

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XIII.—No. 28.]

SUNDAY, JULY 9, 1893.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

CANTING LOYALTY.

WE do not meddle in the *Freethinker* with party politics, but now and again we feel bound to use whatever influence we possess against a crying evil, even though we have to trench on what may be considered as the political field. When the Phoenix Park murders threw Englishmen into a fever, we asked our countrymen to compose themselves, to show a little less apprehension and a little more dignity; and we called upon Mr. Gladstone to stand firm, and refuse to punish a whole nation for the crime of a few irresponsible individuals. Mr. Gladstone did *not* remain firm, he let himself be swept along by the tide of popular passion, and Ireland was gagged and terrorised. Of course we were censured by several Liberals, but they have since learned that they were in the wrong; and Mr. Gladstone himself—not in words, but in deeds—has admitted that he made a great mistake. Once again we spoke out when British cant and Irish priestcraft were hounding Parnell into his grave. It was not at all, in our opinion, a question of party politics, but a question of fair play and common humanity. And now, in exactly the same spirit, we are speaking out against the foolish, abject cant which is being indulged in with regard to the wedding of the Duke of York and Princess May. Here again, it is not the question of Monarchy *versus* Republic that is at issue; it is a question of honor and self-respect. Two gentlemen have complained of our last week's Cartoon, on the ground that they believe in our Monarchy as superior (say) to the French Republic. Had we time and opportunity we might show them that they are in error as to the facts of the case; that they are misled by the scandal which is reported in our newspapers from Paris, to the exclusion of the great work which the French intellect and character are doing for the progress and enlightenment of the world. Meanwhile we beg to observe that, while we can understand and respect a preference for a limited monarchy as a practical form of government, especially when it has come down in a regular evolution from the past, we cannot understand, and we cannot respect, a desire on the part of any Freethinker to uphold monarchical institutions in a way which affronts the most elementary principles of honor and brotherhood. A king may be preferable to a president; that is a point we do not argue, though we have our own decided opinion; but kingship cannot be preferable to a presidency if it means unlimited idle privilege, and the most extravagant luxury at the expense of the people, the overwhelming majority of whom have to labor for a living, and myriads of them for a wretched pittance. It is less the *political* than the *moral* aspect of the matter with which we are concerned. Whether the chief family in the State shall be hereditary or elected may be open to discussion; but it cannot be open to discussion whether that family should or should not be an example of luxury and corruption to the great body of the citizens. At least it is not open to discussion *with us*; our mind

is fully made up, there is not so much as room left for the shadow of a doubt.

Listening to the cant of "loyal" people, and reading the nauseous articles and paragraphs in the newspapers, a stranger might well imagine that the Duke of York and Princess May were the two most extraordinary persons in England; whereas everybody really knows that it is their accidental position, and that only, which gives them any distinction. Princess May is perhaps pretty; we do not know, and we do not care; but England was never short of pretty women, and we have seen thousands in the streets and parks a great deal handsomer than any princess we ever clapped eyes upon, or looked at in effigy in the shop-windows. Princess May is no doubt a "good" young woman, but happily good young women are not so uncommon in England as to make one stare at the Princess in astonishment. Of the Duke of York it is needless to say much; we shall indulge neither in praise nor in detraction; we shall simply say that he is not a portent of grace, wisdom, or ability; in short, there is nothing miraculous about him. But if the Duke and the Princess were ever so handsome, accomplished, wise, and good, we should still object to the cant of loyalty we hear all about us; and we should still more object to the lavishing upon them of money and presents they do not want, while the donors know—yes, *know*—that hundreds of honest people are in absolute despair, thousands in terrible want, and myriads in a state of chronic poverty which often becomes acute in the form of sheer starvation. An imperceptible fraction of the wealth lavished on this wealthy couple would dry the tears of some poor helpless widow, still the cries for bread of some family of orphans, or kindle the fire of hope in the dark ashes of a strong heart's despair. To know that all this misery exists, to leave it to groan in its lairs, and at the same time to shower presents around the feet of those who have already the means, and *more* than the means, of gratifying every legitimate desire, is—well, *what* is it? Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and give an honest answer. We will not search the dictionary for fitting epithets of denunciation. We leave it to every man's individual conscience. The proper words could only come from a great poet, with the indignant satire of a Swift and the fiery passion of a Hugo; or from a Shakespeare when, as in *King Lear*, he tosses the morality of a hypocritical world into the air, and shows the filthiness of its rotten foundations.

If we were a convinced Monarchist, as we are a convinced Republican, we should not advocate the starving of the royal family. Some amount of display, apparently, must be allowed in this case. What is called "the dignity of the crown" has to be maintained. No one wants to see the Queen, at six in the morning, cheapening greens and potatoes at Covent-garden Market, or going into a back street to pick up a reasonably cheap pair of kippers. There are certain things the poorest of us have to do which we would not like to see done by our "rulers." We are ready to tax ourselves

to spare them the necessity. But the line of luxury should be drawn somewhere; and any one who fancies that the Duke of York and Princess May, like all other members of the royal family, are not a *good deal over it*, should be made to spend a month in some of the worst of our London slums, which yield extravagant rents to the sort of people who are proud to subscribe for presents to princelings and "dear princesses." It should also be remembered that the Prince of Wales, in addition to his immense income, has £36,000 a year voted to him by the nation, in order to provide for his children; that Princess May's mother has a good State pension; and that the Duke of York has a separate income from "the service." This should not, of course, prevent *their friends* from giving them wedding presents; that is fair enough in all conditions of life. The objectionable thing is the cadging from the public, including little children in poor Board Schools.

Under eighty fathoms of water off Tripoli lies the "Victoria," and hundreds of her devoted crew are pent up in her compartments or drifting about in the sea. The gallant fellows died at the post of duty; and, as England is proud of her navy, she might be expected to pour out her money royally for the widows and orphans. But will she? Perhaps £50,000 will be subscribed. But look! Ten times as much has been given to a nuptial prince and princess. Yes, we are a *loyal* people, but our loyalty is uncivilised. It is still of the sheep-like order. We are no longer slaves, but we caress the chains that once bound us. Some day we shall understand that *true* loyalty is loyalty to our better selves and the common good.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF MAN.

"G. S. R."—a writer who is understood to be a well known ex-Congregationalist and now Church of England minister—in an able and sympathetic article on King's College Hospital in last week's *Echo*, wound up by declaring the institution was an illustration of the kingdom of God and also of the kingdom of man. One wonders what definitions G. S. R. would attach to the terms he thus puts in apposition. I suspect that at bottom he means by the kingdom of God goodness, and by the kingdom of man skill, and only regret he does not say what he means. But surely impulse and execution, sympathy and knowledge, or any other sensible terms, are all included in the kingdom of man, since the impulse which prompts to the relief of the suffering is as assuredly human as are the methods by which it is combated. I fail to see where the kingdom of God comes in.

What is the work of a hospital? Doctors and nurses, with every appliance that human knowledge can suggest, are engaged in a constant war with the results of accidents, and disease, pain, and death. Theirs is the human part, the kingdom of man—slowly yet gradually extending its boundaries. The kingdom of God must surely be the too often triumphant realm of disease and death, against which they are combatting. I do not suppose this is the meaning of G. S. R., but this is the logic of his antithesis; and, what is more, it is the logic of fact. For every improvement in medical or surgical skill means just this, a triumph of man over the natural forces which are believed to be the work of God. The kingdom of man is built up in antagonism to the kingdom of God.

The system of things which makes hospitals a necessity is, on the Theistic hypothesis, the result of

the deliberate work of God. As the old hymn writer put it

Diseases are thy servants, Lord,
They come at thy command.

The wasting phthisis cutting off the young in the bloom of beauty; the growing cancer eating out the life; the hideous tapeworm; the pullulating bacteria, thriving on human misery, are all the work of God. To the kingdom of such a being I own no allegiance. My homage goes out to brave Dr. Rabbeth, who died in the attempt to suck out diphtheria from a child's throat. He was a true hero of the kingdom of man. But for the personal God, our Father in heaven, who looks on and does nothing, what feeling could I have, did I believe in him? Such a being must be incomprehensible or contemptible. In neither case shall he have my worship.

In another part of the same paper which gave G. S. R.'s illustration of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man, I read, with tear-dimmed eyes and tightened throat, how to add to the horrors at the wreck of the "Victoria"; the screw propellers cut the men swimming for their lives till the sea was red with their blood, while bursting boilers scalded to death those in their vicinity. And God not only saw but caused it all. "In sober truth," as John Stuart Mill says, "nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are Nature's everyday performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognised by human laws, Nature does to every being that lives; and, in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow-creatures." Nature treats her offspring with what, in human beings, would be ruthless neglect and remorseless cruelty. Without warning all are whirled in her maelstrom, and at last all are sunk in the vortex of oblivion. If nature is presided over by a God, he is responsible for all, and there is no wickedness or cruelty which cannot be justified by his example. Theists used to be fond of quoting the line of Voltaire, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." This is exactly what has been done. And the name has been made the cover for all tyranny and oppression. If there be a God, man in his hands is the veriest slave. Throughout nature the strong prey on the weak, and man has learnt to do the like in the name of God. I retort then on Voltaire with Bakounine, "If God existed, it would be necessary to abolish him."

The kingdom of man is but an infinitesimal speck in the boundless waste of the universe. But it is the important speck for us. Like the coral reefs in the Pacific, it has been slowly built by the lives and labors of myriads, each adding his mite to the structure of his predecessors. By the thought, toil, and suffering of countless unknown men and women the earth has been made what it is; its jungles cleared, beasts exterminated or tamed, soil cultivated, swamps drained, boats built, cities founded, laws instituted, canals cut, railways laid, and means of intercommunion and interchange of services opened. Not the preachers, not the men of prayer, not the ministers of God, but the men of science, the thinkers and workers for man have built up the barrier reef of civilisation, within the protection of which we may smile at the stormy ocean without. Every step made in advance has been made by ignoring or opposing the sky-pilots who preach of the kingdom of God. Had but the riches, research, time, trouble, devotion and organisation wasted in a vain search for this kingdom-come been given to the practical amelioration of the conditions of man on earth, had we but served mankind with half the zeal devoted to the vain worship of a blind God, we should not have to lament so many evils to-day.

