

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE TWOPENCE.



A RISKY OPERATION.

[The International Freethought Congress meets at Chicago to-day (Oct. 1) and sits till next Sunday. The following letter to the Congress has been written by special request, and will be read by Mr. S. Putnam.]

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT CHICAGO.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

It is with profound regret that I find myself unable to take a personal part in your proceedings. To say nothing of the trip across the Atlantic, with its lazy life in immaculate air, and its freedom from letters, morning and evening newspapers, and other blessings of civilisation—I should have rejoiced to meet face to face a number of brave American Freethinkers, and above all to spend an hour in the society of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, whose name is a household word amongst the Freethinkers of England. We think of him as a brilliant intellect and a beloved personality, and many of us would meet death more resignedly if we could only see him in the flesh, and hear but once the accents of his living eloquence.

There is no need to trouble you with the reasons of my absence. The long and the short of the story is,

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that I cannot very well leave England in the present state of our party's affairs. Happily you have amongst you my friend and colleague, Mr. Charles Watts, a vice-president of our Society, who is authorised to represent us at your Congress, and who enjoys our complete confidence in that capacity. At the risk of making him blush—though I admit that the bloom of his modesty has been brushed off by the rough hand of experience—I venture to say that he is an excellent specimen of the John Bull; with a sound mind in a sound body, a broad back for the world's burdens and a ready smile for its frowns; added to which he is a very fine speaker and an extremely skilful debater. With him to represent us, we shall cut something more than a passable figure at your Congress. And now I must ask you to take your eyes off Mr. Watts, and let him recover from his confusion.

I do not, however, cease blowing the trumpet of old England. This is the land of Darwin, of Mill, of Huxley, of Herbert Spencer; the land of Byron and Shelley; the land of Charles Bradlaugh, the hero of a hundred fights for freedom; the land of the author of the *Age of Reason*. Like Shakespeare's yeomen at Agincourt, the limbs of Thomas Paine were made in

England. He was one of the greatest of the founders of the United States of America, but we produced him—the dedicated champion of liberty of thought and the rights of man, from whose pen there fell the sentence which eclipses the shibboleths of all the creeds, a sentence worthy to be written in star fire on the brow of night—"The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."

Yes, old England may hold up her head even in an International Freethought Congress, not in braggadocio, but with a feeling that she has a right there, that her place is neither a usurpation nor a concession.

English Freethought—I regret to say it, in one sense; I rejoice to say it, in another—is far wider than the limits of the National Secular Society. It is a leaven in the general mind. It creeps into books, magazines, and newspapers. It affects the very Churches. There are clergymen here, filling theological chairs at universities, who are more drastic, though less pointed, than Thomas Paine himself in their treatment of the Old Testament. Even in Scotland, the land of John Knox, there are Professor Bruce and Professor Dods, whose writings would have raised every hair on the heads of the early opponents of Thomas Paine. Yet they are allowed to sit peacefully in their chairs. The Church cannot afford to turn them out. It turned out Professor Robertson Smith some years ago, and let him loose upon the world unmuzzled. Having learnt a little wisdom, it now prefers to keep its heretical professors, and only asks them to draw it as mild as they can.

The National Secular Society is really an organisation of militant Freethinkers. We take the odium of our principles, we propagate them boldly, and we do it with success. A very large proportion of the most active workers in all advanced movements have passed through our ranks. We are the recruiters of the army of progress. It is our conviction that to rescue men from the thralldom of superstition is to liberate their intelligence for the solution of all the problems of society. Fruitful thought is impossible while the mind is chloroformed by religion. And the proof of this is to be found in the list of those who have sown germinating ideas in the soil of our civilisation.

The organisation of Freethought in England, under the National Secular Society, is, I believe, more complete than it is in any other country in the world. Branches of this Society are planted in most of the large towns. In some places they have their own halls, despite the infamous law which prevents Freethought Societies, as such, from holding any property. A notable feature of our work in London is the outdoor propaganda. During the summer months, in the public parks and other open spaces, our speakers address crowds of people. And we find this good for the speakers themselves. It was Emerson who said that a course of mobs is excellent training for an orator. You *must* interest an outdoor meeting, or it melts away, and you are left to waste your sweetness on the desert air; whereas a man cannot decently leave a meeting within four walls unless he enjoys the advantage of a seat near the door.

The word "secular" is here associated in the public mind with a certain policy of public education. It implies the banishment of religion from our state-supported schools. According to our Education Acts, the Bible can be read and commented upon in such schools, but "denominational" teaching, as they call it, is forbidden. This is clearly a compromise. It is a treaty between Christian sects. But there is always more or less quarreling over the matter; for here, as elsewhere, the Christians are a happy family; and this quarreling has made many persons, who are not Freethinkers, sick of the very name of religious education. A great battle is imminent over this question, and theology will be defeated. If it be true, as John Ruskin said, that the way to empty gaols is to fill schools; it is no less true that the way to empty churches is to keep religion out of the schools. The priests know this as well as we do. They will fight with the savage instinct of self-preservation. But they will be beaten. With a free press and platform, and a popular legislature and government, it is impossible for any combination of Churches to stem the tide of progress.

In England, as in America, churches, tabernacles,

and all sorts of Bethels are exempted from taxation. This is a virtual endowment of religion by the State, and against the foundation principles of a free Commonwealth. Religion, like other forms of opinion, is a personal matter. Those who are whole need not a physician, and should not be taxed to support one. If a man wants a spiritual doctor, let him pay for attendance and physic. Happily this principle was adopted by the wise founders of the American constitution. Religion is not directly established in the United States; in Great Britain it has a splendid position and magnificent endowments. The Church of England has a total income of about ten millions (fifty million dollars) a year, which exceeds the total amount devoted to education; that is, we spend more to make children candidates for heaven than we spend to make them citizens of earth. It is certain, however, that this legacy from Feudalism is doomed to extinction. The Irish Church was disestablished by Mr. Gladstone, the Welsh Church has already received warning, the Scotch Church is preparing for its last fight, and the English Church is aware that, though it will go last, its days are numbered. One by one the relics of Feudalism are undermined and overthrown. The time is not so far distant when England will be a true Republic. The old country will then, I hope, be knit more closely with the great Republic of the West, which shares our blood, speaks our language, and inherits our literature; the Republic that was sanctified by the blood of freemen shed for liberty, that was ennobled by the sword of Washington and the pen of Thomas Paine, that destroyed the curse of slavery at the cost of an unparalleled sacrifice, and produced in Walt Whitman the poet of the new democracy, who sounded loud and clear the *réveille* of the great new day of Humanity.

In the light of that dawn how poor and petty are the artificial distinctions of nationality, race, and creed! In hoping to be knit more closely to the great Republic of the West, we also hope to be knit more closely to our eastern neighbors in the United States of Europe. It is in this spirit that we salute the first International Congress of Freethinkers ever held in America. We see in it a fresh promise of human brotherhood. The thinkers, the seekers for truth, the lovers of liberty and equality, the haters of priestcraft and privilege, in every land on earth belong to the same fraternity. They waft a message to each other across frontiers and seas; a message of courage for the sometimes hard and bitter present, a message of hope for the grand and glorious future.

G. W. FOOTE.

(President, National Secular Society, England)

A FUNNY FAITH.

CHRISTIANITY AS VIEWED BY A JAPANESE.

THOSE who have been brought up in a faith usually retain some of the glamor of solemn reverence with which it is surrounded as a preservative against investigation and ridicule. Probably only a complete outsider can see its full absurdities. Cat-worship had no suggestion of the ridiculous to the ancient Egyptians. Joking upon the subject would have been resented as an injury to their religious feelings. Jews rarely give their real opinion of the Christian faith. Their race has felt so terribly what it is to rouse the spirit of Christian bigotry and persecution, that caution always marks their guarded way.* Mahomedans are bound to speak with respect of "his lordship the prophet Isa," as they call Mary's son, though they resent with indignation the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Hindus are usually timid, and while really despising the Christian doctrine of salvation through blood, content themselves with the tolerant reflection that all streams lose themselves in the same sea. From the Chinese native papers may be gathered their notions of "the pig religion" as exhibited by the missionaries. But probably no more interesting survey of Christianity could be given than that by an intelligent, educated Japanese who has studied it among us. Some

* The Jewish papers would not venture to notice the copies of the *Jewish Life of Christ* which were sent for review.

day, no doubt, this will be done; meantime I am able to give the substance of a letter sent home to Tokio by a Japanese student, whose interest, it should be said, is far deeper in European politics than in religion. Here it is, somewhat freely rendered:—

My dear Chojiro,—You ask my opinion of Western religion. I find it the richest compound of absurdity and hypocrisy possible. Just as you find it at home, and those with other worlds on their lips always have this one in their hearts. What they pretend to believe is the most ridiculous nonsense conceivable. I have tried to read their sacred Bible. The earlier part is all savagery and stupidity. Their God has a chosen people, whom he orders to slaughter other nations as idolaters. His rules to his own people are of the most filthy and barbarous description. Thus if a man is jealous of his wife she has to drink a water prepared by the priest, which, if she is guilty, causes her to swell (Num. v.) Many of the stories in this sacred book are of a most indecent character. Yet the book is put into the hands of children of both sexes in all the schools. These people are fond of talking of the indecent customs of the Japanese! Some pretend they do not regard the older part of the Bible, but only the newer, which they say has superseded it. But the truth is, they regard neither, and their lives are far more regulated by the Old than by the New. Indeed, their doctrine, which is mainly the absurd and barbarous one of salvation from sin by bloody sacrifice, is found everywhere in the older book, but I failed to detect much of it in the New, which is indeed mainly a collection of monkish doctrines similar to those of Buddha, and possibly derived from Buddhism, but interspersed with a lot of absurd fables of miracles, such as of Jesus being carried through the air by the Devil; turning devils into pigs; walking on the water; ascending up to heaven—which they think is above, though the earth is always turning round—where he sits on the right hand of the infinite God, who is his own self. Some of his miracles were poor conjuring tricks, like turning water into wine.

Christianity is a queerer amalgam than our Reigobu Shinto [a mixture of the Shinto religion with Confucianism and Buddhism] only it is a mixture they do not really digest, but only pretend to. Indeed no gullet could swallow the crude absurdities of their creed. They have, for instance, an infinite God who is nevertheless three persons. He, or they, woke out of sleep and made everything out of nothing, including a devil, who seems to be a more respectable individual than himself. This devil they keep to put all their sins on. But their sacred book ascribes as many crimes and follies to God as to the devil himself. They make him partial and vindictive, sending all who do not believe in him to eternal torment. They make him get a son as old as himself of a woman who remains a virgin, though her son has both brothers and sisters. He employs angels to get a poor carpenter to father his child, who is nevertheless said to be a descendant of kings, and then he puts his son to death by his chosen people who believe in sacrifice, though at the same time he died to satisfy his own father with an atonement of his blood. This is supposed to save the believers, but how it is done I never could discover. Some say they are saved by faith, others by grace, others by works—and they all find their contradictory doctrines in the sacred book. Indeed you must know they are all divided in opinion as to what their book (of which there are several versions) really means.

