

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY.

PHILOSOPHY in ancient times was regarded as being equivalent to wisdom, hence philosophers were frequently called "lovers of wisdom." It was supposed that a philosopher could accommodate himself in exactly the same spirit to all the "inconveniences of life, or the agreeable things of life." In modern times, owing to the extension and diffusion of knowledge, the old definition requires revision. Broadly speaking, there exist only things and names of things, or what pass in our minds as such. Thus man's requirements at the present day can be represented for all practical purposes, by the words science—a knowledge of things, and philosophy—an explanation of things. Outside these, or in addition to them, theology represents the speculations which are said to refer to the unknown regions over which the imagination of man is supposed to have roamed. What is termed Ideal Philosophy—which, to us, appears to dispose of the world altogether—has no charm for our practical mind. It may be that we do not understand it (who does?) When we look at the marble statue of Dr. Priestley, for instance, and try to imagine all our sensations taken away, we fail to see how that disposes of the marble itself or of its attributes. But to suppose the statue absent, we are unable to account for our sensations of hardness, smoothness, etc. Moreover, if all we know of the statue is in our minds, we are unable to get rid of the idea that the statue is as real as our knowledge. If ideal philosophers possess any peculiar gifts they may account for what appear to us their peculiar views.

The philosophy in which we believe is the result of investigations and accumulated experience. The chief value of such a philosophy is that its possession is conducive to the formation of a power of self-direction, and that it enables a man to know himself, and to learn what to do and what to avoid. The enjoyment and continuation of life depend upon a knowledge of the means which are most likely to ensure these conditions, and also upon the acquired power to follow the dictates of reason in their application to the promotion of the end desired. The philosopher, who differs entirely from the theologian, does not allow the errors of his fellows to sever the links that connect him with them, as he knows they are the result of natural causes. Besides being himself better informed, perhaps, than some others, he looks upon their deficiencies—whether they are caused through nature or through lack of opportunity—as their misfortunes. He does not, like the theologian, propose to imprison the body to correct some errors of the mind. Whatever proposals the philosopher makes, they will have for their object the giving more enlightened views of things, and of inspiring a better disposition in men towards each other. Philosophy is not like theology, sectarian; on the contrary, it seeks to discover all that is good and true, and to divide it among the human family. It is the father of liberty, and the deadly foe of priestcraft and of

tyranny; hence the supreme efforts of theologians have frequently been to vilify the parent and to strangle the child. Both have been equally detested by the bigoted theologian, and no pains have been spared to try and drive them out of the world.

The claims of philosophy and those of theology must be kept apart, or there will be no room for the former. Theology is founded on extravagant and unverified opinions, and it prohibits the free use of reason in reference to its pretensions. Practically it is as free from doubt as from unfettered thought, for it believes and subscribes to every thing taught in its name. The province of philosophy is to consult common sense, to collect facts, to verify assumptions, and to exercise caution against believing too much. The philosopher examines into causes of opinions, and into the prejudices of his age, in order that he may arrive at right conclusions of things as they are, and not simply as they are represented to be.

Adopting such a course as this resulted in the overthrow of the belief in the Bible doctrine of witches, which for ages was thought to be true by theologians, eminent lawyers, and distinguished judges. The same may be said of slavery, which so long found its chief support in theology. Thomas Paine, looking at all questions with the mind of a philosopher, and recognising the rights and capabilities of man, saw at once the iniquity of slavery, but theologians, accustomed to take opinions and institutions ready made, failed to see the inhumanity of the supposed divinely established institution. The theologian takes things on faith, while the philosopher desires to have them verified by experience, and if necessary, confirmed by experiment. The one sees what he terms a ghost and proclaims it to be a reality, but the other examines it, which action is invariably attended by the extinction of the ghost. It is to philosophy that we owe the explanation of all things that were at first misapprehended by the imperfect perception of our senses. Philosophy bestows her gifts without exacting unqualified adoration or blind worship. It does not demand that we ignore our passions, but that we exercise all our faculties in a reasonable and useful manner, both for our own good and for that of others. Philosophy is the deliverer of men, for it rescues them from ignorance, which has always favored and perpetuated slavery and superstition. Theology has fostered abuses by keeping people in a state of ignorance which has necessarily borne fruit after its own kind. Goldsmith, whose vicissitudes of life qualified him for giving an opinion upon this subject, observes: "The great source of calamity lies in regret or in anticipation; he therefore is most wise who thinks of the present alone, regardless of the past or of the future." But Goldsmith finds this attainable only by the philosopher, hence he says: "Happy were we all born philosophers."

We live in a time when reason and philosophy are extending their empire all over the world; hence those who fear that these mental powers may conquer are placing all manner of difficulties in the way of



their progress. It is perhaps too much to hope that the good sense of men will make them recognise their friends and do their best to secure the complete victory of mental freedom. The human faculties have already been too long under the dominion of forces that hinder the spread of light. Let the English-speaking people cast off the yoke of tyranny, and promote the growth of reason and the extension of philosophy, in order that other nations of the earth may by their example be inspired to seek to discover and to remove the abuses they live under, and expose the deception that has been practised upon them for countless ages. The impediments to such a consummation that call for our principal consideration are the vested interests in things as they are, and the constant dread that is shown of innovations. We wish the intelligent believers in theology to ask themselves that had not the influence of philosophy prevailed in times past, what would have been the present state of the arts, the sciences, and of education? The most selfish of men will find on examination that it will be not only more pleasant, but also more profitable, to promote than to obstruct the progress of the world. It is the height of folly to suppose that the destruction of all that is good will be caused by the increase of knowledge and the improvement of the faculties of those upon whom society depends for its supplies of the necessities and comforts of life. Philosophy is of no sect, for it appeals to all, and aims so to influence society that justice may prevail among all classes of men and women. He that is capable of distinguishing a friend from an enemy will have no hesitation in preferring the guidance of philosophy to that of an expiring theology which does not contain the seeds capable of opening into flowers that would sweeten the life of man.

The philosophy of the sciences unfolds the secrets of nature, and is a reliable revelation to man. Contrast the conjectures of theologians with the investigations of a Darwin and of a Lyell. The latter have deciphered the evidences of an immeasurable past, which render the writings of theologians so much waste paper, or prove them to be merely emotional guesses at truth. The human mind, when once directed to philosophical sources of evidence, can never revert to its old state of theological reliance. If we go into the orchard on a bright summer's day and behold the golden blossoms suspended from the boughs, and then retire, the vision is still before us, and it lingers long, for, as Keats observes, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." It is even so with the truths of philosophy, for as was said of Shakespeare, they are "not of an age, but for all time."

CHARLES WATTS.

## THE SECOND GOSPEL.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE plausible theory of oral tradition put forward by Canons Westcott, Farrar, and others, was invented to account for the differences of the gospels, but it breaks down under a scrutiny of their similarities. These are not occasional, but frequent. The Synoptists agree in their selection of sayings and incidents, in their order, though it is evidently an artificial one, and in their very turns of phrase. Take, for instance, Mark i. 16, compared with Matt. iv. 18.

<p>Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.</p>	<p>And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: (for they were fishers).</p>
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The last clause is one sure not to be preserved alike, if at all, in tradition. It appears the same in both cases, because the writer had documents before him. Turn again to chap. xiv. 43, compared with Matt.

xxvi. 47, and Luke xxii. 47. All tell at this point that Judas was "one of the twelve," though this circumstance had been mentioned frequently before. Note further, both in Mark xiii. 14 and Matt. xxiv. 15, Jesus says, "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Readeth what? Jesus wrote nothing. It may be said, "readeth the prophecy." But how curious that both Matt. and Mark should insert the exact same warning in the exact same words of exactly the same place. Here is another of the many traces of literary manufacture from previous documents, such as it is impossible to ascribe to Palestinian Jews of humble origin of the first century, but much more likely to be the works of monks of possibly much later date.

And in regard to the writer, as I now proceed to show, we have the clearest indication that he either wrote in Latin, or for Latin people. How else should he explain the widow's mite as Roman money (quadrantes xii. 42)? Here he actually explains a Greek term by a Latin one, which would be curious indeed if he wrote in the Greek for Greek readers. Greeks did not want to be told the value of a *lepton*. So he explains the court as the *prætorium* (xv. 16), and the preparation as the *pro sabbaton* (xv. 42). He gives us such well-known Latin words in Greek characters as *centurion*, *speculator*, *legion*, *sextarian*, *ensus*, *denarius*, *fragello*, etc. He turns *grabatus* into *krabatos* (ii. 4). He makes Jesus in Palestine speak of the Roman law of divorce (x. 12). He assumes the official position of Pilate is sufficiently well-known to his readers (xv. 1). The woman Matthew calls a woman of Canaan, he speaks of as a Syro-Phœnician (vii. 26). He makes the mistake of calling Herod the tetrarch Herod the King (vi. 14), and of substituting Abiathar for Abimelech (ii. 26). His geography is at fault, as in making Christ depart and pass through Galilee, when he was already in the midst of Galilee (ix. 30, cf. Matt. xvii. 22) and pass through Sidon on his way from Tyre to Decapolis, which is something like going through Portsmouth on the way from London to Birmingham.

In Mark xiv. 3 we are told that the woman who anointed J. C. brought a box, *Nardou pistikes*, which in the Latin Vulgate is rightly given *Nardi spicati* (spikenard). There is no such word as "pistikes" in Greek. It is a mere corruption from the Latin, and one of the indications that this gospel, at any rate, was originally written in Latin.

Evidently it was not written for Jews, since the writer is at pains to explain their customs, the rites of the Pharisees, and the opinions of the Sadducees (vii. 2—11, 3; xii. 18). He even thinks it necessary to say that the Jordan is a river.

The two earliest persons who mention the language of Mark are Ebedjesu and Eutychius. The former says Mark wrote "in Latin, in the famous city of Rome," while the latter tells us "that in the time of Nero, Peter, the prince of the apostles, making use of the pen of Mark, wrote a gospel at Rome in the Roman language," which Lardner, without fact or probability, jumps to the conclusion may mean Greek. Christian advocates, indeed, seem to fancy all the world, like Hudibras,

could speak Greek

As naturally as pigs squeak.

The fact being that Greek was the language of the learned. The early Syriac version says in its subscription that it was written in Latin at Rome, and so does the *Liber Pontificalis*, ascribed to Pope Damasus. Cardinal Baronius (who, with Cardinal Bellarmine, Gretser, Pagninus, and other learned writers have contended for a Latin original) pertinently remarks: "This gospel was written at Rome, and for the use of the Romans; can we, then, suppose that it would be written in any other than in the language of the place?" At the dawn of modern criticism they saw this clearly. But later Christian advocates have jumped away from the theory of a



Latin origin as they would from a mad bull. It threatens to toss their house of cards to destruction.

The tendency of modern criticism has been to show that this Latin gospel gives us the earliest version we can now get. Of its priority Canon Sanday says, in the just-issued article on the gospels in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, "It is, if not an assured result of criticism, yet rapidly becoming so." So that the alleged eye-witnesses Matthew and John were later than a person who, even according to "Irenæus," did not write until after Peter and Paul were dead. One thing is pretty certain, the omission by "Mark" of the birth stories and of the Sermon on the Mount is strong evidence that these literary productions had not then been concocted, or were not known in the *scriptorium* where the gospel according to Mark was produced. For the materials of their legends it is evident its authors drew mainly from documents, supplying perhaps a little from tradition and more from imagination.

