's disciples captious (ix. 14); after John had so thoroughly recognised the mission of Jesus (iii. 14); to hear the misgiving of the disciples (xv. 33); after provision made in a similar contingency (xiv. 14—21); to learn that the disciples are "exceeding sorry" (xvii. 23) at an announcement which they had already heard twice (xvi. 21, xvii. 9); to find them repelling children (xix. 13) just after J. C.'s disposition towards children had been so freely expressed (xviii. 1-5); to hear them contending for the first places (xx. 20—28), just after a similar contention has been quelled (xviii. 1-5); to have Christ dismissing the Twelve (xi. c f. Mark vi. 12-30); and find from the context (xii. 1) that they have never quitted his side; to hear the Pharisees charged with disbelieving John (xxi. 32) after they have shown belief in large numbers (iii. 7); to hear Christ explaining why his disciples fast not (ix. 15) just after he has issued his regulation on the subject (vi. 16—18, xvii. 21); to hear of Christ's sudden arrival in Cæsarea Philippi (xvi. 13) just after he has left those parts (xv. 29); to see Christ courting publicity and enjoining secrecy at one and the same moment; to hear of Judas "from that time he sought opportunity," when the opportunity is distant only a few hours (xxvi. 16); to hear the specification of the traitor as "one of the twelve" (xxvi. 47), as if there had been no previous intimation of his intentions; to hear of Pilate's scruples and his wife's intercessions, just before he sentenced Christ to be scourged, and allows the soldiers to mock him; to hear of the tombs of the saints being rent (xxvii. 51—54) so long

* The myth, I venture to suggest, may have arisen from symbolical pictures, such as are found in the Catacombs, of the sun-god distributing the bread of life. Notice the theatrical "looked up to heaven" and the symbolical numbers of the baskets of fragments—in the one case seven, in the other twelve. In like manner I conjecture that the story of the Last Supper has arisen from symbolical representation of the sun-god and the twelve months. Old pictures of the Last Supper have just this aspect.

before these bodies are raised; to hear Simon's surname used before he receives it (xvi. 18), etc., etc.

Looked at critically "Matthew" is a palimpsest, in which later writers have palpably worked over earlier documents. My opinion is that all of the early Christian documents have had a deal of touching-up from various hands. Celsus charged the Christians of the second century with continually altering their sacred books. Even the ultra-orthodox Tischendorf, in his Introduction to the Tauchnitz New Testament (p. xv.) confesses: "I have no doubt that very shortly after the books of the New Testament were written, and before they were protected by the authority of the Church, many arbitrary alterations and additions were made in them." When we reflect on the forgery about the Church being built on the rock of Peter, we may come to the conclusion that the arbitrary alterations and additions did not cease even when under the protection of the Church.

J. M. WHEELER.

HOPE'S UNREASON.

SOME heedless heads from pleasant things conclude,
Through eager Hope's uncurbed inductive mood,
That Love o'errules the throbbing Earth with care,
That Love is God, and God is everywhere.
They say that gladness proves that Heav'n is kind,
Whilst sadness merely shows—well, never mind.
They apprehend that good is really good,
And understand that ill's misunderstood;
That seeming-good is good in overt mood,
And seeming-ill is only covert good;
That flow'rs and balmy breezes sweetly tell
Of heav'nly Love that doeth all things well,
Whilst noisome weeds and blighting blasts display
God's goodness in a somewhat different way;
That howling storms and tempests merely yell
The self-same fact that whispering zephyrs tell.
Tornadoes' roars, and victims' shrieks and groans,
To ears attuned, are Love's harmonious tones,
In rhythm, mood and volume, wild or tame;
The pulse and pitch may change, the theme's the same.

Thus, faithful heads in doubt need never nod,
If seeming-ill be good, and good be God;
Their motto is, on faith's serenest height:—
Right's never wrong, and wrong is always right!
Who argues God from what is best, must think
That strength of chain is that of strongest link;
But, *weakest* link is *all* the strength of chain;
So, we from *worst*, our Godly proof must gain.

The force of strongest plea from greatest ill,
Is all the Theist's case; the rest is nil.
When logic seeks for God, the reasoned test
Must be the best from worst, not best from best.

If Reason err in judging "ill is ill,"
Its judgment "good is good" perhaps is nil.
We do not know if God exists or not;
We feel that ice is cold, that fire is hot;
That certain things are good, and others bad;
That life all seeks the glad, and shuns the sad,
And is, from first to last, a bitter fight
Between the sad and glad, the wrong and right.
The dark we know, if we perceive the light;
The wrong we know, if we cognise the right:
These things we needs must feel, and think, and know;
We know that all we know is here below;
So, let us poise on no distorted fact
The slightest hope that might on deeds re-act;
But strive to shun the shades of ghostly strife,
And focus all our thoughts on earth and life!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

The small son of a Baptist clergyman recently had his first pair of boots. They were somewhat hard to get on, and he tugged and stamped and twisted for some time before they were where they should be. "My goodness, mamma, didn't they go on hard?" he said. "I came near saying 'Devil,' but then I remembered papa has told us we must not take the name of the Lord our God in vain."

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

AMONG the many culpable errors taught by orthodox Christians none are more misleading than the delusion that we are indebted to Christianity for those qualities in human nature that produce excellence in character and straightforwardness in conduct. Theologians, as a rule, ignore the fact that men and women are what they are as the result of the nature of their constitutions and also of the many and varied circumstances that have influenced the quality of their dispositions. That the formation of character really commences at the conception of a child is a fact which has now become so apparent that among the thoughtful and prudent the duties and responsibilities of parentage are deemed of paramount importance. Experience has proved that it is wiser for children to be born under good conditions than it is to allow them to be ushered into the world amidst such depravity that the attainment of moral purity and intellectual excellence is almost an impossibility. The proverb that "prevention is better than cure" has a most significant bearing upon this subject.

With us, the hope for an improved condition of humanity is based upon the knowledge that the truth is being recognised and acted upon, that the characters of most persons are determined by the incidents of their birth and the impressions they receive in the morning of their lives. The formation of character, which began in the embryonic state, is continued in the cradle, is strengthened at school, and becomes further impressed by the influence of the principles professed by those whose duty it is to train the youthful minds. Thus the characters of persons are formed for them as well as by them. Of course as a river may be made to flow in a new direction by the cutting of a different channel, so a fresh phase may be given to character in consequence of its coming in contact with conditions which before it had not encountered. Individuals will frequently through reading a story, hearing a speech, or meeting with a difficulty, exhibit traits of character which before they had given no indication of possessing. We must therefore, in estimating the causes that produce character, consider all the circumstances and influences affecting both the nature of the individual and also his or her special aptitudes.

While we admit that theology has had an influence on men and on nations, it does not therefore follow, as is frequently asserted, that the absence of that element would be detrimental to the proper formation of character. Man possesses passions as well as reason, and the correct training of both is essential to fit him to play his part aright in life. He requires to be trained so that he can live wisely in the sphere suitable to his nature, and not to be treated as if he were capable of being virtuous under any and every condition of existence. It is the function of good education to unfold character, and to give it such a direction as will enable it to contribute to its own benefit and also to that of others. It is not merely instruction that determines character, but education in its highest sense. Moreover, knowledge must not be confounded with education. A man may possess a vast amount of knowledge, and yet be uneducated and destitute of a good character. True education—that which is necessary to the proper moulding of human character—consists not only in knowing, but also in having the ability to use what is known, both for personal and general good. It means the power to direct and to modify all impressions on mind and body that are capable of being controlled.

But man is not only a creature, he is also a creator of circumstances. By investigation he discovers the laws of his own being and also those that pertain to nature in general by which he is surrounded. He learns by experience and observation that these can

be adapted to each other, and that a compliance with or acting in defiance of this knowledge determines, to a large extent, whether he will be happy or miserable, good or bad. If such essential facts as these were taught to children early in life instead of the absurd theological doctrines that are enforced upon their youthful minds, a great improvement of character would soon be observed. When men recognise the fact that pursuing a certain course of conduct and rendering service to others will secure the greatest enjoyment and obtain the highest approbation and honor, they will follow that course. It is a law of our nature, when judiciously cultivated, to experience the greatest consolation from acting in accordance with our convictions. Consistency in conduct, and fidelity in carrying out what is professed, are the brightest jewels that can adorn human life. Hence a mind imbued with a knowledge of science, and having a general acquaintance with the uniformity of nature's laws, will be free from those terrors that frequently haunt the minds of the victims of superstition. A person possessing true knowledge, allied with mental discipline, will set a high value on himself, and thus his actions will have a dignity unknown to the ignorant and the intellectually indifferent. Emerson describes a man of character as "a medium of the highest influence to all who are not on the same level. Thus, men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong." In other words, they are what we call examples, and teaching by example is one of the most effective and lasting methods of education. Shakespeare observes: "It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught as men take diseases one from another; therefore let men take heed of their company."