Indeed it seems a mass of contradictions. So far as I have observed, their religion only gives an aspect of greater gloom to the sordid lives of these people. No where will you find the liveliness, grace, courtesy and kindly joy of Japan. These Christians are all dull, coarse and hypocritical, and the more religious they are the worse they appear. If you visit the countries where faith abounds, as for instance Spain and Ireland, there you find misery also abounds. The priests thrive at the expense of the people. The Catholics of these countries remind one of the Shinto worshippers, since they keep a god-shelf or private altar at home. These people make their God into a wafer and swallow him alive. With the Supreme Being inside them you may imagine they work wonders. One of the gloomy ele-

ments is observance of every seventh day as a day of worship. Worship means going to church and mumbling prayers. They come away just as ready to cheat and lie as ever. They talk much of Jesus, but what they really believe in is money-making, guns and iron-clads. They attribute all their blessings to Jesus, but disregard his precepts, so evidently he does no more for them than Ten-shoko daijin does for the gambler or Daikohu for the merchant. [These are Shinto gods.]

I fancy I hear you ask, are these really the beliefs of people whose ships cover every sea, and hold possessions in every part of the world? No, they are not so much their beliefs as their hypocrisies. The sensible ones do not credit any of the nonsensical legends of the old religion. A few are honest enough to openly repudiate it, and the others set on them as if they were criminals. For the secret of it is, there is a large professional class who take millions out of the country yearly to preach and defend their religion. What with these non-producers, and the large standing armies of which I have told you, and the multitude of idlers and sinecurists who all fancy their position is backed up by religion, no wonder the many are grovelling in poverty, while the few revel in every conceivable luxury. Instead of filling the earth with brotherly love, Christianity has brought the instruments of contention and war.—Yours, OKAKURI.

The letter of Okakuri will, to the sincere Christian, appear flippant and superficial. The writer will be esteemed as without any capacity to understand the true spiritual beauties and sublimities of our blessed religion. But then is it not also possible that the heathen, should they see Christian missionary accounts of their faith, might also think them flippant, superficial, and without insight into the real merits of their blessed religion?

J. M. WHEELER.

MR. CHARLES WATTS IN CANADA.

My brief visit to Toronto, Canada, previous to attending the International Freethought Convention in Chicago, on the first of October, has been, to me, very gratifying indeed. It was here that I spent years of my active public life, and formed such pleasant associations; the remembrance of which will not be readily effaced from my memory. During my present brief sojourn in this beautiful city, I have again experienced the great kindness of my Canadian friends, and did not my duty and obligations call me back to England, I should be tempted to prolong my stay on the scene of my former labors.

Last Saturday and Sunday, September 9 and 10, I attended the Annual Convention of the Canadian Secular Union, and I was pleased to find that, during the last few years, considerable Secular progress had been made in this "City of Churches," where hypocrisy is very prevalent; and where puritanical cant—minus its heroism—so extensively abounds. The Convention was a decided success, and if the resolutions passed at its sittings are properly carried out, Secularism will make itself felt more than ever in this orthodox-ridden Dominion. On Sunday evening I spoke in the Academy of Music, which is a spacious and beautifully decorated theatre of the city. It holds nearly two thousand people, and at my lecture it was filled by an enthusiastic audience, and my reception was such as I shall not readily forget. For one hour and a half I addressed the vast assembly amidst the most profound attention, and at the close of my address unmistakable indications of appreciation were manifested. Most of the local papers gave brief reports of the meeting.

Secularism in Canada is conducted on the same methods as it is in England; that is, it does not hamper itself with outside questions, but confines its advocacy solely to the task of endeavoring to destroy theological errors, and to establish a Secular rule of life independently of all speculations as to the alleged supernatural. Of course, Secularists in Canada, as elsewhere, are foremost in all social movements and in political reforms, but they do not make Secularism responsible for their personal views on social and political questions. This, I think, is a wise policy, and one that I have always adopted in my advocacy. It was, of course, gratifying to me to learn that the

prospects of *Secular Thought*, the only Freethought journal in Canada, are brighter than they have ever been. Its editor, Mr. Ellis, is a hard and consistent worker, and he deserves all possible assistance in his efforts to place Secular philosophy on a solid and satisfactory basis in Canada. He is supported by many earnest men and women, who have brave hearts and willing hands, but there are others who, while opposed to the Church, are too apathetic in Secular work. Still, from what I have recently seen in Toronto, my impression is, that throughout the Dominion, Secularism has a noble future. The masses are recognising that the object of theology is to perpetuate slavish submission to old creeds and dogmas, while the aim of Secularism is to obtain and to consolidate that freedom and justice which is the birthright of every man, woman, and child.

The "higher criticism" is bearing fruit even in Canada, the hotbed of theological pretensions. What is known as "the great heresy case of Professor Campbell" is just now exciting a good deal of interest here. Dr. Campbell is a professor in the Presbyterian College at Montreal, and the author of a work of almost world-wide fame on the *The Hittites*. He is looked upon as one of the foremost scholars in the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Some time since Principal Grant of the University of Kingston, Ontario—a man whose views are known to be very broad and liberal—invited Dr. Campbell to give a lecture to the students. The subject selected by Dr. Campbell was "The Perfect Book or the Perfect Father." In this lecture he attacked most furiously certain parts of the Bible, showing that if we accepted them as true, we could not look upon God as a kind and loving parent. He therefore preferred the perfect Father to the perfect Book, and as the two were incompatible, he decided that the Book is full of imperfections. The lecture caused much controversy as soon as it was delivered, and most people thought that the Professor had been misrepresented by the reporters. In order to set this question at rest he printed the lecture verbatim in one of the Presbyterian papers. Then came the present hubbub; for it was found that the Professor was more heretical than he had been represented. The case came before the "General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church," but Dr. Campbell appears to have treated that august gathering with contempt, for he did not even attempt to offer any explanation. The case was then relegated to the presbytery of Montreal, and there, after a long discussion, it was decided by 21 votes against 13 that the reverend Professor was guilty of heresy in denying that the Bible is the supreme and infallible source of truth. The result of this verdict is that Dr. Campbell will be deposed from his professorship and from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

I have just visited once more the Niagara Falls, of which Canadians and Americans are alike proud, and well they may be, for probably there is not to be found in any other country a spectacle so grand and imposing as the one presented by the vast chain of lakes, which extends over more than a thousand miles, partly separating the United States from Canada. There are two great Falls, the one on the American and the other on the Canadian side of the river. I had seen Niagara often before, but its unique attractions grow upon the visitor each time he beholds their stupendous magnitude. Hence at my recent visit I was more than ever amazed and lost in wondrous delight at the lakes mingling with each other as they passed on to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to finally enter the Atlantic Ocean. Lake Erie having a much higher elevation than that of Ontario, the water, in its rapid descent from the one to the other, flows over precipices varying from about 150 to 180 feet high. It is estimated that over these precipices more than 700,000 tons of water are projected every minute. The varied and lovely colors of the water as it rushes incessantly into the vast abyss is a sight which, once beheld, can never be forgotten. A few miles below the Falls are the Whirlpool Rapids, the extraordinary force of which must be seen to be realised. I have read somewhere that on one occasion a gentleman was contemplating the water dashing against the rocks on either side, and he remarked to an Irishman who was with him: "Is it not wonderful?"

"What is wonderful" he asked in return. "Why, that vast body of water falling over those cliffs." "Sure," exclaimed the Irishman, "and what's to hinder it?"

Perhaps the Canadian Falls are the more picturesque, and the recent improvements that have been made enable its beauties to be seen in comfort, which considerably enhances the pleasure of contemplating the grandeur of the marvellous natural phenomena that at every turn meet the eye. Amongst these improvements is the construction of the Electric Railway, the most surprising specimen of engineering skill of modern times. It is twelve miles long, and skirts the Canadian side of the river. As one glides through the romantic scenery in the elegant "observation cars" a splendid view is afforded of the many points of interest, including the Rapids, the Whirlpool, and the famous monument of General Brock, who was killed in the celebrated war of 1812. The ascent of the long grade up the mountain by electricity is truly a scientific achievement of which any country may be justly proud. This grade is nearly a mile and a half long, and rises nine feet in a hundred, the total height of the mountain being three hundred and fifty feet. As the car ascends the steep a superb view is caught of the magnificent scenery below, with Lake Ontario in the distance, surrounded by what is properly termed the "Fruit Garden of Canada." The Governments of the United States and the Dominion have co-operated and purchased all the available land on either side of Niagara Falls, and have converted it into tastefully laid-out parks, which are now open to the public free of charge. Visitors can thus see all the attractions of this charming locality without the heavy expense they formerly had to incur.

Taking a final gaze at the new Suspension Bridge, whose span is twelve hundred and sixty-eight feet from centre to centre of towers; the Falls Park, which is "the very embodiment of loveliness"; the Horse-shoe Fall, and the Great Cataract, with their stupendous volume and force of water dashing themselves into foam at your feet—gazing at all these combinations of nature's treasures, I could readily appreciate the language of Nathaniel Parker Willis when he wrote:

"No one who has not seen this spectacle of turbulent grandeur can conceive with what force the swift and overwhelming waters are flung upwards. The rocks, whose soaring points show above the surface, seem tormented with supernatural agony, and fling off the wild and hurried waters as with the force of a giant's arm. Nearer the plunge of the fall the rapids become still more agitated, and it is impossible for the spectator to rid himself of the idea that they are conscious of the abyss to which they are hurrying, and struggle back in the very extremity of horror."

CHARLES WATTS.

Toronto, Sept. 14, 1893.

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

XV.—CHRISTIANITY FOR THE DEMOCRACY.

THIS is how it came about. A friend handed me a copy of the syllabus of the winter lecture series at the Democratic Club, Essex-street, Strand; and I noticed that the first discourse was to be given on September 20, by Mr. A. E. Fletcher, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, his subject being "The State and the Sermon on the Mount." Naturally, I first thought of the readers of the *Freethinker*, who would probably like to have some account of the affair; and, secondly, I thought of the editor, whose attention I called to the matter. He expressed his wish to accompany me upon the expedition; and thus it fell out that we two, together with a staid and judicious friend, to see that we did not get into mischief, made our way to the Democratic Club to hear the "essential Christianity" view on the relation of the Sermon on the Mount to the modern State.

The audience was characteristic of the place. It consisted largely of young men, many of whom are passing through the earlier stages of the journalistic profession, and are almost without exception Socialists or Anarchists. A few older writers and politicians, a dozen or two of ladies, and a sprinkling of outsiders or visitors, completed the gathering which Mr. Fletcher had undertaken to address. In the absence of Mr.

