

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## A CHURCH DREAM.

MR. MONCURE D. CONWAY has explained to an *Echo* interviewer his idea of a renovated State Church. He has outlived his belief in Disestablishment. He desires to see the Church preserved instead of destroyed, only it must be reformed and brought up to date. In other words, it must be Conwayised. The minister of South Place Chapel, or the lecturer of South Place Institute (we hardly know which is the proper expression), is ready to act the part of Medea to the clerical Æson. But it is to be feared that the renovating process will be a failure, and Æson may meet the fate of Pelias. Reforming a Church is always a questionable experiment. It was tried on the Catholic Church some centuries ago, but it did not succeed. There was an expectation of its being tried again when Pio Nono ascended the papal throne, but the sanguine people were all disappointed. Was it not Thomas Carlyle who laughed at them, and told them that reforming the Papacy was like tinkering a rusty old kettle? Our belief is that the Church of England will not stand the tinkering process any better than the Papacy. She is an institution based upon a certain idea—the duty of the State to look after the religious interests of its subjects; and when that idea perishes (and it has long been decaying) the institution will die with it. Such is our belief, and it is based on the lessons of history. But Mr. Conway thinks otherwise. He cherishes the dream of a Church stripped of all dogmas, that is, of all doctrines; in which every minister will preach what he pleases; and all the happy family is to be supported by the State. Such an institution never existed on the face of the earth, and we venture to say it never will exist.

Mr. Conway may resent our description of his ideal Church. But let us see what he tells the *Echo* interviewer. "In the National Church of which I speak," he says, "there would be room for the assertion of varieties of the religious impulse, varieties in the manner of the expression of all that was highest, purest, and best in the human spirit." Now if this does not mean that every minister is to preach what he pleases, what does it mean? One State-supported talker would teach reincarnation, and another would denounce it as a silly superstition; Trinitarianism would be taught here, and Unitarianism there, and Atheism elsewhere. Mr. Conway, of course, speaks of varieties of religious impulse, but we presume he uses the word very comprehensively; otherwise we should be obliged to ask how much Theistic belief he possesses himself. Yes, even the Atheist would be included in Mr. Conway's ideal Church, which would thus be a Kilkenny-cat Establishment. Thousands of men would be paid by the State to teach the most opposite and hostile opinions. This is called an "organisation of the national intellect." To our mind it is not an organisation at all; moreover, the intellect of a nation cannot be organised, and if it could it would soon become

an intolerable despotism. Auguste Comte himself, while teaching the necessity of a priesthood in the Religion of Humanity, was careful to insist on its absolute separation from the State, and its being maintained by the voluntary gifts of the free citizens.

Comte's priesthood would be appointed by spiritual authority, and not by popular election. Mr. Conway does not deign to tell us how the ministers would be appointed in his National Church. We defy him to devise any plan which would not make the Church either a hodge-podge or a mere reflex of the average man. All advanced views would still have to fight for themselves. Their battle is hard enough now; it would be harder still with the average opinions entrenched behind State endowments. We may sum up the whole matter in a single sentence. Average opinion does not need endowments, and advanced opinions will never get them.

What kind of men would enter this National Church? Mr. Conway speaks of young men of genius and enthusiasm, with a call for "spiritual" work, and unattracted by the "existing and increasing inducements to try other careers," who would war against evil, and labor in the service of humanity. This is fine language, but it is not very precise. What are to be the *actual* functions of these new Church ministers? Comte's priests were to educate, perform ritual, and guide opinion; and in this he followed the old model of the Catholic Church. It is indeed impossible to conceive of a Church without its priests being *directors*. But on this point Mr. Conway is silent. He talks of music, recitations, and such discourses as the Hibbert Lectures. Does he really think that this will suffice? Apparently not, or why should he use the fine, vague language we have quoted? His ministers, then, are to be warriors against evil and laborers for humanity. But evil is only to be subdued by study and thinking; and humanity can only be helped by knowledge, which is the gift of Science, and by the cultivation of the higher emotions, which is the work of Art and Poetry. The leaders of intellectual and æsthetic activity, by the very nature of the case, would not be found in the Church. Its ministers, therefore, would be amiable, well-meaning, and more or less (especially *less*) capable popularisers of greater men's discoveries, ideas, and aspirations. Such work as theirs is not to be despised, but it is not so important that we need set up a Church to provide for their dignity and maintenance. It would be a far better investment to provide for the dignity and maintenance of the men of intellectual and imaginative originality.

Mr. Conway seems to us to mistake the nature of a Church. Clergymen do not make a Church; it consists of members, who are held together by a common belief and a common policy. Clergymen are members of the Church like laymen, though they are also its functionaries. They are no more the Church than our Civil Service is the English nation. Mr. Conway appears to overlook this fact. What he proposes might be a State

department, but it would not be a Church. It would be as inorganic as Goodwin Sands.

Within and without the Church at the present time there are men, all of them used to preaching or discoursing, who desire to see the Church "nationalised." That is, they want to have its seven or eight millions a year divided up amongst the professional exhorters, who cannot all think alike, but, who can all go snacks in the loaves and fishes. Do not let us disestablish and disendow the Church, they say, but let us make a better distribution of its revenues. They will find the thing is impossible. Abolish all doctrine, and you have no Church left. Pay a lot of talkers (not always the wisest of men) to teach what they please, and you violate the principle that the State has nothing to do with the maintenance or propagation of opinions. You also set up a sort of Bedlam, or at least a Babel. The more the idea of a National Church is examined the more absurd and unworkable it appears; and we can only explain Mr. Conway's affection for it on the theory that every man will have his hobby, and that a man of many interests will display some kind of eccentricity. G. W. FOOTE.

### THE THIRD GOSPEL.

[CONCLUDED.]

LUKE, like the rest of the "synoptic" gospels, is a manifest compilation. Schleiermacher, who pointed this out over sixty years ago, found no fewer than thirty-three different documents in its composition. Mr. Badham, who himself points out twenty-five duplicate passages,\* is surely wrong in confining them to two or three. The preface is evidently in a different hand from that of the two succeeding chapters. What follows about Zacharias and Elizabeth is, despite Bishop Lightfoot, manifestly dished up from the Protoevangelion or Gospel of James.† The circumcision, presentation in the temple, and dispute with the doctors—found nowhere else—are "doctored" from the Gospel of the Infancy. Mr. Lillie remarks that "a young Buddhist, that he may acquire readiness in controversy, is pestered with questions by doctors and theologians. But the rabbis at Jerusalem would scarcely have allowed a little boy to talk to them about the Messiah" (1 Infancy xxi. 3).‡ There are many reasons for considering the cruder apocryphal gospels earlier than the canonical ones.

Canon Sanday flatters himself that he has demonstrated that our Luke was earlier than the Gospel of Marcion as found in Tertullian. He has not convinced me. I have only space here for a few considerations and illustrations on this point. Marcion's gospel was called the "Gospel of the Lord." That it bore no author's name tells for its priority, since it was only when controversy demanded definite authenticity for statements that men began to discover the names of individual apostles or evangelists which were unknown to Justin Martyr. This anonymous gospel began with the words, "In the fifteenth year of Tiberias Cæsar, Jesus came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee."§ What precedes in Luke is not in the other canonical gospels, but taken from apocryphal ones. The story of the consanguinity of Mary and Elizabeth is irreconcilable with the subsequent narration found in Luke. The Baptist, who, even when an unborn embryo, knew Jesus and saluted him by leaping in the womb, had to send his disciples afterwards to ask if his cousin was he that should come, or if they were to look for another! The omission of these stupid birth-stories from Marcion's gospel, with

its generally briefer style, tell for the earlier date of the heretical evangel. Marcion omits Luke v. 39, so do many ancient MSS., and the sense is better without that verse. He says, copying probably a Gnostic—*i.e.*, Buddhist—legend, "A sinful woman standing before his feet, washed them with tears, anointed, and kissed them." Luke, with three times the number of words, elaborates this into two verses. Marcion gives the Lord's Prayer, "Let thy Holy Spirit come," an essentially Buddhist aspiration, instead of the the Jewish "Hallowed be thy name." Luke xxi. 18 was omitted by Marcion, also by the Cureton Syriac. Its promise that "not a hair of your head shall perish" must have been written by some monk who did not credit the lying legends about the early Christian martyrs. Marcion says, "And striking him they said, Prophecy: who is it that smote thee?" evidently representing an impulsive action. But Luke, to explain it, makes them deliberately blindfold Jesus before striking (xxii. 64), which is almost as absurd as Matthew and Mark, who make grave Jewish judges buffet and spit on a helpless, inoffensive prisoner, an astonishing item for which Luke substitutes the blindfolding.

What has Canon Sanday to say against considerations such as these? He offers a philological argument, that in the verses omitted by Marcion there are distinct traces of Luke's style. Yea, verily! By a similar argument, though a stronger one, the Rev. Howard Heber Evans has demonstrated that Paul wrote both the Acts and the third gospel.\* What he does prove is that the concoctor, or translator, is betrayed in peculiarities of vocabulary common to these documents and the Pauline epistles.

Before we leave Luke let us look at a few more of its interpolations. The scribe of Codex Bezae, in place of Luke vi. 5, which he transposes to a place between vi. 10 and 11, sets down the following story:—"On the same day, seeing a certain man working on the Sabbath, he said unto him, Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, cursed art thou, and a transgressor of the law." What sermons would have been written on the profound significance of this utterance if it had only found its way into the received text. Who does not see that the monks who invented this saying could have invented plenty more? Look at the Sermon on the Plain. It is almost as palpably a literary concoction, and not a spoken utterance, as the Sermon on the Mount. Look, again, at the cry on the cross. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" did not suit the Gnostic like notions of the scribes of this Pauline gospel, so they substitute, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Marcion has, "And crying with a loud voice, he expired." The utterance "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is wanting in the two oldest MSS. The inventors of this did not lack inspiration. In the last chapter, v. 3, "Of the Lord Jesus" is spurious; so is v. 6, "He is not here, but is risen"; v. 9, "from the sepulchre," is also spurious, and the whole of verse 12. In the last division, v. 31, "and they knew him" is wanting in the oldest MS.; v. 36, "And he saith unto them, Peace be unto you" is spurious; so is v. 40, "And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet"; v. 42 gave him broiled fish, others add "and an honeycomb"; v. 51 (perhaps the most important of all), "and carried up into heaven" is wanting in the Sinaitic, so that this early MS. gives no witness to the ascension. These are by no means all the instances in one chapter, which all critics must allow to be spurious, or at least dubious. In the account of the institution of the Mithraic ceremony of the Lord's Supper, xxii. 19, 20 are an interpolation, probably from 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. They are

\* *Formation of the Gospels.*

† Mr. Arthur Lillie, in his recent able work on *The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity*, endorses this view, which is well substantiated in Judge Waite's *History of the Christian Religion*, now in its fifth edition. Chicago; 1892.