Much of what is called character is developed by scenes presented to us during our walks through life. The miseries of others evoke our sympathies, and their misfortunes call forth our compassion. In the presence of some great calamity a whole nation is moved irresistibly to pity, and we condole with the victims in consequence of the tenderness and generosity of our common humanity. The conduct of those persons—and we hope they are but few—who are so wrapped up in themselves that they are utterly impervious to the sufferings of others, produces intense indignation among right-minded men and women. Socrates divided mankind into two classes—the learned and the ignorant. The first he regarded as those who knew what was good, and who did it; while those who professed to have a knowledge of what was right and yet acted otherwise he denominated as the ignorant. It is always desirable in estimating character to consider under what influences it has been formed, for misfortunes of mind are as natural as those of the body.

Doubtless religion has frequently proved a potent factor in the formation of character, and in too many instances it has been a most unfortunate one. To us, however, it appears that from its very nature Christianity must fail to influence character for good inasmuch as its principal theological teachings are absurd and misleading, and are therefore impracticable for the improvement of human conduct. Superstition has not elevated the actions of men, but, on the contrary, it has degraded their intellectuality and impaired their usefulness. The discerning public always values ethical culture more highly than it does theological pretensions. As Lord Chesterfield said: "If we know a man's religion we still inquire as to his morals; but if we know his morals the question as to his religion seldom arises."

The fact is, the formation of character depends on no one thing, and least of all upon the popular religion of Christendom. In all sane men and women there is a capacity to think, and also a power of retaining impressions that are constantly influencing their characters. These factors in conduct are inde-

pendent of theology, and they depend for their existence and their value upon conditions purely natural. One thing is certain—that is, if we desire consistency in character—mankind must be guided by its intellect as well as by its feelings. Both the head and the heart, so to speak, must be cultivated if we wish to produce personal dignity and general excellence. We fail to see how this can be accomplished by a system like orthodox Christianity, that starts with the assumption that man is by nature corrupt, and incapable by human means of possessing those lofty virtues which in all ages have distinguished those men and women, the records of whose noble lives and sublime characters command our admiration and deserve our emulation.

CHARLES WATTS.

FATHER IGNATIUS AND THE BIBLE.

INTERESTED to hear what Father Ignatius had to say on "Higher Criticism," the writer bided him unto ye Westminster Town Hall, where the Father was advertised to address a Mass Meeting "To protest against the attack upon the Bible" by the higher critics. As he entered Father Ignatius was reading an extract from a journal, and having done this he said, "You see, the Infidels and Agnostics all see whither this teaching is leading us. This teaching must be the utter destruction of our Lord Jesus Christ as a teacher." He then asked "Are the higher critics right, or are they simply possessed by the Devil to such an overwhelming extent, that Satan instructs them in overthrowing the word of God?" His audience, however, were dumb, feeling no doubt too much overcome by the Holy Father's eloquence to shout that Canon Driver, Canon Cheyne, and the rest were possessed by the Devil. The Father delivered himself with much fervor, and worked himself into such a pitch of excitement, that he once or twice nearly choked, and was compelled to stop for fresh inspiration and energy. He deplored the smallness of the meeting. (Why did he not call it in Hyde Park and endeavor to divert a little of the enthusiasm from the eight hours question?) He said "I want you to see that this higher criticism leads us to absolute Atheism," at which the audience and the writer applauded, the former presumably because the Holy Father pointed the way so plainly; the latter at the thought of the good work for Freethought these higher critics were unconsciously doing. He observed that "this sin of unbelief is the sign of the near approach of our Lord at his second coming. We long for his second coming." Possibly some auditors expected to hear the blast of the trumpet and see the dear Lord and his angels coming through the roof. Referring to infidelity outside the Church, the Father said we could leave that alone. But infidelity inside the Church we must put down, and keep up a clamor until these higher critics are turned out. Just imagine, said he, the money that was left by our forefathers to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ being expended on such men as these. He then drew a vivid word-picture for "Christian mothers" of their children coming from school, and, upon their father reaching down the Family Bible, exclaiming, "Poor father! What a deluded old man to read such silly stories." He then denounced the people for their "quiescence" in this matter. Why did not they compel these higher critics to go out of the Church? If they did that he had nothing to say, as he believed in according perfect freedom to unbelievers. Charles Bradlaugh was an honest Englishman who said he did not believe in a God or any religion at all; but these men were trying to overthrow the scriptures while receiving the pay of the Church for propagating "gospel truth." The Holy Father next denounced the Bishop of Hereford for inviting the Rev. C. Gore to deliver lectures within his diocese, and said that for this he must be classed among the infidels of the Church of England. (Applause.) Then said the Father, "What of our missionaries if these higher critics be correct?" As an African missionary wrote him the other day, their profession would be gone. He deplored the "fuss being made about disestablishment, when it doesn't matter a brass farthing in comparison with the word of God. We don't care for God, we don't care for Jesus Christ; but we do care for pounds, shillings, and

pendence. It makes me think sometimes," said the Father, "that the missionaries do not care for the word of God, but do care for money. We are now having the May meetings, and there'll be a pretty disturbance if the collections fall short. The Bible Society," said the Father, "is the most outrageous humbug that ever existed." This was evidently an eye-opener; and one good dame left the hall in a trembling condition. "Go like a thunder-bolt," said the Father, "into their next meeting, burst on them like a bombshell, and demand that they take steps to rid the Church of these higher critics." The Church Association was next *sur le tapis*. "The Church Association ought to be ashamed of itself. It may be a Church Association, but it is not a Christian Association; and what I say of this Association I must say of the English Church Union. None of our religious societies are doing their duty; none of our bishops are doing their duty. Only the other day we saw the Abbey filled with thousands of people to hear—what! not a word about Jesus Christ, not a word about him was mentioned in the whole sermon—it was all about Tennyson; Professor Jowett, the most logical of all the critics, has subscribed his name to the following: 'It is true that the moralisation of Jehovah's character was by no means completed at the close of the pre-prophetic period.' This means that our God, the God we worship, was not a respectable God; that he was a sort of idol tinkered up and improved upon by each generation; that he is filthy, beastly. Now, is it not hellish that these men should be allowed to teach these things?" At the close the audience were asked to give as liberally as possible to help the Father in his work. And may we suppose that there will be "a pretty disturbance if the collections fall off"?

HENRY R. CLIFTON.

WHO IS YOUR BENEFACTOR?

Matthew Arnold tells how, at a French communal school, "A child was asked the question, so common in the training of the young, to whom do you owe all that you are enjoying here, this fine schoolroom, these pictures, these books, this splendid city, all that gives security, comfort, and pleasure to your life; who gives it all to you? I listened (he says) languidly at first, but my interest awoke as it occurred to me—Surely all this can be leading up to but one answer, the established answer, God, and that answer may not be given here. And it was not given. The answer at last to the question put to the child, 'Who is your benefactor?' was this, '*Et bien, c'est le pays*'; 'Your benefactor is your country.'" What was so surprising to a foreigner was simply the substitution of fact for fiction.

SUPPOSED EVIL THAT PROVED A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.

Contrary to orders Bobby had taken the family Bible from the parlor table, where it was very carefully kept, and by the time he had done with it the signs of wear and tear were painfully apparent. For this act of disobedience he received a severe whipping, and was sent supperless to bed. "It is a source of great gratification to me," said the minister, who was making a call that same evening, as he lifted the book from the table and discovered its condition, "to find that in this household, at least, the Bible is not neglected. It is too often the case, I regret to say, that the contents of the good book remain unsought. But I am pleased, Mr. Smith, to know," he continued, "that you find daily consolation in its pages." Mr. Smith devoutly acknowledged the pleasure and profit he derived from its frequent study, and after the minister left he took up to Bobby a glass of milk and a large slice of bread and butter with jam on it.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

ACID DROPS.

Max Müller's article in the *Fortnightly* on "Esoteric Buddhism" deals some hard blows at Madame Blavatsky and Theosophy. The learned Professor admits that the great Helena may have started with good intentions, but he adds—"Unfortunately she was without the tools to dig for those treasures in the ancient literature of the world, and her mistakes in quoting from Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin would be amusing if they did not appeal to our sympathy rather for a woman who thought she could fly though she had no wings, not even those of Icarus." Max Müller says that if he were asked what Madame Blavatsky's Esoteric Buddhism really is, he should say, "It was Buddhism misunderstood, distorted, caricatured. There is nothing in it beyond what was known already, chiefly from books that are now antiquated." The last words are a shrewd thrust at the Theosophic balloon. We have frequently drawn attention to Madame Blavatsky's sciolism, and our view of her "learning" is fortified by the opinion of this eminent specialist in oriental literature.

The special correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, writing from Belfast, gives a shady account of the Protestant leaders of that "loyal" city. This is how he concludes—"They have built churches with the assistance of bazaars, and subsidised Orange lodges, and patronised young men's Christian associations, but they have done nothing to relieve or brighten the leaden dreariness of the working quarters of the town, or to provide for the health, recreation, and enlightenment of the poor."