Murray Macdonald, M.P., who had been announced as the chairman, Mr. Bruce Wallace was elected to preside, and in the briefest fashion he introduced the lecturer. Mr. Fletcher on rising was received in the most cordial manner. He is evidently not a practised speaker, for during the earlier part of his address he exhibited unmistakable signs of nervousness and constraint; but as he warmed to his subject these distressing symptoms vanished. It would be difficult to class his speech in any compartment of oratorical display. In one sense it was a sermon, and a very fine sermon indeed; in another, it was the special pleading of an advocate holding a brief for Jesus Christ as against the existing social system. Throughout I listened to it with the greatest interest and delight, as a passionate plea for the adoption of a higher order of national morality. The special pleading, in which the lecturer sought to find in the teachings of Christ the germ and sanction of his own enlightened and humane aspirations, impressed one by its ingenuity, if it failed to carry conviction.

Mr. Fletcher's thesis was that the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, if carried into effect, would promote the best interests of the State. He especially denounced the dictum of the late Archbishop of York, to the effect that, if the teachings of Christ were literally acted upon, society could not hold together for a week. Mr. Fletcher indulged in some sarcastic references to Bishops as a body, contrasting his Grace of Canterbury, with a stipend of £15,000 per year and sundry palaces to boot, with his professed "Master," who "had not where to lay his head." Returning to Dr. Magee, the speaker remarked that if by "society" he meant the classes as distinguished from the masses; if he meant a social system under which the rich possessed every facility for plundering the poor; if he meant that charmed circle bossed by the British nobles and worshipped by the British snobs: then Dr. Magee was perfectly right. But if by "society" was meant the realised aspirations of the democracy, then he was absolutely and radically wrong.

Mr. Fletcher proceeded to address himself to the exposition of certain passages of the Sermon on the Mount. First he took that much-debated injunction, "Resist not evil," etc. This, he contended, contained the profoundest political wisdom. It was the embodiment of a principle that had far more terror for tyrants than all the physical force that could be brought against them. It embodied the idea of *passive* resistance, which had for eighteen hundred years been taught by the wisest moralists, and in our own day was proclaimed with marvellous eloquence by Tolstoi—the greatest man of his time, now that Lowell and Whitman were dead, and Ruskin had retired from active work. Amongst other examples, the lecturer cited the great Dock Strike of 1889 as an illustration of the triumph of passive resistance in its application to labor struggles.

Mr. Fletcher then passed to the consideration of the "Beatitudes," and favored us with some specimens of exceedingly elastic interpretation. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," if *rightly understood*, signified something very different from the narrow, individualistic interpretation given to it by theologians. It really meant, said Mr. Fletcher, "Blessed are *they who are with the poor in spirit*"—that is, those who, themselves blessed with wealth, sympathise with and endeavor to improve the condition of their poorer brethren. When, he continued, that beatitude is realised, the days of privilege and social injustice will be over. "We shall no longer pay an archbishop £15,000 a year to hold out prospects of perdition to working-men existing on fifteen shillings a week." Then the speaker challenged the bishops and clergy of all denominations to use their influence to put an end to the miners' lock-out. While it was possible for such a struggle to take place, "may God forgive us for such an unblushing piece of hypocrisy as that of calling this a Christian country." (Mr. Fletcher, I may note in passing, did not explain why the victorious principle of passive resistance, which triumphed so gloriously at the London docks, should need episcopal and clerical aid in the colliery districts.)

For the rest, I can only indicate the general lines of the lecture, for I took no notes, hoping to find a lengthy

report in the *Daily Chronicle*; and in this I was presently to be disappointed.

Mr. Fletcher's main contention was that all real national progress must take place in the direction indicated by Christ's teachings. This had been so in the past, despite the crimes committed by false professors in the name of Christianity. The Greek and Roman civilisations had disappeared because the eternal principles of truth and justice taught by Jesus had found no place in their polity. Had Rome, instead of crucifying Christ, endeavored to govern in accordance with his precepts, its civilisation would have existed unto this day. Christianity, so far from being "played out," had an enormous social progressive work which it could and would perform; and every true Christian should bear his part in the great struggle for the redemption of humanity.

When Mr. Fletcher had brought his address to a conclusion, the chairman invited questions. Of these there was a confused and confusing cross-fire; but Mr. Fletcher faced the guns with ever-ready resource and unflinching good-humor. Some of his replies were models of snap-shot epigrams. Perhaps the most pointed and relevant question was put by Mr. Foote, who asked the lecturer if Jesus had been the first to teach the doctrine of non-resistance. Mr. Fletcher answered in the negative; but, he added, it had never "caught on" until it was inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount.

After this preliminary canter (to use a sporting phrase) came the more serious attacks of opponents. Speeches were limited to six minutes each; but some people can crowd a wonderful amount of irrelevant declamation into that brief period. The chairman was extremely patient, and by no means extreme to mark what was done amiss. Only one speaker was actually called to order (and thereupon incontinently subsided) for wandering from the subject. This man, as I noted with a certain grim satisfaction, was the solitary speaker who announced himself as a "Christian"! Very strong anti-theological views were expressed by Socialists and Anarchists. One of the latter fraternity denounced Christianity as an obstacle to human progress, and, in a vein of muddled metaphor, declared that he was tired of seeing mankind driven back by the chloroform of religion. Another speaker compared the new Christianity of the *Daily Chronicle* to a conjuror's hat and sleeves—you can draw from them anything that you please. "Is," he asked, "the Socialist to be for ever juggling with these old Jewish mysteries, these played-out Asiatic metaphors?" In the course of the discussion I ventured to put two points for consideration. The first was this: if Christ said "Resist not evil," and meant "Resist evil, but resist it passively," why did he not say what he meant? If a father tells his boy to go to school, and the lad "interprets" that injunction to mean that he is to play in Regent's Park, there is likely to be trouble between them. Secondly, I asked: Why all this chatter about *Christ*? Why not discuss *principles* apart from the men who are supposed to have taught them? If a principle is decided to be good, Mahometans, Christians, and Atheists can join in giving effect to it. But if the character and pretensions of Mahomet and Christ are to be introduced, then occasion is given for endless division. For myself I agreed heartily with very much that Mr. Fletcher had said, and I could act cordially with him in many things; but when the supposed supernatural sanction connoted with the personality of Christ were imported into the matter, I had with me a sharp knife which I would gladly stick under Mr. Fletcher's fifth rib. Let us, then, cast away these speculative subjects of dissension, and join in determining the best morality and acting upon it.

I am open to the suggestion of egotism in having thus lengthily repeated my four-minutes speech; but I do this because it was the only purely Secularist contribution to the discussion. It was put with many defects of statement and manner; but, imperfect as was its presentation, no answer to it was attempted by any subsequent speaker. Mr. Bruce Wallace did, indeed, tell us what Christ "meant to say" and what his words "should be interpreted to mean"; but he

did not explain why the thing that was said was precisely the opposite of that which it "should be interpreted to mean."

The discussion raged till ten o'clock; and, as Mr. Fletcher was anxious to get back to his work at the *Daily Chronicle* office, he did not enter upon any reply to his critics. The evening was in many ways most interesting and suggestive; but one sat silent whom I would fain have heard speak; and that was the President of the National Secular Society.

GEORGE STANDRING.

"JOSEPHUS" ON THE JEWS.

I HAVE no doubt that the *Antiquities* ascribed to this mock-writer were originally composed in Latin.

1. His name stands 13th on the List of Illustrious or Catholic Writers, ascribed to "Jerome" and composed in *Latin*. This must be regarded as the *primary* notice and advertisement of the works under his name. It does not follow that they had yet been fully written.

2. In this Latin text, two works have *Greek* titles—the *ἀρχαιότης* against Appion, and the *περὶ αὐτοῦ κράτορος λογισμοῦ*, containing the martyrdoms of the Maccabees. But not a word is said to the effect that the *Antiquities* were written in Greek.

3. The notorious passage about Jesus is given in *Latin* and reads better than in Greek.

Unquestionably, the object in composing this flatulent and false book was to lead up to the (as it were casual) introduction of Christ, John the Baptist, the apostle James, and the Jerusalem church. With regard to the latter, the monk asserts, with his usual effrontery, "Josephus most manifestly confesses that because of the greatness of his signs Christ was slain by the Pharisees, and that John Baptist had been a true prophet, and that because of the slaughter of James the apostle, Jerusalem had been destroyed."

4. Turn now to the alleged Greek *History* of "Eusebius," ii. 23, 30—the chapter on the martyrdom of James. This is a rendering of the *bad Greek* put down to the pen of "Josephus":—"These things have befallen the Jews in vindication of James the Just, who was brother of Jesus called Christ, since him being most just the Jews slew."

Another of the same gang of disguised monks, "Origen," also declares that these words are in Josephus—where they are not to be found! The Latin of this chapter is incomparably better than the ungrammatical Greek, and is decisively *not* a translation at all.

I presume that the particular accusation against the unfortunate "Jews of Jerusalem," who are purely creatures of malicious monkish fancy, was allowed to pass into the background as hardly consistent with the graver accusation against the Pharisees of having put Christ himself to death, so prominent in the New Testament. Again a reminder that the proper Introduction to the New Testament is the List of Catholic Writers.

E. J.

CARNAL REASON.

JEHOVAH doth move in mysterious ways,
If we're to believe what his holy book says;
Of two things unlike, oft the better's the worse,
And sometimes a blessing disguises a curse.
His ways are not our ways, so ne'er must we seek
His works to appraise, nor attempt a critique.
Priests say we may judge, if we mean to be kind;
But if we should have an *unprejudiced* mind,
We're told that our reason, though subtle and sage,
Can never the purpose of deity gauge.
Refrain, then, O man, if to blame him thou'rt pressed—
The things we called *bad* might be all for the *best*;
And also forbear if to praise him thou durst—
The things we call *good* might be all for the *worst*!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

"Did you pass the hat, deacon?" "Yes." "What's in it?"
"Well, fort'nitly, parson, the linin' is still thar. First time it
ever happened, parson. I reckon the boys is gittin' religious
at last."

ACID DROPS.

The Westbourne Park Bible Class was recently the scene of an encounter between two Baptist ministers, the Rev. Dr. Clifford and the Rev. John Urquhart. The latter maintained the absolute inerrancy of the Bible, and the former opposed it as a stumbling block to thoughtful Christians. One feature of the debate was the way in which Dr. Clifford was almost howled down by members of his own church. Unfortunately the discussion was too abstract. It would have been more instructive, and doubtless more entertaining, if both the disputants had used Messrs. Foote and Ball's *Bible Handbook*. The proper way to prove that the Bible *can* err is to show that it *does* err—which is remarkably easy. Still, it is refreshing to find Christian ministers fighting over the Bible. When some of these gentlemen not only know, but urge, that the Bible contains mistakes, and plenty of them, the "infidel" can rub his hands with serene satisfaction.

Mr. Urquhart took a simple course, but it was not very courageous. He declined to go into the inaccuracies of the Bible, and said he would "make a present of them to the infidel stump orators of the parks." How generous, to be sure! But, after all, the said orators have to thank Mr. Urquhart for nothing. They can deal with the inaccuracies of the Bible as well without his consent as with it.