Taken as a whole, Mark is a gospel of wonder-working. Its purpose evidently is to establish the claims of the Messiah on the credulous. Let the reader reflect upon the fact that this, probably the earliest, account of the Christian miracles, said nothing of the miraculous birth or resurrection, and appeared in a language the Jews of Palestine could not understand, a thousand miles from the scene of the alleged miracles.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### MR. BALFOUR ON RELIGION.

[CONCLUDED.]

MR. BALFOUR does not appear to see that, if the world is such a huge mistake, it presents just the same problem (while it lasts) to all of us. Things are what they are, and whether we shall make the best of them or throw the business up in disgust, cannot be affected by the length of time it will continue. Nor is it really open to Mr. Balfour to twit the Humanitarian in the way he affects. Mr. Balfour himself regards this life as a poor, mean preparation for another life, without which it has not the slightest worth or meaning. He is thus in no position to argue with those who regard it as our all in all. They look at life with their own eyes, and refuse to view it through the spectacles he says they should wear. He declares that they should be in despair, but they are hopeful; he affirms that they should be sad, and they smile at him. They are not affrighted at the thought that the human race will end and the world become extinct. The catastrophe is too remote to afflict them. They know the time will come when their own mouths will be still in death, but it does not prevent their sitting down with a good appetite to dinner. And though the world may not last another fifty million years, nor the human race another ten millions, they think the time is long enough for a good dividend on their investment of thought and energy in the work of human improvement. Mr. Balfour's jeremiad is really calculated for a generation or two before the "last days." It is a pity he cannot be reincarnated just at that time, to see if even then his jeremiad would prove convincing.

Page after page of monotonous, though not ill-written scorn, does Mr. Balfour pour upon this wretched life of ours. Make it what we will, there remains with us "a residue of irremediable ills—separation, decay, weariness, death." He forgets the probability that these evils will diminish. All of them, in fact, may be nearly abolished. Death as a fact will remain, but death as an evil will practically disappear when science has done its utmost for us in the direction of health and longevity.

Mr. Balfour makes a hit when he declares that the future happiness of humanity will not make up for its past sufferings, for "those who will enjoy are not the

same as those who have suffered; one set of persons is injured, another set will receive compensation." This is a sentimental objection, however; for surely one need not be deterred from doing a kindness to-day because it cannot undo a cruelty inflicted yesterday, and the Humanitarian is under no necessity to make up a perfect character for the universe. On the other hand, it should be observed that Mr. Balfour is not explicit in stating the advantages of the Christian faith. He says that its future life will "complete the destiny," not merely of humanity, but of "every man, woman, and child born into the world." Yes, but how? Suppose your destiny is completed in hell—as it is likely to be on any fair calculation of odds, according to the Christian scheme of salvation. How will this "supply consolation and encouragement, energy and hope"? Mr. Balfour should condescend to details in making his comparison.

The only use Mr. Balfour makes of Hell is to set it off against Public Opinion. He derides the idea that "a judicious manipulation of the latent forces of public opinion will supply us with a very efficient substitute for Heaven and Hell," and asks us whether we "seriously regard it as an improvement in the scheme of the universe that Infinite Justice and Infinite Mercy should be dethroned for the purpose of putting in their place an apotheosised Mrs. Grundy." To which we reply that it can be historically proved that public opinion is stronger than religion; and that it is precisely the supernatural religionists, and not the sceptics, who are most under the dominion of Mrs. Grundy.

On one point Mr. Balfour is in direct opposition to the pulpiteers. He thinks the Religion of Humanity will leave with us "love, pity, and endurance," but it "hardly permits us to live with hope," though it may "encourage us to die with dignity." Mr. Balfour is not, however, as astute as the old enemies of "infidelity." They saw clearly enough that the "infidel" did not live without hope; his cheerfulness, in fact, was a horrid outrage on orthodox principles; it was gross as a mountain, open, palpable. They therefore took refuge in the theory that he was sure to die howling. Of course they were wrong, but so is Mr. Balfour. Their "infidel" and his "Positivist" are both creatures of imagination, the only difference being that their fiction was malignant, and his fiction is charitable.

The whole of Mr. Balfour's address is, in fact, a mere piece of special pleading. He simply indulges in endless rhetoric to depreciate *this* life, in order to show how great is the advantage of supernaturalism in offering us *another* life. Now the obvious reply is that he has not *proved* another life, nor even made it appear *probable*; and, further, that if there be another life, he has not given any reason for supposing it is an improvement on the present. His argument is like a game, in which his opponent's cards bear a fixed value, while his own cards are blank, to be stamped according to exigencies. And the play turns entirely upon this cool assumption of a future life, which is left to the taste and fancy of individual believers. In other words, Mr. Balfour contrasts the pettiness of the real life we know with the glories of the ideal life we imagine. His mansions in the sky may be ever so magnificent, but they are unapproachable and undiscernable. A modest house on earth is very much interior, but you can get at it—and that is a tremendous advantage. For our part, we prefer a little loose cash in our pockets to any quantity of drafts on the bank of expectation. It is easy enough to dream, and easy enough to promise; it is more difficult to realise and fulfil; and it is just here that Mr. Balfour breaks down. Secular philosophy, on the other hand, is less grandiose, but it is the vital principle of all the real progress in the world.

G. W. FOOTE.



NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HANLEY, MAY 21ST, 1893.

THE National Secular Society cannot claim civil recognition though its Conference this year was held in the Mayor's Court, and its public meeting in the Town Hall, of Hanley. The delegates who attended may have felt bound to be on their good behavior with their President occupying the chief magistrate's chair. The following towns were represented:— Bath, C. J. Hunt; Battersea, J. Potter and G. Sellwood; Bedlington, Charles Watts; Bethnal Green, R. Forder; Birmingham, C. Watts and R. S. Bransby; Blackburn, J. Umpleby; Bolton, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Hampson; Bradford, J. W. Gott and J. Sunderland; Brighton, A. Tripp; Bristol, R. Forder; Camberwell, S. Hartmann; Chatham, W. B. Thompson; Cheshire, T. Evans; Cramlington, C. J. Hunt; Derby, W. H. Whitney and H. N. McGinness; East London, S. Hartmann; Finsbury, G. Ward; Finsbury Park, G. Ward and Miss Robins; Glasgow, J. P. Gilmour; Grimsby, S. Alward; Hanley, J. Stanway and J. Foster; Hull, H. Porter; Hyde, R. Forder; Ipswich, R. Forder; Islington, G. Ward; Liverpool, L. Small; Luton, W. Budd; Manchester, Mr. and Mrs. C. Pegg, G. E. Taylor, and L. Hard; North West London, C. H. Kelf; Nottingham, J. Hooper; Ox Hill, F. B. Evans; South Shields, R. S. Chapman; Sunderland, C. J. Hunt; West Auckland, C. J. Hunt; West London, C. J. Hunt; Wigan, A. Gibson. There were also many individual members present from all parts.

Mr. FOOTE, having expressed his pleasure at presiding, and having briefly adverted to the necessity of keeping strictly to business, read the following letter from Mr. Holyoake:—

Royal Hotel, College Green. Bristol.  
May 20, 1893.

DEAR MR FOOTE.—Were I not officially engaged at our Co-operative Congress at Bristol, I should be at your Conference at Hanley. The aim of all assembled there I take to be the extension of Freethought organisation. That will lead to increased influence, and increased influence brings with it increased responsibility. Those whom we release from error we should endeavor to attach to truth. When we call out to a man that he is going down the wrong road, we are more likely to enlist his attention if we can point out the right road. The best of all paths to happiness in this life is the Secular path. The name National *Secular* Society implies that its members know that there is a path of science and morality which leads to the service of man, which includes the noblest satisfaction to an intelligent conscience attainable in this world. As Lowell sings—

It is the deed and not the creed  
Will help us in our utmost need.

Were I to address the Conference I should say: Our immediate purpose, to which your President devotes his energy, is the establishment in London of an Institute in memory of Charles Bradlaugh, where members of Secular Societies in Great Britain and from abroad may visit and find friendly greeting. It is a primary condition of the organisation of a great movement to have metropolitan head-quarters. In this Memorial Hall we have the historic associations of Charles Bradlaugh's name; there we perpetuate the splendid services rendered by him to Freethought, and which are the inheritance of all our Societies. To establish an official and permanent representation of Freethought in London, it is necessary that each delegate should consider what help he can render by taking shares, and who there is, within his knowledge, in the town he represents, who can be asked to aid in this object. No man is expected to be bad, nor to be, as some spiritual persons are, so good as to be good for nothing. Let each one be secular minded, and good for something. A Christian tradesman of Chicago lately put outside his door the notice, "In God we trust: all others strictly cash." For the speedy completion of this Memorial, the promoters put their "trust" in this Conference; but if success is intended, all transactions on the part of well-wishers must be "strictly cash."—Very truly yours,

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

The minutes of the last meeting having been taken as read, the President then proceeded to read the Annual Report as under.

EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.

In presenting this Annual Report the Executive is conscious that it closes a period of special perturbation, following upon

the death of the Society's late President. A new era is now before us; an era, perhaps, of less heroic struggle, but one of growth and perfecting organisation.

During the year after the death of Charles Bradlaugh there was a phenomenal increase in the Society's membership. No less than 1,074 new members were enrolled. It was not to be expected that this increase could continue. The improvement which began in 1889-90 has, however, been fairly maintained. The number of new members enrolled during the past year amounts to 784.

New Branches of the Society have been formed at Aberdeen, Dundee, Bath, Ipswich, Barnsley, and Islington, in all of which places Freethought lectures have been delivered. The Ipswich Branch, in particular, is the sign of an awakening of Freethought in a part of England which has hitherto been quiescent, and perhaps neglected.

Under the new arrangement further Special Lecturer diplomas have been granted to Messrs John Grange and S. H. Alison. Every candidate for a diploma must have been a member of the Society for two years, as some guarantee of conviction and stability, and in every case the Executive has taken ample precautions against the diploma being given into improper or incompetent hands. No emolument attaches to the diploma; it is merely a certificate of fitness, and a guarantee of the holder's position on the Secular platform.

Taking a broad survey of the Society's work, it may be affirmed that there is certainly no diminution of its activity and effectiveness. The principal Branches in London and in the provinces have fully maintained their positions, and in some cases improved them; while large audiences have been obtained by the leading lecturers in all the chief centres of population. In some instances the meetings have been specially well attended, thanks to the important assistance of Christian Evidence Societies, which have stimulated the public interest in Freethought propaganda.

Some of the Society's lecturers have engaged in lecturing tours in the provinces; notably Mr. Charles Watts, whose voice has been heard in all parts of England and Scotland, and even in Belfast, and whose public debates have in every case sustained his own and the party's reputation. Messrs. Moss and Heaford, went on tour in the summer, delivering a number of effective open-air lectures to considerable audiences. Mr. Sam Standing has also been busy in Yorkshire and Lancashire. More recently Mr. C. Cohen has been lecturing in the Midlands and the North of England with much satisfaction to the Branches that engaged him.