‡ *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

§ Just as Buddha came down to Kapilavastu 500 years before.

\* *St. Paul, the Author of the Acts of the Apostles and of the Third Gospel.* 1884.

wanting in Bezae's Latin\* and several of the Græco-Latin versions. Verses 43 and 44, about the angel appearing and giving power to his elbow, are entirely wanting in the three earliest MSS. What but wilful forgery could have added this legend? Luke alone gives the mysterious apparition of the Jerusalem ghost on the road to Emmaus, "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Here Codex Bezae gives us a clue to the concoction of the myth, reading, for Emmaus, Oulammaus, that being according to the Septuagint the scene of the theophany to Jacob.†

The lately unearthed gospel of Peter has made prominent the fact that among the earliest Christians were the Docetae, who considered that Christ had no real body, his apparent body being a mere Maya or illusion. This was the view of Marcion and other professed followers of Paul. Luke, while countenancing this in his basic documents, as in the tale that "he vanished out of their sight" (xxiv. 31), and again "stood in the midst of them" (xxiv. 36) (having apparently popped through the keyhole), adds to these Gnostic stories that he said "a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have"; then makes him partake of a meal of broiled fish and honeycomb, and ascend to heaven with these viands stowed in his interior, though Paul had declared that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The monks who fabricated Luke did not stick at trifles.

In concluding, for the present, with the Synoptics, I add a line or so on the general question. To account for their discrepancies, Christian advocates invented a plausible theory of "oral tradition" for their god-inspired gospels. This breaking down under the evidence of word for word similarities, Prof. Marshall and others have fallen back on the theory of a common Aramaic original. A common Latin original would be as much to the point.‡ A proof that the Aramaic theory does not cover the ground lies in a single word found in the most important liturgical formula in the gospels, namely the word *epiousion* in the Lord's Prayer. How could it happen that Matthew vi. 11 and Luke xi. 3 should in a Greek version both independently translate some unknown Aramaic word into a term which is not genuine Greek at all, but a rough Greek coinage rendering the Latin word *supersubstantialem* found in the Vulgate—a word proving the prior existence of the sacramental dogma? Every possible theory of the gospels has been exhausted except that of their being a monkish concoction; yet if there was nothing else than this one word *epiousion* that theory would deserve an attention it has never yet received.

Clouds of verbiage have been written on the gospels, but I hope that in this series of articles I, at least, have made my meaning clear. I hold that each and every one is a mosaic of legends with the hand of the monk on every page, and no certain verifiable fact at the basis of any. The criticism which attempts to extract some trustworthy historical truth by simply leaving out the supernatural elements, is no criticism at all. The miracles are of the very texture of the gospels, and they can no more be eliminated than the part of the Prince of Denmark can be taken away from "Hamlet." Jesus is an ideal creation of centuries, whose original dates back to Buddha, ages before the Christian era. Moreover, I challenge Christians to give an atom of proof that any of the gospels were known outside the monasteries for the enormous period of over a thousand years after their alleged production.

J. M. WHEELER.

\* Tischendorf, the greatest expert, considered the Greek of this important Codex taken from the Latin. The Rev. Dr. Scrivener opposes this, chiefly on the ground that the Latin is faulty, and has a mixture of Greek words, like much other monkish Latin.

† Cleopas is not a Jewish but an Egyptian name, like Cleopatra.

‡ Dr Rendel Harris comes to the conclusion that "the Old Syriac texts lean on a Græco-Latin, and perhaps simply on a Latin base."—*A Study of Codex Bezae*, p. 177.

## APPROBATION AND DISAPPROBATION.

APPROBATION is a term used to express an agreement with that which we deem right and proper, while disapprobation implies the very opposite, and prompts us to condemn what we regard as being wrong and opposed to the welfare of the individual and of society. As we deny the Christian doctrine of Free Will, and believe in the principle of philosophical Necessity, our opponents allege that the two words—approbation and disapprobation—can have no real meaning or legitimate force with us. They urge that if Necessity controls our actions the actor deserves neither praise or blame, and to punish wrong-doers is both useless and unjust. This is a theological error arising from a misconception as to what the doctrine of Necessity really is.

It is not our purpose in the present article to explain philosophical Necessity or to show the utter fallacy of the theory of Free Will. We desire rather to point out that Necessitarianism does not render approbation or disapprobation of no effect, but, on the contrary, that these are important factors in the law of Necessity. The following extract from Miss C. E. Plumtre's very able work, *Natural Causation*, will indicate how we as disbelievers in Free Will regard punishment. She says: "The supporter of the doctrine of Free Will may inquire; if the character of my child is solely the product of heredity and environments, if he have no power to amend his failings, why should I punish him? 'According to your own doctrine,' Necessity might reply, 'you ought not to punish him, since you do not believe in the universal law of cause and effect. Neglect your child as you may, some happy chance will arrive, some miraculous answer to your prayer take place, and the little reprobate become a child of grace.' I, on the contrary, who am a believer in rigid law, who hold that nothing proceeds uncaused, punish my child because I think punishment is a potent factor in the environment that is slowly modifying his character. 'But has my child no power over himself?' Free Will may inquire; 'can he not love virtue for its own sake, and look upon the avoidance of vice as a more sacred thing than the avoidance of pain?' Doubtless he can, *subject to two conditions*. Either his own moral perceptions must be sufficiently exalted for him to be able to recognise the beauty of holiness—which exalted perception is a factor in the organism; or he must be under the charge of those who know how to train him judiciously while he is yet young and his character pliant, so that from early habit and association virtue will gradually grow pleasurable to him and vice distasteful—which judicious training is a factor in his environment." We ask our readers to carefully study these words of Miss Plumtre, for they contain the keynote to the philosophy of praise and blame as we understand their functions.

It appears to us very evident that knowledge and the cultivation of our mental faculties are essential to enable us rightly to discover what conduct is entitled to praise and what to blame. It is not sufficient to tell us what is right and what is wrong, but it is necessary that we have some standard of appeal in order that we may decide the one from the other. This is the more desirable because whatever course of action we may pursue it should be based upon the understanding of the law of cause and effect. When once the human mind recognises a reason for doing good, an important guarantee is secured against the performance of evil. Even if we assume that man possesses naturally the seeds of every virtue, their growth and development depend on our complying with certain conditions, without which they will not ripen into fruit. Now praise or blame will assist in determining the nature and extent of this growth and development

according to the ability and refinement of the minds employing these factors. We regard approbation and disapprobation as causes or circumstances that contribute to the formation of character. This is very different from the view adopted by furious fanatics or passionate tyrants who inflict torments and cruelty for the purpose of imposing superstition upon and showing despotism towards their unfortunate victims. Dr. Priestley, referring to this question, says: "If, as a Necessitarian I cease to blame men in the ultimate sense of the word, I continue to do so as much as other persons, for how necessarily severely they act they are influenced by a base and mischievous disposition of mind against which I must guard myself and others. I on my system cannot help viewing them with tenderness and compassion, that will have an infinitely finer and happier effect; as it must make me more earnest and unwearied in my efforts to reclaim them, without suffering myself to be offended and desist from my labor through provocation and disgust."

Moreover, there is a growing tendency in these sceptical days, to regard what we call crime as a misfortune, an affliction or a disease, that requires careful treatment as much as insanity does. If a man is not fit to be at liberty, we do not treat him with cruelty, but we apply remedies that may restore him to his normal condition. Should he be incurable, he is placed under restraint so that he may not inflict further mischief on himself or on society. In other words, the feeling of approbation and disapprobation is formed on a higher level than it once was; it is now regulated by an increased knowledge of nature and of man. Science enables us to formulate a truer conception of the causes that form motives and control human actions. We can no more help having a stronger aversion to some actions than to others, than we can escape feeling the effects of excessive heat or cold. No amount of theological preaching about our right to praise or blame men, can alter the laws of our common nature. Why should we not have the feeling of alarm at the spread of robbery and violence, the same as the theologians claim to have at the spread of scepticism, and at those discoveries of science which refute their theoretical opinions as to the freedom of the will? We allege that as the lives, the liberties and the fortunes of men are dependent upon causes, more or less understood, they should be regulated accordingly, and should not be the subject of individual feeling arising from differences of temperament, education and opinion. The adaption of institutions to the inevitable changes of view will ultimately adjust the treatment of individuals upon considerations that are superior to those of personal convenience or personal vengeance.

It is now generally held that society exists for mutual advantage, so that its good and its happiness constitute the standard by which all things must be determined. Only such conduct can obtain the approbation of enlightened men and women, whose tendency is to promote the public good, and it must be obvious that the only true way to reform others is by rendering them happier by the administration of equal justice. We do not urge that the approbation or the disapprobation of men is an exact measure of justice, but it is a measure, nevertheless, and it finds expression spontaneously in every bosom, whatever opinions each may hold. When society approaches an intelligent and a just view of men and things, its members will approve only of that which is beneficial to all and injurious to none, and it will disapprove of all impediments to the realisation of whatever is to the advantage of mankind. Then the world will become conscious of the fact that no one should be exalted merely for his belief, and no one should be condemned for his disbelief. As Lord Brougham

observed, "The great truth has finally gone forth to the ends of earth, that man shall no more render account to men for his belief, over which he has himself no control. Henceforward nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or blame any one for that which he can no more change, than he can the hue of his skin or the height of his statue."

Our contention then is that to approve or to disapprove, to praise or to blame certain actions is a necessary part of human nature, and that whichever is done tends either to encourage good actions, or to discourage those that are bad. To a certain extent the same principle applies to opinions, but as a person's belief is not voluntary, he or she should not be punished for entertaining it, whatever its nature may be. It is actions that are condemned, and that only so far as they interfere with the harmony and well-being of society.

CHARLES WATTS.

#### A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

#### XII.—W. J. FOX AND HIS WORK AT SOUTH PLACE.

IT is no mean achievement to have kept the flag of liberty—in a more or less "religious" guise—flying for a century. This has been done by successive generations of men and women whose latter-day representatives form the "Ethical Society" at South Place Institute; and Mr. Moncure D. Conway, who has happily returned to the scene of his former labors, has been recounting to his congregation the stirring story of the years that have elapsed since the Institute—erstwhile a "chapel"—was opened in 1824 by William Johnson Fox.