Christianity is all over the shop at Oxford, and the college graduates and undergraduates are under its influence, but if report speaks truly it does not succeed in making them models of humanity. Three undergraduates—Claud Fernaux, Arthur Fernaux, and Arthur Houghton—were recently fined at the Woodstock Petty Sessions for cruelty to a cat. They bagged the poor animal, took it into a field, and worried it with terriers. After five minutes of this "sport" the cat died. The magistrates fined the two-legged wretches the sum of twenty-eight shillings. A month's imprisonment would have been more appropriate.

The Christian Evidence Society is in one respect very unfortunate. It is always having to disclaim people. At one end of the scale it disowns responsibility for some awful blackguards, who somehow or other get curiously mixed up with its accredited agents. On the other hand, it is careful to state that the Black Champion is *not* one of its agents. Nevertheless it uses him as the trump card in its annual report. A few months ago, too, an appeal for funds inserted in the leading newspapers, dwelt with much emphasis on this gentleman's marvellous work for Jesus Christ. The appeal was signed by Sir G. Stokes and Lord Halsbury—two big pots; and it realised £163. This is very little more than we raised during Shilling Week. Certainly it is a small response to an appeal made by two such influential men. £163 won't do much for Jesus Christ, and it won't sweep "infidelity" out of England.

Dr. Reynolds, a Baptist preacher, has a considerable reputation. At a London meeting lately he uttered some "deeply thoughtful sentences," and the following is given as a specimen:—"It is never too late to learn, and never too late to mend." There is something very novel and original about this. Dr. Reynolds should patent such "deeply thoughtful sentences." A great man shouldn't tax his brain in this way for nothing.

No. 7 of "Leaflets for the Last Days," signed "Elijah," was put into our hands with the words "Read it with the key that we are Israel." And truly it is such a rambling hodge-podge of Biblical insanity, it needs some key to elucidate it. Some of its statements are plain, if startling. Thus we are told Queen Victoria is the 150th in descent from Adam. She may possibly live to see the restoration. But it also says "We have had in our midst both a prophet and a prophetess for over thirty years, who have revealed scores of things which have happened in our midst, are happening, and will yet happen. These appear to be named H. Oxley and Mrs. Yarnold. More wonders follow which we give in the words of the tract, which is worth reprinting as a specimen of the kind of intellect engendered by Bible belief.

"In this wonderful manifestation, as written by H. Oxley, the Man Child, of Rev. xii. 5. He states 'The writer of these notes knew a man, whose testimony he could believe, etc. This Mrs. Oxley (the widow of the prophet who pointed out the day and the place of his death and all its marvellous circumstances, as likewise the day of his burial) told me that this man was Harrison Oxley's father, that on February 14th, I think 1887, the father was sitting in his dining-room and than the angel Gabriel manifested himself to him, that the angel told him of events that should happen to his family both in England and America and that Titchbourne would be found to be the true HEIR, and that he (H. Oxley's father) would be taken away that day twelve months. On the 14th of February following, the dear man quietly passed away in his chair and all the events that could have happened *have been fulfilled.*'" This is so choice that comment is unnecessary.

President Cleveland appointed Mr. Max Judd of St. Louis, who is well-known as a leading politician as well as a leading chess player, to be United States Consul General at Vienna. The Anti-Semite party in Austria with Christian toleration, petitioned the Emperor not to receive him, on the ground of his being a Jew. Mr. Judd thereupon made the declaration that though of Hebrew race he was not a Jew in religion, but a Freethinker. Now the New York *Sun* taunts him with his denial, without venturing to call him a liar or hypocrite. It seems to us one who is a Freethinker, and by race a Jew, and there are many of them, may rightly insist on not being reckoned among Jews in religion, just as we, though of a so-called Christian nation, object to being reckoned among Christians.

It is noticeable that wherever Jews have most freedom there they are the most freethinking. Christian persecution has only made them adhere more closely to their religion as a tribal bond. Freedom, in making this unnecessary, makes it disused. In England the English Jews, accustomed to some measure of toleration, are most liberal-minded. The narrowly orthodox are the Polish and Russian Jews, who have suffered most persecution. In America there are a large number of the Jewish race who are no longer Jews in religion. The fact is, they see Judaism has no future. It cannot live, save as a vague Deism, if it abandons its old tribal rites, and it cannot propagate itself if it preserves them. Free inter-marriage will gradually break up Jehovah's chosen people.

The late Mr. J. A. Symonds, in a brief paper in the *May Fortnightly Review*, defends statements which he had previously made as to the Jesuit doctrine of obedience, and quotes at length passages from original Latin documents which show that "it is a member's duty to pronounce a thing black which is clearly white before his eyes if the Church has said it is black." Protestants see the immorality of this, but they do not see how it flows from a principle which they hold in common with the Jesuits, viz., that duty to God comes before duty to man. Once admit this, and believe that God has set up a Church on earth; and of course the Church comes before all human duties.

We have received *Fifteen Predicted Events from 1893 until the End of this Age on April 1901.* (*Christian Herald* office). It is the same as previous issues of the Prophet Baxter's predictions, with the exception of the dates being shifted onward. Thus in the issue for 1891 we read, "During 1891 or 1892 great wars will change the present 23 Kingdoms inside Cæsar's Roman Empire into Ten Confederated Kingdoms." This is now altered into "During 1893," The large circulation of this halfpenny shocker speaks volumes for the power of religion.

Referring to our comments recently upon a story in the *Christian Herald* headed "A Blasphemer Answered," one of our members wrote that journal asking for particulars, and also for details respecting another similar miraculous occurrence related in a later number. The reply was characteristic. Here it is: "Dear sir, the first incident—that given on page 160—was copied from another periodical; that on page 207 was given in an address by Mr. A. Harrington at Glasgow. I cannot give further particulars." It isn't very precise, but it's precise enough for Prophet Baxter.

Mr. Labouchere—the "Christian member for Northampton" when Charles Bradlaugh was living—is rather fond of

Bible illustrations, but he does not employ them with orthodox reverence. Speaking at Whitechapel last week on behalf of London Reform, he amused the meeting with the following sally, which we take from the *Daily News* report: "St. Paul boasted that he was a citizen of no mean city. He believed St. Paul referred to Tarsus, but if they did not look after their poor in Tarsus—and very likely they did not—(laughter)—he did not see why St. Paul should have gone about swaggering that he was a citizen of no mean city. (Laughter.)"

"God's Way of Making a Minister" is the title of a recent sermon by Dr. Alexander Whyte. We don't know much about his way of making ministers, but, judging by results, it is open to a good deal of improvement.

"Father Wilson," of the First Church of Boston, often prayed two hours at a stretch. Men came in from the surrounding towns to hear his prayers. Once he was begged to stop praying for rain, it is said, because, since he began, some of the neighboring towns had been flooded.

It is sometimes said that the French Catholics have accepted the Republic. How far this is true may be guessed from the conduct of the Catholic students at the Sorbonne in trying to shout down M. Aulard, who was appointed by the Municipal Council to lecture on the History of the French Revolution. M. Aulard has written many works, in which he shows he does not take the clerical view.

Bishop Barry, speaking at the Exeter Hall meeting of the Church Missionary Society, declared that "Christianity would never be content to be but one of many religions." Well, content or discontent, it cannot help itself. It never has been and never can be anything else. What is more—in the long, vast procession of human religions its place is only a minor one. The Osirian faith lasted longer. Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Judaism also are more venerable. After eighteen hundred years it is still rejected by three-quarters of the world's inhabitants, and there is small prospect of this position being altered to its advantage.

Parsons will talk shop—even the best of them. We have heard that gallant reformer, the Rev. S. D. Headlam, at a purely political meeting, speak again and again of his "Master, Christ." In Hyde Park, on Sunday, at the great Eight Hours Demonstration, the Rev. W. A. Morris, who spoke from No. 7 platform, said it was his business to get the will of God done upon earth as it was in heaven. Poor old God! He is omnipotent, they say; yet, after ever so many thousands of years, he has to look to Parson Morris to get his way for him in this world; and Parson Morris will be dead before he gets it.

In the House of Lords 32 members against 21 voted for the second reading of the Bishop of Salisbury's Elementary Education Bill, which seeks by a side wind to overturn the Education Act of 1870, since its purpose is to allow Board schools to become the seats of definite dogmatic religious instruction. To realise the cheek of this attempt, we must remember that there is hardly a single Nonconformist represented in the House of Lords. We are not, however, sorry that the much talked-of compromise is being disturbed, for Nonconformists, if they know their own interests, will take their stand on the old ground they took in opposition to Church rates, that the State has nothing to do with the teaching of religion.

Some while ago Bishop Moorhouse called attention to the lack of religious education in France, and took occasion to attack a *Manual of Secular Instruction*, written by M. Edgar Monteil. M. Monteil wrote to the bishop for a correct copy of what he said on that occasion. He received no reply, and now writes to us asking if we can furnish him with the article or report of Bishop Moorhouse's discourse. Perhaps some of our readers can oblige.