The London Secular Federation has organised several courses of free propagandist lectures in the metropolis, and provided social reunions in the form of an annual dinner and a summer excursion. It continues to print a common Lecture Program for all the affiliated London Branches—a document which has an imposing appearance now that the outdoor lecturing is in full swing.

Excellent work has been done by the North Eastern Secular Federation in Durham and Northumberland. Lectures have been given in the colliery districts as well as in the large towns like Shields, Sunderland, Jarrow, and Newcastle; while summer excursions and winter social gatherings have brought the members of the federated Branches into friendly personal contact with each other.

With respect to the Society's *Almanack*, the Executive regrets to state that its sale has diminished. The publication was not paying its way when it was handed over to the Society in 1890. Special efforts were made by the President to improve its circulation, and with considerable success; but the sale of the number for 1893 has dropped to the old level. To render the *Almanack* more saleable in future it may be necessary to give it a more taking title, and to bring it more into a line with popular taste. Fortunately the advertisements that were secured for the new number have covered a large part of the relative deficit.

The balance-sheet shows a falling off in the total amount of member's subscriptions, as compared with the phenomenal amount of the preceding year. This appears to be somewhat owing to two facts: first, that the Branches, who now only contribute 6d. per year per member, as against 1s 4d. prior to the new arrangement made at the Manchester Conference in 1890, have only in a few cases conformed to the rule as to making two annual collections for the General and Benevolent Funds; secondly, that while some of the poorer members have availed themselves of the new rule, and paid only the minimum subscription of one shilling per year, some of the better-off members have not taken care to rectify the balance by increasing their own subscriptions. On the other hand,



however, a sum considerably exceeding the amount of members' subscriptions has been raised for the Society by its President, and thus the income of the Society has been maintained to meet its necessities.

It has been resolved by the Executive that Branch subscriptions shall be sent in quarterly, or at least half-yearly in future. This is intended to provide against unpunctuality in remitting on the part of Branches, some of which are considerably in arrear.

The Executive takes this opportunity of pointing out that the Society's normal income has not fallen off. It is equal to what it was four or five years ago, although at that time it included a yearly sum of £63 arising from the Thompson Bequest, which terminated in the early part of 1890. This is a fact to be kept in view in any comparison of accounts.

It will also be noticed by those who carefully examine the balance-sheet, that a very large saving has been effected by the change made at the last Conference in the paid secretaryship. The principal drain on the Society's funds has been in connection with the maintenance of headquarters in London. It was at the President's suggestion that this enterprise was engaged upon, and he has borne his share of the labor it involves. Out of sixty free lectures at the Hall of Science he has delivered twenty-two, without fee or travelling expenses. Not wishing the Society to be burdened in the slightest degree against its inclination, he has offered to release the Executive from the tenancy, and take the entire responsibility himself; but the offer has been declined by the Executive, almost unanimously, only one member voting for its acceptance.

With respect to the Committee of Inquiry appointed a little before the last Conference, to determine whether (as alleged) the Freethought party had any sort of claim upon the then leaseholder, Mr. R. O. Smith, the Executive has to state that the Committee's report was published at length in the Freethought journals of July 17, 1892. The finding of the Committee was as follows: "That there was no moral right of the Freethought party to the use of the Hall of Science for thirty years; that there was no moral right beyond the term of the lease, twenty-one years; that any moral right which Mr. Bradlaugh may have supposed to exist was abrogated by his later attempts to obtain other headquarters for the Society; that Mr. Bradlaugh appears to have made his statements as to the thirty years right on contingent grounds that were never realized; and that Mr. Smith has acted throughout honorably and rendered important services to the party." This finding was signed by Messrs. G. J. Holyoake, George Anderson, J. E. Brumage, and J. Samson; the fifth member of the Committee, Mr. J. M. Robertson, dissenting from the majority.

The Committee's report exonerates Mr. R. O. Smith from all suspicion of unjust dealing, and the President from the charge of having asked the Freethought party to purchase what it had already paid for. It also clears up an episode in the party's history which to many persons was more or less mysterious.

At the last Conference a resolution was on the Agenda as to the disposition of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, with the exception of the £51 which subscribers had directed to be held over until the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company should put forward a practical proposal. The Conference relegated the matter entirely to the Executive, and the Executive has invested the balance of the fund in further shares in the National Secular Hall Society, the Directors agreeing that when the front part of the Hall of Science premises is rebuilt, it shall bear a public intimation that the building is dedicated to Charles Bradlaugh's memory. Not a single subscriber has complained of this arrangement. The £51, with a small sum over, is still deposited at the Birkbeck Bank in the name of three trustees—Messrs. George Anderson, W. H. Reynolds, and G. W. Foote.

In September last an International Freethought Congress was held at Madrid—the capital of the classic land of the Inquisition. The Executive was not able to send delegates, but one of its vice-presidents living in Paris—Mr. P. Le Lubez—attended and spoke on the Society's behalf. It is sad to record that the Congress was summarily closed by the authorities, on the ground that its orators contravened the Civil Code by speaking disrespectfully of the Roman Catholic Church.

This year, probably the first Sunday in September, an International Freethought Convention will be held at Chicago. It was resolved at the last Conference that if such a Convention took place the Society should be represented. To complete

this resolution the Executive has placed on the Agenda a notice of motion that Messrs. G. W. Foote and Charles Watts be authorised to represent the Society.

The Executive regrets to report that the past year has been marked by serious interferences with the Society's propaganda. In the month of July the treasurer of the Derby Branch was arrested at an outdoor meeting, and Mr. Sam Standing was requested to go over from Manchester to watch and report the proceedings, but the matter was allowed to drop. In the month of December the police warned the Portsmouth Branch against charging for admission to the Sunday lectures in the Wellington Hall. Mr. Snell, who was lecturing at the time, acted with the Branch quite wisely. Money was not taken at the doors on that Sunday. But the Branch had no intention to give in without resistance. The President was communicated with, and went to Portsmouth to meet the members and arrange for a battle. On the first Sunday in January he delivered three lectures in Wellington Hall, with the customary charge for admission; but although a well-known detective was outside the Hall in the afternoon the police (perhaps wisely) refrained from taking any action. The Branch committee acted with spirit and determination, and the doors of Wellington Hall remain open on the old conditions.

On the first Sunday in February the police interfered at Hull, where the President was lecturing in the Alhambra Theatre. The Chief Constable threatened the lessee with a prosecution if the Secularists were allowed to charge for admission, and hinted that if the prosecution failed the Theatre might lose its license. The lessee therefore, having a reservation in his contract, refused to open the doors unless the charge for admission was abandoned, and the lectures were given under those circumstances. On the first Sunday in March the President lectured at Hull again. A hall had been engaged for a week, to conceal the object and to shield the proprietor. Free lectures were delivered on the week-nights, and money was taken at the doors on Sunday. The Chief Constable threatened the proprietor and the very caretaker; but, although he was taunted and defied, he would not prosecute the Secularists.

Here again it is impossible to speak too highly of the firm attitude of the Branch committee, and indeed of all the members. The honor of the party is safe enough in the keeping of such men as the police found ready to defend it at all hazards at Portsmouth and Hull. It may be that these incidents, like some others of a less extreme character, are signs of a new wave of bigotry spreading over England. If so, it will be found that the old fighting spirit of Freethought is not extinct, and that the National Secular Society will not shrink when challenged to maintain its liberties.

Fortunately there are hopeful signs to be set against these unfavorable ones. During the late General Elections the statement of the laws against Freethought, drawn up by the President, with questions to be put to parliamentary candidates, was very widely circulated. Many candidates expressed their ignorance of the existence of such laws, and a considerable number—some hundred and forty in all—promised to vote for a Bill to abolish or amend them. There is good reason to believe that a thorough-going measure for the absolute repeal of the Blasphemy Laws would now command much greater support in the House of Commons than when it was first introduced by Charles Bradlaugh, and so decisively rejected.

The Liberty of Bequest Committee, of which Mr. G. J. Holyoake is chairman, has found in Mr. Mansfield, who represents Northampton, a member ready to take charge of its Bill in the House of Commons, and several other members are prepared to back it. But nothing definite has yet been done, nor does anything seem likely to be done in the present session. The Executive of next year should see what steps can be taken to expedite the progress of this measure, for though it should not be carried, its introduction will give a valuable publicity to the wrongs under which we suffer.

Next year's Executive should also watch closely the dispute among the Christian denominations as to religious education in the Board schools. It may be possible to strike in on behalf of the only just and rational solution of this problem. At any rate, it will be possible to enlighten the public mind upon it, by means of circulars, public meetings, and other agencies, so that future School Board elections may show a growing tendency to accept pure secular education for the children of the State.



It is customary to close the Annual Report with a glance at the state of Secularism in America and the British Colonies. It is gratifying to know that there is a considerable spread of Freethought in South Africa. At Melbourne the war against superstition is being waged as valiantly as ever by Mr. Joseph Symes, who still conducts the *Liberator* with spirit and success. Mr. W. W. Collins, at Sydney, carries on the movement in connection with the fine new hall built by the local Secularists. In Canada the Secular Union seems an active organisation, and *Secular Thought*, the paper established by Mr. Charles Watts, is now ably conducted by Mr. J. S. Ellis. In the United States the American Secular Union has a friendly rival in the new Freethought Federation. Both are working together for the success of the International Freethought Convention at Chicago. It is pleasant to record that Colonel Ingersoll has of late appeared more frequently upon the platform, addressing very large and enthusiastic audiences. No less pleasant is it to state that there is some prospect of Colonel Ingersoll's visiting England next year. Should he come he will receive a thrice hearty welcome from the Freethinkers of this country, with whom his name is a household word, as that of an admired intellect and a beloved personality.

On the President asking for questions or motions on the report,

Mr. GILMOUR (Glasgow) said he was instructed by his Branch to call attention to the action of the Executive in the matter of the Hall of Science Company as exceedingly arbitrary and unwise; otherwise he thoroughly approved of the report.

The PRESIDENT said that not a single subscriber had objected. At the last Conference there was a notice of motion as to the allocation of subscriptions, but the Conference had set that aside and deliberately passed a resolution committing the whole matter to the Executive. The matter had been disposed of there by a majority of 16 to 6, and could not be undone. There could not be a question of honesty—the Executive all work for nothing, and the money is invested in trustees, holding it in the Society's name. There may be an error of judgment. If so, the Conference had its remedy when it came to elect officers for the next year, but they could not get behind whatever was done.

Mr. HARTMANN (vice-president) stated that he had subscribed and objected.

The PRESIDENT replied that Mr. Hartmann's money remained unallocated. The point was that no subscriber has complained whose money has been used.

Mr. UMPLEBY (vice-president) thought there was no probability of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall being brought to a successful issue.

Mr. R. O. SMITH (vice-president) said that if the Executive were guilty in the matter, so was the last Conference in delegating it to them. It would have been easy to say adjourn the matter for another year. But it was placed on their shoulders and they took the responsibility.

Mr. C. WATTS, as representing Birmingham, adopted the report as it stood. If they discussed this matter for two hours they would not undo the past. If the Executive has done wrong, don't place them in a position to do wrong again.