Mr. Conway's historical sketch of the century's work has been the subject of three consecutive Sunday morning discourses; but the fates have decreed that one alone of these should fall to my share. On the first Sunday I was recovering from the fatigue of a long and wearying journey; and on the third the demon of outdoor propaganda claimed me for its own. But to hear the second I went joyfully; for assuredly no Freethinker can be indifferent to the good work which his predecessors accomplished in the days when "essential" Christianity had not been invented, and when hostility to the accepted creed meant persecution of the good old Christian sort.

I have never dissembled my love for the South Place congregation, a body which is prone to listen sympathetically to sneers and flouts at those whose courage and determination have made possible the peaceful pursuit of their own "ethical" ideals. A former pastor of the flock, Dr. Stanton Coit, was, in his salad days, accustomed to speak scornfully of the "methods" of Freethinkers, what time he entered into the fruit of their labors. But that brief chapter of the chequered history of the South Place platform has long since closed; and Mr. Moncure Conway is not at all likely to undervalue, or to criticise in a spirit of kid gloves, the pioneers of freedom who, with pick and shovel, made the smooth path along which Ethical Culture with its dainty feet so delicately walks.

On the morning of my visit to South Place, Mr. Conway announced that his discourse would be devoted to the work of his great predecessor, William Johnson Fox. He accordingly gave a biographical sketch of Fox, which I proceed to summarise as far as space will permit.

Fox was born at Norwich on March 1, 1786. His father was a weaver. In early boyhood the iron of religion entered deeply into his soul. He was reared upon the sour milk of Calvinism, and it disagreed with him sorely. His mother was a simple-minded, novel-reading woman; but his father was a rigid member of the uncompromising Calvinist body which for two hundred years supplied the Unitarian pulpit

with its best teachers. In 1806 Fox entered Homerton College as a student, and sat at the feet of Dr. Pye Smith. Upon joining the ministry, he preached his first sermon to a small congregation which consisted chiefly of aged spinsters. On that occasion he exhibited that almost painful shyness which characterised him as a public speaker throughout his life.

After ministering for some years to a small congregation at Fareham, Fox passed through a mental struggle, during which many of the dogmas of Christianity were abandoned. First, the doctrines of the Trinity and original sin were given up in 1810; the pre-existence of Christ and the atonement followed a year later; but it was not until 1812 that hell-fire ceased to burn for him. It may appear strange (added Mr. Conway, in effect) that the belief in eternal torment should be the last, instead of the first, to disappear; but it must be remembered that upon the fundamental panic as to damnation the whole superstructure of monstrous absurdities was built up. It was only by terrorising the human mind that the other dogmas of orthodoxy could be maintained. Hell-fire was the *raison d'être* of the Church and priesthood; hence its terrors were most deeply impressed upon the minds of religious devotees. This it was that made the process of mental emancipation in most cases a series of agonising convulsions, instead of a peaceful and progressive expansion of the mind under the influence of increasing knowledge.

When Fox had finally emerged from the charnel-house of Calvinism, his first aim was to found a society on a comprehensive principle, with virtue for the bond of union instead of faith. He insisted upon the duty of free inquiry and the right of religious liberty. The conditions of his time afforded him the desired opportunity. The French Revolution had been followed by reaction and apparent failure. Lovers of freedom mourned their lost leaders, Coleridge and Wordsworth. The glorious aspirations of the revolutionary era were obscured, and faith in the future of man suffered a temporary eclipse. Fox sought to revive the waning enthusiasm, and at Parliament Court he gave evening lectures dealing with great social and political problems—Church and State, war, philanthropy, population, human perfectibility, etc.

For some years Fox carried on his work as the minister of the Society at the chapel in Artillery-lane, in connection with the Unitarian Association. Over and over again he had to face the puritanical prejudices of his congregation, notably in the matter of the musical feature in their services; but he steadily and consistently set himself to the task of raising his people above their moral superstitions. He never directly attacked their prejudices, but opened before them a loftier ideal in which their narrow puritanism was lost sight of and forgotten.

In 1819, when Richard Carlile was sentenced to fine and imprisonment for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*, Fox delivered a public protest against the principle of persecution. His discourse on that occasion, said Mr. Conway, shone out like a candle in that dark, pious and brutal age, when an honorable citizen, his wife, and friends were imprisoned for the sole "offence" of publishing a work on a controversial subject.

On Feb. 1, 1824, South Place Chapel was opened by Mr. Fox with a discourse entitled "The Spirit of Christianity the same as the Spirit of Unitarianism." The trust-deeds of the Chapel bore testimony to the breadth of view of the founders. According to these documents, the chapel was established to provide for the worship of one God the Father and the teaching of the Christian religion; but all this was to be done upon such principles as might from time to time be adopted. The conscript fathers of South Place made ample provision for the influence of progressive ideas; and, indeed, we hear little or nothing there

to-day concerning either God the Father or the Christian religion, save in a critical sense.

One of the most interesting features of Fox's connexion with the chapel was described by Mr. Conway in language of singular beauty and eloquence. While Fox was still regarded as a believer in the Bible, he received a long letter from one of his friends, Sarah Flower, then in her twenty-second year. The obscure maiden of 1827 is now known to the world as Sarah Flower Adams, the author of that beautiful hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." Her letter to Mr. Fox was read at length by Mr. Conway, and it was a most touching self-revelation of a religiously-trained mind tortured by doubts concerning the divine authority of the Bible. The following passage may serve to indicate the nature of the confession which she made to Fox, as the only human being to whom she could open her mind: "The cloud has come over me gradually, and I did not discover the darkness in which my soul was shrouded until, in seeking to give light to others, my own gloomy state became too settled to admit of doubt. It was in answering Robert Browning that my mind refused to bring forward arguments, turned recreant, and sided with the enemy." Commenting upon this letter, Mr. Conway pointed out the curious coincidence that Browning, who in his later years was regarded as a Christian, should at fifteen have been assailing the faith of one who was destined in after years to be the author of a world-famous Christian hymn. With regard to Miss Flower's letter, Mr. Conway had learned from Fox's daughter that it was a little in advance of her father's opinions at that date. "But," he added, "what influence may it have had on his opinions? In speaking last Sunday of the founder of this Society, one hundred years ago, Elhanan Winchester, I told you how that eloquent preacher's hard Calvinism yielded under the touch of a maiden in New England, whose name and home he never knew—her one word from the height of a larger hope; and it may be that the last remnant of Calvinism that clung to this Society, biblical authority, yielded under the English maiden's heart-broken confession. Well named was Sarah Flower. Sweetest flowers have bitter buds. That budding doubt of her's blossomed under her minister's culture to beauty and fragrance, and by the fruit that followed many sad hearts like hers were nourished into strength and joy."

At this point I must leave the discourse. Most deeply do I regret the loss of the opening and concluding sections; but it may be hoped that Mr. Moncure D. Conway will publish his record of noble work on behalf of liberty and truth.

GEORGE STANDRING.

#### CHRISTIANITY, COWARDICE, AND CHARITY.

SCENE—a grocer's shop in the parish of an incumbent, who assured me that some of the best men in the vicinity were Freethinkers, and that Christian persecution, social ostracism, and "that sort of thing has all died out." In the shop are the shopman, the writer, and one of those sour, kill-joy looking individuals who, like most goody people, are never bright and nice, whose souls are narrowed by the religion which they say gives joy and elevates, who will accept no teaching about the faith they profess, unless it be tinged with the light streaming through their own chapel windows. While the writer is being served a man enters, pays an account in a passbook, leaves an order, cracks a joke, and departs. The lugubrious individual who has been gloating over the defeat of a free library scheme, says, cautiously, to the shopman, "Do you do much with him?" and inclines his head to the door. "Pretty fair." "Oh! Do you find him all right?" "Oh yes, quite so; a pleasure to deal with him." "Hem!" grunts the sourfaced man; "perhaps so, but be careful." "What!" says the shop-

man, looking startled; "do you know anything wrong about him?" "Oh no," returns the chivalrous gentleman, whose faith tells him to keep his tongue from speaking evil, and his lips from uttering guile and not to bear false witness against his neighbor; and adds, rather quickly, "I've not said anything. Pray don't bring me into question; but—but—he's a"—(looks mysterious and lowers his voice)—"Freethinker." "That's his own look out," observes the grocer. "I suppose he's no worse than anybody else as long as he pays his way, and the rest of it." "Oh well, just so; that's your look out," retorts the other, who is evidently "willing to wound but yet afraid to strike."

On May 5 the writer was in a restaurant in the City, and sat opposite two Salvation officers. One was joyously harpooning the crust of an apricot tart, and while he talked of someone who was filled with the "inward joy," was also ladling some inward joy into himself in the shape of a jorum of cream on the apricots. Quoth he, "Yes, he's a very godly fellow, but his people are very, very worldly." "Do you know them, then?" queries his brother in the Lord's work. "No," answers the other, between his bites at the toothsome shape of the meat which perisheth, while I noted that he scarcely looked the picture of ascetic renunciation and self-crucifixion; "but I know that they don't quite like his being in the Army." To this fellow they were "worldly," and all that is meant by that sectarian sneer, because they did not choose to look at God from the angle where he stood.

These types I have given are of the sort who cry infidel to us because we hold that only good conduct counts, and not mere theological correctness. "Infidel!" they shout. The cry comes with revolting cowardice from those whose souls are stained with infidelity to truth and reason. They slander our literature before they read it, because some paid and interested defenders of old and rotting beliefs have started the practice. "That sort of thing has all died out!" On the contrary, it goes on all over the kingdom. It will die out when Freethought crushes these poisonous snakes who hiss at us from the weeds of dogmas among which they crawl. I should like to ask Christians what they think of the two specimens of the brood their faith has hatched, and is hatching. The editor has further particulars. I do not give them here, for Christian juries are so full and foul with Christian prejudice begotten by bigotry out of ignorance, that it is almost impossible for poor and unfashionable Freethinkers to obtain justice in a law court, which is too often a monument of how Christian people quarrel, and how extensively the population of a Christian country forget their Christian commandments.

Christians concern themselves with our conduct, and though they can't prove anything wrong against us, they say we must be wicked because we are without their God. Then we must concern ourselves with their conduct when it is distinctly evident that they are worse than the ordinary man, who without any cant of Christ, "pays his way," and does not deliberately go out of that way to wantonly and maliciously injure a man who does not accept his synthesis of the mystery of existence. Moreover, Christianity differs from Secularism in that its salaried teachers and defenders say if you once believe it Christ will make you so strong that you will always be kept from sinning, and never do wrong any more. Liberator Hobbs and other whited sepulchres show glaring proof of that. Has it ever struck any of us that most of the wrong done in this country is committed by men who call themselves Christians, who frequent fashionable churches and other resorts of shady characters, and are blessed by the parson as long as they are not publicly found out? We should want more than one *Freethinker* to contain the names only of the Christian men who are found out in one year in this country alone. So strong is the restraining power of the God-given morality.