J. M. WHEELER.

ETHICAL CULTURE.

ETHICS is a term having a wide signification, inasmuch as it represents a system of precepts or rules for the regulation of the actions of men and society. It does not simply mean manners or etiquette, but the word is employed to indicate the doctrine of morality, or the science of moral philosophy. Ethical culture implies the means adopted to develop and improve the good qualities found in human nature. It also includes the cultivation and refinement of moral principles. This appears evident when we consider the basis of ethics and the origin of morality. The old notion was, and still is in certain sections of society, that ethics have been revealed by a supreme being, and not discovered by man; and further, among orthodox believers it is supposed that had not moral ideas been so revealed, mankind would not have known good from evil, or right from wrong.

It is true that some who are more liberal than others in their sentiments endow man with "a moral sense" at his birth, and to many persons this notion seems reasonable, because most men evince a preference for one thing more than for another. But man is supposed to be endowed with other senses beside that of morality, such, for instance, as "a religious sense," which may lead him into all manner of absurdity; also "a sense of honor" which may induce him to kill those who give him offence. This so-called "religious sense," however, is not only erroneous, but it also produces conduct that reason condemns, and which renders moral and physical happiness impossible. It often causes men to inflict upon themselves and upon others, injuries of the worst character. Besides, if we assume that the alleged "moral sense" accounts for man's good actions, we may also assume that an "immoral sense" accounts for his bad ones. The question is not, is man able to discern what is moral, but rather, how has the power to do so been acquired? We assert that ethical force, or a knowledge of the principle that regulates human action, like all other mental powers, is not born in us but is discovered by observation and by experience.

Ethical principles are valuable in proportion as they tend to some practical result for the benefit of the individual, and of the general community. Experience teaches us that by properly exercising our faculties, and by acting judiciously, happiness more or less will be secured; also that if we pursue a reckless course, misery will inevitably follow. The question then is, if we never had any experience, how could we have obtained the knowledge of what was moral or what was immoral? We possess the power to observe causes and effects, and therefore, the theological assertion that we are naturally incapable of formulating moral principles, is a palpable error. The basis of ethics is the accumulated observation, the trials and the experiments of life, which enable us to learn what is, and what is not, available as a guide in human conduct. The test of the advantage of ethical culture is the bearing it has on the efforts to produce human felicity, and the general well-being of the community. The fact that these principles possess such qualities, is a proof that they are moral. There is no divinity or mystery about the matter, and the idea that there is can be nothing more than mere theological assumption. The faculty of reflection enables us to judge from what we see and hear of the influence of certain actions, whether they will be beneficial or injurious, and as moral beings, we regulate our conduct in accordance with the knowledge thus acquired.

It will thus be obvious that the notion that certain commands have "a divine sanction" is not sufficient to secure right conduct. It is necessary that the disposition to act rightly shall be developed, and

that the circumstances that are conducive to well-doing shall be thoroughly understood. The public mind has been sadly confused and misled upon this point by the old error that the right way can only be discovered through "a divine declaration." Without availing themselves of a knowledge of nature and her laws, theologians have supposed that the course of life was directed by a power which modern thought proclaims to be purely imaginary and false. The scientific knowledge possessed to-day shows that under given conditions the causes and the results of human actions are natural, and that they recur in an order as regular as that of the tides. Hence ethics are concerned with the causes and consequences of human conduct as part of that general order of nature which overrules the will of man and to which he is subordinate. We recognise the force and utility of sympathy, a sentiment that enables us to put ourselves in an unselfish position towards others, and that does not leave us indifferent to the wants or sufferings of the unfortunate. We thus foster a noble passion within ourselves, and at the same time we promote the comfort and good of others. It may be questioned whether anyone can experience a more refined pleasure than that which is derived from serving others, and in helping those who require assistance. The inspiration to perform such deeds comes, according to Secular philosophy, not from God or from the Bible, but from the love of humanity, and from our known relation to the family of man.

It is no disparagement of this great ethical principle to trace it to a human source, or to know that it has been denounced by learned theologians as "mere morality." One of the principal wants of the present age is the manifestation of more of such morality and less of theological vaporings. The world has had too much of the delusions of heaven; it now needs greater enjoyment of the realities of earth. The recent denunciations at Church Congresses of the pursuit of truth and goodness for their own sakes, on the grounds that they are an inferior standard of thought and action, are but attempts to revive the spirit that once inspired the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Happily for us, we have found that right thoughts and noble actions do not require the trade-mark of the clerical profession. Murder is not wrong simply because Moses is said to have prohibited it (which, by the way, he, in the name of his God, practised in the most reckless manner). The result of cruelly taking human life would have been precisely the same to-day if Moses had never been supposed to have censured it. It is the same in reference to every action by which mankind is wronged or injured. We, as Secularists, do not abstain from falsehood because the Bible in some parts condemns it (while in other portions it clearly sanctions it). We object to lying because experience has proved that to indulge in it tends to destroy that confidence which is necessary to the harmony and welfare of general society.

Objection has been taken to the Secular approval of utility as a test of right action, and yet it is difficult to imagine any virtue that can be measured by its uselessness. Is it not a fact that the value of a person's life is estimated by the utility of his actions? It is encouraging to know that courage, heroism, manliness, benevolence, and all the noble qualities that constitute a great character, are becoming more and more appreciated by intelligent observers of men and manners, whether the individual who displays these virtues be called a Christian or not. No doubt there are many persons who fail to recognise the possibility of ethical culture unless it has a theological sanction, but this may be attributed either to prejudice or to ignorance of the real nature and origin of moral principles and their proper relation to conduct. For ourselves, conscious of the value of rectitude, we pursue our Secular course, undisturbed

by those who misrepresent our views or by those who misjudge our motives. Strong in our confidence in the potency of ethical culture when unmarred by orthodox fancies and superstition, we heed not condemnation from the priests or from their misguided followers. We are satisfied with that rule of conduct that has for its inspiration the promotion of truth, honor, and happiness on earth. This satisfaction, be it observed, arises from the fact that it harmonises with reason and experience, and moreover it can stand the test of fair and honest discussion. The author of *The Service of Man* truly said: "Moral training is obscured, and the result vitiated by the emphasis laid by the religious public, not on morals, but on repentance. What humanity needs is not people who lead unsocial and wicked lives, and are very sorry when about to die, when by the nature of the case they can do no more harm nor good; but people who at an early period begin to render valuable service to the good cause, and continue rendering more valuable service as they advance in years. We cannot take regrets in lieu of work; performance only avails."

CHARLES WATTS.

THE BUGBEAR OF DOUBT.

"DOUBTERS" are an awful nuisance to the men of God. These holy men are always telling us that "doubt" is gone, does not exist, and always belying themselves by producing new cures for the "disease." The latest we have seen at the business is a Dr. Vincent, who talked in Wesley's Chapel the other Sunday on "How to treat Doubters," and some of his methods are at least curious. In the first place, Dr. Vincent says that "we do not need any more evidences than we have." "If," he says pathetically, "they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe if further demonstration were made." Now here, it would seem that Dr. Vincent has a little account to settle with an organisation called the Christian Evidence Society, which undertakes to provide you with "evidence"—either second-hand, or of fresh manufacture—to your heart's content. You put a penny in the slot, and you get so much "evidence"—with a considerable quantity of stale quotations and old clippings, thrown in. That, however, is between Dr. Vincent and his Christian Evidence friends. If we were to spend our time "reconciling" these religionists with one another, we would be kept pretty busy. In the very paper in which Dr. Vincent's sermon is reported, the *Christian Commonwealth*, we find Ritualism implied to be immoral, Romanism classed with Mohammedanism as a "refined superstition," and Anglo-Israelism denounced as an "egregious absurdity." After this we can understand why Dr. Vincent says we do not need "any more external unity." He says the Church of Rome has unity. That Church had it for centuries. "What did she do with it?" asks Dr. Vincent, and he leaves the answer to be supplied. Well, we know what Rome did. It crushed learning, it strangled science, it wiped out art and culture, and literature. It blighted the earth in fact. But so would Dr. Vincent's little church to-morrow—if it had Rome's power. It is the very nature of dogmatism to be intolerant. Freedom and religion cannot flourish in the same soil. The spirit of the one is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the other. For religion tends to contract and close in the human mind, to limit thought within certain boundaries, outside which it dare not go on peril of damnation, to tie morality to the tail of specific dogmas. Freedom and religion are enemies. Where one is, the other is not, and cannot be. When Dr. Vincent, therefore, disclaims any desire for unity, and points the finger of scorn at

Rome, he is simply making a virtue of necessity, and arrogating to himself the credit of that tolerance which he would probably exchange to-morrow for power. No, no, let not Dr. Vincent sneer at Rome for burning men as heretics, while he himself holds a creed that damns all others outside.