The clerical party on the London School Board is waking up none too soon. Mr. Sharp reported that in one of the schools they had some doubt as to the religion of a child. They suspected him to be a Jew. They asked was his father a Christian, a Jew, or a Catholic. The boy said he was a lamplighter.

The *Methodist Times* refers to the "suicidal mistake" of the Church party on the London School Board in trying to disturb the existing compromise. "The enemies of Christian teaching," it says, "are taking advantage of the opportunity to renew a dangerous agitation for the exclusion of the Bible." Our pious contemporary cries out that "it would be a monstrous injustice" if the children were not to have Christian teaching "simply because a handful of Secularists object to it." Secularists must protect themselves by the Conscience clause. What more do they want? asks the *Methodist* organ. Yet the same organ is always declaring that the Conscience Clause is a farce in the rural districts where Nonconformist children have to go to Church schools.

The Rev. R. W. Dale, of Birmingham, has expressed his opinion that now the religious difficulty has been re-opened by clericals, there is "only one solution of the difficulty. Leave secular instruction to the School Board; let religious instruction be given by the Church."

A seller of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians has been imprisoned at Constantinople, it being thought the epistles were addressed to the people of Galata, a suburb of that city. The Chief of Police wished to have a certificate of St. Paul's death before he would release his prisoner!

The police stopped a religious band, hailing from the Mile End Assembly Room, that was playing in Victoria Park on Sunday. This is described in the *Star* as a great piece of tyranny. We dare say, however, if the facts are looked into, it will be found to be nothing of the kind. We are under the impression that the band was a nuisance to all the people who were availing themselves of the space set apart for public meetings. The sooner the County Council deals in the same way with the Salvation Army band in Finsbury Park the better. Their unmelodious strains are heard all over the park, to the annoyance of speakers, audiences, and pleasure-seekers.

Severe floods in Ohio have drowned from fifteen to twenty persons, and occasioned immense loss of property.

As a religious procession was crossing the river Gallego by a pontoon bridge near Santa Eulalia, Saragossa, Spain, one of the pontoons gave way, and a large number were thrown into the water. Over twenty were drowned, faith being no equivalent to the art of swimming.

He doeth all things well: While midsummer weather prevails in Western Europe, the winter in Russia is abnormally protracted. According to an official report which appears in the *Stavropol Gazette*, the winter has been so severe that the nomads in that district have this season lost through cold and hunger, 219 camels, 932 horses, 1,321 head of cattle, and 1,000 sheep and goats. On the other hand, in Normandy they have had no rain for three months. Dry heat has engendered caterpillars which cover fruit trees and vegetables, so that there is no hope this year of Normandy pippins. In the pastoral valley of the Auge, the peasants have to lead their cows to browse on the young shoots of barley.

The organist and choir of the Independent Chapel, Grove-street, Boston, left on strike owing to a dispute as to the appointment. Their place was temporarily supplied by a few ladies and boys, and the pastor, adverting to the strike in his discourse, publicly thanked the "blacklegs."

The Church Missionary Society gloated at its May meeting on Tuesday morning over the "confident hope" that "Uganda has been saved from anarchy and ruin," and rejoiced that this had been done "under God and in answer to much earnest prayer." Wednesday morning brought the news that Captain Williams, who is holding the country, or so much of it as he can bully, had made another attack on some of the natives, "who were defeated at the first onset with the help of the Maxim gun." It is hardly decent, though the pious Jingo may think it modest, to make God responsible for this strange mode of saving a country from "anarchy and ruin." Bishop Tucker, the chief agent of the C.M.S. in Uganda, boasts that he is doing better work there than was done by any of the twelve original apostles, for is he not baptising the heathen wholesale? Those twelve apostles and the early Christians in general were certainly

poor feeble creatures. They had no Maxim guns to help them in making converts.—*Weekly Dispatch*.

The Rev. R. M. McClumpha, of Warminster, who recently, at the meeting of the Wilts and East Somerset Congregational Union, at Frome, showed himself to be of advanced if not heterodox views, has been lecturing to his own congregation. He referred to his "very coarse reception" by his fellow divines, and said "capable and cultured sceptics, and even Mr. Bradlaugh himself, would not have exhibited such ignorance as they had done in criticising Christianity."

The tabulated statements of the India census do not show that that vast territory is being brought to acknowledge sweet Jesus very rapidly. Out of 287 millions, 207 are still counted as owing allegiance to the Vedas, and the Brahmins, with their various Hindu gods. Of the remainder, 57 millions are Mohammedans. Nine millions follow the old primitive animistic faiths, seven millions are Buddhist, nearly two millions Sikhs, 1,400,000 Jains, 89,000 Parsees, and 17,000 Jews.

The English rule in Malta. But the government of the island is in the hands of Catholics. A lady who distributed some Evangelical Protestant tracts was promptly arrested, kept in custody for twenty-four hours, and given a single day in which to pack up and leave the island.

The Dean of Armagh disparages Socrates as "model." He is reported as saying "Socrates would drink with a company till most of them were under the table, and then go swaggering off to discourse on virtue." Well, sweet Jesus turned water into wine for guests who had well drunk, and then went swaggering off with a scourge of small cords to drive the sellers out of the temple.

The Bishop of Ripon has signified his approval of fairy tales. We are not surprised at this, as his lordship draws a big salary for preaching sundry old Hebrew fairy tales, such as Noah's Flood, Joshua and the Sun, and the adventures of Jonah and the Whale. Fairy tales are a subject on which the Bishop speaks with a good deal of authority.

An attempt to steal the ashes of Columbus has been announced. This is depressing news for the spiritualists. What is the use of a spook if he cannot save his own ashes from petty larceny? Any respectable ghost would have scared that miserable thief out of his wits.

"An On-Looker," writing in the *Mexboro' Times*, refers to "the Sunday afternoon infidel orgies in the Sheffield Hall of Science." What on earth does the fellow mean? We believe he is a certain quack sky-pilot in the locality, and his manners are on a par with his reputation.

Some time ago the Manchester Christian Evidence Society was going to settle the hash of South Lancashire "infidelity," but it doesn't appear to have succeeded in this godly enterprise. At its recent annual meeting, held in the Mayor's Parlor, with Canon Woodhouse in the chair, the honorary secretary is reported to have spoken thusly: "The aggressive advances of unbelief and Secularism had in no way diminished. There appeared to be an enlarging prevalence of scepticism also among the educated classes. Doubt and unbelief were almost in the air—epidemic." On the other hand, alas, the Manchester C.E.S. couldn't get funds enough, and "it was discouraging and disheartening to an extreme degree to find their efforts so little valued and appreciated." Let us pray.

Professor David Loring, of Chicago, recently said: "No unexpurgated edition of Shakespeare should be read in the public schools; that in fact no ordinary edition of Shakespeare is fit for the study of young people." If he had suggested the expurgation of the filth and nonsense from the Bible, all enlightened people would have said amen to it.

Says the *Flaming Sword*, the organ of the Koreshan community: "The bankers vainly imagine that with law, locks and safes, they can preserve their wealth. But when the Lord comes as a thief in the night he'll bring his 'jimmy' (his James) and other apostles with him!"

Dr. Joseph Parker continues his weekly contributions

to the London *Echo*. It is poor stuff, hardly worth a shilling a page. In last week's contribution Dr. Parker referred to Benjamin Franklin as a wise man, which he undoubtedly was, and also as "teacher sent from heaven." Evidently the City Temple Oracle doesn't know, or forgets, that Franklin was a Deist. "Heaven" sent him on earth to "teach" that supernatural Christianity was a mistake. Why then does not Dr. Parker give it up? Perhaps the answer is, Because it pays.

In the Church of Saragossa, in Spain, the marble thus blazons Juan Cabeca, Chorister of the King. "When he was received into the Choir of Angels, in augmentation of that happy company, his voice was so distinguishable from the rest, that even God himself hearkened to him with attention, and at last said, rather severely to the angels, 'Hold your tongues, ye calves, and let Juan Cabeca, Chorister to the King of Spain, sing my Praise!'"

Mr. Symes, in his *Liberator*, has been knocking to pieces Mr. Wyke Bayliss's nonsense about the pictures of Jesus being an actual portrait. He shows from Didron's *Christian Iconography* that the portraits of Christ painted at various ages have been of the most diverse character, sometimes old and fierce, at others gentle or cynical; sometimes beardless, sometimes bearded; now Jewish, now Greek. It would be just as true to say that the Satan of the painters was taken from a photograph.

Talking of portraits of J. C., out in Mexico the Christian idol is usually represented in American red-top boots with an Mexican red blanket.

"Porphyrius" says the Highlander's Prayer in a recent issue reminds him of one ascribed to a New England farmer. It ran:

Lord bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four, and no more,
For Christ sake, Amen.

Running our eyes down a newspaper column on Monday evening we noticed the following two items almost in contiguity: "Captain" Ida Bennett, of the Salvation Army, at Spokane, Washington, had a dispute with her lover, who shot her dead and then himself. Holloway Prison, London, having an extra number of prisoners, two chaplains have been appointed to look after their spiritual interests. We leave our subtlest readers to find what connexion they can between these bits of news.