It is no use crying peace when Christian cowards will not leave us in peace. A good deal of error has arisen through people being too courteous to contradict what they inwardly felt to be wrong. We must attack the dogmas which are abhorrent to us whenever and

wherever we see them. The dogmas of orthodoxy exclude us from fellowship with vast numbers who would otherwise shake hands with us, but who still regard us as beings outside a pale. They are urged by the paid expounders of their views to look at us with suspicion, to shrink from us in the common walks of life. There is no need to be bumptious and intolerant; but we must remember that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and if we become too sweetly reasonable and complacent, and cease our *special* propaganda, orthodoxy will again stretch out its persecuting hands and throttle the throat of reason.

CHARLES E. BACON.

(To be continued.)

## ACID DROPS.

On Sunday, June 11, the men on strike at Messrs. Jobson, Derby, got the local Bishop to preach a special sermon on the relations between masters and men. Just before the service commenced a member of the N.S.S. Derby Branch placed a copy of the *Freethinker* on the pulpit. It was picked up by one of the officials and handed to the Bishop, who gazed at it with astonishment. He placed it on one side of him, and as the first article was "The Altar and the Throne" he no doubt perused it before his after-dinner nap. We wish he had read out the article to the strikers before delivering his sermon.

An Oban dairyman, Archibald Campbell, has sued another Oban dairyman, Archibald Black, for defamation of character in attributing to him an "evil eye." Black said he only spoke jocularly, but on going into the witness box he stated his belief that Campbell had bewitched his cows. Another witness was asked if he believed in witchcraft. He said he did, because the Apostles believed it before him. The Sheriff dismissed the case on the ground that the charge of possessing an "evil eye" was not libellous. At the same time he warned Black not to make it again. The whole affair is a proof that Bible superstition is far from played out in godly Scotland.

Wesley said that giving up the belief in witchcraft was in effect giving up the Bible. In some rural districts this Bible sanctioned belief still remains. The *Ilfracombe Gazette* reports that at Yeovil Borough Petty Sessions one F. Terrill was bound over to keep the peace. He had called Harriet Craven a witch, and threatened that if she did not take her spells off his sister he would beat her brains out. Since then people had called "witch" after her in the street.

Dr. Nicholl, in the *British Weekly*, says that "Christians are not inquirers in search of truth." Well, everybody knows that, but is it policy to proclaim it from the housetops? Dr. Nicholl says the Christians are "meek spirits." Yes, they are, especially when they meet an "infidel." Then they are as meek as their Master when he called people names in Jerusalem.

The General Assembly of the American Presbyterian Church have suspended Prof. Briggs for refusing to teach the infallibility of the Bible, and have declared that the teaching of the errancy of God's Holy Word is pernicious. Dr. Briggs did not appear, but his friends put in a plea for him that he did not say the original manuscripts were in error. Unfortunately nobody knows where those original manuscripts are. God Almighty took the trouble to write them, but allowed them to get lost in an unaccountable manner. Perhaps they'll turn up in some Greek convent some day.

The Conservative party against Dr. Briggs gained the day, though not by a large majority. They claimed, and with honesty, that when ministers took oath to uphold the inspiration of the Bible, they meant the Bible they held in their hands, and not any original manuscripts, which no living person has ever seen.

The Rev. Lyman Abbott is one of the advanced ministers who have got beyond the mere letter of scripture. He tells us "Jesus was very fond of yachting." He might have added that he was particularly partial to getting out for a walk on the water with his patent Boyton boots.

Two or three years ago the Rev. Walter Walsh, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, took it into his head to try to convert

the local "infidels." He engaged a hall, gave some lectures, and allowed discussion. But he soon had enough of it. The "infidels" only grew more numerous by his efforts to extinguish them. Since then Mr. Walsh has been rather quiet, but he seems to be waking up again. Recently he addressed a meeting of the Newcastle Christian Evidence Society on "Some Mistakes of Unbelief," although the title (to cover the lecture) should have been "Some Mistakes about Unbelief." Mr. Walsh has been publicly invited by Mr. Joseph Brown to discuss "Belief versus Unbelief" in the local press, but up to the present he has made no reply.

Portsmouth *Chat* hopes the clergy will go strong against betting—"beginning of course with the House of Lords and working gradually downwards till they get to the miners." Our contemporary says it is all very well to scold the working-classes for putting a shilling on a football match or a horse race, but it "wants to see an Archbishop trounce the Prince of Wales for indulging the same vice." Very likely. But as there are only two Archbishops in England, and both of them are good courtiers, *Chat* will have to rely on smaller sky-pilots for this bit of business. It is doubtful, however, if a single member of the whole Black Army will take it on.

West Tarring is a bigoted Evangelical parish adjoining Worthing. Its vestry meetings are described by a local paper as "curiosities." At a recent sitting only one member attended. He took the chair, and proposed, seconded, and carried the resolutions. Some would call it a moving spectacle.

Talmage's tabernacle has been largely cleared from debt. This is how they did it. The creditors were induced to accept five shillings in the pound. About 90,000 dollars was cancelled in this way. There is a mortgage for 120,000 dollars remaining. If that can be brought under the five-shillings-in-the-pound system too, the tabernacle will have been built for next to nothing. We suppose the creditors thought it best to take what they could get, tabernacles not being very marketable property. Altogether it is a fine object lesson in Christian ethics.

Dr. Sanday, in his eighth Bampton Lecture, notices the little mistake of Jesus as to the authorship of the Pentateuch and Daniel. This "human limitation" of J. C. he regards as "part of the self-emptying of his incarnation." What a curious process! How does any being do self-emptying? Jesus was God, and before becoming man he emptied some of himself out of himself. The words are clear, but who can realise their meaning? Dr. Sanday should answer these questions—Was not the part emptied out as much God as the part that was left in? And were there not, in that case, four persons in the godhead instead of three?

The most idiotic superstition of the lowest savages is just as respectable as this notion that an omniscient being could limit his own knowledge. It looks subtle, but it is only silly. Yet disguised imbecilities like this are being widely resorted to by the "advanced" clergy to cover the holes knocked in their Holy Scriptures by the artillery of modern criticism.

Dr. Momerie is still a Churchman. He will not leave his dear old mother. He prefers to remain at home and pour his heresy into her unwilling ears. We suspect the house will soon be too hot to hold him. Even the *Christian World* calls him "an ecclesiastical *petroleur*."

We called attention last week to the letter of a minister's wife in the *Christian World*, complaining of her domestic slavery. The poor woman had six small children, and her life was a kind of martyrdom. We see that other letters have since appeared on the same subject. "Observer" speaks very plainly. "There is no cure but continence," he says, "and clergymen are the last to practise it."

"He is Coming! Who?" is the proclamation carried through the streets of London by a number of sandwich men with white hats. Prophet Baxter is the person to elucidate the mystery of the coming one, who may turn out to be the often-announced and long-delayed Avatar who made such a mess of it upon his first appearance.

The Rev. C. N. Gray sends out a circular appealing for the moderate sum of £10,000 to improve his parish of Helmsley,

Yorkshire, which he says is one of the largest in England. If he cannot get the sum in a lump, he hopes the recipients will at least send him a few stamps. Godliness with cadging is great gain.

On the anniversary of Bentham's birthday the *Echo* had a sneering reference to the utilitarian philosophy and to Bentham's views as though they were dead and done for. Yet the *Twentieth Century*, certainly among the most advanced of American publications, is publishing week by week a translation by Prof. W. Myers of Pierre Etienne Dumont's *Principles of Legislation*, a work entirely founded on Bentham.

Everybody knows that the clerical labor market is overstocked. The Church of England has a Society for the Employment of Additional Curates. Its income last year was £121,511. With this money fresh curates were planted in various parts of the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury asks for "More!" Christianity, we all know, is the friend of the people, and its chief occupation is the production of parasites to live at their expense.

The Rev. J. E. Barter, vicar of East Tilbury, Essex, is declared to be too drunken to attend to his religious duties. He has been deprived of the "cure of souls." Perhaps he will take to herrings.

Another drunken man of God is the Rev. Thomas Pugh, perpetual curate of Gwynfe, East Carmarthenshire, against whom there were seven separate charges of drunkenness, one being that on Easter Sunday last year he was intoxicated while administering the Sacrament. The Court found the defendant guilty on four of the charges, and he will be removed from the dangerous temptation of administering the Sacrament.

Three young men named Potter, Dearden, and Kelly, were each sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment at Liverpool for playing football with a cat. The poor animal was shockingly mutilated. The three scoundrels were on their way to early Mass!!

The clergy assembled at the St. Albans Diocesan Conference have been much exercised over the question of Religious Education in Elementary Schools. They see that to pump their nonsense into the plastic minds of children, is a matter of life and death. The Bishop of Colchester impressed on the parsons that they should attend the voluntary schools at regular intervals, and give religious teaching. He would even let Dissenters visit his Church school, if he had the same right to enter Board schools. We guess the teachers who already have far too much of clerical management, will not relish the constant supervision desired by the Bishop.

At St. Savior's Retreat, Broadway, Worcestershire, where the late Cardinal Manning retired before entering the Roman Catholic Church, they have, in the words of the rector, "manifested their faith by giving God a little more honor by carrying Him in triumph round the grounds of the retreat." The old Jews used to carry about God in a box, and the old Pagans carried and worshipped their idols in procession. No doubt the idea of the Catholics is much the same. "We've got God with us. Here he is on our side." Probably the doctrine of the Real Presence is one of the things that renders Ritualism attractive. Although the doctrine is a virtual denial of God's omnipresence, religious people with their idols are like children with their toys—they will have them all to themselves. To swallow the Real Presence and feel you've got God inside you, gives a fine sense of spiritual exaltation.

A hoax has been played on the *Bookman*: Someone sent an announcement, "Almost ready, *England*, by Cardinal Vaughan. Dedicated without permission to St. Peter."

By the way, the *Weekly Register* points out that Catholics who cannot afford to go to Rome should pay a visit to Peterborough. At present there is no Catholic church there, but the writer proposes that one should immediately be built. If they could only get Peter to have his old nets on view there, they would catch abundant flat fish even in these days. His worthy successor at the Vatican is reported to have netted over £400,000 by the spring pilgrimages this year.

At the close of an anti-Romanist lecture, at the Town Hall, Chelsea, by the Rev. Mr. Wright, the Catholics hooted and yelled, even while the chairman was giving out the Lord's Prayer. The *English Churchman* remarks: "No decent Atheist would be guilty of such behavior."