Mr. GILMOUR said he would formally move "That in the opinion of this Conference the Executive had made a grave error of judgment, and that the money be refunded."

Mr. PEGG seconded, that the matter might be tested.

On its being put to the vote, seven hands were held up for Mr. Gilmour's motion and an overwhelming majority against it.

The Executive's report was then put to the meeting and unanimously accepted.

On the Financial Report a variety of questions were asked, and suggestions were thrown out as to the advisability of the Executive saving expenses by printing matter that might be used in common at all Branches.

Mr. C. J. HUNT (Cramlington) called attention to the loss on the Hall of Science, owing to which, he thought, London received more than its fair proportion of the revenue.

Mr. KELF said they must recognise that Freethought was not intended to be a paying business concern. They delivered two free lectures every week at headquarters, and he thought if provincial societies did the same there would be a similar loss.

Mr. PEGG said they did so at Manchester, but made it up out of the Branch funds.

Mr. FOOTE said it was a question of maintaining headquarters in London. If the Conference did not think it necessary to incur this liability, he would renew his offer to take the full control. But then the amount raised through the Executive would have to be raised through himself.

Upon the motion of Mr. Thompson (Chatham), the Financial Report was adopted.

It was decided that in future the balance-sheet should be sent out to the branches earlier.

Mr. FOOTE then vacated the chair for the election of President, Mr. Watts presiding.

Mr. WARD (Finsbury Park), on behalf of the Finsbury Branch, formally moved that Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President. Mr. Foote had shown he had the fighting qualities necessary for the office. The motion was seconded by Mr. Porter, of Hull, who alluded to the recent encounter with the authorities there, and seconded the motion which was supported by various delegates, and carried unanimously.

Mr. FOOTE, who was received with much applause, said he had only one request to make. It was a maxim of the constitution that the king could do no wrong, but with some it seemed a maxim that the President could do nothing right. Every man might make mistakes, but he would ask that in judging him they should hit the golden mean between detraction and flattery, and judge by the total balance of the year's decisions and the year's work. He had done his level best. No one could expect a man to do more. He would try to do as much.

On the motion of the Executive, the previous list of vice-presidents, Messrs. Allinson, Anderson, Baker, Billany, Brown, Brumage, Buchner, Collins, Forder, Hartmann, Holyoake, Le Lubez, Moss, Parris, Peacock, Pratt, Reynolds, Rogers, Schlaeger, Slater, Smith, Standing, Swaagman, Symes, Truelovs, Umpleby, Watts, Wheeler, and Mrs. Smith and Miss Vance were re-elected. Messrs. John Samson, William Heaford, and C. J. Hunt were added to their number.

It being mentioned that Mr. Reynolds wished to retire owing to pressure of other work, it was moved on behalf of the Executive—"That the office of treasurer be abolished, and that all monies in future be paid into a banking account opened in the names of two or three members appointed by the Executive, who shall sign cheques for all monies to be drawn out." This was carried after some discussion.

On the motion of Mr. GILMOUR, seconded by Mr. C. J. Hunt, a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Reynolds for his valuable services in the past.

Mr. MOSS moved, and Miss ROBINS seconded, that Messrs. J. Early and H. A. Lupton be re-elected auditors. Carried.

Mr. R. FORDER was re-elected hon. secretary, amid general acclamation.

The notice by the Camberwell Branch calling attention to the delay in issuing the *Monthly Magazine* authorised at a previous Conference, was then taken. Mr. Hartmann suggested that the project might perhaps be carried out by raising the price of the Special Number of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. WATTS said it was a question of ways and means. He favored rather extending the usefulness of the publications we have at present.

Mr. JACOB POTTER (Battersea) thought such a magazine highly necessary.

The PRESIDENT stated that he had the matter at heart as much as anyone, and they might trust he would see what could be done.

After Miss Vance calling the roll, the Conference adjourned to the Borough Arms Hotel, where they partook of a most excellent repast, provided at the expense of Mr. G. Anderson, vice-president, whose health was drunk with much enthusiasm.

(Continued on p. 355.)

#### OBITUARY.

An eminent Freethinker and scientist has departed in the person of Dr. Jacob Moleschott, Professor of Physiology at the University of Rome, who died in that city on May 20. Dr. Moleschott, who was called "the father of the modern Materialistic movement" by Lange, its historian, was of Dutch parentage, being born at Herzozenbosch, Holland, on August 9, 1822. He became a professor of physiology at Zürich and afterwards at Turin and Rome, and became a naturalised Italian citizen. He has always been a pronounced Freethinker, and his works on medical and scientific subjects have done much to spread the materialistic philosophy on the continent. In 1876 he was nominated a member of the Italian Senate, and his seventieth birthday last year was made the occasion of a celebration by the leading Freethinking scientists of Europe.



## ACID DROPS.

Archdeacon Farrar preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, last Sunday morning on the sin against the Holy Ghost. He said the "unpardonable sin" was an obscure matter that had been much debated, and nobody knew exactly what it was. Still, the Archdeacon wasn't going to give up the problem. He ventured to think that men who didn't bow their heads were the sinners against the Holy Ghost. Men who drank, gambled, and tempted others to do "the Devil's work" might all be forgiven; but there was no forgiveness for "the man who disbelieves and will not repent." It thus appears that Archdeacon Farrar, for all his pretended liberality, holds the same narrow creed as the street-corner tub-thumper.

Godly Scotland produces some queer two-legged asses who bray from pulpits. For instance, there is the Rev. J. E. Houstoun, parish minister of Cambuslang, who has been praying that his congregation might not patronise a local cattle show, and rebuking his assistant for reading one of George Eliot's works. The noble Houstoun ought to be exhibited at Chicago. He would be a greater curiosity than most other objects in the show.

A Glasgow newspaper, writing on the startling remarks of a Manchester magistrate with respect to the "fall" of shop-girls who are overworked, underpaid, and generally treated like slaves, lashes out as follows: "The smug-faced and oily people who are making their fortunes out of the white slaves pose as respectable and subscribe to chapel funds, while the poor victims of their greed are rapidly going down the stream of sin." What are our Christian professors doing? asks our indignant contemporary. Well, they are doing what they always did. There's no novelty in it.

Mr. Charrington and his band continue to "Stand up for Jesus" in Victoria Park. The Parks Committee of the London County Council think band-playing in places devoted to public speaking a nuisance. Mr. Charrington and his sympathisers call it standing up for Jesus and refuse to budge, resenting interference as an attack on "religious liberty." They should get Jesus to come down and claim the ground if he wants it.

Religion, depending as it does on authority and force, is often associated with barbarism and cruelty. A striking instance comes from Hungary, where the mistress of a religious school for girls, in the true spirit of the injunction that it is better to go maimed through life than to be cast into hell fire, attempted to tear out the tongue of one of her pupils with red-hot pincers as a punishment for having uttered an immoral word. The poor girl struggled to defend herself as well as possible from her pious mistress's cruelty, but is still in a very critical condition.

Protestants, on hearing of this case, will be apt to remark on the cruelty engendered by celibacy, and the absence of the domestic affections in monks and nuns. But they seem to forget that the whole system of monkery finds its authority in the New Testament. These books come to us through monks, and have the mark of the beast on almost every page. What are fasting, prayer, and casting out of demons but monkish practices? What are the injunctions to leave house, home, wife, father, mother, sister and brother, to forsake all and follow Jesus, and to mutilate the body to preserve the soul, but the precepts of monkery? While such precepts are regarded as divine one need not be surprised at asceticism and ascetic cruelty.

It is fifty years since the disruption of the Scottish Church, and the Free Church has been celebrating its Jubilee. The Free Church is indeed free from patronage, but as far as bondage to creeds and ecclesiastical rule is concerned, it remains one of the most slavish churches in Christendom.

The sky-pilot line is as much overrun as other professions—rather more so. There were ninety applicants for the vacancy in the ministry of Langback Parish (Scotland). "How very good we must be," says a Glasgow paper, "when there is such a number of pastors with nothing to do."

Scripture texts are often quoted conveniently. It is said that the late Rev. Josiah Bateman, rector of Southchurch,

near Southend, was a strong Low Churchman, while his son was a Ritualist. On one occasion he consented to occupy his son's pulpit, and took for his text "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic."

George Wright, a blacksmith, cut his throat in the Model Lodging House, Portugal-street, Glasgow. He left a letter stating that he hoped to meet his brother in heaven. We are sorry for the poor fellow, and hope he has not gone to the dreary place he has referred to. Anyhow, he wasn't an "infidel."

The recent Cyclists' Church Parade at Bedford—which brought over a thousand cyclists into the town, to its pecuniary advantage—has been denounced by the local press as a wholesale desecration of the Sabbath under the cloak of religion. Sunday cycling is still in the religiously intolerated state, but we can look forward to the time when it will be consecrated. The bishops and clergy will then perhaps save their coachmen's Sunday labor by riding their own bicycles.

The *Times of Natal* has a poor opinion of the Christian natives. It describes the "Christian Kaffirs" as spending their leisure in low music halls, where Sopela, one of their confrères and a member of the "Zulu Choir," sings "The Man who breke the Bank at Monte Carlo," etc. The missionaries do not appear to turn out very splendid specimens of regeneration.

A. Herman, a well-known prestidigitateur, says in the *New York Herald* that he has hunted all over the world for evidence of pretended miracles, but has found none. The most common form of modern miracles has been miraculous cures, but, barring a few cases of cures through natural means, arising from soil, climate, etc., all the rest has been "humbuggery pure and simple." Indeed, he says these two are often combined in Southern Europe, where, if medicinal springs are discovered, the owners combine in a business partnership with religious houses and institutions or priests, to spread abroad the fame of the wonderful cures. He says: "I have never seen a miracle—not even the exhibition of the ossified bones of a saint capable of working all sorts of wonders—that I did not find a man with a hat exacting a fee."

*The Pulpit Commentary* on the Song of Solomon has some rich bits. Here is a mild comment on the passage where the fair Shulamite says, "I am black, but comely." *Black*—The Christian soul knows its own guilt. *Comely*—The Christian owes whatever he may possess of the beauty of holiness to his communion with the King of Saints. This is nearly as rich as the old Christian fathers, who found a symbol of Christ and the Christian and Jewish Church in the story of Lot and his daughters.

The mistakes of the enemy afford us many a smile. To see his Grace of Canterbury and all the hosts of the Church assembled to proclaim that the Church in Wales and the Church in England are identical, when we know that before long they will be glad to contend that they are perfectly separate and distinct, is "as good as a play."

In America, as here, the cry of the clericals is that tax-payers' money should not be thrown away on "special studies" at the common school. They know it is the special higher studies of science that are most likely to injure their own supremacy, so as they cannot abolish common schools, they at least hope to cripple them. But the world is slowly learning that the best investment it can make of its money is in the education of its children.

We wonder what the highly-paid church dignitaries really think of the wandering carpenter who had not where to lay his head. Perhaps if their secret thoughts could be divulged they would resemble those of a celebrated preaching mendicant friar, who went to conduct a revival at Rome. He looked pretty well around him before he ventured to preach, and when he did so, began with the words "St. Peter was a fool," proceeding to observe that since cardinals and bishops could get to heaven abounding in wealth, honor and preferment, the Galilean fisherman must have been a fool to choose the thorny path to everlasting bliss.