Mary Ann Paige seems to have an active imagination. She summoned her "husband" at the Sevenoaks Petty Sessions for wilfully neglecting to maintain her and her children. When asked if the defendant was her lawful husband she said she "understood he was," but she had no marriage certificate. By way of explanation she said that her husband was an Atheist, and they were married "at a Freethinkers' Hall." This absurd rubbish was gravely listened to by the Bench and as gravely reported in the local press. Mary Ann Paige has drawn her bow at a venture and made a ludicrous mistake.

The Bishop of Oxford warns his clergy against engaging in controversial correspondence in the newspapers. They may expose their ignorance.

At Liverpool they have been fining newsboys for crying their papers on Sunday. The clanging of church bells, the bands of Salvationists, and the ravings of Christian advocates at street corners, are of course no nuisance.

A row took place at Chicago on the first Sunday after the opening of the World's Fair. A number of persons who expected it would be opened on Sundays assembled and, attempting to force their way in, came in contact with the police. Some broken heads and some arrests were the result. It is announced that the vexed question of Sunday opening will be decided this week.

Mrs. Lydia Woodruff, the young lady evangelist, is doing great work at conversion in Indiana. The fact that she kisses the converts may have some effect in bringing the converts to the anxious seat.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 14, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—at 7.30, "The Religion of Humanity: a Reply to Hon. A. J. Balfour."

Wednesday, May 17, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—at 8, "Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*." Admission free.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—May 14, Birmingham; 28, Hall of Science, London; 29, Battersea. June 4, Hall of Science, London; 5, Battersea; 11, Birmingham; 25, Sheffield. July 25 and 26, debate at Jarrow-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.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Always pleased to see your "list."

C. H. DUGDALE.—Mr. Foote's time for postal correspondence is limited. You will find all you require in his *Prisoner for Blasphemy*, which Mr. Forder will supply on application. Perhaps Mr. Stocker has a copy at Liverpool.

G. CROOKSON.—Sorry you were obliged to be away during our visit to Barnsley. Thanks for paper; see "Sugar Plums." We have no time for a discussion in the local press, and political arguments are out of place in the *Freethinker*.

JAS. MORRISON.—It appeared in our columns several years ago. Thanks, all the same.

J. TIDSWELL.—Glad to hear you say that "the front part of the Hall of Science premises *must* be rebuilt *at once*," and that you intend to take some additional fully paid up shares in the National Secular Hall Society. The enterprise would be soon carried to completion, with profit and honor to the cause, if every Freethinker who can afford it would only follow your example.

RON MAHON.—The longer piece shall appear.

YOUNG READER.—Never mind what the clergy say. Read Gibbon's great work for yourself. The best edition is the one in eight volumes, edited by Milman and Smith, but it is expensive. You can sometimes pick up an old edition second-hand, containing simply the text and Gibbon's own notes.

C. E. SMITH.—Thanks.

H. W. JONES (Blackburn).—We never before heard of any person called Gerish who lectured on the Freethought platform under the name of Union. The Christians must be very gullible to be taken in by such a "converted infidel."

C. DOEG.—All right. Mr. Foote will communicate in a day or two.

A. LEACH.—Thanks. The joke has already appeared.

R. S. P.—The Protestant Reformation Society's triumphs over "infidels" are purely imaginary.

J. TULLIN.—No such answer has appeared in the *Freethinker*. We note the other contents of your letter.

J. KEAST.—Of course the Bristol Branch will be represented at Hanley. Your application will be considered this week. Pleased to hear that your first public lecture went off so well.

THOS. BIRTLEY.—You have apparently taken the boastful Christian Evidence lecturer down a peg or two. Send us further information in due course. Mr. Foote is in good health.

MINNIE M.—See "Acid Drops."

R. DAVISON.—We had already heard from Mr. Billany. See "Sugar Plums."

F. B. EVANS.—A paragraph was already in type. Glad to hear Mr. Cohen made such a good impression at Hanley.

F. TODD, 59 Tunis-road, W., informs us of what we learn with deep regret, that Mr. Harry Courtney, the energetic President of the West London Branch, is confined to his bed with a severe attack of rheumatic fever, and the doctor says it will be some time before he will be able to engage in public work. Mr. Todd will be happy to hear from some one willing to assist in the open-air propaganda during Mr. Courtney's disablement.

N. B. BILLANY.—Your daughter and her husband have our sympathy in their bereavement. Very sorry to hear the Hull strike will prevent your attending the Hanley Conference.

JOSEPH BROWN, whose portrait was in our Special Number, thinks our cartoon the best that has yet appeared, reflecting great credit on our artist. Mr. Brown wishes to correct an error in our biographical notice. It was the Trades Council, and not the Trade Union Congress, that he attended as a delegate at Newcastle in 1892.

J. ROBERTS.—Shall appear in our next. Mr. Doeg has also written us on the other matter. We shall keep our eye on Liverpool.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) John Wesley said "my parish is the world." It was in reply to those who said that, as a Church clergyman, he should stick to his parish. The exclamation does not carry the same meaning as Paine's "The world is my country." (2) Your other questions are sufficiently answered in almost any number of the *Freethinker*.

W. L. PROSSER.—Received. Under consideration.

J. BLACKER.—Thanks for the marked paper, but it does not change our attitude. Mentioning names would lay us open to an action for libel, and while we should not shrink from this if ours were a medical journal, we are not so foolish as to do it now. A quack medicine-man, with clergymen to back him, would be pretty sure to get a verdict and judgment against the editor of the *Freethinker*.

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—Wiltshire Times—Hull Critic—Reading Observer—Boston Globe—Church Reformer—Boston Guardian—Jarrow Guardian—Castleford Gazette.

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.

FORWARD!

ON Tuesday evening, at the London Hall of Science, the National Secular Hall Society (Limited) held its first annual general meeting, the chairman (Mr. Foote) presiding. The report and balance-sheet were unanimously adopted, and declared to be very satisfactory. The number of members on the Society's books is nearly 240. This is highly gratifying as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. The Society should have at least a thousand members. London alone should furnish a half of that number. I must appeal to the Secular party to bestir themselves. Mr. George Anderson's splendid offer to give £300 if the number of shares is made up to 3,000 holds good till the end of July. I am very anxious to secure that generous donation, and it can be done if the party will only rise to the opportunity. By the party, I do not mean an abstraction; I mean the *individual members*. Everyone should seriously ask himself (or herself)—"What can I do to help this important enterprise?" The shares are only £1 each, payable in easy instalments. Half-a-crown is called up at a time on each share, and the notice extends to two months. No one therefore can say that the conditions are too onerous. Even the poorest may take one share, if no more, and "stand in" with the wealthiest for the success of a cause which transcends class distinctions. The enterprise *must* be carried to a speedy completion, and I shall give the party no peace till it is done. They will be appealed to week after week without intermission. I may add that if the 3,000 shares are made up by the end of July, the *rebuilding* will commence *immediately*. Then we shall soon have a splendid Institute, up to date in every way, and openly dedicated to the memory of Charles Bradlaugh.

G. W. FOOTE.

P.S.—Readers of the above who mean business should send a postcard at once to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C., who will send them share application forms by return.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Our last week's Special Number kept up to its predecessors in point of circulation, selling on the whole rather better than the ordinary penny issue. The idea has evidently "caught on," and it will be a still greater success if our friends who can afford it will only take a few extra copies for circulation among their liberal-minded acquaintances. Our cartoon, "The Modern Belisarius," is one that might raise a smile on the faces of persons of very moderate heterodoxy.

Mr. Foote has changed the subject for his lecture this evening (May 14) at the London Hall of Science. He will discourse on "The Religion of Humanity," in reply to the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P. Mr. Balfour's new volume of Essays contains a strongly-worded criticism of Atheistic philosophy in relation to human progress and happiness, and it is fitting that he should be replied to at the headquarters of Freethought in London. Mr. Foote's reply will be careful and thorough, and Freethinkers should try to bring their orthodox friends to hear him.

Mr. Foote's third Shakespearean lecture on *King Lear* was well attended. The fourth on *Othello* will be delivered after we go to press. The fifth, for Wednesday next (May 17),

will be on the *Merchant of Venice*. The admission to these lectures is free, and the audience appears to include a fair proportion of the general public.

Mr. Watts had a good audience last Sunday morning at Manchester, but his afternoon meeting was not so large in consequence of two powerful counter attractions. These were the May Labor Demonstration and T. P. O'Connor's lecture at the Free Trade Hall. In the morning, however, the Secular Hall was crowded with an enthusiastic audience. Friends were present from most of the surrounding districts. This (Sunday) evening, May 14, Mr. Watts lectures at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham.