Efforts are still being made to purge the Church of the poison of the "Higher Criticism." We see that a pamphlet has just been issued by the Rev. Hugh Ryves Baker on the burning question of Inspiration. We haven't yet seen the pamphlet itself, but according to the *Rock*, "He quotes words of riotous rejoicing from Mr. Foote's *Freethinker* over *Lux Mundi*, and he calls upon the bishops to speak out at this crisis."

On clause 4 of the Home Rule Bill being discussed, Mr. Bowles, in supporting an amendment to allow an Irish Parliament to establish and endow religion if it so chooses, expressed his general approval of all forms of religious belief "save only Atheism, which denies the existence of God." Mr. Gladstone in reply said, "I rather think the day for founding establishments in religion has gone by." The amendment was lost, and the Irish Parliament may possibly be Atheistic after all—without God and without religion.

Coroner Clarke, of Shrewsbury, should really learn how to take evidence. A jurymen in his court, named Overy, claimed to affirm as a Christian who believed that Christ forbade him to swear. Under Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act he had a legal right to affirm, but Coroner Clarke refused to let him do so, and grossly insulted him in addition. Mr. Overy was quite illegally kept in court, and told that he only wanted to shirk his duties, and warned that he would "be on every time"—a threat which was also illegal. Coroner Clarke should take Hamlet's advice to Polonius, and play the fool in his own house. When he sits in court he should respect the law and act decently.

The Rev. Dr. Thain Davidson, who is a sort of authority on the situation of Heaven, has been holding forth on poisonous literature, with special reference to Freethought publications. After referring to the bonfire of books, recorded in the fourteenth of Acts, the reverend gentleman said he wished it was as easy for Christians to get hold of "infidel" books and burn them. No doubt. Very likely he would serve their writers in the same way—if he could.

"Clear your bookshelves of all deleterious literature!" shouted Dr. Davidson. He did not say whether he included the Bible, which has some of the dirtiest passages ever printed.

The town of Liberal, Barton County, Missouri, was founded above a dozen years ago by Mr. G. H. Walser, to establish a community where there should be neither church, chapel, nor drinking saloon. Freethinkers and anti-Christian spiritualists built up a very successful township. Outside Christians prophesied things evil, and some of them appear to have brought their prophecies to pass, for a Reuter telegram informs us that a fire, supposed to be the work of an incendiary, has done damage to the extent of 250,000 dollars. We trust Mr. Walser and his fellow townsmen are insured.

The Rev. James Mackey was preaching at Lampasas, Texas, when he fell dead in the midst of his sermon. Happily the days of belief in providential judgments are over.

"Lovely weather!" we've all been saying for the last three months, but the farmer finds it spells ruin, his hay crop being completely spoiled from want of rain, and nearly every other crop in a worse position than the average. In many places on the continent the long spell of dry weather has been succeeded by severe cold. In Galicia recently there has been 45 degrees of frost, and in France there has been several deaths in snow-drifts. There has been news of deaths also from cold in all parts of Germany. In the eastern provinces of Austria, floods have caused immense loss of life, and rendered in one district alone a thousand families without food or shelter.

Sir George Sitwell has a Bill before Parliament proposing to alter the Sunday Observance Act of 1780, so as to legalise Sunday concerts of sacred music, a term which is declared to include all vocal and instrumental music, except

dance music and comic songs. Better abolish the Sunday Observance Act altogether.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway, in an *Open Court* article, demolishes the Rib Story. He says there is nothing about a rib in the proper translation of the Creation Story. Jahveh takes one of Adam's sides. The word "one" is feminine. "The plain meaning," says Mr. Conway, "is that the man had two sides, one male and the other female, and the female side was detached." There is more about the grand old gardener being originally bi-sexual in Mr. Foote's "Bible Heroes"—*Mr. Adam*. We feel with Mr. Conway that there has been an awful waste of sermons on that Rib Story.

The Rev. R. F. Horton, who is great on "Inspiration," and evidently thinks he has a good supply of it himself, has been talking a lot of nonsense about Abraham Lincoln, and representing him as carrying into the struggle of his life "the simple principles which he had learnt at his mother's knee in the backwoods, and from the gospel of the Son of God." Mr. Horton should take the trouble to learn the truth about Lincoln. If he did so he would find that the great President was not a Christian but a Deist. His scepticism was quite pronounced in regard to all the supernaturalism of the New Testament.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling says it was "Romance" that makes us "fashion Heaven and Hell." The *Christian World* points out that something like this was said by John Milton and by Omar Khayyam. "How far this is reconcilable with orthodox doctrine," it adds, "may be left to preachers of the Word." Which is a very pretty evasion of the difficulty.

An Iowa editor wrote an obituary on one of his subscribers, at the request of his widow, in which he inadvertently spoke of the deceased having gone to a "far happier home." And the fastidious mourner was angry.

God Almighty isn't in it with President Cleveland in America. On April 30 the President worshipped in a Presbyterian Church. "Though the sermon was good," says a reporter, "few of the congregation listened to it. Their eyes were all fixed upon the presidential party." The reporter looked into the collection. He found the largest contribution was a two dollar bill. Evidently the President didn't give more than he could afford. When the President "arose" and left the church, the congregation remained seated until he had passed into the street.

Jesus Christ said he came not to send peace but a sword, and the history of Christianity proves he was about right. But how the Christians of to-day (in some cases) are turning their backs on their Savior! Even the *Speaker's* plea for white armies to defend civilisation against the hordes of the black and yellow races is stigmatised by the *Methodist Times* as "Satanic." Perhaps the editor will tell us what the Devil has to do with fighting. In the whole of the Bible he never meddles with such business, but Jehovah is often on the warpath.

Mr. Nix has been evangelising again at Epsom, and there is the usual glowing report in the *Methodist Times*. Mr. Nix had the greatest success with the ladies and the bookmakers. He has had the same success before, but it hasn't diminished the glory of the Derby. The crowds of sinners are as big as ever, and the bookmakers do just as much business. Mr. Nix is simply tickling an elephant, and his subscribers are satisfied by hearing of the animal's apocryphal capers.

Mr. Nix has made a great discovery. It is a matter of deep conviction with him. He is "more convinced than ever that God cannot save a brick building, but he can save a man." We are equally convinced of the first half of the statement, but we don't go to the Derby to get fortified. God's inability to save a brick building doesn't seem to need a laborious demonstration.

#### OBITUARY.

On the 8th inst. an old attendant at the Hall of Science passed away in the person of Mrs. Annie Griffin, aged 83. She had been in the habit of attending the old and present Hall of Science for over forty years, and for the last few years never missed a shake of the hands from Mr. Holyoake whenever he lectured.—J. A.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 18, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—7.30, "An Evening with Colonel Ingersoll."

Thursday, June 22, Hall of Science, at 8, Discussion with the Rev. O. Fleming Williams on "Christian Methods of Progress."

July 2, Hall of Science; 9, Birmingham.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—June 18, Barnsley; 25, Sheffield. July 2, Huddersfield; 9, Hall of Science; 16, Birmingham; 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.

H. O. (Birmingham).—Obliged for cuttings.

P. J. D. (Manchester).—Not without merit, but hardly up to publication mark in point of execution.

D. SUTHERLAND.—Both stories have already appeared in a slightly different form. The second is one of Mark Twain's.

W. J. OSBORNE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. C. F.—Thanks for cutting. Glad to hear there are several of you at Worthing "deriving great pleasure every week from the *Freethinker*."

J. PARTRIDGE.—Subjects have been sent for July 9, when Mr. Foote hopes to see good meetings at Baskerville Hall.

S. H. ALISON.—See "Sugar Plums." Will bear the other matter in mind.

G. J. WARREN, 20 Rhodeswell-road, E., thanks Messrs. Campbell, Bowles, Christopher, Toye, Hunt, and others, for parcels of literature for distribution.

J. BLACKER differs from Mr. Wheeler as to Cowper's "madness." He contends that Cowper was sane enough in a general way, despite his "one or two temporary fits of insanity." For the greater part of his life he had one of the most evenly balanced minds. It was his misfortune to be always surrounded by the atmosphere of religious cant.

O. HEWITT promises to send 2s. 6d., and as much more as possible, towards the expenses of Messrs. Foote and Watts's delegate trip to Chicago. This correspondent says—"I wish every friend of the party would give as much in proportion to his income; there would then be a handsome surplus for fighting the enemy and other purposes. Don't forget the Colonel. It would be a grand thing for our party if he could be got over."

W. HART (Camberwell Branch) writes—"The verso in this week's *Freethinker*,

"You can, and you can't;  
You shall, and you shan't;  
You will, and you won't;  
You'll be damned if you do,  
And be damned if you don't,"

is to be found in "The Billy Bray Series of Theological Rubbish," published some years ago by the Christian Tract Society, and entitled *Christ for All, All for Christ* (illustrated, by the Life and Labors of the Rev. William M. Bailey, an eccentric Evangelical Arminian preacher, for many years resident at the Isle of Wight, occasionally preaching in London and the provinces, in the early and middle portions of this century. There are more lines than those as above, and they are to be found in Bailey's doctrinal system entitled *Chain of Reasons and Reflections*, in which he discusses Calvinistic dogmas.

JOSEPH BROWN.—See paragraphs. Pleased to see you keeping the ball rolling so actively at Newcastle.

A. STANLEY (Glasgow) in sending a subscription to the Foote-and-Watts Chicago Delegate Fund, hopes that "all Freethinkers will feel it a pleasure as well as a duty to contribute." All subscriptions received for this Fund up to date will be acknowledged in next week's *Freethinker*.

WOLVERHAMPTON.—Visitors from a distance to hear Mrs. Besant's lectures can be supplied with tea on applying at the Hall after the afternoon lecture.

V. PAGE.—We wish you success at Nelson. There are many Freethinkers in the district, who should form a strong and active Branch.

O. JENSEN.—Cuttings are always welcome.

H. KRANK.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

C. E. FORD.—The suggestion shall be acted upon in our next issue of Tracts. Thanks for the advertisement on your leaflet.

S. J. WILLIAMS.—You can get the *Freethinker* at Glasgow from Ferguson, newsagent, Ingram-street, near Candleriggs.

J. FARR.—See "Acid Drops."

GEORGE WISE (Liverpool) denies that the local Christian Evidence Society has been "lying about the bankruptcy of the Liverpool Branch of the N.S.S." "What we have stated more than once," Mr. Wise says, "is that the Liverpool Hall scheme is bankrupt." Mr. Wise should consult the dictionary. The Hall Society is not "bankrupt." It owes nothing. Mr. Wise simply means that money enough has

not been raised to erect a hall in Liverpool. This has been stated more than once in the *Freethinker*, and the Liverpool Christian Evidence Society is cackling over an open secret.

J. L. (Liverpool).—Glad to hear you and some of your friends are going to take shares in the Hall of Science scheme. Miss Vance has forwarded copies of the new Prospectus with application forms.