Amid the crash of banks and the fall of other securities, the "converted Jew" market holds firm. During last year the sum of £36,487 was subscribed for promoting Christianity among the Jews. The annual report states that twelve converts were confirmed during the year. Of these, five only were adults. So it appears that it takes over three thousand pounds to convert each Jew. But this is too low an estimate, inasmuch as seven out of the twelve were infants. Even with adult Jews there is always a strong possibility of their being re-converted. If with half the income the N.S.S. could not make a hundred times the number of converts, it would undertake to dissolve.

The Jews are a good deal like the Christians in one respect. They boast that converted Jews usually return to their ancestral faith on their death-bed. The Brahmins say the same of converted Hindus.

It is related that Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, the French Aristophanes, had two sons. One followed his own profession as comedian; the other, on higher thoughts intent, entered the Church. A friend meeting the great dramatist one day, the following significant dialogue ensued: Friend—"How is your son?" Molière—"Which of them?" Friend—"The comedian." Molière—"Which of them?" Molière apparently regarded the black business as a sorry farce, of less dignity, because of more pretence, than holding the mirror up to nature on the stage. In his day the acknowledged actor's art was regarded with scorn by the rigidly righteous, and though Molière was, and remains, the greatest glory of French dramatic literature, the Archbishop of Paris refused to allow his remains to be interred in consecrated ground till he was compelled to it by the king. Nowadays the decline of the Church is apparent from its seeking an alliance with the stage.

The Bishop of the Diocese has just consecrated the new portion of St. Agnes's Church, Moseley, and made it spiritually fit on to the old portion. The vicar announces that the debt will be at least £2,000, which leads a Birmingham paper to remark that the parishioners of Moseley are not so convinced as Ruskin is that "you should pay before you pray."

*Talk* says that Archbishop Thomson was highly indignant when Benson was translated from Truro to Canterbury. He held he had the prior claim to the primacy. "To the end of his days," says this new tatter, "Archbishop Thomson refused to appear in the same neighborhood with His Grace of Canterbury. More than once the Church was barely saved from a serious scandal."

A parson, preaching a farewell sermon, said he had had a call from God. After the service a member asked the parson how much income he had now. He replied, "£400 per annum." "And how much are you going to have?" Answer, "£800 per annum." "Ah, I see," said the member. "God has called you from £400 to £800 per year, and you are going. But if God was to call you from £800 to £400 per year, I'm afraid he'd have to call a long time before you went."

*Sala's Journal* refers to a Church parson at Brighton who says it "upsets" him to find "so much fraud and hypocrisy" there. "At times I feel so depressed," he says, "that I could throw up my work here and go back to the so-called savages in Fiji, who are angels compared with some of the specimens of humanity to be found in this parish." This proves our frequent contention that the Missionary Societies are a gigantic fraud. The "heathen" they try to convert are not half as immoral as many professed Christians they leave at home in England.

Talmage calls David one of the wisest and best of all ages. They seem to have a poor standard of wisdom and morality in Talmage's neighborhood.

The Rev. R. F. Horton says that "the Buddhists in Japan are preparing to send missionaries to England to convert us." The gospel they have to preach is "a poor one" beside the one that is preached here, but "much better" than the gospel that is practised. Mr. Horton says they see us "drunken, avaricious and impure," so they are coming

to put us in the right way of living. He hopes, however, we shall wake up in time to make their visit superfluous. "Make straight in the desert," he cries, "the highway for your God." Poor old God! Fancy a deity who can't get on without a Horton tooting in front of him to clear the road.

The Rev. J. W. Dawson, of Highbury, is called a "great preacher." According to his own definition, a great preacher is "a man who has a big, earnest soul, and a strong grip on truth." Ahem!

Mr. Dawson says he doesn't think we are going to the Devil yet. In the case of some of us this is good news for the Devil.

The Rev. Moses Hull, a Spiritist preacher, who is publishing *The Bible Spiritualist's Concordance*, in which he shows how much spiritism is in the Bible, says that the Lord Jehovah originally represented the spirit of an Egyptian, who is referred to in the Egyptian as "Gehokah." We should say Jahveh was a grim kind of Gehokah.

*Apropos* of the new "Entheism" which Dr. Carus teaches distinct from Pantheism, we recently came across a new and—strange to say—a decent kind of god. He, She, or rather It, is named Mellos. We ran against Mellos in a curious book by a Mr. W. A. Macdonald, an economist, entitled *Humanitism*. The book is dedicated to Mellos, and Mr. Macdonald preaches the Mellian faith. Mellos seems to be an abstract name for the ideal of the future of humanity, and is certainly of a superior stock to Jehovah and Co.

"Don't worry" and "Don't hurry" are two Laws of Life laid down in a religious paper. Good advice—probably from a country parson with a fat living and a thin parish.

Under the heading of "A Clerical Mendicant" there is a warm exposure of the Rev. Edward Henville, rector of Chipping Warden, in the last number of *Truth*. One of his begging letters is printed in full. The reverend oadger says he has a very large family on his hands, and his eldest son is "mentally wrong," etc., etc. His beautiful epistle closes with a diatribe against working men, who are spoiled by education which will prove "a great curse to the country." According to *Truth*, this begging parson "is frequently to be seen driving in and out of Banbury, and his habits would seem to indicate that if he has not got cash, he is, at any rate, able to get credit." *Truth* adds significantly that "his character is well known among his parishioners and among his neighbors."

The Anti-Sunday Travelling League boasts of the signatures of some fifteen thousand persons, that they will not travel "without necessity" on Sunday. Fifteen thousand, including women and children, are an insignificant portion of the inhabitants of these islands, where there still swarm a number of saints ready, as Butler said, to

Compound for sins they are inclined to  
By damning those they have no mind to.

The saving clause about necessity too should add to their signatures. Among the most frequent Sunday travellers are professionals. Engaged in one town till late Saturday night, and beginning at a fresh one on Monday, to them Sunday travelling is a work of strict necessity, and they could sign the declaration at once. We fancy if the names and addresses of the signers were published, they would appear to be still more insignificant.

Referring to Professor Drummond's lectures on the Origin of Man, the *Christian Commonwealth* exclaims: "We are wholly at a loss to understand why Theism is necessary, if Evolution is true, or why Evolution is necessary, if Theism is true." Hear, hear! those are precisely our sentiments.

It appears from the fourth volume of M. Renan's *History of the People of Israel* that he held the author of the Chronicles to be a miserable compiler; Ezra a not very clever forgery, and Daniel as evidently of the Maccabean era.

Porphyrus says that while it is absurd nonsense to speak of "the Pentateuch of Moses," it is certainly correct to say "the Mosaic Pentateuch"; for the first five Bible books are such a mass of fragments as to well merit the title of a "Mosaic."



SPECIAL.

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

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

June 11 and 18, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—May 28, Hall of Science; 28, Battersea. June 4, Hall of Science; 5, Battersea; 11, Birmingham; 18, Barnsley; 25, Sheffield. July 2, Huddersfield; 25 and 26, debate at Jarrow-on-Tyne; 29, Blyth; 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.

ANTI-HUMBUG.—Thanks for cutting.

J. HORNE.—Some Christian apologist has been "larking" with you. The things referred to by Lyell, and by Bradlaugh after him, as having been found in Egypt, are of undoubted antiquity.

DOUBTER.—George Sexton's degrees are, we believe, imported from abroad.

HENRY COOKE.—Cuttings are always welcome. Mr. Foote will be visiting Birmingham again shortly.

L. L. B.—We well remember the occasion you refer to. The article shall appear.

A. V.—You will find great assistance in Strauss's *New Life of Jesus*, now published in one volume. Read also Mr. Foote's pamphlet on *The Resurrection* (2d.) in "Bible Romances."

N. SMITH (Birmingham).—It is not our business to "induce" the gentleman you mention to champion Spiritism in public debate. The Spiritists must put forward their own champion, just as Secularists do.

F. R. BRID.—See paragraph.

J. M. WALKER.—See "Sugar Plums."

A. HEMINGWAY.—We note the contents of your letter. Thanks.

JOSEPH BROWN states that the joint-committee for arranging the debate at Newcastle between Mrs. Britten and Mr. Charles Watts has passed a resolution declaring that the negotiations failed "without fault on either side," through the impossibility of agreeing upon a suitable date. This is all very well, but is it not a fact that Mrs. Britten has been influenced to keep out of the encounter?

A. STANLEY.—The statistics are "missionary" statistics. That is enough. Many thanks for the cartoon suggestion.

J. PRINGLE (Glasgow) says he has much enjoyed Mr. Foote's new volume, *Flowers of Freethought*, and thinks that every young Freethinker should possess a copy. This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

LECTURE NOTICES, etc., must reach us by the first post on Monday, as we go to press earlier next week, it being a Special Number.

H. GREENWOOD.—We believe you report accurately, but we do not like to print a private conversation. The labor leader you mention has confessed his heresy to several of our friends—under the rose. His talk of "God," "providence," etc., seems to be nothing but stage thunder.

J. G. FISHER.—Mr. J. Judge has served the Boot and Shoe Operatives well. We hope his new step into commercial life will be successful.

HOLIDAY week shortens this column. Some answers stand over for our next issue.

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—Independent Pulpit—Tablet—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Inkanyiso Yase Natal—Commonweal—Leek Times—Post—Weekly Bulletin—Daily Chronicle—Natural Food—Modern Thought—La Aurora—Valentina—Fur Unsere Jugend—York Evening Post—Staffordshire Post—Leeds Daily News—Times—Islamic World—Freethinker's Magazine—Oritico—Bedfordshire Times.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

It being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

The next issue of the *Freethinker* will be a Special Number, price twopence. Besides the usual supply of good portraits, it will contain the best Cartoon we have yet published. It is a bold and striking picture, and very finely drawn, its title being "The Clerical Macbeth." The reading matter will also be as good as we can make it. We shall print for a larger sale than usual of this number. Those who intend to take extra copies of it should order early of their newsagents.

This Sunday evening (May 28) Mr. Charles Watts will lecture at the London Hall of Science, taking for his subject, "The Bible Up to Date." We hope a good audience will greet our colleague.

Mr. Charles Watts has been engaged by the Battersea Branch to deliver two lectures at their hall on consecutive Mondays. The first lecture will be given to-morrow (May 29), subject "Is Man a Religious Being?" the second on June 5, "Science and the Theory of a Future Life." Freethinkers should bring their Christian friends to hear these lectures. Tickets can be had at the hall and at outdoor meetings.

Professor Huxley chose a fascinating subject for his Romanes Lecture at Oxford, namely "Evolution and Ethics." No doubt a full report of it will appear in one of the monthly reviews. Meanwhile we may note, from the brief press reports, that Professor Huxley's lecture was profound and interesting. With regard to the ethical aspect of the cosmos we take the following passage from the *Daily Chronicle*:—"Where the cosmopoietic energy works through sentient beings there arise, among its other manifestations, that which we call pain or suffering. This baneful product of evolution increases in quality and in intensity with advancing grades of animal organisation until it attains its highest level in man. If there is a generalisation from the facts of human life which has the assent of thoughtful men in every age and country, it is that the violator of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment which he deserves; that the wicked flourishes like the green bay tree, while the righteous begs his bread; that in the realm of nature ignorance is punished just as severely as wilful wrong, and that thousands upon thousands of innocent beings suffer for the crime or the unintentional trespass of one. Thus brought before the tribunal of ethics the cosmos might well stand condemned."