It is interesting to learn on so high an authority as this "Bishop of the Episcopal Church," that the "world is full of doubt." There was never more doubt than now—doubt in the colleges among the seniors, and among the professors; doubt in our literature, in the magazines, and in the books; doubt on the lecture platform, doubt in the very atmosphere; doubt in the pew, doubt in the pulpit." We should, of course, have explained that, by this, the pulpiteer does not mean doubt in the truth of Mohammedanism, or Brahminism, or Buddhism, or for the matter of that, doubt in the truth of Atheism. He, like most clerics, insists on giving the word "doubt" the special meaning of "doubt in the truth of Christianity." It is an arrogant thing, this cool appropriation of general words to specific meanings, but it is a favorite trick of the clerics. They have made the word "infidel," which generally means unfaithful, to specifically mean rejection of Christianity. Of course there is nothing gained by the transaction, for thoughtful people will never be bluffed by mere names, and when the real value of the names is understood, any odium which may have been thought to hang to them, vanishes. If, for instance, clerical talkers insist on calling us "infidels"—though of course it is really only the lower type who descend to that sort of thing as a rule—and it is clearly explained that an "infidel" is merely one who is unfaithful to what he considers false, well then, of course, there is nothing derogatory or offensive in the title. The clerics gain nothing in particular by using it, we lose nothing in particular by wearing it.

Having shocked the goody-goody congregation by telling them how much doubt there was in high places, Dr. Vincent had a word to say on "legitimate" doubt. He said "there would be no scientific advancement without doubt. Scientific men doubt the hypothesis of to-day before they provide a better hypothesis. Men will doubt the thing they have attained unto before they reach out after another, a higher, a better thing." Now that is excellent; puts the gist of the sceptical case in a nutshell. In fact Dr. Vincent goes so far as to admit that the doubter "is a very good type of character" when—when "it is simple-hearted and loves Christ." How fine! Doubt as much as you like, but—don't doubt my little nostrum. Play havoc with anyone else's apple-cart, but "have a warm heart and a true desire to glorify God," and I will not touch you.

Then, surveying the causes of doubt, Dr. Vincent came to "defective education." There is a great deal of doubt in the world because of a "failure properly to train our children! In our Sunday-schools the work is exceedingly superficial." So this, then, is "defective education." Failure properly to train our children! Nay, rather we would say, failure to cram their minds with dogmas which, if brought to them in their prime, they would scout as unworthy even the consideration of sane men. If Dr. Vincent's creed has a true foundation it ought to meet with a readier acceptance from grown-up people than from little children. But the fact is, as has been repeatedly stated, and Dr. Vincent knows it too well, if the children were kept from the clutches of the priests for *one generation*, Christianity would be almost killed. Take a parallel from science. Astronomy, say, is not taught in the elementary schools to young children. Do they, however, therefore, when they reach manhood and study, question the truth of Kepler's laws or Newton's discoveries? Surely, then, if Christianity had a basis in fact, its position would

be as secure in the intellect of man as any of the sciences which man's intellect has made.

The last cause of doubt Dr. Vincent mentioned was an "impaired moral nature, where a man wants to do wrong and his conscience troubles him, because he thinks certain things to be true." Now we can mark a distinct advance here. Time was when *all* "doubt" sprung from an "impaired moral nature"; Dr. Vincent only regards it as *one* of the causes. The idea that a heretic is *ipso facto* a bad man is shrinking; now he is only *sometimes* a bad man. Perhaps the more decent of the pulpiteers are getting ashamed of the barefaced hypocrisy. As far as the idea itself goes, of course "impaired moral nature" was never the cause of any real "doubt." A man can no more believe that two and two make five, because he wants to pay a five-shilling debt with a couple of florins, than he can believe Christianity false simply because he wants to relieve another man of his head. Doubt is a matter of the intellect; it depends upon the nature of the evidence submitted to the judgment, and the reasonableness of the propositions which are put forward. The "impaired moral nature" is simply a bogie put forward by theology in the day of its power, to turn ignorant prejudice against the "doubters."

Dr. Vincent mentions, as a wonderful and extraordinary sample of Christ's power, the way he treated those who doubted. When some of these came to him, he "spoke unto them." And what did he say? This is the great wonder-striking answer, the awe-inspiring message: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Well, candidly, fairly, we utterly fail to see the blood-curdlingness in the thing. Perhaps it is the want of a "spiritual eye," but to us, we confess, it appears a peculiarly pointless or evasive reply. Suppose, to take an example from a scientific man, someone "who doubted" were to go up to Prof. Huxley and question him as to the validity of some of his conclusions, and Prof. Huxley were to deliver himself of some oracular answer in this strain: "I am Huxley, there is no Huxley but me"—and that, we fancy, is a fair imitation of the style of many of Christ's answers—would not rational people ask, What's the matter with Huxley? The fact is, this indiscriminate booming of Jesus as a model philosopher, statesman, moralist, preacher, and what not else, is nearly "played out." Mr. Stead has almost exhausted his "ideal citizen Christ," and even ordinary people are getting tired of this laughable attempt to saddle on a semi-mythical character every virtue and every strength that men can imagine.

The last great need of the times, according to the sermon under notice, is an "incarnation of Christ in every family." That may, of course, be very well in its way, but we might venture to hope that, if it took place, it would not be accompanied by such domestic derangements as the previous one is alleged to have caused; otherwise the prospect, especially for the young ladies, is anything but pleasant. Mrs. Josephine Butler and her friends had better see to it.

FREDERICK RYAN.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

WHERE'S YER MOR'L CODE?

IN the *Freethinker* a few weeks since, Mr. Ward gave a very complete answer to the cant query of the *al fresco* Christian Evidence manufacturers, "Where's yer 'Orspitals?" I purpose now to reply to another of their thoughtless questions, namely, "Where's yer mor'l code?"

This inquiry is often emphasised with a slap upon the Bible, opened at Exodus xx., and a triumphant expression as who should say, "There, you can't get over that—answer is impossible." They tell us—these gentlemen more remarkable for their fervor than their reasoning—that the Ten Commandments is, if not the only moral code in existence, at any rate the only one worth a rap; that all morality, even that of the heathen, is based primarily upon it, and that had it not been given to the world mankind would never have known right from wrong. You may quietly point out to them that the Mosaic laws had no existence until man had lived upon the earth for many hundreds, if not thousands, of years, and that even at this day half the world's inhabitants have never heard of Moses and his ten crude commands, and get on very well without them. These facts have no influence on the determined Christian Evidence man; they penetrate about as deeply as water poured on a duck's back. You quiet him to-day with such facts, and to-morrow, having slept off the effect, he trots out his old assertion with as bold a front as ever.

What is the substance of this boasted code of morals? Leaving out the commands relating to worship, and the sanctity of the Sabbath—which do not belong to the domain of morals, you have the elementary laws against theft, murder, false witness, and adultery. Covetousness is related to, and mostly precedes, theft; and honoring parents must depend upon their lives inspiring respect. Now, will any thoughtful Christian contend that had the words "Thou shalt not kill" never have been written, people would have submitted to being murdered? that had we never seen the command "Thou shalt not steal," no community would have protected itself by laws against theft? or that had the words "Thou shalt not commit adultery" not been penned, men would have allowed others to rob them of their wives' affections with impunity?

Further, these Ten Commandments is by no means a complete moral code. We find it necessary to supplement them with laws against slavery, polygamy, drunkenness, sexual crime other than adultery, cruelty, assault, incendiarism, and other wrong doing. If a written moral code were required, would it not be well that it should include a few commands, something to this intent:—

Thou shalt not hold property in human flesh and blood.

Thou shalt not grind down the worker to almost ceaseless labor and semi-starvation, that thou mayest get rich thereby.

Thou shalt grant equal opportunity to all of mental and physical advancement.

Thou shalt stand up for perfect equal freedom of thought and speech, and denounce all tyranny over the mind.

It is sheer nonsense to point to the Ten Commandments as the alpha and omega of guidance as to conduct. Even Christ found it necessary to add what he called "a new Commandment"—that of mutual love. As a fact this wonderful moral code, while condemning vices on the wrongfulness of which all civilised peoples are agreed, fails entirely to inculcate the subtler ethics which grow up with the advance of the race. If a Christian felt tempted to steal, he would not turn to Exodus to see if it were allowable. His experience would tell him it was wrong. If, again, he hesitated about performing some action in politics, or society, or the family, upon which his conscience did not speak out plainly, he would scan his precious Ten Commandments in vain for a solution of the difficulty. Where, then, is the unique quality possessed by these commands? If they are unique in anything, it is in their absolute inutility.

The truth is, no fixed code of morals can be established. Right and wrong are convertible terms. What is right in one country is wrong in another, and what would be wrong in one state of society or under one set of circumstances, would be right under other conditions. The standard by which all actions should be tested, is that of utility to society at large. Whatever is for the good, *i.e.* the happiness of mankind, is right, and whatever tends in the opposite direction is wrong.

A. GUEST.

VOLITION.

WHEN lions and tigers are free to be lambs ;
 When trees can dispense with a root,
 And genuine matters are free to be shams,
 Then Freedom of Will we shall moot.
 Volitions, like rack, or the leaves of the fall,
 Might motiveless flounder and fret
 When absence-of-mind is quite free to recall,
 And memory free to forget.

When men are indifferent to health and disease,
 And each can be somebody else,
 Agreeing with all that with him disagrees,
 Necessity, then, might be false.
 When notions are always and never the same,
 And quality ceases to be ;
 When growth is a myth and decay but a name,
 Volitions, perhaps, might be free.

When all are dejected at things that elate,
 Coincident with the reverse ;
 Identities love with a synchronous hate,
 And praise all the things they asperse ;
 When none has a character, temper, nor mind,
 Nor ought to suggest a desire,
 The Will might be free to be strongly inclined
 To things that aversion inspire.

When man's ev'ry thought is his first and his last,
 With nought antecedent thereto ;
 When each stands alone with no future nor past,
 Then Freedom of Will might be true ;
 But since he recalls and foresees an effect,
 And slowly, or quickly, doth pause
 To weigh and reject, or condemn, or select,
 The infinite past is the cause.

A will that is free is an absolute will
 That neither was made, nor began ;
 An infinite will that is *all*, or is *nil* ;
 The pulse of the cosmical plan.
 A boundless Creator can never suspend
 His power to inspire and maintain ;
 The work of his work is his work to the end,
 With never a loss nor a gain.