HALL OF SCIENCE REBUILDING FUND.—Collected at Mr. Foote's lecture last Sunday, 15s.

JAMES ANDERSON writes:—"There is an error in your answer to W. Bradburn in last week's *Freethinker*. The explosion mentioned occurred at Swaithe Main Pit (in which 143 poor fellows were killed) on December 6, 1875, and the brave miner's name was William Washington." That is, it was William Washington who first went down the pit at the risk of his own life. He was a member of the National Secular Society.

W. FARMER.—There is no secrecy about the N.S.S. Conference. Any pressman would be accommodated with a seat at the reporters' table. The fellow you refer to went to unnecessary trouble. Probably he preferred lies and subterfuge to straightforward honesty.

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

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Echo—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—La Raison—Lucifer—Secular Thought—Independent Pulpit—Tablet—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Modern Thought—La Verité Philosophique—Fur Unsero Jugend—Ironclad Age—Weekly Bulletin—Sunday Notes—Reading Observer—Washington Post—Sirilaka Satumina—Manchester Spy—Isle of Man Times—Herts Observer—Daily Chronicle—Watts's Literary Guide.

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

## SPECIAL.

MANY persons have applied for shares in the National Secular Hall Society (Limited) in consequence of our recent appeals. According to promise, we continue to press the matter upon our readers' attention. There are hundreds who could easily take a share or two, who have not yet bestirred themselves; and several who could take a handsome number, who have not yet taken any. If nothing else answers, we must try to prevail upon them with much importunity. As we said before, it would be a grand thing to have the front part of the Hall of Science premises rebuilt as a handsome and well-appointed Institute, and formally dedicated on the third anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death. To secure this it is only necessary that Freethinkers should deny themselves a little for the best interests of their cause. We are in communication with a Secular architect, with a view to his drawing a plan of what might be done with the frontage, and as soon as possible his drawing will be published in the *Freethinker*. We shall then be able to say—"This is what you may have, if you choose. Will you have it or not?" Meanwhile I invite all lovers of Freethought, all admirers of Charles Bradlaugh, to send for share application forms *at once*. Address to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Our SUMMER NUMBER is on the stocks. It will be, at least in Freethought circles, the event of the season. Such a budget of bright reading and fine illustrations will be unique in the history of Secular publications. One of the items is to be a fine portrait of Colonel Ingersoll with a chatty paper on the great American orator by Mr. Charles Watts, who knows the Colonel intimately and has enjoyed his domestic hospitality.

Considering the phenomenal weather, Mr. Foote's lecture on "A New Theory of the Resurrection" drew an excellent audience to the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. There was a large sprinkling of ladies, whose bright summer costumes gave an element of cheerfulness. Mr. Forder took the chair, and made a strong appeal on behalf of the Hall scheme, which induced several members of the audience to apply for shares.

Mr. Foote lectures again this evening (June 18) at the London Hall of Science. He will take for his subject "An Evening with Colonel Ingersoll." This is the first time a lecture has been delivered there on the great American orator. Mr. Foote has a good budget of Ingersoll stories, some of which he will retail, and altogether this lecture should be very attractive.

Mr. Charles Watts had an excellent audience last Sunday evening at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. There were more strangers present than usually attend, and the applause was frequent and enthusiastic. Mr. Daniel Baker presided, and drew special attention to Mr. Foote's article, "Altar and Throne," which appeared in our last issue. The demand, therefore, for the *Freethinker* was greater than the possible supply.

Mr. Watts also drew attention to the coming SUMMER NUMBER of the *Freethinker*, and urged friends to give their names as subscribers at once. Several dozen persons gave their orders for the sixpenny number. To-day (Sunday, June 18) Mr. Watts lectures three times in the Arcade Hall, Barnsley. We hope to hear that our colleague will have large audiences, as we are sure he will receive a hearty reception from his many Yorkshire friends.

The Birmingham Branch held a well-attended members' meeting on Sunday, to receive the report of Messrs. Watts and Bransby, its delegates to the N.S.S. Conference. It was unanimously agreed that the Conference had been a successful one, that the business had been well dispatched, and that the resolutions carried gave hope for further progress and development. Mr. R. S. Bransby was elected corresponding member for the new year. In view of Mr. Watts's intended visit to Chicago with Mr. Foote, it was decided to endeavor to engage the Town Hall for a lecture by him on his return. A vote of condolence was ordered to be sent to Mr. H. Card, one of the Branch's old members, who has suffered a great loss in the death of his wife.

It is to be wished that the sale of Freethought literature were pushed more briskly at our open-air meetings. Many complaints have reached us in this respect. The lecture, after all, is only an introduction to Freethought; it is the literature which confirms and completes the work. We may take this opportunity of saying that any Branch which is ready to distribute back numbers of the *Freethinker* can have bundles of them by applying to us. We supply the trade on sale or return, and the weekly "returns" accumulate in the course of months. The bundles will include some copies of our Special Numbers.

Mr. Foote has decided to lecture at a few of the open-air stations in London this summer, beginning with Clerkenwell-green. He makes it a condition that, in every case, proper arrangements be made for a collection in behalf of the London Secular Federation, which is much in need of funds for its work.

The second part of the friendly discussion between the Rev. C. Fleming Williams and Mr. G. W. Foote will take place next Thursday evening (June 22) at the London Hall of Science. Only half the subject could be dealt with on the

first occasion. The second half is "Christian Methods of Progress." Mr. Foote will open the discussion. The chair is to be taken at 8. All seats are free. Those who are not able to stand should come early, as there is every probability of the Hall being crowded again.

London Freethinkers will remember the demonstration at Charles Bradlaugh's grave on Sunday, July 2. It is being organised exclusively by the N.S.S., but non-members are free to attend. The return tickets from Waterloo to Brookwood are two shillings each. The train being a special one, tickets can only be obtained from N.S.S. officials. Mr. Forder has charge of the arrangements, and will supply tickets at 28 Stonecutter-street to individual applicants or to Branch secretaries. The demonstration should be a very large one, worthy of the N.S.S. and of its dead leader's memory.

At the last Council meeting of the London Secular Federation a special committee was appointed, similar in function to the Organisation Committee of the N.S.S. We believe it will materially help forward the work in the metropolis. Branches that have any suggestions to make should communicate at once to the Secretary.

The Federation's annual excursion will take place on Sunday, August 20. Return tickets (3s.) by special train to Brighton will be on sale on and after July 2. London Branches are requested to make collections in aid of the Federation's funds on Sunday, June 25.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures at Luton to-day (June 18). It is to be an open-air meeting, and we hope the local "saints" will rally in force around the platform. Mr. Moss intends to devote a part of his summer holiday to lecturing. He is prepared to preach the gospel of Freethought from July 29 to August 13. The first week he would like to spend in the North, and the second in the West. Branches should take note of this. They will find that they can avail themselves of Mr. Moss's services at a very moderate cost to themselves.

Mr. Stephen H. Alison, an N.S.S. lecturer, is desirous of making as many lecturing engagements as possible during the next few months, having extra time to devote to the work. His mornings are mostly booked for the summer season, but he has many afternoons and evenings disengaged. He is also willing to lecture in the provinces, and considers his recent visit to Manchester as sufficiently encouraging. Mr. Alison's address is, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.

We are pleased to see the *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis again among our exchanges. The paper, which is now in its 38th volume, has not ceased to appear, but owing, we presume, to a change in the management, it has not reached us for some time past. Mrs. Lulie Monroe Power, a daughter of the late Dr. Monroe who carried on the *Ironclad Age* with such vigor for many years, is now editor and proprietress.

The *Truthseeker* (New York) says that the number of visitors to the Chicago Exhibition the first Sunday it was opened was nearly two hundred thousand. All the Sabbatarian predictions were belied. There was no disorder and no drunkenness. Five arrests were made during the day; one was a woman, who had no money, and jumped the fence to see her daughter in the beauty show; the other four were Exhibition workmen who sneaked away from their jobs and got liquor. Not a single visitor came under the notice of the police.

Mr. Rosetti, who is pretty familiar to open-air audiences in London, was discharged from his employment in October on account of his activity as a Trade Unionist, and the master tailors of London are "warned" against him. He has therefore had to support himself by odd tailoring jobs. His friends of the Leyton Branch N.S.S. are getting up a benefit Concert for him, which is to take place at the Workman's Hall, West Ham-lane, Stratford, E., on Monday, June 19. Mr. Maurice Russell, of the West Ham School Board, takes the chair. A good program has been drawn up, and Mr. Rosetti will himself speak on "How I escaped Death and Siberia." The tickets are 6d. and 1s. They can be obtained of Mr. E. Anderson, 52 Grove-crescent-road, Stratford. We hope the function will materially assist Mr. Rosetti.

Miss Robins, of the Finsbury Park Branch, is always active in working for a good object. Last Sunday she, and some lady friends of the Branch, collected the sum of £30 4s. 8d., for Hospital Sunday Fund. They were at their posts from early morning till the park closed, and one lady fainted from over-exertion. At the N.S.S. stand were exhibited receipts for £17 11s. 0d. from the Hospital Sunday Fund of last year; £22 18s. 10d. for the Hospital Saturday Fund; and 18s. 10d. for the Women's Nursing Association; a total of £41 3s. 8d. for 1892.

Professor Johnson has an out and out convert in K. F. Bellairs, the editor of the *Weekly Bulletin*, who, in his last issue says, "I declare that Christianity is a deliberate falsehood, invented by the Monks '400 years ago' . . . I always knew (from my very childhood I realised it) that the disgusting murder-dealing book, the Bible, was a lie, but until I met the Professor I did not realise the entire tale was a forgery. But now I understand everything; I see it all as clear as crystal. It is nothing but a forgery whereby priest-craft may do as it has done, get the land into its grip, sneak every possible halfpenny, and keep us in mental prostitution."

The *Brighton Examiner* gives a notice of "Freethinkers on the Level," reproducing very fairly some of Mr. A. Liddle's arguments on the question, "Is the Christ of the Gospels an historical character?" When the London Secular Federation has its excursion to Brighton, perhaps the occasion can be utilised for a demonstration on the Level.

In *Open Court*, Mr. Paul Carus thus summarises what he calls "the prescripts of the religion of science": "Know thyself and the laws of thy being. Learn the duties which the laws of thy being imply. Attend unfalteringly to thy duties."

Mr. Symes is back in Melbourne from Sydney, where he was much pressed to stay. Though times are very bad at Melbourne, he felt he could not desert his friends in that place.