Professor Huxley concluded by saying that the theory of Evolution encourages no millennial anticipations. Nevertheless it was impossible to set limits to the extent to which intelligence and will, guided by sound principles of investigation, and organised common effort, may modify the conditions of human existence. We must cherish the good that comes in our way and breathe the evil with stout hearts while trying to diminish it. Death will come, but we may work meanwhile in the spirit of Tennyson's "Ulysses." The gods may wash us down or we may touch the Happy Isles, but some work of noble note may be done while we are here.

*Fritankaren* still keeps the flag flying in Sweden, and in the current number promises its readers a portrait and biography of Giordano Bruno.

Members of the Newcastle Branch should all attend the special meeting to-day (May 21) Arrangements are to be made for rendering help to the Sunday Music Society, a matter in which there is no time to be lost if the help is to be effective.

The Leyton and Walthamstow Branch's open-air station should be strongly supported by the local Freethinkers. On Sunday last there was a disturbance and the Branch president was seriously threatened by some pious rowdies. Such "lovers of the Lord" must be kept in check.

Three appreciative audiences were addressed by Mr. A. B. Wakefield at Barnsley last Sunday. Prior to the evening lecture he had the pleasure of "naming" the infant son of one of the Branch members—Charles Bradlaugh Brown. Mr. Wakefield is of the same opinion as we are, that the Barnsley Branch has a promising future. Mr. Charles Watts is to lecture at Barnsley next month, and he is already being adver-



tised as the "King of Debaters" and the "Demolisher of Divines." This ought to "fetch."

Returning on Whit Monday from the Conference a number of southern delegates, including Mr. and Mrs. Ward, Miss Robins, Miss Vance, Mr. Hartmann, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. Kelf, and Mr. Tripp (of Brighton) alighted with Mr. Rudd, of Luton, at that town, and carried on a successful outdoor meeting on the Luton Market-place, Mr. Moss delivering an effective address. After the meeting closed, the audience broke up into rings and had some lively discussion. A goodly number of *Freethinkers* were distributed, and the party may be congratulated upon combining a good piece of propaganda with their Conference trip.

### HELL AS A MORAL DETERRENT.

[CONCLUDED.]

WHAT love, what heroism, what humanity, could be left in the man who could conceive and put into shape some of the tortures Father Furniss describes? All human sympathy must have left such a heart long ago. Such then is one result of the hell belief.

In the second place hell directly fosters the spirit of persecution. Some time ago we noted Victor Hugo's suggestion that Torquemada, if he believed in hell, was acting sincerely and rightly in putting heretics to death. It might be a moral act to burn men here in order to save them from being burned for ever hereafterwards. Persecution therefore becomes a virtue. Now Mr. Stead, we think, would hardly be prepared to establish the Inquisition. Yet it is the logical outcome of the hell belief. Hence we see that in this respect, so far from deterring, it incites to crime.

We have deliberately refrained from speaking of the justice of punishment, for such a term is rather out of place. Punishment, in so far as it is inflicting pain on man for acts which, with his inherited moral sense and his ethical environment, he could not avoid, is unjust. For the reign of law is as complete in the mental and moral world, as in the physical, inasmuch as the mental and moral, and the physical are but different aspects of the same existence. Punishment, therefore, is only excusable in so far as it enters as a factor or motive into determining action; its only legitimate functions are to deter others and to reform the criminal. But it is really the *threat* that acts as a motive. If a man, in spite of the threat of punishment, commits a crime, it merely indicates that there were counter-balancing motives which out-weighed the threat. To punish such a man, if there were not the ulterior object of deterring others, would be mere revenge. Hence the punishment must be such that all can witness or know of. It is here that the imbecility of the hell business comes in. There is no surety that the threat is ever carried out. Hence its deterrent influence over others is not secured, besides which, there is not even the pretence that it reforms the sinner. It is simply and solely eternal revenge—a revenge which a man with the least spark of human feeling would not wish visited upon his greatest or most malignant enemy.

The fact is, the hell belief is on its death-bed, if it is not already dead, and the sooner it is ignominiously buried the better it will be for the race. The world will be sweeter and nobler when this hideous growth, which has its roots in the diseased imaginations of mediæval monks, and derives its nourishment from the ignorance and credulity of mediæval men, is torn up and cast to wither on that earth whose vitality it had so nearly destroyed. As Robert Buchanan says of Jesus, it has been a "canker and a curse upon the body of the universe."

We cannot do better than conclude with the following forcible arraignment of hell which Mr. Mivart, in his reply to Father Clarke, puts into the mouth of a "non-Catholic":—

"Such, then, is your gospel—your 'good news' to mankind, and yet you cry out against the abominations of Pagan religions! Let us consider one of the most cruel. It seems to me that the Mexican god, before whose image the priests cut open the breasts of living victims in order to smear its lips with blood from their torn-out yet palpitating hearts, was a god of benevolence and mercy compared with the divine monster you set before us. The Mexican's sufferings, after all, were short, and he was often a voluntary victim; but the God you would have us adore regards with complacency torments compared with which burning alive is but a small suffering, endured by thousands and thousands of human beings for an endless duration, which we can only picture by millions on millions of years recurring without end. Such a God we refuse to worship, and, come what might, did we believe in his existence, we would but regard him with disdain as well as execration."

This is strong language and pointed, even though the ending be somewhat weak, and the whole be but an imitation—at a distance—of John Stuart Mill. It is given as what a "non-Catholic" might urge against the orthodox hell or its creator, but it is written with such force that it evidently betrays on its face Mr. Mivart's own feelings. Mr. Mivart, however, is not a Mill. He of course cannot help that, and we should appreciate men according to their lights. He is moving slowly, but he is blundering into the right path, though the blundering is so awkwardly done that it makes him appear ridiculous. He wants to test his hand at the old trick of putting the new humanitarian wine into the old religious bottles. His moral nature revolts against this foul doctrine, yet he craves for the old formulas—nay, he attempts to show that the old formulas do not mean what they have always been held to mean. Rejecting, with a scorn that does him credit, the very basis of the priest-concocted delusion, he still longs for the priestly creeds, and strives pathetically to show that these old creeds contain within them the enunciation of the new faith. The striving is vain. As Carlyle says, this continual stretching of the old formulas until they do crack, this attempt to show that *we* are the orthodox people, that it is our opponents who have swerved from the old faith—this is one of the most pitiful phases of a transition stage of thought which this world has to show. Why not throw down the gauntlet? Why not courageously say, "This, and this alone is my creed, whether it agree with the old creeds or not, by it I shall stand, and by it I shall fall?" This is the straightforward attitude, this is the attitude of Freethought. It accepts or rejects without regard to age, and acknowledges Truth as the only criterion by which to test opinions.

To return, however, to Mr. Mivart, it is a matter for pleasure that he has advanced even so little. By and bye, perhaps, he may see his way to abolish hell altogether, and recognise that his own "modified" hell is as much a figment of the imagination as that of Father Pinamonti, or Father Furniss. Then, perhaps, he may see that for Omnipotence to inflict *any* punishment—be it ever so "modified"—on a creature for being precisely what Omniscience intended, is, in his own phrase, "monstrous and revolting." By that time, however, Mr. Mivart would be a Freethinker, and might even have within him the possibility of that supreme iniquity—the writing of an "irreligious book."

FREDERICK RYAN.

### 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. Fordet will send them on application.



## N. S. S. CONFERENCE.

(Concluded from p. 350.)

## AFTERNOON MEETING.

Upon reassembling, the matter of the Chicago International Conference was first dealt with, Mr. LAWRENCE SMALL moving and Mr. R. O. SMITH seconding, "That Messrs. Foote and Watts be authorised to represent the N.S.S. at the Chicago International Freethought Convention."

Mr. FOOTE stated that Mr. G. J. Holyoake had informed him he was going to America for several months, and would make an effort to be present at the Congress. He proposed, therefore, that his name should be included. The proposition as amended was supported by Mr. Hooper and carried unanimously.

The question of expenses being raised, the PRESIDENT stated that these might be provided by private contributions, and perhaps they could fix up some lecturing engagements in America.

Mr. KELF (N.W. London) thought the Society would not object to make up any deficiency.

The PRESIDENT considered that the nominal income of the Society need not be affected.

Mr. J. POTTER then moved the resolution standing in the name of the Battersea Branch: "That some steps be taken to bring Secularism into touch with the social movements of to-day." He pointed out the leading part Mr. Bradlaugh had played in advanced movements, which contributed largely to the spread of our principles.

Mr. KELF warmly seconded the motion. He thought that while putting down superstition, we ought to show how to ameliorate the condition of the masses. He pointed out how church and chapel were capturing the labor leaders and moving in the direction of Socialism.

Mr. A. B. MOSS moved as an amendment "that the N.S.S. leave its members free to take what part they think wise in social movements." Socialism was becoming more and more political. To join them meant alienating others. Secularists were earnest in desiring to ameliorate the condition of the people, but, like others, they differed as to the best means. The proposal was vague, and he thought the Society would be well advised to adhere to its primary work of fighting superstition. This was the course followed and approved by Mr. Bradlaugh.

Mr. S. ALWARD opposed the motion. He thought we should keep along in the same way, fighting superstition.

Mr. BRANBY (Birmingham) approved of the resolution subject to modifications. He thought the leaders of the Society should stand in the van of the progressive movements of the day.

Mr. WATTS said if the matter were brought to a vote he should support the amendment as coming nearer the true business of the Society on this perplexed and perplexing question. His view for thirty years had been that all political and social party work must be kept distinct from the advocacy of Secularism.

Mr. SMALL thought the motion particularly vague. He wanted it specified what social movements were intended. As to the parsons' game of trying to identify progressive movements with their creed, he thought they should checkmate that as individuals wherever possible.

The PRESIDENT thought the Conference would be ill-advised to put a wet blanket on any such aspiration as this. He pointed out, however, that an intellectual platform held fewer the more you extend it. A man who accepts nineteen of your views will not join you if he rejects the twentieth. He thought it would be best if the Conference would refer the proposal to the Executive for its earliest consideration. Mr. HOOPER supported this proposition.

Mr. D. BAKER (Birmingham) wanted to know what steps were desired. Why didn't the Battersea Branch state plainly what it meant? Did it propose Socialism or social parties? They had referred to Mr. Bradlaugh, but he had always been in direct opposition to Socialism. He thought they should distinctly know what it was they wanted.

The PRESIDENT said they should not let the word Socialism operate as a red rag. If they did not want the red badge, so neither need it excite them. Nothing was to be gained by pressing this matter to a division, for they would not be dividing on principles. He thought they could not do better than have time to consider and report, rather than to divide and alienate or achieve a barren victory.

Mr. POTTER, as mover, repudiated the introduction of Socialism, which, he said, had been done by the mover of the

amendment. He referred rather to such questions as the Hull strike and trade unionism. He would not press the matter to a division if it was referred to a committee irrespective of the Organisation Committee, which already had sufficient to do.