When mortals are free to believe what they please,
 And woo all the things that they shun,
 The planets and bits of their bridles* will seize,
 And bolt right away with the sun !
 Till then, let us motives suggest to each mind,
 All tending to all that is best,
 That all might in goodness their happiness find,
 And each might in blessing be blessed.

G. L. MACKENZIE

QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE ULSTER BRANCH.

The usual weekly meetings of the Branch were held every Sunday evening. For some years past we have charged one penny for admission to our meetings, ladies admitted free, and have found it work well, financially and otherwise ; being better than a collection and preventing a rowdy element growing, which threatened once to wreck the meetings. The average attendance for past quarter, exclusive of ladies, was sixty-one ; same quarter last year was only fifty-eight. At the thirteen meetings eleven original papers and addresses were given—ten by members of the Branch and one by a Christian friend in opposition. Eight subjects were theological and three were social. On two occasions the debates were so lively and interesting that they were adjourned to the following Sundays to allow those who were anxious to speak to take part in them. The sale of literature each Sunday averaged 9s., as compared with 8s. 3d. in same quarter last year. A collection on behalf of the Oldham Cotton Operatives on strike realised £1. The balance to Cr. in treasurer's hands at end of quarter was £5 4s. 10d.—W. M. KNOX, sec.

* The *radius-vector*, an imaginary line from the sun to a planet that sweeps over equal areas in equal times (known as Kepler's 2nd Law), and that might be called the "bridle," by which the sun guides a planet round its orbit.

ACID DROPS.

Parson Garland, rector of Binstead, has discovered the cause of the long drought in England. God has sent it because we have put Mr. Gladstone in power. We don't dispute parson Garland's theory ; we only ask him to explain why the drought has been extended to France and Germany. Couldn't the Lord measure it out a little more accurately ?

Parsons are gifted with astonishing ingenuity. Here is the Rev. M. D. Shutter, for instance, who has actually written a seven-and-sixpenny book on the *Wit and Humor of the Bible*, which is appropriately published by Gay and Bird. Jesus Christ, he seems to think, is the most humorous character in the Bible. Perhaps so ; it depends on how you take him. Still, the humor of J. C. is not very obvious ; it is rather "subtle." We read that "Jesus wept," but never that "Jesus laughed." Perhaps he kept his jokes for the twelve around the supper table, though there isn't much jocularity about the only supper that is recorded.

When a certain gentleman was writing the Natural History of Ireland he gave a short chapter to snakes. It read thus—"Snakes—None." We should say that as short a chapter would be required for the *Wit and Humor of the Bible*.

Miss Marianne Farningham, the poetess of the *Christian World*, has burst into verse over the sinking of the "Victoria." Of the hundreds of poor fellows who were drowned she says that

God spoke his pity
 For their requiem.

We should say that his pity would have been better shown by deeds ; instead of *speaking* it, he might have got them out of the water, to the great advantage of their mothers, sisters, sweethearts and wives. Miss Farningham seems to think it was a sort of mercy to let them drown ; it saved them all the troubles of old age.

God gave them early rest
 For heritage.

According to this logic, Miss Farningham should beseech God to shorten her life. We hardly think she will, though, while the *Christian World* pays for copy.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is angry because the American secular press was unanimous in favor of opening the World's Fair on Sundays. We, on the contrary, are very glad ; and, as the Fair is open on Sundays, we can afford to smile at our contemporary's wrath.

This same pious contemporary, by the way, remarks that "This is not yet a Christian country." No, and it is too late to hope it *ever will be*. Christianity will never again enjoy its old opportunities. Having failed in so many hundreds of years, it is lost for ever.

Hugh Price Hughes is singing the praises of open-air preaching. He draws a lesson from the success of the Social Democratic Federation. But the Secularists were long before them in street propaganda, and very likely Mr. Hughes is aware of the fact, only he does not like to mention it. Methodists must not be led to suppose that there are any Secularists knocking about, except the occasional ones who are "converted" by Mr. Hughes.

The Anti-Protestant League of France have the courage of their opinions, and are going to have a banquet on August 24 to celebrate the 321st anniversary of the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, an event which they describe as "a terrible but useful execution *bien Française*."

In Michigan they have the good sense to propose a law for the taxation of all church property. Of course the men of God are up in arms at this attack on religious privilege. They forget that J. C. was so scrupulous in paying taxes, that he thought Cæsar's effigy on a coin was a sufficient reason for handing it over ; and that on another occasion, being short of cash in his own pocket, he got Peter to put his fingers in a fish's mouth and pull out a coin, in order that the taxes should be promptly met.

We have before us the Sixth Annual Report of the United Committee for the Prevention of the Demoralisation of Native Races by the Liquor Traffic. The need for such a society is

a striking comment on Christian methods of evangelising the heathen. It appears from the report that Christian firms ship to the heathen immense quantities of cheap spirits, which are little better than poison.

Labouchere gives another exposure in *Truth* of John James Jones, the Director of the London Samaritan Society, whose reverend Council have published an exoneration, but will not prosecute Labby for libel because legal proceedings are inconsistent "with the principles of the Christian religion to which we adhere."

This precious document was signed by the solicitor who had threatened Labby with an action, as well as by the men of God whom he asks if they have ever preached against the sin of going to law. As for Jones, the Director, whose honesty is impugned, it is pointed out that he had a woman taken up and charged with theft who picked up a whip one of his children had dropped, and when she sued him at law in return, fought the case through with disastrous results to his purse and character. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Adolphe Rothenburg, alias Cresskey, alias Pussack, alias Filney, or whatever his name may be, is one of the Hebrew gentlemen who make their living by imposing on Christian congregations as an inquirer, and who will be baptised as often as you please, for a consideration. He was baptised at the Presbyterian Mission, Whitechapel-road, London, and was dipped again recently amid much éclat at St. Andrew's, Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton, and has probably gone through the same ceremony at Nottingham, where he is well-known both to the clergy and the police, and elsewhere. He is the author of a tract against the Freethinkers, as well as of certain forged letters of recommendation. He has been consigned to Stafford Gaol for three months, where he will have an opportunity of choosing his own faith.

Another sanctimonious swindler, named Noah Edwards, has been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment at Cheshire Quarter Sessions for obtaining various sums by false pretences. He had both the Church Army and the Salvation Army uniforms for use as occasion required. He conducted a mission at Dronfield, Derbyshire, but was arrested at Alrincham. His books showed he had netted a considerable sum by collections.

The French Catholic church of St. Anne at Kankakee, Illinois, was struck by lightning and burnt down. It was a famous seat of miraculous cures. Its shrine, the clergy aver, held part of the body of St. Anne, who occupied the responsible position of being God's grandmother.

A fashionably dressed woman entered the cathedral at Dubuque, Iowa, with the purpose of killing Bishop Hennessy at the behest of two angels. She was seized while offering the prayer preparatory to the sacrifice.

A young woman was found wandering near Elizabeth, New Jersey, saying she was in heaven. She is crazy on religion.

Mohammedan pilgrimages are responsible for the spread of much disease. At Mecca recently as many as 650 deaths from cholera occurred in one day. The pilgrims are noted as men of prayer.

More disturbances are reported from India, arising from the practice of cow-killing, which is part of Mohammedan religious custom at certain festivals, while it is in deadly opposition to the religion of the Hindus. At Azimgurh the police had to fire on the religious rioters. Many are killed, and the hospitals and dispensaries are full of the wounded. Troops have been sent for, and all English ladies and children sent away.

The Rev. Frank Ballard has been letting off a little indignation at "England's Foreign Devilry" at the Wesleyan Chapel, Norfolk-road, Brighton. He said the name of England, as a Christian country, stank in the nostrils of those to whom as "heathen" we sent out our missionaries. An experienced Christian worker in China had recently written that he never heard a missionary address a Chinese audience without being met with the answering taunt, "Who brings the opium?" Nor was it long since in such an audience an eager listener cried out with indigna-

tion, "I hate Jesus; I won't hear another word. You foreign devils bring opium in one hand and Jesus in the other!" Unfortunately the quickest way into the heart of the matter was what happened at the recent Decennial Conference of missionaries at Bombay, where not only were the questions as to drink and opium ruled out of consideration, but when a resolution was brought forward condemnatory of the "practical official sanction of impurity" by British officials in India, out of some six hundred missionaries present only 102 voted for it, 105 being against it, and 400 neutral.

The Rev. Charles Milner, of Sunnyside-road, Ealing, has been summoned on a bastardy order by Edith Chown, a girl who stayed with his housekeeper. He is said to have offered £150 for a letter saying he was innocent.

Clergy-cowed Arran possesses, we are glad to say, one sturdy boatman who rejoices in the name of Cossimo Latona. The Rev. J. K. Cameron, of Brodick, sent him a sneaking Christian letter, saying how sorry he was to hear it reported that he was out in a boat on the Sabbath, "not only because of the violation of the Sabbath law involved in it, but also because it would necessitate our taking measures to put it down, and the people would rise very much in rebellion against you."

The satellites of the man of God followed up this impertinent letter by threatening that unless Latona conformed, the clergyman would have him removed from the island even if he appealed to the Duke of Hamilton, who owns the whole of Arran. Cossimo Latona replied to the clergyman that his threat "shows to what extremes your clerical intolerance and bigotry would go providing you had the power. Life (he says) would become insufferable were we to submit to be dictated to and domineered over by men of your narrow, bigoted, and fanatical tendencies." To show his threats have no terror he sends the correspondence to the papers. Bravo, Cossimo Latona, boatman!

The *Dublin Figaro* says that the Rev. Dr. Cotton, who received six months' imprisonment for cruelty to children at the Carrogh homes, is still carrying on the business, and seeking subscriptions for the homes without, any reproof from his clerical brethren.