"Infidel stump orators" is a good phrase; but in Mr. Urquhart's mouth it indicates a shoddy sort of pride. Jesus Christ was a stump orator. He held forth in deserts, on mountains, and in the streets of Jerusalem. Paul was also a stump orator. He held forth commonly in the open air, and his most famous discourse was delivered on a hill in Athens. Mr. Urquhart's sneer is like that of the stuck-up big tradesman who forgets that he once kept a chandler's shop or trundled a barrow.

Some of these Broad churchmen wish to confine the Higher Criticism of the Bible to the Old Testament. They don't mind admitting a few mistakes in that, if only you will not touch the New. We may be sure however, that criticism will not stop at their desire. Besides, the New Testament is affected through the criticism of the Old. If Moses did not write, Jesus was wrong in saying "Moses wrote of me." If Daniel did not write the book attributed to him, Jesus was wrong in assigning it to Daniel. If Jonah was not three days and nights in a whale's belly, Jesus was wrong in saying he was.

Among other papers the *Christian Commonwealth* is prohibited in Turkey. This might perhaps be taken as a compliment, but it puts our pious contemporary into a holy rage. It denounces the "unspeakable Turk," and hints that a war would be a very good thing to teach him civilisation. This is extremely funny in a professional champion of the meek and lowly Jesus; and especially so when it is remembered that less than a hundred years ago many papers were dealt with after the fashion of the "unspeakable Turk" in Christian England, and that many men and women were rotting in gaols for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*. It is wonderful to see, when Christians are dragged forward a few steps on the road of civilisation, with what ferocity they turn upon other religionists who still stand in the old orthodox position.

Dr. Parker has been clowning at Birmingham. He calls it conducting a mission. Among other things he said he liked football when other people played it, and lawn tennis when he played it himself. This brilliant witticism convulsed the meeting with laughter; emboldened by which, Dr. Parker went on to say that young men who played lawn tennis on Sunday would be no use to the nation in her hour of need. Well, if it came to fighting, we guess they would be a great deal more serviceable than Dr. Parker, who would probably be found at the rear, praying hard on a good salary.

One of Dr. Parker's discourses at Birmingham was on "Preaching and Hearing." At the close there was time allowed for questions, and one man took the opportunity to say that if many ministers could only hear their own sermons, they would say, like Cain, "My punishment is more than I can bear."

Anent the British Association meeting held in its town, the *Nottingham Daily Guardian* says its discussions have caused quite a flutter amongst people who feel that Christianity is in danger from the utterances of scientific men. But the *N. D. G.* reassures these timid folk. Religion, it says, will remain unaffected. "It is not, and never can be, a matter of intellect." We should think not, indeed.

There has been a thanksgiving service at the Parish Church, Broadwater, Worthing, "for the find of pure water at Broadwater, and of prayer to implore God's blessing on the new temporary supply." As the town has been ruined by the typhoid epidemic, this thanking God for service rendered by human agency is a good deal like asking the Devil to do no more damage.

The Rev. T. Garnett, of Christ Church, Moss-side, Manchester, fell down in a fit while preaching on Sunday morning, and was carried from his pulpit to his home, where he died. There is no moral.

One of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions was Dr. Stoecker, German Court Chaplain. This individual distinguished himself by inciting to the persecution of the Jews. We wonder what the Jewish delegates thought of Dr. Stoecker and of D. L. Moody, the evangelist, who invited him to Chicago.

The *Western Morning News* has a pious leader against Sunday League excursions to Plymouth. The excursions, however, are eminently successful, and bring some gain to the towns visited, as well as to the railway companies.

A married couple announce in the *Bolton Evening News* the birth of a son, giving the very minute at which he first inflated his little lungs. They add, "Not unto us, but unto Him be the glory." We hope it isn't a special reference to the third person of the Trinity. As for the "glory," considering the number of people who beget babies, it is difficult to see where it comes in.

Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone broke the fourth commandment last Sunday by having a drive from Blackraig to the episcopal church at Aylth, which gospel-shop was closed, it only being opened every alternate Sunday. What a bad trade the Lord must be doing in this part of Scotland!

Reading has been very much agitated by the report of a striking "act of God." A certain man (precise, as usual!) said that if there was no rain next morning he would go out and shoot God. There was no rain, so he took his gun and fired at the sky. What happened is differently related. Some say he was turned into a pillar of salt—in which condition he will be useful to the cows. Others say he was fixed to the ground, and fifteen horses couldn't move him. After this delicious absurdity, no one can doubt the orthodoxy of Reading. If Jesus Christ *does* come again, he will probably drop down in that locality.

The Rev. A. J. Harrison, replying to a sceptic, said he held that an Atheist, Agnostic, or Buddhist, who was sincere and sought to elevate humanity, would eventually receive salvation. Mr. Harrison is a minister of the Church of England. We should like to know what construction he places on the thirteenth Article, to which he has sworn adherence, which declares that "works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God." We should further like his opinion of the eighteenth Article, which declares, "They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of Nature. For his life according to that law, and the light of Nature. For his holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved." Is the Rev. A. J. Harrison to be held accursed?

Mr. Fortescue Flannery, a Croydon magistrate, moved before the local Board of Guardians that, in future, no questions as to their religious beliefs should be asked candidates for office under the Board. Although the guardians has had under its eyes as an object-lesson the career of Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Jabez Balfour, both of whom were its leading lights, they rejected the motion. Probably they are upholders of the local church which, up to now, has stuck to the part of

the swag which deacon Jabez handed over to their safe keeping.

An anti-Infidel lecturer at Oldham has been denouncing Secularism as "the foulest monster ever foisted upon human credulity." We see he had some opposition, but without that, we should fancy talk of this kind must only do injury to those who put it forward.

The Rev. Mr. Haslock, of All Saints', Grays, has been entertaining his congregation with a graphic description of the fate that awaits those who are guilty of the iniquities of taking walks on Sunday, and picking blackberries by the way. Mr. Haslock must possess a nice old God of his own, entirely distinct from the one who defended his disciples plucking corn on the Sabbath day.

The *South Wales Echo*, the organ of the Cardiff ranters, throws a bit of Bible at Zola's head. It says, anent his visit and writings, "It needs be that offence comes, but woe unto him by whom it cometh." The application of which is, we suppose, that God ordains social evils, but Zola should be punished for exposing them.

Owe no man anything, said Paul, but all the churches and religious societies find it good begging policy to disregard his advice. The Rev. Wardlaw Thompson, Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, says the year was commenced heavily in debt, and the Society now owed £40,000 to the bank—wherefore shell out ye pious supporters of foreign missions, even though the unemployed are starving at home.

St. Katherine's Hospital is a charitable foundation for the relief and education of the poor. It is under Royal control. An income of £12,000 is received by the "chapter" for administration. Last year, £6,402 was spent to obtain £751. The master receives £1,200 a year for preaching twice on Sundays to congregations never numbering twenty persons. Three "brothers" receive £300 a year each and a residence, but do nothing. Some "sisters" receive £250 each per annum, and do nothing. A school finds free education for fifty-six children, who are nominated by the "brothers" and "sisters," and are the children of well-to-do parents. This is one of the many instances of charities perverted in the interests of the parsons and privileged classes.

The *Daily News* Vienna correspondent reports an amusing incident from Miskoley, Hungary. A young girl pretended to see the Virgin Mother daily, and to have conversations with her. The pious came to see her, and brought presents. At length the would-be saint was put in a coffin in a shroud, and her mother told everybody that the Virgin had told her to die, and she should rise again on the third day. There was great excitement, and the local authorities went with a doctor, who said: "As she has died so suddenly, we must have a post-mortem examination." Immediately the young saint sat up in the coffin, crying, "Oh, don't cut me up; I can be resuscitated immediately." She was taken to a prison hospital to be examined as to her sanity. What a pity there was no doctor handy with his dissecting-knife in the cases of Mr. Lazarus of Bethany and his Master of Nazareth.

Bishop Turner, a colored sky-pilot of the American Episcopal Church, has thrown out the suggestion that Mr. Adam and Mrs. Eve were probably created black. In this case the forbidden fruit must have been a water-melon instead of an apple.

How to make the churches attractive is the great problem to the sky-pilots. A Brooklyn pastor has tried to solve it by asking the young ladies of his congregation to act as ushers, "in order to encourage the attendance of young men on church worship." One of the profane American papers says that if he wants to make a real success of it he should put his ushers in tights.

In his second article on "Theism; or, The Religion of Common Sense," the Rev. Charles Voysey has the following passage: "Take away the Bible, and many would become Atheists, and, perhaps, worse. Take away the Church from the other party, and they, too, would drift into Atheism and immorality." As Mr. Voysey himself neither believes in the Bible nor in the Church, we presume he is here using the

language of people with whom he does not agree. But since he does not make this clear, we invite him to explain what he does mean by this linking of "Atheism and immorality."

It is a beautiful world, in spots, but in the Central Provinces of India it is rather too beautifully adapted to beasts of prey. Although in the last four years over 1,000 tigers, 2,000 panthers, 500 bears, and 300 wolves have been destroyed, the destruction of cattle is immense, and this year shows an increase of about 1,200 over the previous year. Last year 317 persons were killed by wild beasts in the Central Provinces, while the number of deaths from snake-bite was 999. Altogether over 21,000 persons were reported as killed by snakes in India last year.

A thousand lives were lost in the recent cyclone at Jamaica. "He doeth all things well."

Rev. Peter Mackenzie is the clown of a comic gospel. This is how he is reported in the *Scarborough Post*:—Paul said to them: "When you go to a person's house for a bull don't ask questions, but just eat whatever is given to you." Then he went on to explain the fundamental principles of Christianity, which were the death of Christ and the Resurrection. "Why," he said, "he led out 500 people into Bethany—enough to fill all Falegrave—enough to satisfy any Atheist. The Atheists think we are going to die and don't know exactly where we are going to, but oh, no! oh, no!!—we don't buy a pig in a poke. They think we don't know there is a heaven till we die, but that is all nonsense." The Rev. Peter gives an amusing sample of the sort of rigmarole that goes down with pious folk. His lecture was received with much merriment and applause.

Notes and Queries has been having some notes on Noah's ark. The book put under the name of Sir John Maundeville said it had been seen by a monk, and could still be seen from afar in clear weather. Benjamin of Tudela, however, said that Omar ben al Khatib had removed the ark from Ararat and made a mosque of it. Both stories are probably as veracious as those of the Christian Fathers who saw the pillar of salt that had been Mrs. Lot.

The *Church Times* says it has in its possession "Tickets for Heaven," issued at Quebec by Cardinal Taschereau at 25 cents in Sept. 1885. This, however, is only a barefaced edition of the game that is played by all priests and sky-pilots. It is always money down for promise of post-mortem felicity.