Mr. KELF said he respected the opinions of his individualistic friends, and agreed that whatever was done must be of a more or less elastic nature.

Mr. HOOPER thought the Conference should take a pledge from the President to remove any dilemma that might occur.

Messrs. Hunt, Watts, and Gilmour supported the proposal that the matter be referred to the Executive for its earliest convenience, which, after a statement from the President that the Executive would try to hit upon the line of least resistance, without pledging the organisation to any extreme view, was carried unanimously.

Mr. FOOTE then moved: "That the Executive have drawn up and printed, with the General Principles and Objects of the Society, a detailed statement of its immediate practical objects in the political and social field—taking care to include nothing that does not command a general agreement; and that the said statement be first published in the Freethought press with a view to general criticism and possible emendation before being incorporated in the Society's prospectus." He said their principles were already admirably expressed, but they were somewhat too general for the popular mind. The ordinary reader should learn their relation to such questions as the Blasphemy Laws, the Disestablishment of the Church, secular education, and the destruction of the theological view of marriage. On these points all were agreed, but he would go to the length of vetoing the introduction of anything of a contentious character.

Mr. TAYLOR, in seconding, referred especially to the Blasphemy Laws, upon which he had written many leading men, and obtained strong expression of opinion. The Bishop of Manchester even said he disapproved of any intolerant laws, though he would not do anything for their removal, after the horribly shameful character of the attacks on Jesus Christ.

Mr. PEGG supported, and the motion was carried.

Mr. FOOTE then moved:—"That every Branch shall send into the Executive, at the beginning of January, of April, of July, and of October, a careful, succinct statement of its work and progress during the past three months, together with the number of *bona fide* members on its books, and the number of lost, lapsed, and new members; and that the Executive take steps to have these statements properly edited and published, either fully or in summary, in a way to make them accessible to all the Society's Branches and members." He remarked that the old reports did little more than repeat the Guide Notice, and praise the lecturer. The amount of space in the journals was too small for the tabulated returns required.

Mr. HOOPER opposed the motion. He thought there might be difficulty in giving the number of lost or lapsed members. An annual report, such as sent from his Branch for the last ten years, he thought should suffice.

Mr. HUNT thought if their books were kept regular, secretaries should be able to tell at a glance the condition of their membership.

Mr. PEGG held that the proposition involved extra labor on voluntary workers, and would not satisfy any particular demand.

Mr. W. B. THOMPSON, of Chatham, supported the proposal. They wanted better organisation and to know more of each other's work. Sunday-schools had failed for want of the experience and aid of others. He thought it a right step in the direction of making the Society really National.

Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford) said Yorkshire goes slow. Make it six months, and then I'll vote for it.

Mr. HARD (Manchester) was opposed to making it more difficult to get persons to take the secretaryship.

Mrs. PEGG (Manchester) pointed out that her Branch sent up a regular annual report.

Mr. CHAPMAN thought there were difficulties in the way. Secretaries were also usually connected with other societies, and had too much to do. He thought a six months' report should suffice.

Mr. FOOTE certainly never supposed the proposition would entail enormous labor on the secretaries. The work, to anyone used to a pen, should only occupy a short time, for which life would leave a margin. As to deprecating general publication of the state of their affairs, he held that to be a superstition which had cherished the idleness and laxity of branches. The sooner it was got rid of the better. As to



lapsed members, the Branch would send those it considered lapsed. The object of the Executive was to put the experience of single Branches at the service of all.

The motions for twelve, six, and three months were then put separately, the last being carried by a large majority.

The proposition "That the Executive be allowed to decide the place where the Conference should be held," moved by Mr. B. O. SMITH, and seconded by Mr. J. M. WHEELER, met with considerable opposition, and was eventually withdrawn. Mr. Wheeler stated that he acceded to this desire with reluctance, as he feared there were deserving Branches who would not get a chance while the matter remained to the mere open voting of the Branches.

This completing the business, Mr. HARTMANN proposed, and Mr. HOOPER seconded, a vote of thanks to the Town Council of Hanley for letting the use of their fine Town Hall and rooms. Carried unanimously.

Mr. WARD moved a vote of thanks to the Hanley Branch, who had shown themselves very enterprising. Mr. SMALL, in seconding, said Hanley had indeed come out strong; and Mr. PEGG in supporting, referred to the trouble and expense that must have been taken to make the Conference such a success. The motion was carried with acclamation.

#### EVENING MEETING.

The splendid large Town Hall of Hanley—amongst the finest in the kingdom—was well filled for the evening meeting, delegates and friends occupying the balcony, for which part the Town Council required the purchase of a sixpenny program. The body of the hall was filled by the inhabitants of the district, to some of whom evidently Freethought views were a novelty. The chair was taken by Mr. Foote, who expressed his gratification with the welcome accorded, and then thanked the authorities for granting the use of the fine hall on the same conditions as religious bodies. Addresses were delivered by Mr. Moss, who dwelt on the distinctive principles of Secularism; Mr. GILMOUR, who gave a lively report of the progress of Freethought in Scotland; Mr. C. J. HUNT, who dwelt on the disabilities of Freethought and the necessity for organisation; Mr. WATTS who made a brilliant, brief oration on the leading principles of Secularism; Mr. FORDEE, who spoke of how much had been effected under legal disabilities; and Mr. SMALL, who, dealing with the school question and the recent clerical and Roman Catholic attempts at reaction, paid a well deserved compliment to Hanley, where the Board School children are brought under the influence of brightness, cleanliness, and beauty. The CHAIRMAN brought the meeting to a close with a telling speech, which was enthusiastically applauded.

A collection was made for the Benevolent Fund, which brought in £3 14s. 6d. After the meeting many groups assembled outside, discussing the views advanced, some of them not breaking up till after midnight.

On Whit-Monday many of the delegates were shown over the Cauldron Pottery Works, the artistic productions of which, and their process of manufacture, afforded interest and evoked admiration. All the delegates were well pleased with their visit to Hanley, and the whole arrangements reflect great credit on the local Branch.

#### CHURCH v. PROGRESS.

The Church has ever lagged behind the times—  
Ever condoned and bolstered up old crimes :  
Whene'er men's reason went rebellion's length,  
The Church claimed "progress" due to her sole strength.

CLINTON LOVERIDGE.

#### OBITUARY.

It is with regret that I have to record the death of Mr. A. J. Chapman, one of the oldest and staunchest members of the South Shields Branch of the N.S.S. He died as he lived, a true Secularist, his last request being to have a secular funeral. He was, in his earlier days, secretary of the Branch, and an active worker in the movement when it was regarded as a serious crime to openly avow Freethought opinions. He lived an honest, upright, and manly life, true to his principles, a good husband, and a kind and loving father; he died respected by all who knew him. About two hundred friends followed to the grave, where the Secular Burial Service was read in a most impressive manner by the president of the Branch, Mr. S. M. Peacock.—R. CHAPMAN.

#### PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

GENERAL satisfaction was expressed by the delegates and members at Hanley. The Conference was distinctly successful. It was marked by a practical spirit and the greatest good-humor. The public meeting in the Town Hall was well attended, and the seed of Freethought must have been sown in hundreds of fresh minds. The only expression of dissent from the large audience came from two old ladies dressed in black, who exploded in the midst of the Chairman's address. One of them hurriedly seized a child and dragged it out of the unholy place, and returning to the doorway she shook her fist at the orator. This was her way of re-enting the observation that it was better to be a citizen of earth than a candidate for heaven.

The Conference closed a certain chapter of history. Despite a good deal of close intrigue and open solicitation, it declined to condemn the Executive's action with respect to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund. For my part, I regard this as decisive. It was apparent that there was little heart in the opposition, and the very few hands that voted against the Executive's policy were held up in a languid fashion. The overwhelming majority were satisfied with what had been done, and appeared glad to get rid once for all of the matter in contention.

No one but a dreamer can suppose that our party needs, or could manage and sustain two headquarters in London. The one we have at the Hall of Science serves as a centre at present, and thus enables us to carry on the movement; and, after all, it is the movement which is the best of all memorials to our great lost leader. Far be it from me, however, to deny that we should make the Hall of Science a worthy tangible memorial to Charles Bradlaugh. I have all along asserted that we *should* make it so, and as this seemed feasible I have thrown my energies into a practical direction. Fortunately the vast majority of the men and women who do the real work of the National Secular Society take the same view of the situation.

I now appeal to the rank and file of the party to be prompt as well as generous in contributing to the success of the Hall of Science scheme. Working men can take at least one share. Surely the sum of one pound might be spared for the love of Charles Bradlaugh and the best interests of the Society he established, especially as the pound is payable in such easy instalments. Some working men have taken as many as five and even ten shares. Let all do their best and we shall be enabled to complete the purchase by clearing off the mortgage, and to commence the rebuilding *this year*. It would be a grand thing to have the front part of the premises transformed into a first-class Institute, well built and well appointed, and formally dedicated on the third anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death.

It was pleasant to see the veteran Daniel Baker at the Conference, bearing his seventy-eight years lightly, and as merry as the youngest delegate. Another veteran was Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, who offered to give a handsome donation to the Hall of Science scheme if others would render similar assistance. Mr. Umpleby's donation of £25 to the Memorial Fund was long ago directed by himself to the same object. Mr. George Anderson is also doing his best for the scheme in many ways, which proves that the veterans, who have seen much of the world, are satisfied as to its practicality.

Mr. R. O. Smith, I am happy to say, has continued to give his time and ability in a quiet way to the work at the Hall. It is only right to place this on record at the present moment. He looked really ill at Hanley, the result, I fear, of overtaxing his strength. I hope his week's stay at Matlock will recruit his physical energies.

The Conference did me the honor of re-electing me as President. I accept the responsibility, and I will sustain it to the best of my power. There will always be some who, if they cannot govern the President, will regard him as a despot. Well, I must leave these comical people to digest their indignation. If I have any besetting sin when I sit in the chair at Executive meetings, I believe it is



allowing too much discussion. Some of my colleagues—plain business men with no itch to hear themselves speak—have accused me of this failing, and I have replied that I had more than one variety to deal with. Anyhow it is a vice that leans to virtue's side. It is well to let men clear their bosoms of the perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart. They feel better after it.

There is room enough inside the National Secular Society for all sorts and conditions of Secularists, except those who criticise without ever helping, and impute evil motives when they cannot decide policies. Happily they are not very numerous, and they are always convicted, if not convinced, by the logic of events.

Let me conclude with a word to those who may have wondered at the blank in my "engagements." In order to give my voice a rest, and still more to clear off arrears of literary work, I have decided to do no lecturing until July, except on the two Sunday evenings I am booked for the Hall of Science. In July and August I hope to be busy again on the platform, and the fourth week in August I expect to leave for America with Mr. Charles Watts. I look forward to the very great pleasure of meeting Colonel Ingersoll, and I shall press him to come over and let the English Freethinkers see him face to face.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### M. ZOLA ON "WORK AND HAPPINESS."