The spiritualists of Newcastle-on-Tyne must be peculiar mortals. For the second time their representative has backed out of a discussion with Mr. Watts after all arrangements had been made and the conditions mutually agreed upon. It appears that some of the local spiritualists are of an opinion that a set debate would not be an advantage to their cause. This may be quite true, but it should have been remembered before they invited Mr. Watts to discuss and have given the trouble of making arrangements, etc. We presume that our colleague will not be fooled in this way the third time.

The Hanley Branch is making every possible preparation for the N.S.S. annual Conference. As the hotel accommodation is limited, the Branch president—Mr. T. Charlton, 58 Market-street, begs that all delegates and intending visitors will write in good time, so that beds, etc., may be secured for them.

A Midland excursion train leaves St. Pancras station on Saturday morning (May 20) at 10.5 for Hanley. The return fare, from Saturday to Monday or Thursday, is 12s. Delegates going from London by this train should communicate with Miss Vance.

Dinner will be provided for delegates and visitors at the Boro' Arms Hotel at half-a-crown per head. The delegates will be entertained at this repast at the expense of one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, who has previously acted in the same generous manner. Tea will be provided at the Secular Hall.

The London Secular Federation, at its last monthly meeting, Mr. Foote in the chair, decided to re-issue the Monthly Lecture Program, which was suspended during the winter. Branch secretaries in London will please note that their lists for June must reach Mr. Pownceby, the Federation secretary, before May 24 to ensure insertion, as the Program is to be printed so as to be in circulation on the last Sunday in the month.

The Federation's annual Excursion is fixed for the third Sunday in August. A special train will run to Brighton. Full particulars in due course.

Funds are urgently required by the Federation for its work. The treasurer's address, for intending subscribers, is Mr. R. O. Smith, 142 Old-street, E.C. Branches are requested by the Council to make collections at all open-air stations for the Federation's exchequer on the second Sunday in June. A collection will also be made at the Hall of Science on that day, and probably at Camberwell.

Mr. Robert Forder does not lecture frequently now, but he has no intention of relinquishing platform work altogether. This evening (May 14) he lectures in the Battersea Secular Hall on "The Holy Ghost." Local Freethinkers will be glad to hear what he has to say about "the foggy member of the Trinity."

Mr. C. J. Hunt delivers two open-air lectures to-day (May 14) at Wolverhampton, and will no doubt have good audiences. An important general meeting of the Branch will be held in the evening.

The Bristol Branch held its second annual meeting on Sunday. Mr. Keast wished to resign the secretaryship and devote himself to public speaking, but he was pressed to stand for re-election. Mr. Harvey was appointed treasurer, and a good committee was appointed to carry on the work. The

Branch has seventy-one *bond fide* members on its books, and is full of hope for the future.

The Hull Branch has decided to have its annual excursion on the first Sunday in June. Members and friends desirous of joining this pleasure party should lose no time in notifying the secretary, Mr. R. Davison, 1 Francis-street East. The tickets are—adults 2s., children 9d.

The annual meeting of the Liberation Society at St. James's Hall was numerously attended and enthusiastic. Sir G. Osborne Morgan presided and made a rattling speech. The Rev. J. Hirst Hollowell said that there were 200 chief ministers of the Church of England who took between them £300,000 a year, and 34 high priests of the Church of England who were receiving salaries between them amounting to £160,000. Dr. Parker also spoke, and remarked that "Whenever he saw a priest he saw an enemy to the human race." True, the remark was not original, but we rejoice to hear such an opinion expressed, though we doubt if the speaker meant it in its full significance.

The *Family Herald* has completed its fiftieth year, and issues its jubilee number. The fact suffices to show it has supplied a want, and the occasion would have been a fitting one for the editor to mention the labors of his predecessors. He writes with justifiable pride of the success which has met the aims of this popular domestic magazine, but says nothing of the person who gave it its distinctive characteristics. This was the first editor, James Elishama Smith, generally known as Shepherd Smith, a Pantheist, Socialist, and pronounced heretic, whose previous publication, *The Anti-Christ*, would certainly have come within the scope of the law against blasphemy.

The annual Conference of German Freethinkers will take place this year at Karlsruhe, from May 27—29. Professor Ludwig Büchner will preside, and will read a paper on "The Relation of Freethought to the Social Question."

Mr. James Payn, in his Notebook columns in the *Illustrated News*, relates from a correspondent how he heard a Secularist in Hyde Park denouncing ecclesiastical institutions with great eloquence, when there broke out a dog-fight. The audience migrated to the rival attraction. "But the orator was not only a Secularist but a philosopher. 'Well, I don't blame them,' he observed. 'Demosthenes himself could not stand against a dog-fight'; and when it was over he returned to his iconoclastic harangue as if there had been no such hiatus." The orator in question was, we believe, a witty vice-president of the N.S.S., who occasionally contributes to the *Freethinker*.

The "Higher Criticism" is winning all along the line. Orthodoxy is in a perfectly hopeless condition. Dr. Sanday himself, in the course of this year's Bampton Lectures, is "going the whole hog, including the bristles." The book of Daniel is one of those referred to by Jesus, but Dr. Sanday gives it up altogether as the work of Daniel. It was not written till hundreds of years after Daniel's time; the real date of its composition being the second century before Christ. Thomas Paine was therefore right after all. Daniel's prophecies were in some cases fulfilled because they were written a long while after they were fulfilled. Perhaps we shall live to see the *Age of Reason* a text book in Christian colleges.

The *Barnsley Independent* devotes a couple of editorial notes to Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture on "Home Rule," which it describes as "an exceedingly able one, from the Radical point of view." As the editor is a Unionist, and goes on to say that the lecture was based on false premises, we may take his compliment to be sincere.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, who will always be remembered as having put forward the theory of natural selection almost simultaneously with Darwin, writes in the May number of the *Fortnightly Review* of Mr. W. P. Ball's book, entitled *Are the Effects of Use and Disuse Inherited?* (published by Macmillan in "The Nature Series"), as an "excellent little work." Mr. Ball, who has long been known to the Freethought world, and especially to readers of the *Freethinker*, as a most thoughtful writer, has for some time past been engaged on a still more important volume bearing on human

evolution, which we are sure will equally commend itself to the judicious few. We regret that Mr. Ball's health necessitates his "hastening slowly" with any work he may take in hand. He is not one to push forward for fame, or for anything but real service to humanity, but his reputation stands high with those who know him.

Mr. C. Cohen delivered three open-air lectures last week on the Market-square, Hanley. He had large audiences, and several prominent Christians spoke in opposition. Mr. Cohen will visit Hanley again before the Conference.

The Malthusian League holds its annual meeting at South-place Institute next Tuesday evening (May 16) at 8 o'clock. Dr. Drysdale will preside, and the list of speakers includes Dr. T. R. Allinson, Dr. Alice Vickery, Mr. J. M. Robertson, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mrs. Heatherley, Mr. G. Standring, Mr. T. O. Bonsor, Mr. A. P. Busch, and Mr. G. W. Foote. The admission is free.

The open-air propaganda of Freethought is now in full swing in London. All the N.S.S. stations are scattering the seeds of thought among the multitude. Mr. Foote is not quite sure, but he hopes to give five or six of these stations a turn during the summer.

Colonel Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses* has been translated both into Dutch and German.

Ingersoll has been to Niagara Falls recently. Of course he was interviewed. But he would not say much beyond that it was a dangerous place. He is reported as saying:—"It is simply a mighty force of nature—one of those tremendous powers that is to be feared for its danger. What I like in nature is a cultivated field, where man can work in the free open air, where there is quiet and repose—no turmoil, no strife, no tumult, no fearful roar or struggle for mastery. I do not like the crowded, stuffy workshop, where life is a slavery and drudgery. Give me the calm, cultivated land of waving grain, of flowers, of happiness." Mrs. Ingersoll, who accompanied her husband, was enraptured with the beauties of Niagara.

CHRISTIAN DIFFICULTIES ANSWERED IN DIALOGUE.

CHRISTIAN.—What would you give me in place of the Bible?

FREETHINKER.—All the literature of the world (including your Bible), at its just worth, in place of your one book at an exaggerated and fictitious valuation.

C.—What code of morals would you give me?

F.—No written code. Your conscience—that is, your moral judgment—is your guide. No fixed set of rules of conduct can suffice. Right and wrong vary with time, and place, and circumstances. It is not wrong for a savage to go naked, but it would be wrong for you to do so here. It would be wrong for me now to go into that house and steal a decanter of brandy; but if you were dying of syncope and that brandy would save your life, it would be right for me to take the brandy by force if the owner denied it to me.

C.—But where should we have been without the ten commandments?

F.—Just where we are now. Do you think men would submit to be robbed and murdered and deprived of their wives' affections if Moses had not produced those tables (assuming the story to be true)? The instinct of self-preservation would have dictated laws. More than a third of the civilised world have never heard of these commandments.

C.—What would you give me in place of religion?

F.—A healthy self-reliance, a feeling that this life is the only one we are certain of, and that it therefore behoves us to make the most of it; to strive to ameliorate the lot of our fellows by all the means in our power, instead of merely regretting the misery of the world and hoping for a better, thus dropping the reality to vainly grasp at the shadow.