Mr. Wm. Olney, a London missionary, at a meeting a few days ago, told some curious stories of the extreme ignorance of many of the London poor in regard to the scriptures. One of the teachers of the Sunday-school he superintends was visiting the homes of his scholars, and the mother of one of them said to him, "I often tell my children how Adam and Eve died for them on the Cross." A City missionary in the same neighborhood asked a woman if she had a Bible in the house. "Oh, yes," was the reply, "we would not live without one." "Do you read it?" he asked. "No," she answered. "Then what do you keep it for?" he proceeded. "Oh, you see, sir, it's always ready in case of sickness."

"How Man Got his Brain," is the heading of a leaderette in the *Christian World*, in relation to Dr. Robert Munro's address before the British Association. Our contemporary appears to accept the evolution theory; at any rate, it says nothing about the old Creation Story in the Book of Genesis, which is being quietly dropped by the more knowing apologetists of Christianity.

Several clericals "improved the occasion" of the British Association's meeting. Among them was Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, who declared that "worship began as the outcome of wonder, not of fear." This is a very easy assertion, but very difficult to defend. As a matter of fact, wonder and fear are inseparable in the savage mind; and it was in the savage mind that worship originated.

Dr. Clifford was another "improver," his sermon being upon "The Divinity of Man." This gentleman asserted that man was not the creature of circumstance, but their moulder and creator, and this revealed his divine heritage. But man's power of moulding circumstances is very limited, and as far as it goes it is merely a matter of knowledge and intelli-

gence. His "divine" nature does not help him much without science and labor, which owe nothing to metaphysics or theology. It is all very well for Dr. Clifford to assign man a place "only a little lower than God." If he means the Bible God, it is a poor compliment to man; if he means the God of Theism, he is talking idle nonsense. Naturally speaking, however, man is higher than any god, for he created all the deities. He made them all, and will probably unmake them all.

Every Christian is a divine manufacture, says Hugh Price Hughes. He does not tell us who manufactured the rest of mankind. Taking Mr. Hughes as a specimen of divine manufacture, it does not seem that "the Almighty" has a great deal to boast of. One would think that Omnipotence might turn out a better job after such a long apprenticeship.

"Every possible endeavor," says the *Church Times*, "should be made to pass a restraining measure by which the Church may be saved the indignity of having her affairs managed by Jews, Agnostics, and nondescripts." We think so too. And that restraining measure is Disestablishment.

"Jezreel," the founder of the Jezreelites, gave out that he would never die, but they had to bury him. Mrs. Jezreel set up the same pretensions, and she also passed into the hands of the undertaker. Mr. Lake Harris, the American prophet, declares that he has conquered death. We have no doubt, however, that we shall some day read of his funeral. We also expect to hear his disciples affirm that their Master's words were "misunderstood."

The parsons showed themselves in their true colors at the ruri-decanal conference just held at Bournemouth. They strongly deprecated the possible interference with their business by the Sunday opening of the Winter Gardens, and loudly denounced this desecration, although the Gardens are only open to those who can afford to buy season tickets. They were also up in arms against the Parish Councils Bill, which Canon Elliot stated might be a step towards secularising parochial schools and diverting Church doles. If it were it would be a step in the right direction, though the sky-pilots, with an eye only to the interests of their cloth, cannot be expected to see this.

"How mysterious it is that we have to plead for money!" says the Superintendent of the Wesleyan West-end Mission. Very mysterious! One would think the Churches had money enough already for all the good they are likely to do. But they always crave for more, crying "Give, give, give!" The sound of cash dropping in the collection box is their music of the spheres.

Methodists don't understand Atheism, and never will. Hugh Price Hughes believes that "Atheists are the product of the inconsistency and neglect of Christians." Nonsense, Mr. Hughes, nonsense! Atheists are thinkers, and there would be Atheists if Christianity were dead, as there were Atheists before it was born. It may be true, however, that they are fortified by the tricks and antics of religionists, especially the professional ones. It hardly seems possible that there can be a God who has the power to stop their little game, yet allows it to go on.

They have a man on the *Methodist Times* who writes Labor Notes, and he finds it unfortunate that "the founders and teachers of modern Socialism have been and are, with hardly an exception, blank and blatant Atheists." How shocking! But what is a blank Atheist! Is it a Methodist way of swearing? What a blatant Atheist is we know. From the orthodox standpoint, he is an Atheist who openly proclaims his Atheism—which is the crime of crimes.

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) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 1, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :—
11.15, "The Coal Strike and its Lessons" (free). At 7, "The
Doom of the Bible" (free; reserved seats 6d. and 3d.)

Wednesday, Oct. 4, Hall of Science, at 8.15, "Shakespeare's
Julius Cæsar" (free).

October 8, Hall of Science; 15, Camberwell; 22, Man-
chester; 29, Bristol.

November 5, Nottingham; 12 and 19, Hall of Science; 26,
Tyneside.

December 3, Leicester; 10, Liverpool; 17 and 24, Hall of
Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC., should be written on postcards or
the envelopes marked outside.

J. F. COOKSON.—Cuttings are always welcome.

CONSTANT READER.—We are unable to give you the informa-
tion.

G. W. BLYTHE.—(1) Yes, we shall give a portrait of J. S. Mill
presently. (2) The question you open up is hardly one to
be treated in this column.

W. HOOK.—No doubt a Freethought literature depot in every
large town is a desideratum, and would be a powerful agency
in the spread of our principles. But it must be left to
private enterprise or local effort. The N.S.S. could not
possibly undertake to keep shops going. It has enough to
do at present to look after its existing enterprises.

G. MANCO.—We are aware that there was a *Freethinker* pub-
lished early in the eighteenth century. It was, however, a
religious publication; probably intended to take the wind
out of the sails of the real Freethinkers, who were then
attracting attention. It is not considered to have had any
particular merit.

W. T. LEEKEY.—Thanks for cuttings.

COTTONOPOLIS.—Shall appear. If we issued a special poetic
edition of the *Freethinker*, and gave the staff a week's
holiday, they would never need to come back again.

J. SAUNDERS.—See paragraph.

WELL WISHER.—Pleased to hear you are delighted with the
new experiment at the Hall of Science, and that you took
three Christian friends to the lecture last Sunday. Still
more pleased to hear they mean to go again.

H. DIVES.—Apparently a slip of the pen.

C. WILSON.—Thanks for the cuttings. Pleased to hear from
one who was first attracted to Freethought by our imprison-
ment, and has been a steadfast supporter of the cause ever
since. You do an excellent work in taking your Christian
friends to Secular meetings.

A. WIKELER.—The Finsbury Branch is very welcome.

H. MELLOE.—We cannot help you to reply to such blackguards.
We would much rather you left them to wallow in their own
filth. Why fight a chimney-sweep?

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:
Dr. Duncan, 5s.; H. Gadd, 3s. 9d.; Battersea Branch, 15s. 6d.;
parcel of clothing from a Friend; printing from W. Bell.

J. HOLLAND, newsagent, 5 Seven Sisters-road, South Totten-
ham, supplies the *Freethinker* and all Secular publications.
Freethinkers in the district will please note.

E. KINSMAN.—Will try to find space. We do not pay for out-
side contributions, as perhaps you are aware.

T. MAY.—Thanks. We have sent him a contents-sheet. Will
you ask him to display it, and let us know?

E. S.—(1) What difference is there, in the case of a "divine"
book, between permitting and teaching polygamy? (2) Mr.
Holyoake did not go to prison willingly. He was taken
there. We cannot follow you therefore when you say he
"cared more for Secularism than for his wife and children."
Do you mean that playing the liar and knave is the way to
show one's love for one's family? (3) Nature produces
everything, but it is of no use to rail at Nature for what we
call evils, as Nature cannot hear us. If Nature could hear
us, it would be a different matter.

J. D. P.—May come handy.

W. THOMSON.—Don't trouble. The man is an adventurer.

C. E. FORD.—(1) Ask him for his proof that Robert Taylor
turned Christian. Anybody can make an assertion, especially
one gifted with as much "face" as the person you mention.
(2) We cannot tell you how long Brahmanism has existed,
but 13,600 years is a wild calculation.

W. TIFFIN.—You are in a pretty nest of bigotry. Keep pugging
away.

T. MAY.—Shall appear. No room this week.

T. J. BARTLETT.—Subject noted.

F. MAURICE.—Brotherhood does not necessarily mean Com-
munism. We sympathise a good deal with the philosophical
Anarchist's protest against Government, which meddles with
many things it should leave alone; but some kind of
Government seems indispensable until human nature is very
much altered. You will find some beautiful and profound
remarks on Government and Society in Thoma Paine.

H. COURTNEY.—Glad to hear of your restored health, and of
your successful visit to Southampton. We often wonder
that more Freethought lectures are not delivered there.

H. JONES.—See "Plums." We wish you all success at Man-
chester.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer,
acknowledges:—Clerkenwell-green collection at Mr. Foote's
lecture, £1 2s.

L. WOOD.—Thanks. See paragraph.

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—
La Vérité Philosophique—Ironclad Age—Church Reformer
—South Wales Echo—Sun—Reynolds's Newspaper—Grays
and Tilbury Gazette—Oldham Times—Oldham Evening
Chronicle—Birmingham Daily Post—Brighton Examiner—
Worthing Gazette—West Sussex Times—Surrey Indepen-
dent—British Weekly—Nottingham Guardian—Melbourne
Age—Western Morning News—L'Intransigeant.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote's second lecture of the course he is delivering
at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evenings was more
successful than the first. The paid seats were rather more
crowded than before, and a larger number occupied the free
portion of the hall—the gallery. The lecture on "A Search
for the Soul" was very warmly applauded. Some questions
were asked at the close, and two Christians offered courteous
opposition. Mr. Foote delivers the third lecture this evening
(Oct. 1), his subject being "The Doom of the Bible." Ample
opportunity will be afforded for discussion.

The Sunday morning lectures at the London Hall of Science
will be resumed to-day (Oct. 1). Mr. Foote leads off with a
lecture on "The Coal Strike, and its Lessons." The admis-
sion is entirely free. The Wednesday evening free lectures
will be resumed next Wednesday (Oct. 4). Mr. Foote begins
this course also. His former Shakespearean lectures were
highly appreciated, and he will give another on this occasion,
the special subject being "Julius Cæsar."

During the second half of September and the first half of
October, Mr. Foote will have given eight lectures at the Hall
of Science, and all of them gratuitously, every penny of the
proceeds going to the National Secular Society. In the cir-
cumstances, he may well ask his audiences to be as liberal as
possible in contributing to the collections.

Mr. Foote's open-air lecture at Clerkenwell Green last
Sunday morning was listened to by a large audience, and the
collection realised £1 2s. for the London Secular
Federation. Mr. George Standing took the chair (which
was not a chair), and made one of his humorous little
speeches by way of introduction. Several Christians offered
opposition at the end of the lecture, and one or two during
the lecture. The policy of noise and interruption is now
regularly pursued by the Christians at our outdoor meetings,
and steps will have to be taken to check them next summer.

The Debating Class at the London Hall of Science opens on
Monday evening, Oct. 2, when Mr. George Standing will
speak his mind on the question, "Am I my brother's
keeper?" Socialists and Individualists should both be

interested in the discussion. The admission is free to members of the Club and of the N.S.S.