At St. Mary Woolnooth, Lombard-street, seats were erected to view the Royal Wedding, and the churchwarden requested a publican in King Edward-street to apply for a license, which was of course granted. Good old Church of England! We don't believe there is a Dissenting chapel in the whole country that would play so low down.

The Church schools last year exceeded their income by about £100 000. They are always appealing for money, and although they offer every inducement to the children in the way of holidays and prizes, they cannot compete with the Board schools in the matter of education. It stands in the nature of things that where the least attention is paid to religion, secular education has the best chance.

At present the Church schools boast of being in the majority, having in 1892, 1,716,877 to 1,570,394 in Board schools, 252,038 in British schools, 201,304 in Roman Catholic schools, and 130,158 in Wesleyan schools. As, however, 850 Church schools have already had to be given up on account of inefficiency, it probably will not be long before it steps down from its leading position. Meanwhile the clergy are everywhere resisting the introduction of Board schools by alarmist reports of expense to the ratepayers.

The program for the October Church Congress at Birmingham, has already been drawn up. A leading feature will be the necessity for more bishops, and especially to resuscitate the abortive scheme of one for Birmingham. The financial condition of the clergy will also receive much attention, and Sir G. Stokes has been got to give a discourse on "Science and Faith."

Bishop Merrill, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says all of his sect will boycott the World's Fair for opening on Sunday, and that, he hopes, will make it a financial failure. The Rev. W. C. Steele, another American Methodist, appeals "to the Supreme Being to deliver Chicago from the reign

of Satan, and close the Fair on the Sabbath Day." The Supreme Being, like Congress however, declines to interfere.

At Tula, in Russia, they have been returning thanks for rain in answer to prayer; so it is evident God cares more for Russian prayers than he does for English ones. It was in this same district that on the occasion of the opening of the first railway a numerous party of peasants, headed by the village priest, cross-bearer, and thurifer, placed themselves on the line in front of the approaching pioneer train. If, they said, this monster is an invention of the Devil, its progress will be arrested; if not, it must pass over our bodies. Fortunately the conductors of the train were enabled to bring it to a standstill just in time. It was only under special safeguards adopted by the railway officials that the trains proceeded unchecked by such popular manifestations, until the superstition was finally dispelled.

According to a Reuter telegram from Halifax (N.S.), the maritime provinces are seriously affected by the prolonged drought, and prayers are being offered up in the churches for rain. "Unless it comes soon"—well, what then? Will the clergy be cashiered? Will good old Providence be superannuated? Oh, no. Merely this—"enormous losses will be incurred." The sky-pilot business will go as before, the Nova Scotians not being as sensible as the Chinese, who, when their gods obstinately refuse to answer prayers, bring them out and give them a public whipping.

The Sabbatarians of Aberdeen have been terribly shocked, and up to the time of our going to press it is not reported that they have recovered. On a recent Sunday the band of the first V. B. Gordon Highlanders played the "Hielan' Laddie" and other profane tunes on the road to church. "Stands Scotland where it did?" is now answered in the negative. The solemn glory of Caledonia is departing, and the Scotchmen actually laugh—nay, sing ungodly tunes—on the blessed Sabbath. It's awfu', mon!

The good young men of the Croydon Y.M.C.A. have been displaying their piety and poetry by circulating a leaflet containing the following lines:

The theatre is a gate of hell;
The actors consider well—
The audience! Who are they,
The half of those who go to see the play?
Abandoned women of the town,
Their partners, men of bad renown;
The other half are simple gaping fools,
The Devil's victims and his fools.

Sweet Jesus called his opponents fools, vipers, and children of hell. With so striking an example, what better specimens of Christian charity can be expected than the foregoing?

Truth declares that the Armenians are not ill-treated because they are Christians, and that in no country is the right of any sect to practise its religion more fully recognised than in Turkey, so far as the Government is concerned.

Canon Fleming is a man with many irons in the fire. He is canon residentiary of York (£1,000 a year and residence), vicar of St. Michael's, Chester-square, Scarborough (£1,500 a year and residence), chaplain to the Prince of Wales, editor of the *Religious Review of Reviews*, and director of a patent medicine company he booms in his journal. Apparently he could give a tip to Jesus Christ as to how to serve God and Mammon.

The debate on Theosophy between Mrs. Besant and Mrs. Macdonald drew a good audience to St. James's Hall. It also furnished the *Pall Mall Gazette* with the occasion for a highly amusing descriptive report. Ladies were in the majority, and the men present were of the "nice" description. Mrs. Besant was at all times eloquent and at all times mystical. There was no getting near the wonderful Mahatmas; in other words, the big trick is still in the bottom of the bag.

Our own opinion is that the infallible authority of Helena Blavatsky will not wear much longer, and in a few years at the outside the Mahatmas will not have a dozen believers. What will Mrs. Besant do then? It has been frequently said that she will become a Roman Catholic. But the Romish Church only offers women suffering and silence.

"General" Booth has to pay £600 and costs to Messrs. Fawcner and Rogers for disputed occupancy of premises in Bridge-street, Blackfriars.

The mysteries of Salvation Army finance are too deep for the London *Echo*. Some time ago the "General" declared that there would have to be a great reduction in expenditure unless more money were subscribed; but, in a case just heard before Mr. Justice Matthew, it transpired that the "Army," besides its other expensive buildings, had rented a great place opposite Ludgate-hill station at £900 a year. The *Echo* says that the "Army" leaders should explain what they mean by self-denial; it seems that "nothing will satisfy them but piles of buildings in some of the most expensive streets in the City."

"Are there errors in the Bible?" asked the Rev. S. D. Scammell in a sermon at Chatham. He admitted that the Bible as we have it in English is not faultless, but it would be if we had got the original as it was written—which, as the Americans say, is a very large order. Mr. W. B. Thompson, the secretary of the Chatham N.S.S. Branch, writes a spirited reply to Mr. Scammell in the local *Observer*. Mr. Scammell's rejoinder is looked forward to with interest, but perhaps he will refuse to be drawn. It is so much easier to preach than to discuss.

The Welsh Churchmen have a song against Disestablishment to the tune of "Men of Harlech," but there is a great difference between fighting for home and liberty and fighting for the loaves and fishes of privilege. "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose," and parsons can give a good name to a bad cause.

Other places besides Oberammergau have found they can make a good thing out of a dramatic performance of the Christian mystery. Thousands have crowded to Hôritz, in Bohemia, to witness the Passion Plays there. The success is likely to lead to an extension of these representations, and as many village schoolmasters will want to impersonate their Lord and Savior as now aspire to play Hamlet.

It is not an utterly incredible thesis that much of the Christian legend may have developed from these mystery plays, which go back to the time of the Eleusinian mysteries. A dramatic representation of the birth of the sun-god and of its accompaniment by the twelve months, may conceivably have formed the nucleus of the Christian story.

The Carpenters' Company has sent a handsome present to Princess May; it is a jewel with the arms of the Company worked in brilliants, and the words "Honor God." This is the rankest blasphemy we have heard of for a long time. Is it honoring God to send costly presents to a princess, while thousands of "God's children," or at least men's brothers and sisters, are in want of daily bread? If this is honoring God, the sooner we all serve the Devil the better. But the truth is, that religion was never anything else than the cheap defence of the privileged classes. It keeps the people *under* more efficaciously than a half a million soldiers.

Mr. Keir Hardie spoke words of hard truth at an open-air demonstration last Sunday. He said that £100,000 was asked for to relieve the distress of the most unfortunate of the Liberator victims, who were very largely swindled in the name of religion; but the money could not be raised, notwithstanding the most pressing appeals; yet when presents were solicited for Princess May, hundreds of thousands of pounds were raised with the greatest ease. Such is "Christian charity" after the lapse of nearly two thousand years.

Was it not Thomas Hood, the poet of "The Bridge of Sighs," who sang—

Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun.

We should rather complain that it is not rare enough. There is far too much of it. What the world wants is *True Charity*. But, first of all, it wants *justice*, which is inconsistent with the maintenance of certain persons in disgraceful luxury at the expense of millions of others, a great proportion of whom are unacquainted with the common comforts of life.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, July 9, Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham—11, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, its Philosophy and Lessons"; 3, "Mrs. Besant on Death and After"; at 7, "The Book of God."