C.—Christians do try to improve their fellow-creatures' conditions; we believe in making the most of both worlds.

F.—If you are a true Christian you cannot do so consistently; and Christianity itself, as an institution, hinders

progress. In the face of these words, "Take no thought for your life," but copy the example of the lilies, which neither toil nor spin; "Blessed are the poor"; "Submit to every ordinance of man, for the powers that be are ordained of God"; "Resist not evil"; pray for the recovery of the sick instead of taking natural means to that end—I say, in the face of this it is inconsistent to endeavor to raise the poor, to practise industry, to resist evil, to oppose tyranny and bad laws, to use the sciences of sanitation and medicine. Further, Christianity's history is one of bitter opposition to all progress in science, in government, in education; while it wastes millions of days and money yearly which might be employed infinitely better.

C.—But you must admit the consolation of religion?

F.—If you mean the Christian religion, is the consolation you speak of the teaching that "many" go the broad road to everlasting agony, while but a "few" reach heaven. If you have any love for your human brothers and sisters, would you not give up the consolation of the thought that you are going to heaven, if thereby you lost the fearful belief that most of the faces you see are smiling to-day, will bye-and-bye be distorted with pain and terror—and that for eternity?

C.—I dare not trust myself to answer that question directly. I cannot alter God's decrees.

F.—But will you say they are God's decrees if your sense of justice revolts against them?

C.—It seems impossible that what I have been taught in childhood and all my life, can be all a delusion. How do you account for eminent and scholarly men believing Christianity?

F.—Your own words as to early training partly explain it. Religion is woven with their very being, and therefore difficult to eradicate. Again, minds vary unaccountably. Of two great men, one is a confirmed Radical, and another a staunch Tory; one a sworn enemy of vaccination, another enthusiastically supports it. Many scholarly men are Parsees, Buddhists, Mohammedans, but you would not argue for these religions from that fact.

C.—Well, you cannot gainsay the good Christianity has done. But for it where would be our hospitals and philanthropic institutions, the homes for the reclamation of the fallen?

F.—It is a common blunder of Christians to claim all charitable work as being instituted by them. Hundreds of years before Christ was born there were hospitals and homes in Egypt, China, and India; in the latter country even hospital for animals; while the "golden rule," claimed to have been first enunciated by Christ, is to be found in "heathen" and Pagan teaching centuries before him. Homes for fallen women were not then required, as prostitution is an evil confined almost entirely to Christian countries and to places where Christianity has been introduced.

C.—Where are the hospitals and charities of you Secularists?

F.—What would you think of the person who had asked the Christians of the first century such a question, they being few in number, poor, and laboring under social ban and legal disability? Act of Parliament debars Secularists from holding property as such, and outlaws any legacy left for the promulgation of our principles. Such legacies have been seized by Christians and devoted to other purposes. As to hospitals, although we have our own benevolent funds, we should never think of establishing a Secularist hospital. We do not believe in sectarian benefactions; besides, such an hospital would be for the most part empty. Some Christians would rather die than go into an "infidel" institution. We, however, do our share towards supporting existing establishments of the kind just as Christians do.

C.—I certainly did not see the matter in that light before, and I was not aware of your legal ostracism.

F.—Thank you for your candor. I hope you will not neglect to correct misrepresentation on the subject wherever you may hear it.

A. G.

The force of habit is great. A shop-walker at a large and well-known dry goods establishment in the vicinity of Twenty-third-street, who lately acted as pew opener at a fashionable church, was showing two ladies to their seats last Sunday, when it proved too much for him. He advanced briskly up the aisle and called-out in the most approved and business-like style, "Two for silks forward! Take a seat, please."

SAPIENT SERPENTS.

THE injunction that not only the immediate but that all the succeeding disciples of the Nazarene impostor should be as *cunning as serpents* has been strictly followed by at least one portion of the Christian community—the clergy. And hitherto the lethargic laity have been too muddle-headed to twig its trickery. However, the two sections together—flats and sharps—form an illustrative example of the proverbial meeting of extremes. The wisdom of serpents partakes more of the scriptural adage than of zoological fact. The worldly-minded wisdom of the *skyboshites* is almost a universally admitted fact both in sacred and profane history, right away from the forensic Samuelsons of Ramah down the long, dark, superstitious ages to the modern Succothites of the cosmopolitan *Blood and Fire* brigades. This innumerable array of meek and lowly white-eyed candidates for the celestial *upper suckles* have seldom failed in making to themselves friends of the Mammon so readily derivable from the ever-waxing fool-crop.

When some noodle of a curate, crowded with his due quantum of catechetical cram, has obtained a gospel agency at about £90 *only* per annum, he rears aloft his snubby, Pecksniffian proboscis and petitions the president of the poor whangdoodle augmentation fund—an institution very largely supported by working men, whose annual earnings average less than £70—just to level it up to even money—two sovereigns per week, until such propitious times as his heavenly Father calls him to a fat and streaky living of five or six hundred a year. At this juncture we cannot refrain from citing a calculation we recently made anent the £15,000 per annum which his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury receives for doing nothing, and the time and energy expended in our workshop. We are manufacturers of articles for which we are paid at the nett rate of two shillings per dozen. By dint of perseverance the five workers in our family have produced 5,000 dozen in five years, which means less than eight shillings per head per week of over fifty hours. At this miserable rate of making friends with Mr. Mammon, £ s. d., we shall have to continue toiling in this god-chosen state of elbow-grease for 145 years longer before the whole lot of us shall have conjointly netted as much money as Archbishop Benson pockets in a single year. Selah! God works in a very mysterious way Mr. Cowper, when he ordains that in one instance a struggling family, including five bread winners, must toil twelve years in order to obtain as much as one lazy Christian gets in a month. What has A—B—C—done to entitle him to such emoluments? Has he penned some sophistical pamphlet on the Trinity, in which he excels everybody else in demonstrating that three times one *is* one, and that the fiction of the Bible is all fact? Surely godliness, with or without the contentment, is great gain. We know of hundreds of honest men as good, if not better, any end up as A—B—C—who will, for thirty-bob a week, work as many hours usefully, as the prelate works minutes perniciously. Then again, the right reverend Dr. Moorhouse, Bishop of Manchester, is another live sample of ecclesiastical sapience. He stalks about all over Lancashire, exhorting the wan-faced workers in that thronging hive of textile industries to be patient and content with their low estates, as their reward hereafter will be all the greater. Now why did Moorhouse himself leave the flesh-pots of sunny Australia and diminish his chances of a future reward, by accepting the more lucrative diocese over which he is now my Lord Bishop? Let Mammon answer. The masses, as well as the classes, are expected to give to the Lord, through the priests, tithes of all they possess—or do not possess. Indeed—but we have not yet come across a solitary case where one of those *apron-and-gaitered* soldiers of Christ has sacrificed one-tenth, or even one-fiftieth of his easily earned stipend for the commonweal, or for the silly sheep over whom he has so tenderly watched. These little inconsistencies in ecclesiastical high quarters are as so many drifting straws, and if people would only *wink the other eye* and fix the open one on the man of *Monte Calvary* and his devotees, especially the *purple sumptuous* section, they would at all times easily discern which way the wind was blowing.

P. W. BALDWIN.

The Rev. Jacques Massis, pastor of the French Protestant Chapel, Soho-square, has been found guilty of forgery.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN.

(PECULIAR METRE.)

GOOD BYE, dear relatives, neighbors and friends, I'm sincerely
and piously sorry
That Slashet and Druggem, the doctors, can't possibly pull
me through;
Though I'm leaving this sinful world of labor and trouble
and worry,
For infinite bliss ecstatic in the regions beyond the blue.

How thankful I am that my death-bed, serenely, ineffably
glorious,
Is not, as the Atheist's vile, o'ershadowed by sorrow and
gloom;
He finds, too late, that his godless piety is more damnable
than crimes notorious,
And hollers and writhes and shrieks as he's pitched to his
doom.

I've transacted a tidy amount of shady business in my time;
But I've rinsed and lathered my soul since then pretty well
With the famous warranted Blood—a wonderful eraser of
crime;
And, unless my priest lies most abominably, I'm safe to
dodge Satan and hell.

With what rapturous glee shall I lean o'er the ramparts
celestial
(Hugging my glorified body the while to think that I'm
safe and sound).
And gloat o'er the holocaust below of Freethinkers, Atheists,
and similar riff-raff bestial,
Who wouldn't pay God his dues, nor with their heavenly
creditors compound.

Then fervently back to resume my vociferous hallelujahs shall
I go,
Chuckling o'er the torments of those who have cursed me
and died by reason of my nefarious dealings
(Which same blasphemies probably settled their hash, and
consigned them for ever below,
Enveloped in sulphur and fire, with all sorts of devils and
imps to deride their squealings).

All my enemies I handsomely and generously forgive, though
may God deal with them after their offences,
And smite them hip and thigh if they deserve it—as I'm
sure they do—
I'm determined my soul shall be white when it flies up to
him who dispenses
Torture eternal to many, and blesses a carefully-selected few.