Mr. Symes, who, as most of our readers know, is an ex-Wesleyan minister, gives in the *Liberator* (Melbourne, May 6) a very interesting comparison of the lives of Wesley and Voltaire. He concludes: "While Wesley taught renunciation of the world, Voltaire taught to make the most of it. Wesley was a narrow-minded reactionist; Voltaire a philosopher of wide-reaching ideas. To Wesley we owe nothing but that curse Methodism: to Voltaire we owe the spirit of inquiry and liberty."

Mr. Wallace Nelson, "in response to a numerously signed requisition" from the electors of North Gregory, Queensland, will contest that electorate "in the interests of Labor and Democracy." His English friends will be pleased indeed if Mr. Nelson finds his way into the Queensland Parliament.

*Fritankaren* is doing good work in breaking down bibliolatry and other superstition in Sweden. The number for June 15 gives A Hundred Bible Contradictions, compiled by Viktor E. Lennstrand.

Free Discussions for men are being held on Friday evenings at 30 Lower Rosoman-street, Clerkenwell, E.C., at 8.30. The chair is taken by the Rev. R. W. Menzies. The platform is open to all forms of opinion, and the program for June and July is very varied.

The Derby Branch, being unable to obtain a suitable hall for lectures, and being molested at outdoor meetings, is devoting itself to a vigorous literature propaganda. Mr. W. Whitney, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  Barrow-street, Bloomfield-street, will be glad to receive any parcels of pamphlets and periodicals for distribution.

**THE BROWN TESTIMONIAL.**—Some weeks ago we announced that a testimonial was to be raised for Mr. Joseph Brown, the zealous secretary of the North-Eastern Secular Federation. The treasurer is Mr. J. H. Summerfield, 61 Grove-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Mr. Summerfield has received the following subscriptions:—A. Davidson, 5s.; Mr. Scott, 2s.; A. J. Smith, 2s. 6d.; T. Vipond, 2s. 6d.; W. Stamp, 2s. 6d.; L. Johnson, 2s. 6d.; B. Brodie, 2s. 6d.; O. Jenson, 2s. 6d.; J. H. Summerfield, 2s. 6d.

The North Eastern Secular Federation holds its annual Council Meeting this afternoon (June 18) at 3 in the Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street. There should be a good attendance, as important business has to be transacted. The federated Branches will kindly take note of this.

The Newcastle Sunday Music Society is having a great success this season. Twenty thousand people were present last Sunday on the Moor, and Mr. Smith's band played splendidly. Shareholders, associates, and workers in this movement should assemble to-day (June 18) at 5.30 prompt in the Eldon Hall.

The Blackburn Branch reports good open-air meetings last Sunday. Mr. O. Trumper kept a large and enthusiastic audience in good temper, much to the disgust of a little band of would-be disturbers, who at the finish of the lectures quarreled with each other for precedence in the discussion.

An effort is being made to reconstruct the Nelson Branch of the N.S.S. To-day (June 18), two lectures are to be delivered by Mr. Ernest Johnson in the Albert Hall:—at 3, "Church History," at 6.30 "Charles Bradlaugh: Atheist and Republican." Friends might attend from Burnley, Colne, and other places in the neighborhood.

#### WHAT DO MIRACLES PROVE?

CHRISTIANITY is said to be proved by miracles. But what do miracles prove? If a person cures another of a disease, it only proves the disease was not incurable. It may display his power, but no rational person will say it proves the truth of his doctrine. Ignorant people may jump to such a conclusion, but the position will not bear a minutes examination. That power and goodness are invariably conjoined is an assumption necessary for the establishment of Theism, but utterly unwarranted by facts. The Christian belief in Satan, or an evil power, attests this. In the light of the Christian belief in a powerful devil and evil spirits, the absurdity of proving anything by miracles is manifest. We are told by Paul that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14). If so, he may have taken on the appearance of Gabriel in announcing the incarnation to Mary. He may, indeed, have seduced the blessed Virgin. For a woman to have a child by other than her lawful husband, is surely more likely to be through the agency of an evil, than of a good being.

If a man asserted that, like Abraham, he heard a voice from heaven telling him to kill his only son, it would be far more natural to suppose that such a command came from an evil being than from a good one. Even the Jews saw this, at any rate when Christians called on them to believe in their crucified Messiah. A story is told in the Talmud which illustrates this. Rabbi Eliezer ben Orian was renowned for his wonder-working powers, and on the strength of it sought to carry his way and enforce his opinion on the Sanhedrim. Once in a dispute with the Rabbis, in attestation that he was right, he called on a sycamore tree to remove. The tree left its place and replanted itself a hundred cubits off. "Very clever," said the Rabbis, "but that proves nothing." "I am right," said Eliezer, "and in attestation I call on the rivulet to flow backward." It did. "Wonderful," said the Rabbis; "but now proceed with the discussion." "I call on the walls to fall down in attestation," cried Eliezer. Then up stood Rabbi Joshua—not Joshua ben Pandira—and asked, "By what right do the walls interfere in our debates? Your argument must be weak to seek such aid." Then the walls stopped in their fall out of respect to Rabbi Joshua, and remain leaning until this day. Rabbi Eliezer was wroth, and called on the Bath Kol (a kind of Jewish progenitor of the Holy Ghost). And a voice from heaven spoke, saying, "What are all the opinions of the Rabbis to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer?" Then Rabbi Joshua again arose and said: "It is written, 'The law is not in heaven; it is in your own mind and in your own heart'; to amaze is not to argue; it is argument, not phenomena, we require. If the Rabbi has good reason for his doctrines, why should he appeal to the sycamore tree, the rivulet, the walls, or the Bath Kol?" This old freethinking Rabbi just hit the mark. It is exactly because Christians have no rational

grounds for their absurd superstitions that they have in the past appealed so vehemently to the evidence of miracles.

LUCIANUS.

#### AN ATHEIST INTERVIEWED.

ALTHOUGH well-known Atheists are generally shunned by the clergymen and ministers of the most Ancient of Days, yet it does happen sometimes that these gentlemen, who naturally are of a prying disposition, cannot withstand the temptation of visiting an Atheist at home. And when the flesh is weak, and when their curiosity gets the better of them, they fall. The visit is made; but whether they are anything the better for it, man knoweth not!

In the north of England, there is a seaport in which Secular propaganda has been carried on somewhat successfully. In this town there are several active workers in the cause of Secularism, one of whom was interviewed by a sky-pilot lately. The Rev. Meek, having knocked at the Atheist's door, and upon it being opened, asked if Mr. Atheist was in. Upon being answered in the affirmative, the Rev. Meek said he wished to speak to him. Upon being invited inside, he made himself comfortable on a couch, and the following conversation took place:—

Rev. Meek.—So I really have the pleasure of speaking to an Atheist face to face? What I have heard of you, I should have taken you to be an older man, but this is by the way. Are you happy in your Atheism? Is your mind as much at rest as when you were a Christian?

Atheist.—Yes. Why should it not be? My mind is more at rest than it ever has been; for my study of Atheism has led me to that high standard of morality, which tells me that I must live a moral life without the aid of God or gods. It teaches me that I must depend upon myself alone. The acceptance of Atheism has given me a firmer grip of myself, so to speak. When God vanished from my sight, I was left more to my own resources, and I am far better for it. Where once I depended upon a mythical God, I now depend upon myself. Why should I not be happy in my Atheism? A child that gives up its belief in Santa Claus is not rendered unhappy thereby, as long as the presents at Christmas are still there. The giving up of belief in a God does not make me unhappy, for the world is still there.

Rev. M.—But supposing there should be a God after all, how do you think you would fare then?

A.—I believe I should stand as good a chance of good things to come (rewards, etc.) as you yourself. I try to live a good life here; you cannot do more. I try to be honest to myself and to the world. I endeavor to be truthful. If these are not good passports to future felicity (if there is such felicity in store for us), then I do not know what else would be. My disbelief in the God of the Bible, or for the matter of that any other God, is firmly established. For the God of the Bible is a cruel monster throughout, and as for other gods, they are all of a like character.

Rev. M.—Have you not a feeling within you that there is a Supreme Being who made everything, and who is watching over the good people of the earth?

A.—No. As far as I understand the nature of things there is no necessity for a God now, and no traces of this Supreme Being are anywhere discernable. This world has rolled on for millions of years, geologists tell us, and for anything we know it will continue in its path for millions of years more. If, as you believe, there is a Supreme Being watching over the good people of the earth, then that is about all that he is doing; for he never interposes where right is trampled underfoot, when brutality murders innocence, when honesty starves in the gutter, when wrong flourishes and is respected, and right is shunned. These various items have led me to accept the doctrine held by some that there is no such God as you picture to us. Hence my Atheism.

Rev. M.—Suppose a friend of yours were to die, would you approach his death-bed and preach Atheism to him?

A.—No. I would not thrust my opinions on dying people. Our object is to make people happy, and not the opposite. If this friend had been an Atheist, I would urge him to hold that which is true. But if he had been an adherent to Christianity, I would leave him to his belief, so that his end might be peaceful. Our doctrine is taught to and accepted by living strong-minded men and women, and not to those hovering between life and death.

Rev. M.—I suppose that curly-headed youngster is your son (referring to Atheist's little five-year-old son)? Would you teach him your opinion?

A.—Certainly. I would teach my children that which I held to be true. I would give them antidotes to that which is taught them in the schools. If Christianity is not good enough for me, then it is not good enough for my children. My path to Atheism was cruel and stony, but that for my children shall, with my assistance, be more smooth.

Rev. M.—I am much pleased with this conversation. I have often wished to see an Atheist at home, and I am now satisfied. If you will allow me, I should like to pay you another visit.

A.—With pleasure. Perhaps you may, after all, convert me.

Rev. M.—No, no. I would not want you converted to Christianity. If that which you have told me is true, then I sincerely hope that all those people who will not come to our church and be Christians, would adopt the belief which you hold, rather than remain indifferent to both. I can see that men like you are endeavoring to reform the world by your method. We do not want to convert men like you, we only want those who live immoral lives and in sin. Go on with your work and prosper. I have been very interested with this evening's chat, and you have given me much food for reflection. Good evening.

A.—Good evening. You have now seen how an Atheist jogs along through life. The library which you have just admired is one which has been scraped together and is a credit to any man's home, showing that Atheists are a class of people who read and think for themselves. I shall be pleased to see you again.

G. E. CONRAD NAEWIGER.

#### BROWN'S RELIGION.

A MAN named Brown—a very common name—  
But, Brown or Jones, I'm sure 'tis all the same—  
Was one of those good easy-going men  
Who make but little stir with tongue or pen;  
Who keep the even tenor of their way  
Through winter snows and sunny time of May;  
And he was known where'er his life-line fell,  
As an honest man, but—an Infidel.