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—July 9, Hall of Science, London; 16, Birmingham; 23, 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.
- G. CHAMBERLAIN.**—To what does your letter refer?
- R. KILLICK.**—Thanks for cutting. We wish you and Mrs. K. a good time at Brussels.
- W. M. KNOX.**—The object of the resolution passed at the Conference was designed precisely to do what you say is so desirable.—Branches will doubtless take notice of the Ulster Branch's wish to know what English Free Libraries are open on Sundays. If they send us the information we will place the facts at the disposal of all—the Ulster Branch included.
- C. F.**—Mr. Forder may be able to supply you with a copy of the debate between Charles Bradlaugh and G. J. Holyoake, in which you will find their respective positions stated in relation to Secularism. The debate took place at the Hall of Science in 1870.
- W. B. THOMPSON.**—See "Acid Drops."
- G. W. BLYTHE.**—We have not space, at any rate at present, for a discussion of the Opium Traffic. As a general principle, we are in favor of individual liberty. Government interference, in morals as distinct from crime, very seldom improves morality. So far we heartily agree with you. At home, for instance, that man is a humbug, who, with a well-stocked wine-cellar in his own house, dictates to his poorer fellow citizens when and how they shall purchase a glass of beer.
- H. BLAKEY.**—You seem to have had a lively twenty years' experience of Methodism. There is as much cant in those circles now as there was when Sidney Smith wrote his famous essay.
- T. BROCKHILL.**—Our speakers have their own work to do, and cannot follow Mr. Dunn about. His opinion that Free-thinkers *dare* not meet him is the usual egotism of Christian Evidence lecturers. Mr. George Standing had an evening's discussion with him some months ago.
- J. BARNES.**—(1) Yes, we believe that £25 was paid over to the Manchester Infirmary as the proceeds of a local debate between Mr. Sam Standing and the Black Champion. (2) Glad to hear you enjoy reading the *Freethinker*, particularly the Special Numbers.
- W. E. W.**—We also are *loyal*, but to our *country*, not to a *family*, which has always been a thirsty leech on John Bull's neck. We are simply disgusted at the cadging that has been going on for two young people who have all, and more than, they want already, while thousands of honest men are out of work, and myriads of women's and children's faces are pinched by want. We have just as much regard for a ragged child in the gutter as we have for any prince or princess. This may not be *loyal*, in the cant sense of the word, but we believe it is good sound humanity.
- W. DIACK.**—Next week.
- A. SCOPES**, 14 Queen-street, Ipswich, secretary of the N.S.S. Branch, is arranging for dinner and tea at a cheap rate for visitors on the occasion of Mrs. Besant's lectures on July 16. Intending visitors should communicate with him at once.
- T. MAY** is not the *secretary* of the Tottenham Branch, but corresponding member. Mr. Sutcliffe still acts as secretary.
- A. B. MOSS.**—Sorry to hear the orthodox rowdies disturbed you at Camberwell, but glad to hear they were checked by the police.
- R. F. FOX.**—Distant announcements cannot go in the Lecture List.
- R. S. JOHNSON.**—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."
- E. S.**—Mr. Forder has some copies left of Colonel Ingersoll's *The Christian Religion*. It will be reprinted when necessary. You are quite right in calling it "splendid."
- E. NORWOOD.**—Mr. Foote hopes to visit Liverpool again shortly. We don't see the paper you mention. What is the matter referred to?
- W. S. RALPH**, newsagent, 180 Meeting House-lane, Peckham, reports an increased sale of the *Freethinker*. He has been in the habit of selling about six copies; last week he sold twelve copies of the Special Number, which "attracted the attention of numbers." This correspondent adds—"I used to like the old style of illustrations, and still treasure them, but we are not all out-and-out Freethinkers, and you have adopted a very wise plan of attacking Christianity by a more indirect method, much more powerful for good."
- H. P. CHANTER.**—Sorry to hear the Portsmouth friends were prevented from journeying to Brookwood by the refusal of the railway company to take them at a reasonable rate.

J. T. IVES.—We recollect now that the verses appeared in our pages some years ago.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We were not able to answer your question as to what Free Libraries admit the *Freethinker* to their reading-rooms.

J. G. DOBSON.—Pleased to learn that Mr. Watts gave you "two splendid lectures" at Huddersfield. The refusal of the Longwood Mechanics' Hall in the afternoon is not surprising. It is not the only hall which has bigoted provisions in its trust deeds.

T. J. BARTLETT.—We cannot make out the *name* in the obituary notice you send us.

J. HOOPER.—We shall expect to hear again.

F. GELL.—No room this week.

R. DAVIES.—The wholesale agent shall be spoken to.

C. HEATON.—Bellamy's book is interesting in its way, but we do not consider it by any means a great piece of work. His ideal seems to us rather tame.

BENEFOLLENT FUND.—W. C. (Dorking), £1 1s.

W. O.—The sectarianism, in this case, is inevitable.

CHICAGO DELEGATION FUND.—W. Westwell, 10s. 6d.; G. Ward, £1; J. Garven, 2s. 6d.; G. Harlow, 10s.; Brady and Sons, £1; O. Heaton, 2s. 6d.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—T. Trollope, 1s.; W. C. (Dorking), 1s. 1d.

J. O.—The author of *Supernatural Religion* holds the gospels were not written before the second half of the second century. Dr. S. Davidson dates Matthew about 105 A.D., Mark 120, Luke 110, and John 150. Some place Mark earlier. Mr. Wheeler will give a list of these "dates" shortly.

J. KENNEDY.—We must agree to differ now and then. There are not two men exactly alike on this planet, and, if there were, it would be one too many.

THE BRISTOL BRANCH CRICKET CLUB is to meet at Mr. Parker's, Bridge-street, on Saturday (July 8) at 8 p.m.

J. BLACKER.—We have not time to hunt through our file for the paragraph you recollect.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—The hon. treasurer (R. O. Smith) acknowledges:—Collected by Mr. PACK in Hyde Park 2s. 6d., in Regent's Park 3s.

HALL OF SCIENCE REBUILDING FUND.—Collected at Mr. Foote's lecture on Sunday 8s. 8d.

W. C. KEBLE.—Thanks for cutting. We are not surprised at the bigots tearing down the Cartoon.

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 Unserer Jugend—Ironclad Age—Watts's Literary Guide—Weekly Bulletin—Dublin Figaro—Reading Observer—South Shields Free Press—Brighton Gazette—Brighton Examiner and Post—Church Reformer—Sirilaka Situmina—Portsmouth Evening News—Castleford Gazette.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. 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. 10d.

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.

MR. GEORGE ANDERSON has handed me his cheque for £300. It only wants his signature, which he will add with the greatest of pleasure if the number of shares in the Hall of Science scheme is made up to 3,000 by the end of July. Applications for shares are coming in daily, and I am far from complaining; but they will have to come in faster, if we are to secure Mr. Anderson's £300. I appeal to all Freethinkers who read this journal to *do their level best during July*. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Readers should apply at once to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., for share application forms.

G. W. FOOTE.

SHILLING MONTH.

THE National Secular Society's Executive has accepted my offer to appeal to my readers again as I did in January. "Shilling Week" was then fairly successful. Many subscribers said it was a bad time of the year, others said that "Shilling Week" should come every six months. The present appeal will therefore meet both views.

This seems to be the only way to reach the great multitude of Freethinkers, scattered all over the kingdom; and those who gave a shilling in January should by this time be in a position to give another. And their kind assistance is needed in many ways. The Society has only a small balance in hand at present, and a good deal of money is wanted for the open-air propaganda, by which the Gospel of Free-thought is carried to thousands of people who otherwise never hear it. In August we wish to send two or three of our London men on lecturing tours in the North, West, and South of England.

Every subscription should be sent *to me direct*, and it will be acknowledged as before. Thousands can easily afford to send a shilling; some can easily afford to send more. I do not ask for *less* than a shilling. That is the minimum. But, if anyone sends me ten shillings, or ten pounds, it will by no means be "declined with thanks."

On the previous occasion I divided the Fund as follows:—one-third for the *Freethinker*, and two-thirds for the National Secular Society. On this occasion I shall take nothing for the *Freethinker*, as the Special Number is gradually bringing me a little financial relief. All I receive will be divided in this way:—two-thirds will go to the N.S.S., and one-third to the Chicago Delegation Fund. Those who wish their subscriptions to be divided in any other proportion, or to go wholly to the one fund or the other, should say so, and their wish will be respected.

Heaps of money have been raised for presents to two young people who do not want them. Very few Freethinkers, I imagine, have subscribed in *that* direction. But they should subscribe in *some* direction, and here is a good opportunity. They can subscribe for Princess Liberty and Prince Progress.

A generous response to this appeal will involve me in a good deal of labor. But that is one of the perquisites of my office, which is an unpaid one, and a considerable tax on my time, attention, and energy, to say nothing of out-of-pocket expenses. I will undertake the labor, and, as precept is stronger when backed by example, I will, be the first subscriber. I put myself down for ten shillings. Let every other Freethinker give in proportion to his means (mine are limited enough), and I shall have a nice sum at the finish for "the good old cause."

The fund will be kept open till the end of July, and acknowledgments will be made week by week.

G. W. FOOTE.

According to a writer on "Board School Religion" in the *Christian World*, heresy is very widespread among the teachers. A head teacher was asked, "No doubt you know many who can hardly be said to have any religious belief at all?" And the answer was: "Oh, dear, yes; a great many. I should think that out of the seven or eight thousand Board teachers, if they were all to speak out honestly, a good third of them would be found to have no belief at all in the authority of the Bible."

SUGAR PLUMS.

Our last week's Special Number sold better than any other we have yet issued. We printed an extra quantity, and only a few copies were left on Monday.

Next Monday (July 10), as announced, will occur the event of the season in Freethought circles. We refer to the publication of our SUMMER NUMBER. It will contain a large quantity of racy reading matter; several Cartoons by our regular artist, Mr. Calvert; some other sketches as well; a magnificent full-length portrait of Colonel Ingersoll, superior to anything hitherto seen in England; and other splendid portraits of Professor Huxley, Professor Tyndall, Professor Buchner, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, Mr. John Morley, and Erasmus, accompanied by biographical notices. Fine toned paper is used, much thicker than that of our Special Numbers, and the thirty-two pages will be stitched in a handsome colored wrapper.

We are obliged to charge *sixpence* for our SUMMER NUMBER. No trouble, and no expense, have been spared to make it in every way a first-class production. Our readers, we believe, will admit that it beats the record in Freethought publishing. A very considerable sale will be needed to bring back the money we have invested in it. Enough copies are being printed to allow us a moderate profit when the whole edition is sold. That it will be sold we have no doubt; the magnificent portrait of Colonel Ingersoll is enough in itself to secure a purchaser in every one of our regular subscribers.

A larger audience than was expected in such tropical weather was present at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Mrs. Besant on Death and After." The lecture was evidently much appreciated, and the applause at the finish was very enthusiastic.

Amongst Mr. Foote's auditors on Sunday evening, as Mr. James Anderson informs us, was a veteran Freethinker born in 1800, and therefore a year older than the century. He came down from Upton Park to see, as he pathetically said, some of the old faces for the last time. On being told that Mr. Foote was to lecture, he said he would stay, as he was "fond of hearing Mr. Foote." This he did, and finally went home "highly delighted" with the lecture.

Mr. Foote lectures three times to-day (July 9) at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham. Local friends, who have petition sheets for the admission of this journal to the Free Libraries, are requested to bring them to the hall during the day.