Good-bye; music sweetly thrills round me,
And light, golden light, fills the room
(This is the correct thing to say, I believe, though—confound
me—
I've no ear whatever for music, and I can't see a thing in
the gloom).

Good-bye, friends; the Savior stands beckoning,
With a smile on his heavenly face:
Well, I've squared Mother Church most handsomely, and I'm
confidently reckoning
That he'll show me to a snug, comfortable, slap-up, con-
spicuous front place.
EX-RITUALIST.

THE MINISTER NOT CREDITED.

"How do you feel to-day?" said a venerable Scotch clergyman of the olden school to one of his parishioners, an old woman, whom he met on the public road. "I'm no weel, ava, sir," replied she; "I'm unco weak, an' my mind's clean gane." "I'm sorry to hear that, woman," said the minister; "the want of memory is a great affliction; ye ken I can well sympathise with you in it, for I've suffered greatly in that way mysel' for a long time." "Eh, sir, hoo can ye say that? when I've heard ye gi'e the same prayer noo for ower sax-an'-twenty year, an' ye haena forgotten a word o't—no' ane," was the old woman's reply.

OBITUARY.

Died on May 2, Elma C. Billany Gill, aged thirteen months. Her parents are both members of the Hull Branch N.S.S. Mr. N. B. Billany, the child's grandfather, officiated at the funeral.

BOOK CHAT.

Mr. T. Fisher Unwin announces a new series, to be called *The Reformer's Library*, of which the first volume will be a cheap edition of Mr. G. J. Holyoake's *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*. This will be followed by *The English Peasant*, by Mr. Richard Heath; and *The Labor Movement*, by Mr. L. T. Hobhouse, with a preface by Mr. R. B. Haldane.

A biography is announced of W. J. Fox (1786-1864), who for many years preached at South Place, Finsbury, where he introduced the plan of taking texts from other books than the Bible. Fox did much good work for liberal thought and radicalism, and sat in Parliament from 1847 to 1861.

Messrs. Chapman and Hall have just published a work by H. Martyn Kennard, the Egyptologist, entitled *Philistines and Hebrews: A new Light on the World's History*. A tentative form of the same work was put forward for private circulation last year, but Mr. Kennard has gone all over the ground afresh before putting his extraordinary book before the public. We shall bring Mr. Kennard's views before our readers shortly, meantime wonder what the orthodox world will think of his contention that the temple at Jerusalem was dedicated to the god Amen.

The Priest in Politics is the title of a book just issued by Hutchinson and Co. It is written by Mr. Philip H. Bagenal, and refers only to the political action of the Irish clericals within the last seven years. Indeed, to go into the question generally, would be a very large order. One point Mr. Bagenal vigorously enforces is, that the hierarchy in Ireland took sixteen days after the verdict in the O'Shea and Parnell case, to make up their minds if the Protestant was unfitted to lead their flock.

Max Nordau, the author of *Conventional Lies of our Civilisation*, has put out a new brochure in German. It is entitled *Entartung*, or "Degeneration," and deals with some aspects of modern life, in the same strenuous style as his former work.

CORRESPONDENCE.

DISTRIBUTE OUR LITERATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Our party does not rely on bands and banners, but on the progress of ideas. Much is done by our courageous lecturers, but a far wider public can be reached through the press. Our Unitarian friends advertise that they send tracts and lend books to inquirers. Cannot we do the like? Christian societies have their tracts, asking "Where will you spend eternity?" and similar foolish questions at railway stations, and even inside tramcars. Cannot we supply the antidote to their poisonous trash by bringing Freethought before the eyes of the many? Could we circulate a million tracts in a year, as one Christian society alone boasts of doing, sky-pilotage would soon become a bankrupt business? In the holy book we read that the disciples of John at Ephesus had not "so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost;" and, though it may appear equally strange, there are thousands in Great Britain who have not so much as heard whether there be any *Freethinker*. Let every Freethinker make it his business to distribute our literature.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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, Robert Forder, "The Holy Ghost"; 9.15, social gathering. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, entertainment by the Marlowe Dramatic Company (tickets 3d. and 6d.)

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, Thomas Layman (E.L.R.L.), "The Royal Commission on Land Values" (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Darwinism." Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Finsbury Park Branch, 11 Blackstock-road: Monday at 8, special meeting.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Religion of Humanity—a Reply to the Hon. A. J. Balfour" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*" (free).

Notting Hill Gate—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street: Monday at 8.30, special general meeting of the West London Branch to discuss the Conference Agenda.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, S. H. Alison, "Darwinism and Design."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, R. Rosetti will lecture.

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, H. Snell, "God's Book."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, J. Marshall, "What Think ye of Christ?"

Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, a lecture; 3.30, A. Guest, "Is the Bible Inspired?"

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8.30, W. Heaford, "What, after all, is Christianity?"

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, W. Heaford, "Posers to the Pious."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Mr. St. John, "The Heaven Above and the Earth Beneath"; 3.30, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company." Wednesday at 8.30, Mr. St. John will lecture.

Islington—Newington Green: 3.15, S. H. Alison, "The Bible and Modern Criticism."

Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road, High-road): 6.30, Lucretius Keen, "What has Christianity Done?"

Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, T. Thurlow will lecture.

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, a lecture. Mile End Waste: 11.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Bible God at the Bar of Human Reason."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company"; 3.30, F. Haslam will lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): J. Marshall, 11.15, "God's Personality"; 3.15, "What Think ye of Christ?"

Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, C. James, "Deism, the Road to Freethought."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, E. Calvert, "History of the New Testament Canon."

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

COUNTRY.

Bath—Corridor Rooms: Monday at 8, C. J. Hunt, "The Christian Creed."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, Charles Watts, "The Holy Bible."

Brighton—Eagle Hotel, Gloucester-road: 7.30, J. Fagan will lecture.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' monthly meeting; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 4.30, Sunday-school anniversary tea; 7, distribution of prizes, and entertainment by the children.

Derby—Mr. Moore's Restaurant, Station-street: Monday at 7.30, important business meeting.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, Mr. Ackroyd, "The Discoveries of Ancient Monuments and the Light they throw upon the Bible."

Leeds—New Waverley Hotel, Call-lane: 7, important business meeting.

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Cox-lane: 7, business meeting; 7.30, E. Copland, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Doeg, "The Prophet of Nazareth."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 6.30, readings from the Poets by Mr. Taylor, and selections by the choir. Tuesday at 8, debating circle, Mr. Morley, "Some British Fossils."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, fortnightly meeting; 7, Mr. Mitchell, "Burns."

Nottingham—Shortland's Café (bottom of Derby-road): 7.15, important meeting for discussion of Conference Agenda, etc.

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, Mr. Laver, "The Pagan Origin of Christianity."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: R. Law, F.G.S., 3, "Progression of Life on the Earth; or how the World became as it is"; 7, "History of the Hills around Sheffield, and their Habitation by Wild Savages."

South Shields—Thornton's Variety Hall: C. Cohen, 11, "Evolution v. Special Creation"; 3, "The Fate of Religion"; 7, "Christianity and Morality."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, Mr. Selkirk, "The Christian God an Impossibility."

Wolverhampton—Athenaeum Assembly Room, Queen-street: 11 and 3, members' meetings; 7, C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

Brighton (on the Level): 3, J. Fagan will lecture.

Sunderland—Wheat Sheaf, Monkwearmouth: Saturday, May 13, at 7, C. Cohen, "Religion and Freethought." Sunday at 6, Mr. Selkirk will lecture.

Wolverhampton—Lichfield-street (near the fountain): 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Book of Common Prayer." At Snowhill (near Villiers' statue), at 3.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Resurrection."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—May 14, m., Battersea; a, Islington; 21, m., Camberwell; e, Lambeth; 28, m., Midland Arches; e, Lambeth. June 4, m., Wood Green; 11, e, Lambeth; 18, Chatham; 25, m., Camberwell.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—May 12, Chester-le-street; 13, Sunderland; 14, South Shields; 21, m., Leyton; a, Victoria Park; e., Hall of Science; 25, Hammer-smith; 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.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—May 14 to 21, annual tour; 28 m., Islington; e., Kilburn.

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

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—May 14, e., Camberwell; 21, m., Westminster; a., Finsbury; 28, m., Wood Green; e., Hammersmith.

J. ROWNY, 7 Park Villas, Newington Turning, N.—May 14 to June 25, m., Regent's Park; a., Hyde Park.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—May 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 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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This new god, he cannot give me
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Though the fight were stubborn and long.
Can he give me again the glory of youth?
Go down with me to the sea,
And harry the shores of Britain?
Ah! never more shall I see
The white sails spreading their wings,
Each spring as we left our home,
And day by day drew southward—
I can almost feel the foam.

But now all is past and over,
I know that naught can avail.

The gods in Valhalla have spoken.
I go; and your white Christ pale,
He cannot bring back for one instant
The glorious days that are past.
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