M. ZOLA's speech at the banquet of the Student's Association abounds in good words. M. Zola spoke with invigorating strength and sincerity when he glorified work as the ballast of the human mind and nerves and the great sweetener of life. He knew no other path to success or to inner well-being. M. Zola confessed to drudging painfully with his pen. He went methodically about his work, determined to get through so many pages in so many hours, and every day with unvarying regularity. He often sat down lazy and longing to loiter and shrinking from his task, but when he conquered his inertia he felt he was on the right track and rose from his work re-invigorated and braced up. In speaking of the nineteenth century as the century of science, M. Zola said it seemed as though science which had ruined the old world was too promptly reconstructed upon the models we form in our own imagination of justice and happiness. People waited for twenty, fifty, or a hundred years, and at length perceiving that justice did not reign, that happiness failed to come, many yielded to a growing feeling of impatience, lamenting and denying that the pursuit of knowledge was the road to happiness. "But," he continued, "does science promote happiness? I think not. It promises truth. The question is whether you can make happiness out of truth. It requires great stoicism, perfect abnegation, the serenity of a satisfied intelligence such as is found only in a small elite. But meanwhile what a cry of despair is raised by the mass of suffering humanity. How is it possible to live without deception and illusion? Nature is unjust and cruel. Science appears to lead up to the monstrous law of the strongest. The present reaction and sickness of too much science may also be in part accounted for by a recoil from truth, yet ill-explained and ferocious as it appears at least to our feeble eyes unable to penetrate its laws. People exclaim 'Bring us back to the good sleep of ignorance.' I am very much moved at this yearning after happiness. I am willing to grant that we old Positivists closed too completely the horizon in literature. I, for my part, have regretted my rather narrow views in maintaining that art should confine itself within the limits of proven truths. I would propose to you a faith. Have faith in work. Work is the unique law of this world, the regulator that carries organised matter on to its unknown bourn. Apart from work there is no sense in life. We appear, give our quantum of work, and pass away. Why not be modest, why not accept our individual task without revolt, without pride? Work, I know, does not solve any problem of metaphysics. It is but a rough and tumble way of living an honest life, or nearly so. But is it nothing to have good moral and physical health, and escape from the danger of dreams? A man who works is always good. I am convinced that the only faith that can save us is the belief in the efficacy of the accomplished effort. It is very beautiful to dream of eternity, but it is enough for the honest man to pass away having done his task.—*Daily News.*

A lady remarked to a popular divine that his sermons were a little too long. "Don't you think so?" said she. "Just a little." "Ah, dear madam," replied the divine, "I am afraid you don't like 'the sincere milk of the word.'" "Yes, I do," said she, "but, you know, the fashion nowadays is condensed milk."

#### BOBBY LOWE AND THE DIVINITY EXAMINER.

Bobby Lowe, the late Lord Sherbrooke, was a shrewd character, even at Oxford. The following is his own account of his examination in divinity.

Examiner—"Which gave the better counsel to Rehoboam, the old men or the young men?"

I—"The old men. It was quite right to lighten the taxation."

Examiner—"Did not Solomon obtain large revenues by commerce?"

I—"I don't think so. Princes have, as Adam Smith tells us, always been bad traders; we do not know what he exported to Ophir, but he brought back gold and silver, mere articles of luxury, and monkeys and peacocks, not, I apprehend, a very profitable consignment." (A laugh)

Examiner—"Still, the country is described as being very prosperous under his government, and the revenue is described as being large."

I—"Yes, but then, see how it was squandered: there was the Temple, the Golden Throne, and the Sea of Gold, and the lions, and the cherubim, and the mercy seat."

Examiner—"Still, that hardly bears out the opinion of the old men."

I—"No, sir. There was besides the support of 300 wives and 700 concubines. We often see a man ruined by one wife; surely a thousand women were enough to ruin a whole country." (A general roar of laughter.)

Examiner—"Thank you, sir. Your examination has been very pleasing."

#### SAILORS' IDEAS.

The following conversation was overheard between a boatswain's mate and a foretopman. They were talking of one that was dead, and after the boatswain had said—

"Well, he is in Heaven, poor fellow!" The foretopman replied, "I wonder, Bill, whether I shall ever go to Heaven?"

"Why not?" said the boatswain's mate.

"Because the parson says it's faith and good works that takes a man there. Now I've plenty of faith in our navy, and have been in action as often as any man of my age, and have killed my share of men."

"That is all sufficient, I should think—I hold my hopes upon just the same claims; I've cut down twenty men in my time, and if that ain't good work, I don't know what is!"

"I suppose Com. Decatur's in Heaven?"

"Of course—if so be he wishes to be there I should like to know who would keep him out, if he was determined on it? No, no; depend upon it, he walked right slap in!"

#### PRIESTS AND TRUTH.

A priesthood, claiming to be a separate and a sacred order of men, hired and paid to teach and to preach certain doctrines and opinions, and adopting this mode of life as a trade—a profession—as the sure road to comfort and consideration, if not to affluence; and strictly imbued with the *esprit de corps*, the corporation spirit of the clerical order, cannot be expected to come into the field of argument without a strong bias in favor of the tenets by which they obtain their living, or without irritation and anger against those who, in any manner, oppose their influence over the people. If truth interferes with their interest, they can hardly be expected to look at it but with a jealous eye.—*T. Cooper, M.D.*

#### MORE CONVERTS.

Professor Garner expects to return to England in August with a real live chimpanzee he has taught to speak English. The missionaries will doubtless take the hint and get up funds to convert the whole monkey tribe to the glorious gospel. Can any true Christian rest satisfied until every chimpanzee in Africa has experienced the beatitude of rum and true religion? Christianity must penetrate the jungles, and every simian be taught to swear by the blood of Christ.

No. 1, vol. i., of the *Islamic World*, the monthly organ of English-speaking Mohammedans, reaches us from Liverpool, where it is published at 32 Elizabeth-street. It opens with a "Salaam Aliekoum," which contends that "Christianity is expiring," and that the only alternatives are Atheism or Islam!



## MR. LELAND'S LUCK BALL.

Mary Alicia Owen, in *Old Rabbit the Voodoo and other Sorcerers* (Fisher Unwin), tells of a "luck ball" manufactured for Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland, the well-known gipsy folklorist, by an American magician of mixed India and negro blood. It is made of red clover, sewing silk and tin-foil, tied in innumerable knots and copiously moistened with libations of whiskey from the mouth of the Voodoo chief. The knots are of the essence of the contract, being four times four (Circe turned round four times, according to Ovid, when she conjured poor Picus)—"and de daid and de debbils gotter mine dat number"—"dey ain't no debbil kin git thu dem knots." This is the invocation:—

"Gord afo' me; Gord ahine me; Gord be wid me. May dis ball fetch all good luck tu Charles Leland. May hit tie down all debbils; may hit bine down 'is innemies afo' 'im; may hit bring um undah 'is feet. May hit bring 'im frens in plenty; may hit bring 'im faithful frens; may hit bine um to 'im. May hit bring 'im honeh; may hit bring 'im riches; may hit bring 'im 'is haht's desire. May hit bring 'im success in evehting he hondehtakes; may hit bring 'im happiness. I ax foh hit in de name ob de Gord."

The Voodoo "luck ball" only cost a dollar. As a charm it is quite as efficacious as swallowing the blood of Jesus. The invocation, too, is at least as sincere and direct as most Christian prayers.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

## LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 8, free entertainment. Monday at 8, Charles Watts, "Science and the Theory of a Future Life" (3d. and 6d.) Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, Rev. Stewart Headlam, "Temperance."

Camberwell—51 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, R. Forder, "Christianity Played Out."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, musical selections; 7.30, Charles Watts, "The Holy Bible" (3d., 6d., and 1s.)

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. James, "Deism, the Road to Freethought."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. St. John, "Secularism and Christianity."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, G. Standing, "What Freethinkers have Done for Humanity—II."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Morality."

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen will lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, A. Guest, "Recipes for Happiness"; 3.30, E. Calvert, "Human Progress."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8.30, a lecture.

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, A. B. Moss, "What Does the Bible Teach?"

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, H. Snell will lecture; 3.30, J. Rowney, "Prophecy." Wednesday at 8, Mr. St. John, "This World and the Next."

Islington—Newington Green: 3.15, C. J. Hunt, "God: Where and What?"

Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road, High-road): 6.30, C. J. Hunt, "The Resurrection."

Lambeth—Kington Green (near the Vestry Hall): 6.30, S. H. Alison, "The History of the Devil."

Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, W. Heaford, "A Gloomy Creed."

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, S. H. Alison will lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mahomet and his Koran."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Happiness in Hell."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Prophecy"; 3.30, H. Snell, "The story of the Atheists in the French Revolution."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, E. Calvert, "Secularism, the Light of the World"; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.

Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, W. Heaford, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

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

The "Queensberry" R. and A. Club: Saturday, May 27, at 5 and Sunday at 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.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, miscellaneous concert.

Jarrow—Co-operative Hall (small room), Market-square: 7, business meeting; 7.30, J. Brown, "Mosaic Cosmogony and Modern Science."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Lefroy, "Is the Resurrection Fact or Myth?"

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "Death and After"; 3, "The Mechanism of Thought"; 6.30, "Latest Theories of Heredity." Tuesday at 8, debating circle, T. Griffiths, "Atheism and Morals."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, pleasant evening. May 29 to June 2, course of free lectures by C. Cohen: May 29, "Science and Supernaturalism"; 30, "Ethics and Theology"; 31, "Antiquity of Man"; June 1 (at the Lecture Room, Working Men's Liberal Union), "Disestablishment"; 2, "Freethought: its Uses and Development."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, monthly meeting of members, important business.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, important business meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bradford—Market-ground, Godwin-street: 6.30, John Grange will lecture.

Brighton (on the Level): 3, Mr. Ford, "The Crimes of the Church of Rome."

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—May 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 28, m., Clerkenwell; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 29, 30, 31, Portsmouth. June 1 and 2, Portsmouth: 4, m., Camberwell; a., Islington; e., Camberwell; 11, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Battersea; 15, Hammersmith; 18, m., Leyton; a., Victoria Park; e., Hammersmith; 25, m., Clerkenwell; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton. July 2, Manchester.

J. FAGAN, 18 Church-lane, Upper-street, Islington, N.—June 25, m., Battersea.

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

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—May 28, Ipswich.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—May 28, m., Wood Green; e., Hammersmith.

J. ROWNEY, 7 Park Villas, Newington Turning, N.—May 28 to June 25, m., Regent's Park; a., Hyde Park.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—May 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 28, 28, m., Bethnal Green. June 4, m., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn; 11, m., Finsbury Park; 18, m., Bethnal Green.

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Reason must be our last guide and judge in everything.—Locke.

Nothing can be consistent which has not reason for its foundation.—Cicero.

Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.—Job.

Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything.—Butler.

Reason is the supreme authority, and there is no appeal from its decisions.—J. M. Wise.

In deep questions, where great names militate against each other, an appeal to authority only thickens the confusion.—Burke.

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"And why not, Tommy?"

"O, when I die I want to go where a feller can rest."

"Well, my boy, you can rest there."

"Well, in that song we sung it said we'd all shine there."

"Certainly; don't you want to shine there?"

"No, mum; I don't want to shine there. I get enough of that here. I'm a boot-black, mum."

Minister (dining with the family): "Well, Bobby, do you like to read the Bible?"

Bobby: "I don't get much of a chance at it. Sister has it most of the time."

Minister (turning to sister): "Ah, Miss

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