Had it not been for the hitch in the arrangements, and the late issue of tickets, a much larger number of N.S.S. members and friends would have journeyed to Brookwood on Sunday. As it was the demonstrators numbered nearly three hundred, and they included the cream of the London workers in the Secular movement. Charles Bradlaugh would have recognised nearly all of them. They were, in fact, his Old Guard—men and women who had stood near him in many a hard fight. *They* have not forgotten Charles Bradlaugh, and they feel that they honor him most by carrying on the work of Freethought, which they are doing and will continue to do.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts had a hearty reception at his first visit to Huddersfield since his return from Canada. The friends mustered in good force in the morning, but the excessive heat and a heavy thunderstorm interfered with the evening meeting. Mr. Watts should have lectured at Longwood in the afternoon, but through some misunderstanding the hall could not be had. This Sunday evening (July 9) Mr. Watts lectures at the Hall of Science, London.

Mr. R. Chapman gives a lively description of the N.E. Secular Federation's picnic at Holywell Dane under the heading of "Sunday Recreation," in the South Shields *Free Press*. It should incite many to "go and do likewise."

The West London Branch have made arrangements for an excursion by brakes to Burnham Beeches on Sunday, July 16. The brakes will leave the Railway Arches, Goldhawk-road, Shepherd's-bush, at 9 a.m. Fare for the double journey—Adults, 3s.; children under twelve, 2s. As the number of

tickets is limited, those friends who are desirous of obtaining them should make early application to the secretary, Mr. F. Todd, 59 Tunis-road, Shepherd's-bush, W.

The Battersea Branch held its quarterly meeting last Sunday evening, a fair number of members were present. The balance-sheet showed income to be £16 5s. 5d. and expenditure £15 16s. 8d., leaving 8s. 9d. in hand. Profit on sale of literature for the quarter was £1 0s. 1½d. The treasurer and secretary were re-elected; Mr. J. Fisher was elected chairman, and Messrs. Wilkes and Potter vice-chairmen. Mrs. Fisher was voted to the London Secular Federation, and Mr. Potter member of the Executive. Five new members joined during quarter. This Branch will hold a meeting on Clapham Common, on Monday evening, July 17, when Mr. C. James will lecture. Friends are earnestly invited to attend to keep order, as it is comparatively new ground.

The Camberwell Branch holds its quarterly tea and meeting to-day (July 9). Members of other Branches will be admitted on production of their tickets. Friends can purchase tickets from members up to Saturday.

Gordon Lawrence, of the Society of All Souls, has sent a letter to Colonel Ingersoll, telling him that his society wishes him to become their leader, and that they will pray for his conversion to that end. He and some others have been on their marrow-bones for some time past before the door of the Colonel's office. Ingersoll is, however, at his summer home at Dobbs' Ferry. He says he has about a thousand letters annually from as many fervid religionists, which all go into the waste-basket. He is rather tickled at the idea of being converted to become the leader of a new sect, and says he hopes Lawrence will not be discouraged by the fact that he is serenading an empty house with prayer.

The *Scientific American* (May 27) has a fine portrait of Galileo from Substernmann's picture in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. It gives a graphic sketch of his life and struggles with the theologians.

Secular Thought is one of our most welcome exchanges. It was established by Mr. Charles Watts, and has of late been conducted by Mr. J. Spencer Ellis. The latest number to hand contains a reprint of one of Mr. Foote's *Freethinker* articles. Captain Adams continues his interesting summary of the Evidences of Evolution.

In the prison statistics of seventeen States, collated for the special purpose of examining the oft-repeated allegation that education increases rather than diminishes crime, United States Commissioner Harris proves that the illiterate criminals are eight times as many, proportionately, as the educated criminals.

The summer number of the *Clarion* is, of course, well written and excellently illustrated. The lovely Christian smile on the face of the Bishop of Chisboro is worth all the money. Among other special features appears a portrait of "Sergeant Nunquam" in his regimentals. We fear we have looked over the number carelessly, for we have not yet discovered what the Bounder's "contraptions" are. But his flippant Chronicle is to be continued in the Christmas number, so we live on in hope.

For some weeks past the *Freethinker* has been laid on the table of the Free Library at Northampton, but it attracted the notice of a Roman Catholic member of the Committee, Mr. J. Shepherd, who managed to procure its exclusion. Some of the local Freethinkers have protested against this act of bigotry, and brought the matter before the Radical Association. They will not be satisfied until the *Freethinker* is restored to its place on the Library table.

The Liverpool Branch goes on excursion to Eastham to-day (July 9), assembling at the Landing Stage at 2 45 for the 3 o'clock boat. A knife-and-fork tea, at 1s. 6d. per head, will be provided for those who care to partake. Friends from Birkenhead, Chester, Garston, etc., will be welcome to join the party.

Miss Vance says the Benevolent Committee desire us to appeal for further funds. The balance in hand is very small at present,

and there are some deserving cases to be relieved. We are not likely to appeal for this fund in vain. Those will give best who give promptly. Parcels of cast-off clothing and boots will also be gladly received and distributed. Send them to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

The Cheap Propagandist pamphlets advertised in the *Freethinker* are very suitable for general distribution, especially at open-air meetings. The one by Mr. Foote on *The Book of God* contains a great deal of information, and is written in a thoroughly popular style. We commend it to the attention of those who are in the habit of circulating Freethought literature. These pamphlets are issued at the low price of one halfpenny.

Will Christ Save Us? is the title of a new pamphlet by Mr. Foote, which will be published directly after our Summer Number. Mr. Foote is also completing his *Bible Romances*, the concluding numbers of which will be published in July and August. The numbers will then be bound in a volume like *Bible Heroes*.

VISIT TO MR. BRADLAUGH'S GRAVE.

ABOUT 250 of the London members of the N.S.S. went by the excursion train to Brookwood, where they were joined by a few others from various parts. Some soldiers came over from Aldershot, two friends came from Portsmouth, others came on bicycles, and one person walked sixteen miles in the sweltering sun. It would be invidious to select names of those present, but they comprised many of what the President called the Old Guard, who had worked with Mr. Bradlaugh in his severest struggles, and who are still carrying on the work. A goodly number of ladies were among the party. Before returning, brief but effective addresses were delivered on the waste land outside the station by Mr. Forder, Mr. Standring, Mr. Rowney, and Mr. Foote, who all spoke of Mr. Bradlaugh's struggles, his love for Freethought, and the impulse to earnest endeavor which arose from having come in contact with such a man, and urged that in honor to his memory each should resolve to do his utmost to carry on his work.

AT BRADLAUGH'S GRAVE.

THE summer sun shines o'er the hero's tomb,
The day is bright, yet hearts are full of gloom;
For where is now the valiant brain and pen,
The trumpet tongue that stirred the hearts of men,
The courage firm and true, the soldier's eye,
The will determined or to do or die?
The image-breaker shattered by stern fate,
With hand just laid upon the helm of state.
Ready to steer the ship, Republican
To freedom and fraternity of man.—
Oh ye who loved him, since his task is done
Hold firm, strike hard, and let his work go on.

Brookwood, July 2.

J. M. W.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE monthly Executive meeting was held at the Hall of Science on Thursday, June 29, the President in the chair. Present—Messrs. V. Roger, R. O. Smith, G. Standring, E. Truelove, J. M. Wheeler, C. J. Hunt, J. E. Brumage, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, E. Bater, G. J. Warren, J. Fisher, J. Potter, T. Gorniot, G. Ward, W. Trew, and C. W. Martin; Mrs. Thornton Smith, and Miss E. M. Vance, secretary.

Minutes of previous Organisation Committee's meetings read and confirmed.

The first business before the new Council was the appointment of the various committees, and the following members were elected:

ORGANISATION COMMITTEE.—Messrs. R. O. Smith, G. Standring, G. J. Warren, J. E. Brumage, G. Ward, and T. Gorniot.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—The previous committee, consisting of Messrs. G. Burton, S. Hartmann, C. J. Hunt, V. Roger,

G. J. Warren, and Mrs. Thornton Smith, were proposed *en bloc*, and re-elected, with the addition of Miss Robins and Mrs. Standing.

Messrs. J. M. Wheeler, J. Samson, and V. Roger were re-appointed to the Committee for Interviewing Candidates for Special Diplomas; and Mr. J. Fisher was elected to examine and report monthly on the financial statements.

The resolutions remitted by the Conference to the Executive were then dealt with, and Messrs. J. Potter, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, J. M. Wheeler, and T. Gorniot were appointed as a sub-committee for the purpose of drawing up a detailed statement of the Society's practical objects in the political and social field.

In accordance with the resolution of the Conference, it was decided "That a banking account be opened in the name of the Society, and all cheques be signed by the President and Mr. G. Standing.

On the question of finances, the President kindly offered to make an appeal through the columns of the *Freethinker* for a "Shilling Month." The offer was accepted, and it was finally proposed by Mr. C. J. Hunt, seconded by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, "That two-thirds of the sum raised be placed to the credit of the N.S.S. and the remaining one-third towards the expenses of the Chicago delegation." Carried.

Applications and correspondence from the West Ham and Chatham Branches, and the London Secular Federation, were remitted to the Organisation Committee, and the meeting adjourned until July 27. E. M. VANCE, Asst.-Sec.