The Science Classes at the Camberwell Secular Hall open on October 6. The subjects include astronomy, chemistry, and geology. The classes are entirely free, and under the conduct of Mr. J. B. Coppock, who is a most capable and painstaking teacher. Young Freethinkers should take advantage of this excellent opportunity.

It is gratifying to know that Freethought has now a monthly organ in the West Indies, and Senor Emanuel dos Santos, of Port of Spain, Trinidad, is to be congratulated upon the way in which he sustains his monthly *Progress*. The number before us opens with a vigorous paper on "The Mission of Freethought." It gives from the *Freethinker* Mr. Wheeler's article on "Who Wrote the Gospels?" and also Prof. Johnson on the Origin of Christian Literature. The cover also gives the September calendar from the N.S.S. *Almanack*.

We are pleased to note from *Progress* that there are also signs of Freethought in Jamaica, where Mr. A. M. Mould has published *A Plea for the Agnostic*. We know that seeds of Freethought were sown both in Jamaica and Trinidad by certain of her Majesty's soldiers who are also enrolled in the army of Freethought, and who are now occupied with similar work in another portion of the British colonies.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine*, of Buffalo, in its September number, gives a portrait of H. M. Taber, a friend of Col. Ingersoll. Mr. Taber himself supplies a solid article on the Taxation of Church Property, pointing out that practically it makes no difference whether legislators openly donate so much of the public money every year to the support of the churches, or whether such churches are exempted from the operation of a general tax law. Mr. Taber shows that the churches of the United States are really enormously endowed. The rest of the contents are of an interesting character.

Canon S. A. Barnett admits that the Japanese get on remarkably well without religion. He says: "No one is religious. I believe in nothing. I believe in myself! expresses the attitude of young Japan. The Japanese are curiously deficient in the religious sense." Yet by energy and versatility, Japan in science, education and history, now takes its place alongside the foremost nations.

The Cheshire Branch held a successful meeting last Sunday evening at Chester. Mr. Lewis, of Crewe, lectured on "A Freethinker's View of the Bible." The admission was free, and many strangers were present, who listened with great attention.

Mr. Johnson will give a course of instructive lectures at the Battersea Secular Hall during the Mondays in October, with a view of educating young Freethinkers. The following are the subjects:—(1) Egypt, its People and its Cult; (2) China, Ancient and Modern; (3) Assyria, Babylon and Israel; (4) India's Place in History; (5) Buddhism and its Work. The admission to these lectures will be free, and the committee hope they will be supported by old as well as young Freethinkers.

Under the heading "Saints and Sinners," the *Surrey Independent* gives a good report of the proceedings at the Broadway, Wimbledon, where the Secularists have made a good start, which we hope they will sustain.

Mr. Thomas Slater, of Leicester, lectures to-day (Oct. 1) at Manchester. We hope the veteran will have good meetings and a hearty reception. Judging from the titles, his lectures will be interesting and instructive.

The Manchester Branch, like others, has suffered from too much summer. People would not go indoors to hear lectures in such phenomenal weather. Ten new members have been added, however, during the past half-year. The balance in hand has been somewhat reduced, of course, but no doubt it will be increased during the winter, when the Branch hopes to carry on a vigorous propaganda.

Henri Rochefort warns the Socialists against an alliance with the Catholic Church, whose newborn solicitude for the

workers is as much to be distrusted as Greek presents to the Trojans.

Mr. Symes proposes a visit to New Zealand for a month or two this winter. No doubt he will be well received.

Our good friend and valued colleague, Mr. George Standring, contributes to this week's *Freethinker* a bright account of a recent discussion at the Democratic Club. He winds up with a regret that the President of the National Secular Society did not speak. Well, there are times for silence, and that was one of them. Mr. Foote went to study human nature and the attitude of pronounced Democrats towards Christ and Christianity. This was one of his reasons for not intervening. He had others just as valid, but there is no need to disclose them.

We printed too many of the Summer Number of the *Freethinker*. A sixpenny number is not everybody's purchase. About three out of every four of our regular readers have bought a copy, and about twenty-five per cent. of the edition is still in our stock-room. These copies we now offer at half price (3d.) This will enable some of our poorer readers to obtain a copy, and some of our better-off readers will perhaps take a few copies at the reduced price for distribution among their friends and acquaintances.

The Bradlaugh Birthday celebration at the Hall of Science on Tuesday evening was a distinct success. The large meeting included most of the cream of the Freethought party in London. Mr. Foote took the chair, and delivered the opening speech. He was followed by Mr. R. Forder and Mr. G. Standring, whose remarks were much appreciated. The last speaker was Mr. Leslie Johnson, formerly of North Shields, where he sat on the School Board and the Town Council. Mr. Johnson's bright and earnest speech was very warmly applauded.

PARSONS AND MAGPIES.

The Magpie devours the corn and grain; so does the Parson. The Magpie takes the wool from the sheep's back; so does the Parson. The Magpie devours alike the young animal and the eggs; so does the Parson. The Magpie's clack is everlastingly going; so is the Parson's. The Magpie repeats by rote words that are taught it; so does the Parson. The Magpie is always skipping and hopping and peeping into others' nests; so is the Parson. The Magpie's color is partly black and partly white; so is the Parson's. The Magpie's greediness, impudence, and cruelty are proverbial; so are those of the Parson.—*William Cobbett*.

THOUGHTS OF HOME MOVED HIM.

A Sunday or two ago, at a Methodist chapel in one of the pit districts of Staffordshire, a worthy "local," after preaching very earnestly for about three-quarters of an hour, had tired his audience, and yet showed no sign of drawing his discourse to a close; indeed, he had just got passed "secondly." A number of the congregation had been sleeping for some time; but one brawny miner was wide awake, and apparently in a state of great uneasiness. After repeatedly looking at his watch and then at the preacher, the miner groped for his stick and hat, and then proceeded to make his way out of the chapel. The preacher just then had got warmed up to his subject. He had been advising his hearers to beware of the pitfalls by which they were surrounded. "Stop, sinner!" he shouted. "Pause!" "A'can't stop any longer," exclaimed the miner, who had just got to the door. "Y've preached well-nigh an hour, and if a' stop, our Peg'll be kicking up a row when a' get whome."

A RIGHTEOUS BIRD.

A maiden lady of Penzance owned a parrot, which somehow acquired the disagreeable habit of observing, at frequent intervals: "I wish the old lady would die."

This annoyed the bird's owner, who spoke to her curate about it.

"I think we can rectify the matter," replied the good man. "I also have a parrot and he is a righteous bird, having been brought up in the way he should go. I will lend you my parrot, and I trust his influence will reform that depraved bird of yours."

The curate's parrot was placed in the same room with the wicked one, and as soon as the two had become accustomed to each other the bad bird remarked:

"I wish the old lady would die."

Whereupon the clergyman's bird rolled up his eyes and, in solemn accents, added:

"We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord!"

The story got out in the parish, and for several Sundays it was necessary to omit the Litany at the church services.

THE WAYS OF ROME.

THE Rev. Father Clarke, who, it will be remembered, figured as Prof. Mivart's chief clerical opponent in the extraordinary discussion on "Happiness in Hell" at the beginning of the year, writes in the *Nineteenth Century* for September on the method by which Rome deals with heretical books. Father Clarke thinks the recital will be of interest to outsiders as well as Catholics, which is true; but its influence, we fancy, will be widely different from that which Father Clarke probably imagines. So far from any self-respecting man being attracted to Catholicism by this story of priestcraft and cunning, we believe its direct influence will be to repel everybody of any degree of intellectual sincerity from a system so odious and tyrannical.

The Congregation of the Index, founded by Pius V., consists of a highly-developed machinery, with assessors, consultors, qualificators, and Rome alone knows what else, together with a court of cardinals who sit and try the "heresy" of any particular writing submitted to them. When the court has decided, the Pope promulgates the decree, and the book is placed on the index of prohibited works. "No one is allowed," says Father Clarke, "to read such books without permission from the competent authority, and the penalty incurred by any transgression of this rule is thus stated in the last of the rules that are published at the beginning of every edition of the list of forbidden books:

"If any one shall read, or have in his possession, the books of heretics, or the writings of any author whatsoever that have been condemned and prohibited on account of heresy, or suspicion of false doctrine, let him at once incur the sentence of excommunication.

"But if any one read, or have in his possession, books for any reason forbidden, then in addition to the guilt of mortal sin that he incurs, let him be severely punished at the discretion of the bishop."

Prof. Mivart's articles have been condemned, and, according to the terms of the decree, good Catholics will not be able to keep on their shelves the numbers of the *Nineteenth Century* containing the forbidden items, but will have to deliver them up to their spiritual adviser. Now what we have here to point out is that the dishonesty and imposture of the Church are apparent in every step. If the cardinals were convinced of the error of Mr. Mivart's teaching, why did they not refute it in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*? We are sure Mr. Knowles is too smart a man not to have grasped at, say, an article from the pen of his Infallibility himself, if he had chosen to write. Instead, however, the Church—true to its intolerance, and the cowardice which intolerance begets—strikes in the back what it cannot fight in the face. The Church does not say: "Prof. Mivart is mistaken. We will show you why and how—and leave you to judge." That would be the attitude of a man who believed he had the truth, and put confidence in his belief. What the Church, however, really says is this: "We will not tell you where Prof. Mivart is wrong or how he has erred. We will not show you facts which Prof. Mivart has overlooked and which will alter your judgment. We simply order you not to read what Prof. Mivart writes." Is it not interesting, characteristic of Rome in particular, typical of religion in general. For religion—in its native state—never argues with those who differ from it. Religion stands to Freethought as the brute to the man; for Religion knows not the weapons of the intellect. It fights, so to say, on the physical, where Freethought fights on the mental plane. Religion, when hunted down, can only denounce and excommunicate, imprison and murder. And every line of Father Clarke's story breathes the very animus of tyranny, of cunning, of conscious fraud. All this paraphernalia of courts and congregations, of decrees and indexes, of assessors and cardinals, belongs to the Middle Ages. It is not of to-day. For the environment in which that kind of thing worked is gone. The Church is no longer dominant; the Papal decrees are merely pious opinions. Nobody will refrain from reading Prof. Mivart's articles because of the decree, and nobody has the power to prevent their being read. The machinery which Father Clark describes is out of date; to be effective it would have to be backed by the

civil power, and happily Rome no longer has that weapon in her armory.

In all this discussion, however, about hell—half serious, half burlesque—the person who comes worst out is Mr. Mivart himself. He need never have entered on the escapade, but, having undertaken it, the least he might have done was to see the thing through to the end. Fighting for his milk-and-water hell, Mr. Mivart could hardly have figured as a hero, but he might at least have acted as a man. Instead, he has chosen to play the part of a good Catholic—and a coward. Surely he cannot honestly believe that the opinions he set forth a few months ago as true, are false now, because of something which has happened in Italy. Yet he ignominiously bows to the Church, and swallows to-day his words of yesterday. He has thus lost prestige, and almost irretrievably destroyed any confidence which anyone had in his judgment. For how can we tell when Mr. Mivart, in the future, starts some discussion, that he will not abandon his position in a few months at someone else's bidding? No one can have any confidence in a man who has shown so little confidence in himself. The whole thing is an interesting object-lesson for the world. And if Mr. Mivart may be taken as a sample of the intellectual courage which Rome begets, then let us find solace in the reflection that Humanity is larger and wider, greater and stronger, than Rome; for Rome, after all, is but one city in the midst of many.