He lived a quiet, upright, sober life,  
Faithful and true to fellow-man and wife;  
And most of folks who'd known him long and well  
Had many tales of his good deeds to tell:

He found in attics high and cellars dark,  
Where poverty had set her chilling mark—  
What you or I or anyone may find,  
On any day—our own, our human kind,

In want and sorrow and shivering with cold;  
With voices trembling, their story they told,  
Of how they had struggled, essayed, and failed,  
While scornfully the world at them had railed.

On such occasions Brown would be quite wroth  
And utter profanely many an oath.  
Said he: "They preach of God in whom we've breath,  
While here are his children starving to death!"

"They pray for heathens in cannibal lands,  
And pour out money to loosen their bands,  
While the outcast at home, though sore he plead  
Is left to die, or for ravens to feed."

But while some asked God to pity the poor,  
Great loads of oak-wood Brown left at their door;  
And he also left where'er he passed by,  
Beans and beefsteak, bread and butter, and pie.

"Your soul," snarled the deacon, "think of your soul,  
Good works cannot save from the fiery roll  
Of the hot, hissing flames down there in h—"  
"Hold on," said Brown, "when this body, this shell,  
To its first estate shall safely return,  
Will there then be anything left to burn?"

"You fool!" sneered the deacon, as to his store  
He quickly retired and inwardly swore  
That if he were God, every Infidel  
In sulphur and fire should be roasted well!

Then he thought, as o'er he counted his cash,  
That soon there might come a financial crash;  
And as times were hard and the gospel high,  
He must raise money somehow on the sly.

Soon after he failed for quite an amount,  
But not until he had made a large count  
Of assets of widows, and orphans too,  
Who thought that he to his promise was true.

He was so pious and talked with such zeal,  
That they could not think he would lie or steal;  
But he grasped their means though, nevertheless,  
And they found themselves quite penniless.

With tears they told their wrongs to Brown,  
Who said: "Now this man expects a crown,  
A robe, and a harp, and all that, you know,  
Where rivers of bliss eternally flow.  
Well, maybe he'll get 'em, but as for me,  
In such company I'd rather not be!  
The deacon's known as a pious old saint;  
While I—well, I have made no complaint;  
But which is the worse, my friends may tell,  
Such a pious fraud or an infidel?"

SUSAN H. WIXON.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### DARKNESS IN DERBYSHIRE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While on foot through the loveliest part of Derbyshire recently, I was struck by the gross ignorance of the villagers, who for centuries have been living under the shadow of a church presided over by a parson who, judging by the mansion-like vicarage in which he resides, has transposed that blessed text into "Get all that thou canst and take from the poor, and thou shalt have treasure on earth."

Here are the facts, that where the Church has held supreme and exclusive sway for hundreds of years, there the people are the most illiterate and their mental condition the most pitiable.

Suppose that in place of a steeple and a parsonage with a vicar to mumble prayers and sermons—souvenirs of barbarism—there had been a Hall of Science or some other Secular institute in the midst of these same people, where truth and the science of this life could have been promulgated, instead of their being deeply sunk in ignorance and superstition, the writer would have found a community of men and women displaying a degree of civilisation and intelligence at least a thousand years ahead of the present condition of the inhabitants of Christendom, and which has been solely retarded by the abominable institution of priestcraft, the direct outcome of Christianity.

J. WESLEY C. STAFFORD.

### LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

#### LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 8, George Bernard Shaw, "Socialism and Human Nature" (free); social gathering after the lecture. Tuesday at 8.30, dancing (free).  
Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, C. James, "Deism, the Road to Freethought."  
Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Dissolution of the Word of God."  
Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "An Evening with Colonel Ingersoll" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Thursday, June 22, at 8, discussion between G. W. Foote and the Rev. C. Fleming Williams (free).

#### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, H. Snell, "God's Book."  
Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, Mr. St. John will lecture.  
Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Consolation of Religion."  
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Day of Temptation in the Wilderness."  
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, J. W. Marshall, "God's Personality."  
Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Miracles and Prophecy as Tests of Truth"; 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Mansions in the Sky."  
Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8.30, Mr. St. John, "This World and the Next."  
Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Fate of Religion."  
Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Happiness in Hell"; 3.30, J. Rowney, "Paul and his Teaching." Wednesday at 8, Mr. St. John, "The Meaning of Materialism."  
Islington—Newington Green: 3.15, E. Calvert, "The History of the New Testament Canon."

Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road, High-road): 6.30, Stanley Jones, "The Service of Man."  
Lambeth—Kennington Green (near the Vestry Hall): 6.30, Mr. St. John, "Science and Miracle."  
Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Religion and Freethought."  
Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt."  
Mile End Waste: 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Gods, Ancient and Modern."  
Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, a lecture.  
Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Paul and his Teaching"; 3.30, C. J. Hunt will lecture.  
Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, R. Rosetti will lecture; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.  
Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, F. Haslam, "Bible Stories; are they True?"  
Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, A. Lewis, "The Basis of Christianity."

The "Queensberry" R. and A. Club: Saturday, June 17, at 5 and Sunday at 10, at Reader's Boat-house, Lea-bridge, rowing. Monday and Friday at 8, at the "Central" Baths, Clerkenwell, swimming. Wednesday at 8, at the hall, adjourned general meeting and athletics.

#### COUNTRY.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 7, J. Rogers will read a Paper.  
Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 7, S. H. Alison, "Darwinism and Design."  
Derby—Mr. Moore's Restaurant, Station-street: Monday at 7.30, important business meeting.  
Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Miller, "Causes of Crime."  
Luton—Rudd's Room, Bute-street: 6.45, A. B. Moss, "Why I Reject Christianity."  
Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: L. Small, B.Sc., 11, "The Relativity of Knowledge"; 6.30, "Latter-day Christianity." Tuesday at 8, debating circle, C. De Rome, "Music and Morals."  
Nelson—Albert Hall: Ernest Johnson, 3, "Church History"; 6.30, "Charles Bradlaugh: Atheist and Republican."  
Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: June 19, at 7, a meeting.  
Sheffield: Members and friends meet near the Monolith, Far-gate, at 2, for excursion to Wharcliffe Side.  
South Shields: Annual Excursion to Holywell Dere; brakes leave North Shields at 1; ferry leaves South Shields at 12.45.  
Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, debate between J. Bawey and J. Birkett on "Theism or Atheism: which is the More Reasonable?"  
Wolverhampton—Exchange Hall: Mrs. Annie Besant, 11, "Reincarnation as a Fact in Nature"; 3, "Theosophy and Christianity"; 8, "Do Christians Believe in Hell?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.  
Bradford—Market-ground, Godwin-street: 6.30, J. Greevz-Fisher, "Did Christ Die to Save Me?"  
Chatham—New Brompton-road (High-street end): 11, S. H. Alison, "Are the Holy Scriptures Impregnable?"  
Luton—On the Moor, New Bedford-road: 2.45, A. B. Moss, "Inspired Nonsense."  
Nottingham—Sneinton Market: J. Hooper will lecture.

NORTH EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.  
Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, important meeting of the council.

### LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

STEPHEN H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—June 18, Chatham; 25, m., Camberwell. July 2, m., Wood Green; 9, e., Lambeth; 16, m., Battersea; 23, a., Finsbury Park; 30, m., Camberwell; e., Hammersmith.

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

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon-street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—June 18, Sneinton Market; July 9, Barnsley.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—June 18, e., Kilburn; 25, m., Finsbury Park. July 2, m., Mile End; 9, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—June 18, Luton; 25, m., Wood Green. July 2, m. and e., Camberwell; 9, m., Midland Arches; e., Enfield; 18, m., Westminster; a., Finsbury; 23, e., Hammersmith.

J. ROWNY, 7 Park Villas, Newington Turning, N.—June 18 and 25, m., Regent's Park; a., Hyde Park.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—June 18, m., Battersea; e., Lambeth; 25, m., Westminster; a., Regent's Park.

ST. JOHN, 8 Norland-road North, Notting Hill, W.—June 18, 18, m., Bethnal Green; e., Kennington Green; 25, m., Leyton; e., Walthamstow. July 2, m., Victoria Park; e., Hammersmith; 16, m., Bethnal Green; 23, Brighton; 30, Chatham.

## WHY HE COULD NOT.

SAID a Christian to an Infidel: "If you would only accept Christ as your pattern, you might do a great deal of good with the ability you possess, and be very useful in your day and generation."

"I really wish to be useful, and employ what little ability I have got for the benefit of humanity; but, to be candid with you, I cannot accept Christ as a pattern," was the Infidel's reply.

"Now I would like to know very much why you cannot. Will you please tell me, briefly?" inquired the Christian.

The Infidel replied: "I will, with the greatest pleasure. Some of the moral precepts of Christ would be good, were they not nullified or rendered useless and bad by others. Thus 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,' is excellent, but it is spoiled by such teaching as this—'He that cometh to me and hateth not his father and mother, brother and sister, etc., cannot be my disciple.' 'I come not to send peace but a sword.' 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household.' 'Take no thought for the morrow,' etc., etc. You may think that this is good teaching, but as

I don't, I cannot accept a man as my pattern who teaches it, and therefore I am not a Christian."

"But, my Infidel friend," replied the other, "you don't seem to consider that as Christ talked in the Oriental style, you must make due allowance and not take his language literally."

"Look here, my Christian brother," said the Infidel, "I am a plain man, was born in Dighton, Bristol county, only know the English language, and never studied the Oriental, as schooling in our town was short in my youthful days, but I think I understand words according to their common meaning, and I would like to ask you this simple question: If I should say to you that you can't be an Infidel unless you hate your father and mother and wife and all your relations, would you think it a good saying if I told you it must be considered or judged of by the Oriental style of speaking?"

"I see the point," replied the Christian, laughing, "and your ingenuity, too; but I must bid you good-bye for the present, as I am in a hurry for church."

It was Sunday when this conversation happened, and as the Christian turned into Tremont Temple, the Infidel directed his steps towards the Paine Memorial and made his report.—*Boston Investigator*.

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**PROFANE JOKES.**

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"and the asses snuffed up the wind." The other replied that the only inference he could gather was that they would be a long time before they would get fat on it.

A parson travelling in a country place inquired of a passer-by the road to a certain village. "You must go up the next road until you come to a minister, then turn to your right until you come to another minister, and you will soon be there." "But what do you mean by a minister?" "Oh, the guide-posts here we call ministers because they are always pointing out the road, but they never go themselves."

Dr. Doolittle preached a well-meaning but dreary sermon, describing heaven as "one long perennial Sunday, on which good, very good little girls, will perpetually sing hymns and praise the Lord." Coming home, little Amy was silent, and appeared thoughtful. At length the child said, "Mamma, please when I'm up there, if I am very, very good during the week, may I, on Saturday evenings, go down and play with the dear little devils in hell?"

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