CHRISTIANITY, COWARDICE, AND CHARITY.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE REV. PRICE HUGHES, whose courage is undoubted, whose veracity is unimpeachable, and whose modesty, like Dr. Parker's, is as unquestioned as that of the violet which loves to dwell and bloom unseen, spoke on May 8 at St. James's Hall of "the stinginess and blindness of those who were stewards of God's bounty." According to this, God chooses some very unworthy persons to dispense his bounty; another instance of the Almighty's omniscience! The Master is greater than the "steward": why then be so cowardly as to blame the servant? When a "steward of God's bounty" donates a large sum to a sect, the Christians for once, as a refreshing novelty, follow one of their texts—the last shall be first. God should undoubtedly be first in the Christian's thanksgiving, but they put him and his dutiful Son in the background, and the most thanks go to their human benefactor. The Holy family—one does not really know who bosses the show in this mysterious triumvirate; they all claim to sit on the stool and give orders—come in for their share later on when the prayers ascend. Logically I take it, if the subscriber be only "a steward of God's bounty"—and God is omnipotent—his servant could not help giving, and no gratitude is due to him. What a wretched mess the whole business is, and in what a frightful bog these explanatory Christians do flounder! But even this is better than the old days. God then claimed the fat as a sacrifice to himself. At any rate the heavens absorbed the smoke, and much good meat was wasted. Nowadays, God's priests, by which I mean the men of any denomination who illustrate the truth of "Godliness is great gain" by living sumptuously by the precious Word while God's poor are starving, claim all the fat they can. They get it, and after returning thanks with pious unction to men first and God afterwards, decency compels them to relieve the blessed poor with what is left over, after handsomely lining and feathering their own nests. The stage machinery of religion is kept going, for they are like Canon Kingsley's Piaches who bewailed the loss of his sacred trumpet, because it meant that he would no longer be kept in free corn and oil, but would have to do honest work for his living. We are getting on; presently we shall cork up the holy trumpets of the Piaches of our times, and they will no longer bewilder the mass with mind-cheating tunes. There will no longer be the stupendous waste of human energy, and humanity will take a great stride forward.

Before leaving my subject, I wish to ask, does anyone believe that when ordinary Christians give money to some charitable work they ask God's blessing first, or that in their souls they say, "O God, we give this in thy name. We should not have given if thou hadst not caused us to by mysterious and unseen forces." The set form of prayer does

not matter, but if they gave for that reason the world does not believe so. If it did it would only credit God, and not load its benefactors with fulsome eulogiums. If we regarded men and women as mere instruments—puppets who dispensed "God's bounty" because they could not help doing so—we should not cover them with the praise we shower on them; we should not revere their memories so much. If the servant of a Christian brought us money to alleviate our misery, whom would we thank, the messenger or his master? All our gratitude, that of the Christians and men of every creed, would go to the man who sent the servant, whom they would courteously dismiss with the brief thanks which are given to the postman when he brings a letter covering a remittance. Most of the charity which has blessed the world has been given by men and women whose common practice in their everyday life has shown that they do not believe in an intervening God. We know that when a notoriously rich man dies and leaves nothing to Christian societies, how the Christian secretaries of such societies—who generally get a comfortable living by relieving their poorer brethren at the expense of somebody else—assail the dead man's memory, and how the parsons preach diatribes on the awful misuse of wealth by the departed. Why do they not have the courage to attack him *by name* for his vicious life when living? The Bible which backs them gives them plenty of examples to follow. However greatly a rich man might be corrupted by detestable and enslaving vices, you would never learn it from Christian ministers if they wheedled, or had the hope of cadging great sums out of him for augmenting salaries and the erection of those buildings in which the richer parishioners delight to flaunt their finery, but which are meant to ensnare people, and prevent them from searching for the true path leading to moral and material freedom. As *Christians* the ministers are cowards to revile the dead man. The blame should be thrown on God, whose creature and steward the dead man was; but the parsons in such cases are too cowardly to say so. My idea of a true minister is one who does not make much out of his faith, like the good Bishop Bienvenu, drawn by that enemy of priests, Victor Hugo. Are such men only to be found within the two boards of a novel? We know that most ministers who will, for £300 a year, preach of Paul as a demigod, and one who has done as much for Christianity as Christ, will, for another £200 a year, leave their WORK—spelt with great capitals—and the gratitude of their flock, which they boast is the only earthly reward they covet, slink away to another tabernacle, and almost preach Paul down as a jackass. One may well ask if the salary at Spurgeon's place were cut down to £100 per annum—millions live decently on less—and allowances for strictly audited travelling expenses, would there have been the unseemly squabbles, intrigues, and wrangles caused by the pushing of rival claims for the well-paid pastorate?

Blessed be ye poor! It is very singular that those whom, according to the priests, God loves most, he treats worse than anybody else on earth. It would not be so unreasonable to think that the reason why the humble, virtuous and good get sat upon in this world is because God is jealous of them for unconsciously appropriating the love and respect of their intimates—worship which he thinks is due to himself alone; so he punishes them by poverty, and the world's scorn, contumely, and regret, for goodness does not pay financially so much as smartness. Some Christians talk so much about the charity of God that they have no time left for bestowing human kindness, and yet they get as much credit as if they had warmed many with it. They expect more thanks for the expression of God's good intentions than others do for good deeds. The mass of men are not so bad, but the mass of Christians never act up to their principles because they make too strong a demand upon their generosity and self-denial. Numbers of them lead wicked lives, and think they atone for their misdeeds by defending the Christian faith—by slandering Free-thinkers. Let us strip of their pretentious hypocrisy these humbugs who are so taken up with the worship of God that they have no room in their souls for human charity and justice. Christianity teaches that happiness grows out of misery and pain. If it do, why does every Christian on earth try to avoid such necessary passports to heaven? Christianity stunts the soul which it is supposed to help to climb heavenwards. *Consistently* and *rigidly* followed, it unfits a man for his duty to humanity. The reason why some exponents of it meet with some success as men, is

because their common sense is greater than their Christianity. Its very inception is nonsensical. Christians ridicule the god who came to Danæ in her tower of brass, up which no man could climb, and left her with child. They jeer at similar mythological stories, but for money foist upon an ignorant world a much later invention, the morality of which takes no account of the anguish caused to an innocent husband, who was so simple as to think that if his wife was with child before he knew her, there must be a father lurking somewhere. I prefer the more ancient stories; there is a more respectable aroma around about them. There is no wronged husband. If the Christian God be so majestic and awful a being, it is ludicrous and a degrading insult to him to suppose that he could demean himself with a clandestine flirtation with a poor, ignorant woman, and then lay the blame on the poor Holy Ghost. It is not charitable. Do Christians propagate this story because it furnishes them with a pretext for laying the blame for their backsliding and sinning at the Devil's door? Much-obliterated God and Devil! Even a poor and despised Agnostic will not believe the fables told of you, will not libel you in so cowardly a manner!

The average parson does not preach man's duty to his fellow man. His Christian cowardice will not let him. He is afraid of his rich paymasters. Pure Antinomianism and duty to God is the staple of his discourse when it is not filled with entangling twaddle on such abstruse questions as did Samson set fire to the foxes' tails, or tie torches to those tails, then set them alight, and so devastate the corn-fields? Christians imitate him in this; they are always trying to spoil the bread and butter of unbelievers, because we do not see these things with the eye of faith, which is another name for vast and unquestioning credulity. We do not strain after an imagined Ghost. Our duty lies on the earth. The next world to us is the one outside our homes. There is no need to indulge in extravagantly enthusiastic gush, but we have a tremendous task before us in clearing the earth of the Christian vermin who sting the heels of the pioneers of progress. We strive for the attainable.

Freethinkers as a body work for healthier homes, higher wages, and greater leisure. Their faith impels them to. They recognise that bad institutions make bad men; that is why they are ever trying to change them. The better sort of humane Christians who co-operate in this work transact very little business with God. They relegate him to a back seat; his name is rarely on their lips. It smears too often the lips of those who are ever forging fresh clogs and manacles to maim the men who have shaken off the shackles of the Church, and are groping wearily, like those in a dungeon pent for years, towards the track down which the light of Freethought gleams. That track will be beaten hard by those who follow the flame lit by the Freethought martyrs. The future is on our side. Let us justify our hopes, and remember above all—*Le cléricisme ! c'est l'ennemi !*

CHARLES E. BACON.

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, C. Cohen, "Ethics and Theology" (free). Tuesday at 8.30, social gathering (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 4.30, members' meeting; 6, tea, etc.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, W. C. Lyons, "The Sacred Literature of Christianity" (free).

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, H. Snell, "Christianity and Materialism."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, C. James, "Buddha, Confucius, and Christ."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, J. Rowney, "Paul and his Teachings."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. Haslam, "The French Revolution and Atheism"; members' meeting after the lecture.

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

Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, H. Courtney, "God and his Friends"; 3.30, R. Rosetti, "Bible Blunders."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday, July 13, at 8.30, Mr. St. John will lecture.

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): Stanley Jones, 11.30, "How we Got our Bible"; 3.30, "The Cooling of Hell." Wednesday at 8, C. Cohen will lecture.

Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road, High-road): 6.30, C. J. Hunt, "Life and Death."

Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Consolations of Religion."

Midland Arches (corner of Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Delusions of Theology."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches."

Newington Green: 3.15, a lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Secularism versus Christianity."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, F. Haslam will lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, E. Calvert, "Miracles and Prophecy as Tests of Truth"; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.

Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity Compared."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, J. Marshall, "What think ye of Christ?"

The "Queensberry" R. and A. Club: Saturday, July 8, at 6 and Sunday at 10, at Reader's Boat-house, Lea-bridge-road, rowing. Monday and Friday at 8, at the "Central" Baths, Clerkenwell, swimming.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street G. W. Foote, 11, "Shakespeare's Hamlet: its Philosophy and Lessons"; 3, "Mrs. Besant on Death and After"; 7, "The Book of God."

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall (No. 9 Room), Northumberland-street; Tuesday at 8, business meeting.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, J. Sketchley, "The General Outlook."

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

Liverpool: Excursion to Eastham; members and friends meet at the landing-stage at 2.50 for 3 o'clock boat.

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 6.30, Mr. Richmond will give dramatic and humorous recitals.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, members' fortnightly meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, a meeting.

Sheffield: Excursionists meet at Victoria Station at 1.20.

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

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