FREDERICK RYAN.

INDIFFERENTISM AND IGNORANCE:
THEIR RELATION TO FREETHOUGHT.

INDICATIONS are multiplying every day to prove conclusively that the greater portion of the English people have assumed an attitude of indifference towards religion in whatever form it may be represented. Of course, this display of apathy in regards to matters relating to a futurity, whose existence, we are told, is to be eternal, gives rise to grave apprehensions among theologians as to the future of Christianity; and such fanatical religious organisations as the Salvation Army, for instance, have doubtless been inaugurated with the avowed and particular objects of reviving the old superstitious beliefs, and of sweeping away the obtaining scepticism. This indifferentism, although favorable to Freethought, inasmuch as it must loosen clerical power, does not really assist the cause of Liberty and Light. There are thousands of people who, though they never attend at places of worship from one year's end to the other, nevertheless consider themselves Christians, and would be very much offended if one told them they were outside even the pale of the Church. They appear quite satisfied with their state, and by enjoying the good things of this life, run up a heavy spiritual account on the debit side, every item of which, however, they confidently hope to entirely erase by a hurried deathbed confession.

Of persistent churchgoers the great majority are members of the gentler sex. But, we ask, are the ladies found in their pews morning and evening, Sabbath after Sabbath, for the intended purpose of reconsecrating afresh their lives to their Maker and to receive spiritual benefit generally? I do not hesitate to answer this query with an emphatic "No." I will go further, and unflinchingly assert that the sole object of nine-tenths of the women attending church is to criticise the hats, bonnets, gloves, and the rest of the paraphernalia that go to make up feminine dress. To be present at divine service! what better opportunity could Miss A. desire to show the fashionable assembly present that she can vie successfully with her rival, Miss B., in her profuse display of brilliant and costly jewellery, in the expensive material and exquisite workmanship of her latest Parisian costume; in—well, the Lord only knows in what not else.

The dissenting Christians, or Nonconformists, as they are generally styled, are perhaps a little more earnest and conscientious in their belief than their church-going brethren. But then the fact has to be considered that Nonconformist congregations are made up mostly of artisans and common laborers, most of whom have received but an elementary education. They are consequently the more easily gulled by the sky-pilots, who generally succeed in inducing

their flocks to unconditionally surrender whatever powers of reasoning with which they may have been endowed by Nature. Poor, deluded men and women! They are told by their spiritual advisers to doubt nothing that the Bible contains, and are also encouraged by them to entertain the most wildly impossible and extravagant ideas of the Great Unknown Future.

They picture heaven in the brightest and fairest color, and as a land where they shall for ever be inconceivably happy in the presence of a Savior, who took upon himself human form and suffered crucifixion for their redemption. Religion still maintains a strong sway over the minds of people, and the only means of loosening its pernicious grasp is to more liberally educate the masses, and to rouse the indifferent into a state of intelligent mental activity.

EDWARD K. KINSMAN.

SCEPTICS AT EXETER HALL.

SEEKING an announcement that the Rev. A. J. Harrison would deliver a series of lectures on "Christianity and Scepticism" in Exeter Hall between the 18th and 22nd September, and, associating that gentleman's name with the "redoubtable champions" of the "dying creed," the writer paid a visit to "Exeter Hall, where the pious folks squall" (the latter expression was uttered by the Chairman for the evening), and, having listened with fortitude to the opening prayer, followed with interest the reverend lecturer in his somewhat florid discourse on that subtle subject "The Christian Doctrine of Conversion." The reverend gentleman, in his opening remarks, thought it expedient to shortly state the Church of England view of baptism, which was "that there is, in the nature of the case, no necessity for subsequent conversion on the part of men, provided they have been baptised in the Church of God and brought up in that Church." Referring to the text which says no man can come to the Father except the Father draw him, the lecturer said: "To tell a man that he cannot be redeemed until some indefinite time in the future, when the Holy Spirit is to take hold of him and compel him to become a Christian, is to teach an immoral doctrine." This text was again referred to by a questioner at the close of the lecture, who sought an explanation; but the reverend gentleman was not to be caught napping, and only replied by quoting a text of an opposite character, which proves that Erasmus was right when he said the Bible was like unto a nose of wax. In speaking of prayer, the lecturer made bold to state that there was no one present who could not turn so far as to ask God to give him what he needed, and anon this, the writer, in due time, requested to be enlightened as to how it was possible for anyone to appeal to a God in whose existence they did not believe. "That is a very easy matter," was the reply. "You may say to yourself, 'There may be a God,' and then keep on praying until you know it." Then fell from the reverend gentleman's lips a most remarkable sentence: "What right has a man to stand here and say that the Buddhist or Mohammedan faith is a delusion?" A short time ago, at a Church Congress, another gentleman of the cloth said there was only one true religion, viz., Christianity! "How wonderful it is," said Mr. Harrison, "that man has the power or will to do this or that." He did not, however, touch upon the wonderful influence of a man's environment. Possibly it escaped his memory! A question was put towards the close of the proceedings as to how Mohammedans, say, would fare at the Day of Judgment, who, having lived an honest, upright life, had yet rejected Christianity; and the reply to this question showed clearly that the reverend gentleman was ashamed of the cruder portion of his faith, and should give encouragement to Freethinkers in their efforts to rationalise morality. The reply was that whether a person was an Atheist, Agnostic, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or what not, so long as he was sincere in his belief or disbelief, and seeking to elevate humanity, he would, in the lecturer's opinion, eventually receive salvation. Another little omission he made, however, was that he failed to tell his audience what this salvation would be!

As the chairman, in his introductory remarks, stated it was necessary to take up a collection, and that even if you went to the Hall of Science you would soon find that you were called upon to contribute to the expenses of the place, this opportunity is taken of enlightening any poor benighted Christian who may chance to read this that he may now hear a Secular lecture at the Hall of Science without any demand being made upon his pocket, or rather the contents thereof. H. R. C.

There was much grim humor in the sportsman who admonished his son on the occasion of that youth's first "outing" with a party after grouse: "Don't shoot that tall gentleman, for he is my banker, nor that spare, slight one, for he is my broker; but if you must pepper somebody, let it be yonder fat and hearty parson—his curate preaches better sermons than he does, has all the hardships, and scarcely any of the emoluments."

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A CATHEDRAL CITY.

I WONDER if any of the readers of the *Freethinker* have ever visited the City of Worcester—"the faithful city," as its inhabitants are so fond of calling it, owing, I presume, to the zeal with which it upheld the cause of Charles II. during the Commonwealth. If they have ever had to spend a Sunday there, they will have seen the well-dressed crowds hurrying to cathedral, church, or chapel (many of them, however, slipping out before sermon and collection), they will have seen the crowds of boys and girls who throng the main streets after evening service, indulging in horseplay, and compelling the peaceable stranger to leave the pavement; and they will have found that it is a sin, and sometimes a crime, to buy or sell tobacco or Sunday newspapers on the Sabbath. Doubtless the inhabitants should wait till Monday for their Sunday papers, and buy their tobacco on Saturday.

However, it is not of Worcester itself that I wish to write, but to call the attention of the reader to the proceedings at the August meeting of the Worcester School Board, the account of which, as given in the local papers, will, I think, be of some interest. It seems that the representatives of the Church of England, who are in a majority on the Board, are somewhat disturbed in mind by the Code of Regulations of May, 1893, of the Education Department, and accordingly a Mr. Curtler moved the following resolution: "That this Board, while cordially recognising the great importance of establishing continuation schools, and approving generally of the scheme set forth in the Code of Regulations of May, 1893, deeply deplores the omission therefrom of any reference to religion as the basis on which the teaching of duty, virtue, and citizenship can alone successfully rest." He made a speech in support of the resolution, in the course of which he expressed a hope that he would not be accused of trying to raise the religious question again, and then went on to say that his objection to the Code was that "it might have been written by an Atheist—perhaps it was." He thought it a terrible thing to find the Department issuing that document without any reference to that superintending power of Providence which was the mainspring of the duties the Department wished to inculcate. He objected to the Code because it was copied from the code in use in France, where, so far as education went, the existence of God was almost ignored—so much so, that he was told the word God was written in the schools with a small "g"; he hoped that was not true. Mr. Cherry, in seconding, remarked that the history of the world abundantly proved that religion was the only possible basis of morality.

Mr. Lewis wished to move an amendment, but his amendment was ruled out of order; he therefore contented himself with speaking against the resolution. He agreed with Mr. Curtler that religion underlay all true conceptions of duty, virtue, and citizenship, but thought it unnecessary to include religious teaching as the basis of instruction in the Code, for the persons attending the continuation schools would be young men, who had already had religious instruction in the elementary schools. He contended that the resolution was practically a vote of censure on Mr. Acland, and raised a laugh by suggesting that councillors, magistrates, and members of School Boards might with advantage go through a course of instruction such as that set forth in the Code.

Canon Claughton supported Mr. Curtler, arguing that they could not teach the duties of the citizen to the State without teaching about God. They might as well give a boy an English history which began at the Norman conquest as attempt to inculcate the duties of that Code without mentioning the duty to God. Mr. Tombs opposed the resolution, on the ground that there were plenty of churches and chapels, ministers, etc., to teach men and women their religious duty, if these instructors would do their duty. Mr. Curtler, in replying, expressed his deep disappointment that there should be any opposition to his resolution. In the end the resolution was carried by four votes to three.

My object in troubling the reader with so long an account of this meeting has been to point out to Secularists that, although very much has been done in the past, there still remains much to be accomplished before the principles of Secularism succeed in penetrating to the small towns, to the villages, and especially to the cathedral cities such as Worcester.

It is not difficult to see why Churchmen are so anxious to have religious knowledge taught in the schools. They are beginning to find that if they do not get hold of the children in infancy and impart to them some measure of religious knowledge, they cannot get hold of them afterwards; and no doubt they are anxious to introduce religious education in the continuation schools because they know full well that the young men who would attend these schools would be beginning to think for themselves, and possibly even to have some doubts as to the truth of the religious knowledge they had learnt in the elementary schools. They know that this doubt must be stifled, and the spirit of inquiry it engenders overcome, if the Church is to retain its present power and influence.

I confess it makes me sad to think that no member of the Board opposed the introduction of religious teaching because it was *religious*. Would that every School Board had two

three members such as Mr. Small, who spoke so forcibly on this subject at the evening meeting at the N.S.S. Conference at Hanley this year.

I cannot help thinking that there must be some in Worcester who believe that a man may be a good citizen and a moral man without holding any religious belief whatever. I trust that if there are any such, they will make their presence felt at the next School Board election, or before.

ALPHA.

THE FREETHINKER.

I ONCE was shackled in the creeds
That priests have shaped to blind men's eyes.
I trusted in those solemn lies
That fired men to such savage deeds!

I looked with fear-filled eyes of trust
To those who screeched to their dumb gods,
Who rule the spheres with tyrants' rods,
And damn the weak and save the just.

As I surveyed Their "wondrous deeds,"
I found no room for Them at all!
They list not to our anguished call!
They're not in nature, but in creeds.

Preachers may pray, and shout and rave;
I will not blind my opened eyes.
I see how vain their blood-stained lies
To prove a life beyond the grave.

And with this revelation comes
My hope in this world—not the next.
I trust in laws by Nature fixed—
Nature that bears us and entombs.

I backward look on the sad lot
Of mankind, chained to book and bell
By cunning priests, who raved of hell,
And burned and tortured those who thought.

Forward I gaze. Through coming years
I see mankind glad, strong and good,
Freed from the sacerdotal brood
That filled the world with strife and tears!

I see a world where every one
Holds right of man untrammelled, free;
Where each man's eyes are trained to see,
With not a slave beneath the sun!

N. MILLER.

TRACT DISTRIBUTORS.

SCENE.—Grocer's Shop.

(Infidel Grocer and Tract Distributor discovered.)

T. D. Good afternoon, sir. I am just visiting this neighborhood, and am leaving tracts at each house to be read during the week. I will leave you one, and call for it next week, if you will promise to read it.

I. G. No, thank you. I have no desire to read your tract. I have read so many in my time, and consider that that means so much time wasted. I find that they are nearly all written in the same childish and monotonous strain, and resemble each other so much that one is inclined to think that those who concoct these tracts must be either very dull as to the wants of to-day, or so deeply steeped in religion that they are blind to the fact that the world is moving. To read a tract means so much good time wasted.

T. D. Not so, my friend. You will surely not assert that tract-reading is time ill-spent? You must know that the work which these tracts are doing in the homes of those who do not attend public places of worship is good, for do they not help to spread the truth?

I. G. If they always did spread the truth, then their case might have a bottom to stand on. But are they doing this? I think not; and even venture to state that they actually spread untruths. I will state a case or two. In tract No. 443, published by the Religious Tract Society, we read of Jehoiakim's supposed wickedness, and a parallel is endeavored to be made out between him and modern Infidels and Deists. It states that, "All Deists and Infidels who reject the Bible altogether as the word of God, may be said to resemble this wicked king. They are like him in this respect; they hate the Bible for the same reason that he hated it—because they perceive that its threatenings at them and their sins." This hate "begins with the love of sin, the indulgence of unholy desires and sinful practices; and hence you will find that, with scarcely a solitary exception, all men who reject the Bible are men of sinful habits and immoral lives—men who hate holiness and delight in iniquity" (pages 4 and 5). Do you call this spreading the truth? Do not tracts of this nature deceive those people who read them, by portraying Infidels and Deists in the blackest manner imaginable? Infidels (so-called) and Deists have rejected the Bible by careful and systematic study, and not because they were

wicked and of immoral nature. This tract is a libel on all those men and women (past and present) who have thought fit to think for themselves. Ignorant people who read this tract will believe that Deists, etc., are wicked people, because they know no better.

T. D. I must confess that I do not agree with the tract which you have quoted. I know some Deists who have become anti-Christians. They lead good lives and not immoral, but I think that by their rejection of Christianity they have done an unwise step, and do not understand the Bible aright. Anyhow, I hope there are not many tracts in existence such as you have just quoted.

I. G. There are many. I have read some where we are told of the horrible death-struggles of that reformer "Tom" Paine, who was supposed to see hell gaping at him during his last hours. I have read how Voltaire recanted during his last few minutes on earth; and of other infidels who defied God to strike them dead, and which God is supposed to have done too. Some other tracts have told us how Volney, when on a vessel at sea was jeering at the Bible stories, but when the storm commenced, he fell on his knees, crying aloud to God to save him. And all these assertions are bare-faced lies, and these lies are swallowed by tract-readers, thereby biasing their minds against a class of people the boots of whom these tract-writers are not worthy to blacken. Do you call this procedure "spreading truth"?

T. D. So you will not take a tract then?

I. G. (reaching down tin of mustard) Will you buy this tin of mustard?

T. D.—Me? What a ridiculous question. I don't want mustard; I have no need for it.

I. G. Thanks. I don't want your tract; I have no need for it. It might do for children who are learning to read, but for matter of fact it is useless to persons who have to struggle for a living. If they were interesting (apart from their falsehoods) it might be different, and they might find intelligent readers, but they are too dry and too much out of date. The yarns of Jehoiakim and his penknife, and the wonderful (?) strength of Sunson will do for children, but not for the business man or woman of the nineteenth century.

T. D. Well, good afternoon; I shall call round again, probably with the minister.

I. G. Good afternoon; I sincerely hope you will.

G. E. CONRAD NAEWIGER.

P.S.—They have not come round yet.

JESUS AS A SLAVE DEALER.

In the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, from Syriac MS., edited by Dr. W. Wright, vol. ii. p. 147, is given the Acts of Judas Thomas—quite as veracious a story as any found in the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples divided the countries of the world where they were to preach by lot, and India fell to the share of Thomas. Thomas would not go. Now it happened that a certain Indian merchant was passing, so our Lord said to him, "Thou wishest to buy a carpenter?" He saith to him, "Yes." Our Lord saith to him, I have a slave, a carpenter, whom I will sell thee. And he showed him Thomas at a distance, and bargained with him for twenty pieces of silver as his price, and wrote a bill of sale thus: "I, Jesus, the son of Joseph the Carpenter, from the village of Bethlehem, which is in Judea [they were in Jerusalem at the time], acknowledge that I have sold my slave, Judas Thomas, to Habban, the merchant of King Gudnaphar." And when they had completed his bill of sale, Jesus took Judas, and went to Habban the merchant. And Habban saw him and said: "Is this thy master?" Judas saith to him: "Yes, he is my master." Habban, the merchant, saith to him: "He has sold thee to me outright." And Judas was silent. And so Judas Thomas was taken to India by Habban, and his master, we suppose, stuck to the twenty pieces of silver.

A PLEASANT SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

What was called "a pleasant Sunday afternoon" was held under the auspices of the Melbourne Methodist Mission last month, when Madame Antoinette Sterling distinguished herself by joining in some rather highly-flavored discourses on the social purity question. In an animated speech, to quote the Melbourne *Argus*, Madame Sterling urged that the libertine ought to be killed, and that those who could not control their desires ought to immolate themselves. At one part of her address, Madame Sterling was so overcome by her feelings that she burst into tears, and exclaiming, "Oh, my God!" covered her face with her hands. The next moment she had the audience in laughter at the emphatic declaration that if better protection were not afforded all the women would have to go away and live in a land by themselves. At the close of the meeting Madame Sterling administered the "purity pledge" to a number of both sexes.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Man must learn to rely upon himself. Reading Bibles will not protect him from the blasts of winter; but houses, fires, and clothing will. To prevent famine, one plough is worth a million sermons, and even patent medicines will cure more diseases than all the prayers uttered since the beginning of the world.—*Ingersoll*.

SUNDAY 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.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "The Coal Strike and its Lessons" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "The Doom of the Bible" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Wednesday at 8.15, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*" (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, A. Johnson, "Freethought, Socialism, and Christianity" (free); 9.15, members' quarterly meeting. Monday at 8, A. Johnson, "Egypt: its People and its Cult" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, J. Rowney, "Prophecy."

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "Christianity a Fraud." Friday, science classes.

South Essex Secular Society, Enterprise Club, 33 Salway-road, Stratford: 7.15, B. Hyatt, "I go a-fishing" (free).

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High street: Monday, members' quarterly meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, G. H. Baker, "The Birth, Growth, Marriage, and Death of God."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, G. Standing, "A Secularist's View of Christ."

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday, Oct. 5, at 8, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity Contrasted"; 3.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Kingsland—Ridley-road (near Dalston Junction): 11.30, H. Snell will lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, S. H. Alison, "Jesus and his Teachings."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Impeachment of the House of Lords."

Wimbledon—Broadway: 7, H. Courtney, "The Case Against Christianity."

COUNTRY.

Brighton—Eagle Hotel, Gloucester-road: 8, important business meeting.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 10.20, C. James, "Christian Evidences"; 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, C. James, "But still it Moves."

Derby—44 Howard-street: 7, quarterly general meeting. Monday at 7, at Christians' Resort and Mission Room (top of Babington-lane, Normanton-road), G. Harper will read a paper.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, D. G. Lindsay, "Natural Rights: what are they?"; 6.30, Zosimus, "The National Reformer, 1860-93"

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, members' quarterly meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "Progress."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: Thomas Slater, 11, "Herbert Spencer's Ethics"; 3, "The Relations of Secularism to other Theories of Life"; 6.30, "The Life, Trial, and Death of Socrates." Monday at 8, dance. Tuesday at 8, debating circle, W. M. Clement, "A Few Phases of Life Assurance."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, W. H. Fawcus, "Individualism"; readings, etc., after the lecture.

Nottingham—Shortland's Café, 3 Derby-road: 7.15, general business meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, chess club; 7, Mr. Skipton, "Darwinism in the Nursery."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rookingham-street: R. Law, F.G.S., 3, "A time in Geological History when Sheffield was buried under snow and ice for thousands of years"; 7, "The Formation of Rainbows and the Wonders of the Sp. microscope."

South Shields—Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane: C. Cohen, 11, "Missionaries"; 7, "The Evolution of the Devil."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Brighton (on the Level): 3, P. H. Snelling, "Disobedience that Leads to Progress."

Nottingham—Sneinton Market: 11, J. Hooper, "Bible Heroes."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Oct. 1 to 31, on Tour. Nov. 4, South Shields; 5, Blythe.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Oct. 1, a, Hyde Park; 8, a, Hyde Park; e, Lambeth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Upton-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Oct. 4, North Camberwell Radical Club; 15, Hyde Park; 22, m. and e, Camberwell; 29, Westminster. Nov. 5, Chatham.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Oct. 1, Camberwell. Nov. 26, Camberwell.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woodwich.—Oct. 1, Ridley-road; 8, Lewisham Liberal Club; 22, Hall of Science; 29, Camberwell. Nov. 12, Camberwell; 14, West Norwood Reform Club. Dec. 10, Camberwell; 17, Deptford Liberal Club.

NAM STANDING, 16 Gray's Inn-road, E.C.—Oct. 14 and 15, Salford; 16, Rochdale.

St. JOHN, 8 Norland-road North, Notting Hill, W.—Oct. 15, Victoria Park; 22, Hyde Park; 29, Chatham.

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Husband—"Don't fret, love. We must get into debt. But Aunt Tabitha cannot last more than six months, and then we shall be rich."

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Husband—"Merciful powers! I hope not."

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